


**WE ARE ALL ISLAMIC STATE | CHRIS HEDGES**  
**'ALLAH' – CODE WORD FOR TERRORISM | AZEEZAH KANJI**  
**ALL YOU NEED IS MUD | MALCOLM LIGHTNER**

# ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING | PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

ISSUE 115



# In The Jungle

**CALAIS, FRANCE 2016:**

**"We aren't criminals;  
we aren't terrorists. We  
are just trying to find a  
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**Ben Ehrenreich** witnesses the  
demolition of a refugee camp



# ColdType

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# We all are Islamic State

We use drones, war planes and artillery to kill our enemies. Then their suicide bombers kill us by blowing up our airports and subways. Why do we feel so morally superior? asks **Chris Hedges**

**R**evenge is the psychological engine of war. Victims are the blood currency. Their corpses are used to sanctify acts of indiscriminate murder. Those defined as the enemy and targeted for slaughter are rendered inhuman. They are not worthy of empathy or justice. Pity and grief are felt exclusively for our own. We vow to eradicate a dehumanized mass that embodies absolute evil. The maimed and dead in Brussels or Paris and the maimed and dead in Raqqa or Sirte perpetuate the same dark lusts. We all are Islamic State.

“From violence only violence is born,” Primo Levi wrote, “following a pendular action that, as time goes by, rather than dying down, becomes more frenzied.”

The tit-for-tat game of killing will not end until exhaustion, until the culture of death breaks us emotionally and physically. We use our drones, warplanes, missiles and artillery to rip apart walls and ceilings, blow out windows and kill or wound those inside.

Our enemies pack peroxide-based explosives in suitcases or suicide vests and walk into airport terminals, concert halls, cafes or subways and blow us up, often along with themselves. If they had our technology of death they would do it more efficiently. But they do not. Their tactics are cruder, but morally they are the same as us. T.E. Lawrence called this cycle of vio-

lence “the rings of sorrow.”

The Christian religion embraces the concept of “holy war” as fanatically as Islam does. Our Crusades are matched by the concept of jihad. Once religion is used to sanctify murder there are no rules. It is a battle between light and dark, good and evil, Satan and God. Rational discourse is banished. “The sleep of reason,” as Goya said, “brings forth monsters.”

Flags, patriotic songs, deification of the warrior and sentimental drivel drown out reality. We communicate in empty clichés and mindless, patriotic, absurdities. Mass culture is used to reinforce the lie that we are the true victims. It recreates the past to conform to the national heroic myth. We alone are said to possess virtue and courage. We alone have the right to revenge. We are hypnotized into a communal somnolence, a state-induced blindness.

Those we fight, lacking our industrial machines of death, kill up close. But killing remotely does not make us less morally deformed. Long-distance killing, epitomized by drone operators at air force bases within the United States who go home for dinner, is as depraved. These technicians make the vast machinery of death operate with a terrifying clinical sterility. They de-personalize industrial war. They are the “little Eichmanns.” This organized bureaucracy of killing is the most enduring legacy

**We alone are said to possess virtue and courage. We alone have the right to revenge. We are hypnotized into a communal somnolence, a state-induced blindness**

## SPOT THE DIFFERENCE?



Police use tear gas to disperse right wing demonstrators in Brussels. YouTube screenshot

**We torture kidnapped captives, many held for years, in black sites. We carry out “targeted assassinations.” We drive millions of families from their homes. Those who oppose us do the same. They torture and behead – replicating the execution style of the Christian Crusaders – with their own brand of savagery**

of the Holocaust.

“The mechanized, rational, impersonal, and sustained mass destruction of human beings, organized and administered by states, legitimized and set into motion by scientists and jurists, sanctioned and popularized by academics and intellectuals, has become a staple of our civilization, the last, perilous, and often repressed heritage of the millennium,” wrote Omer Bartov in *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing and Representation*.

We torture kidnapped captives, many held for years, in black sites. We carry out “targeted assassinations” of so-called high-value targets. We abolish civil liberties. We drive millions of families from their homes. Those who oppose us do the same. They torture and behead – replicating the execution style of the Christian Crusaders – with their own brand of savagery. They rule as despots. Pain for pain. Blood for blood. Horror for horror. There is a fearsome symmetry

to the madness. It is justified by the same religious perversion. It is the same abandonment of what it means to be humane and just.

As psychologist Rollo May wrote: “At the outset of every war . . . we hastily transform our enemy into the image of the daimonic; and then, since it is the devil we are fighting, we can shift onto a war footing without asking ourselves all the troublesome and spiritual questions that the war arouses. We no longer have to face the realization that those we are killing are persons like ourselves.”

The killing and torture, the more they endure, contaminate the perpetrators and the society that condones their actions. They sever the professional inquisitors and killers from the capacity to feel. They feed the death instinct. They expand the moral injury of war.

### **22 suicides a day**

Twenty-two veterans of US military service commit suicide every day. They do it without an explosives belt. But they share, with suicide bombers, the overpowering urge to be rid of the world and the sordid role they had in it.

“It is better to suffer certain injustices than to commit them,” wrote Albert Camus. Like Immanuel Kant, he understood. But the politicians, pundits and mass culture dismiss such wisdom as weakness. Those who speak with sanity, like Euripides when he produced his anti-war masterpiece, *The Trojan Women*, are reviled and banished.

Who are we to condemn the indiscriminate murder of civilians? Have we forgotten our bombing of German and Japanese cities in World War II that left 800,000 civilian

women, children and men dead? What about those families we obliterated in Dresden (35,000 dead), Tokyo (97,000 dead), Hiroshima (80,000 dead) and Nagasaki (66,000 dead)? What about the three-million civilian dead we left behind in Vietnam?

We dropped 32-tons of bombs per hour on North Vietnam between 1965 and 1968 – hundreds of Hiroshimas. And, as Nick Turse writes in his book, *Kill Anything That Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam*, this tonnage does not count the “millions of gallons of chemical defoliants, millions of pounds of chemical gases, and endless canisters of napalm; cluster bombs, high-explosive shells, and daisy-cutter bombs that obliterated everything within a ten-foot-ball-field diameter; anti-personnel rockets, high-explosive rockets, incendiary rockets, grenades by the millions, and myriad different kinds of mines.”

Have we forgotten the millions who died in our wars and proxy wars in the Philippines, Congo, Laos, Cambodia, Guatemala, Indonesia, El Salvador and Nicaragua? Have we forgotten the million dead in Iraq and the 92,000 dead in Afghanistan? Have we forgotten the nearly eight-million people we have driven from their homes in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria?

### **87,000 attacks**

There have been 87,000 coalition sorties over Iraq and Syria since the air campaign against Islamic State began. This is the newest chapter in our endless war against the wretched of the earth.

How can we rise up in indignation over Islamic State’s destruction of cultural monuments such as Palmyra when we have left so many in ruins? As Frederick Taylor points out in his book, *Dresden*, during the World War II bombing of Germany we destroyed countless “churches, palaces, historic buildings, libraries, museums,” including “Goethe’s house in Frankfurt,” and “the bones of Charlemagne from Aachen

cathedral” along with “the irreplaceable contents of the 400-year-old State Library in Munich.” Does anyone remember that in a single week of bombing during the Vietnam War, we obliterated most of that country’s historic My Son temple complex? Have we forgotten that our invasion of Iraq led to the burning of the National Library, the looting of the National Museum, and the construction of a military base on the site of the ancient city of Babylon? Thousands of archeological sites have been destroyed because of the wars we spawned in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Libya.

We perfected the technique of aerial mass murder and wholesale destruction that we call carpet bombing, saturation bombing, area bombing, obliteration bombing, mass bombing or, in its latest version, shock and awe. We created, through our national wealth, the managerial systems and technology that the sociologist James William Gibson calls “technowar.” What were the attacks of 9/11 but an answer to the explosions and death we inflicted on towns and cities around the globe? Our attackers spoke to us in the demented language we taught them. They, like the attackers in Paris and Brussels, knew exactly how we communicate.

The merchants of death, the arms manufacturers, are among the few who profit. Most of the rest of us are caught in a cycle of violence that will not cease until we end the US occupation of the Middle East, until we learn to speak in a language other than the primitive howl of war, death and annihilation. We will recover a humane language when we have had enough, when there are too many of our own dead for us to sustain the game. The victims will continue to be mostly innocents, trapped between killers that come from the same womb. **CT**

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*Chris Hedges’ latest book, *Wages of Rebellion*, has just been released by Amazon Books. This essay was originally published at [www.truthout.org](http://www.truthout.org)*

**What were the attacks of 9/11 but an answer to the explosions and death we inflicted on towns and cities around the globe? Our attackers spoke to us in the demented language we taught them**

# How 'Allah' became a code word for terrorism

The reflexive connection of terrorism with Muslims is persistently forged by media, politicians and government, writes **Azeezah Kanji**

**Muslims in Canada are seen through the distorting lens of the war on terror, which projects the terrorizing atrocities of groups like al Qaida and ISIS onto Muslims unassociated with them, while leaving other (and in many cases more significant) sources of political and ideological violence invisible**

As facts emerge about the stabbing on March 13 of two soldiers at a Canadian Forces recruitment centre in Toronto, one detail in particular has attracted special attention. “Allah told me to do this, Allah told me to come here and kill people,” the accused, Ayanle Hassan Ali, 27, allegedly said, prompting conjecture that the attack may have been “an act of terrorism.” These comments “fit the profile” of a terrorist, Toronto Police Chief Mark Saunders commented – even as he cautioned against the “Islamophobia nonsense” and stereotyping of Muslims almost-inevitably generated by announcements of terrorist incidents involving Muslims.

But would an assailant of any other religion who claimed that God instructed him to kill or wound similarly be deemed to fit the terrorist mould? The very fact that a reference to Allah is apparently sufficient to trigger suspicions of terrorism is itself problematic: A manifestation of the tendency to equate terrorism with acts of violence committed by Muslims. The very fact that the dominant profile of a terrorist is someone who appeals to Allah and Islam – rather than to xenophobic or white-supremacist or militant right-wing ideas – to justify his violence is a reflection of the fallacious but popular belief that “not all Muslims are ter-

rorists, but all terrorists are Muslims.”

Muslims in Canada are seen through the distorting lens of the war on terror, a lens that projects the terrorizing atrocities of groups like al Qaida and ISIS onto Muslims unassociated with them, while leaving other (and in many cases more significant) sources of political and ideological violence invisible. This produces a double-standard in the language used to describe Muslim violence versus non-Muslim violence, even when the acts in question are comparable.

We must ask ourselves why the Muslim has become the paradigmatic figure of the terrorist, even though, according to internal CSIS documents described in the Toronto Star, right-wing and white-supremacist violence is actually a greater security threat in Canada than violence by Muslims? Why is the Boston Marathon bombing memorialized as a terroristic assault on the West (including in Canadian media, which marked the one-year anniversary of the attack with extensive coverage), while the most fatal act of violence that occurred that year in the United States – the shooting in the Washington Navy Yard by Aaron Alexis, which killed 12 – is largely ignored and forgotten?

Why was Mohamed Hersi convicted of “terrorism offences” for attempting to join Al Shabab in Somalia, while Justin Bourque, who specifically targeted RCMP officers

in his shooting spree in Moncton, New Brunswick, was not charged with terrorism, but solely with murder? And why were the Muslim men who plotted to blow up a ViaRail train labelled terrorists, while the non-Muslims who planned a Valentine's Day massacre in Halifax were described rather underwhelmingly as murderous misfits by then-Justice Minister Peter McKay?

In post-9/11 Canada, the assumption of a Muslim near-monopoly on terrorism is largely taken for granted. For instance, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's 2009 publication, *Radicalization: A Guide for the Perplexed*, perplexingly insisted that "virtually all of the planned or actual terrorist attacks in Western Europe and North America since 9/11 have been carried out by young Muslims," without citing a single source or statistic. In fact, US studies indicate that more people have been killed by right-wing and white-supremacist political violence than by Muslims since 9/11. Reports from Europol (the European policing agency) likewise demonstrate that Muslims have been responsible for only a tiny percentage of political violence on that continent. But the supposed predominance of the Muslim terrorist threat is often treated as common-

sense knowledge: No supporting evidence required.

Similar dynamics prevail in other Western liberal democracies participating in the "war on terror." In the United Kingdom, for example, English Defence League member Ryan McGee, who built a viable nail-bomb packed with 181 pieces of shrapnel to maximize carnage, avoided terrorism charges and received a two-year prison sentence. Prosecutors described McGee, who had written of murdering immigrants and praised Adolf Hitler, as an "immature teenager" rather than a terrorist. In stark contrast, Runa Khan, a British Muslim woman charged with promoting terrorism on Facebook, was sentenced to a five-year jail term. Even Muslim children have been flagged as dangerous in the UK. Last month, for instance, nursery school staff raised alarms about the possible radicalization of a four-year-old boy, whose drawing of a cucumber was mistaken for a cooker-bomb. The reflexive connection of terrorism with Muslims is persistently forged and reinforced by media, politicians, and government agencies – creating a context where Muslim children's cucumbers can become cooker-bombs, and Allah can become code for terrorism. **CT**

**Nursery school staff at an English school raised alarms about the possible radicalization of a four-year-old boy, whose drawing of a cucumber was mistaken for a cooker-bomb**

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*Azeezah Kanji is a legal scholar based in Toronto.*

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## EYE WITNESS

“We aren’t criminals. We aren’t terrorists. We are just trying to find a safe place. We are here because of the actions of European governments in our countries. We are the outcome of your actions.”

– **Ben Ehrenreich** sees the demolition of a refugee camp in Calais, France

# In The Jungle

“It was like I was walking into Wonderland. It was the last place I could imagine seeing in France”

**B**araa Halabieh could recall almost every detail of the long journey from his family home in the Syrian city of Hama: Every bus and taxi fare, where he slept or failed to sleep each night, how many hours he walked to cross each border and how long he stood crammed on a stationary train waiting to pass into Hungary. He remembered the friend of a friend who stole all his money in Turkey, and the children screaming as water leaked into the small boat that was ferrying them to Lesbos. And, grinning at the memory, he recalled flagging a taxi in Calais and asking the driver to take him to the Jungle. “He was an old man,” Halabieh said. “He smiled.” Halabieh soon learned why. “It was like I was walking into Wonderland. It was the last place I could imagine seeing in France.”



Most of the refugees gathered in the Jungle, a 10-minute drive from the bronze statue of Charles de Gaulle and his wife on the Place d’Armes in the centre of Calais, have fled countries to where, in recent years, the French and British have dispatched troops or have bombed from the air. Others have escaped from regimes armed by France and the UK. Afghans appear to be in the majority, but there are also Iraqis, Syrians, Libyans, Egyptians, Pakistanis, and Sudanese.

### Million refugees

The Jungle houses a tiny proportion of the million people who have sought refuge in





Riot police watch as shacks blaze during recent demolitions at the Jungle refugee site in Calais, France. Photo: Amirah Breen

Europe over the past year. One British NGO put the camp's mid-February population at 5,497 – that's including 205 women and 651 children, about two-thirds of whom arrived unaccompanied by a relative. The Jungle's inhabitants are a select group: they've made it to Europe, crossed the whole Schengen Zone and want to keep going, to stow themselves away in one of the trains and trucks that take consumer goods through the Eurotunnel to Dover. (As always, there are fewer obstacles to the moving of goods.) Some have family in the UK; some speak English. Most know that work is comparatively easy to find in

the UK, that France's unemployment rate is nearly twice as high as Britain's, and that the UK approves about twice as many asylum applications as France.

When he arrived last autumn, Halabieh said, there were only tents in the Jungle. Halabieh is 31, and has the same persistent cough as almost everyone else I met in the camp. "Jungle cough," he called it. In Syria, he said, "I had an amazing life: My own car, my own business, my own house." But the war changed things, and in October, 2014, he crossed into Turkey. It took him nearly a year to reach Calais. He speaks fluent English, has a degree in English literature and

**In Syria, said Halabieh, "I had an amazing life: My own car, my own business, my own house." But the war changed things . . .**

## EYE WITNESS

**The Afghans have a monopoly on the grocery trade, selling their wares out of sheds with counters and plexiglass display windows. They offer canned soup, fizzy drinks and juice, crisps, batteries, earbuds, phone chargers, sacks of onions and potatoes**

a master's, plus an uncle in London and a cousin in Wales with a family business ready to employ him. In France he knows no one. The day he arrived in the Jungle, he met some Syrians who gave him dinner and a dry place to stay. Late that night, they asked if he wanted to join them: They were going to try to sneak onto a train. Exhausted from travelling, he declined. The next morning they called from Dover. Halabieh inherited their tent.

For a while he tried to follow them. The refugees would stop the traffic on the motorway outside the Jungle, or wait for queues to develop, then scatter across the tarmac searching for a big enough hiding place on a lorry. Getting onto the lorries was difficult enough without the police chasing off the refugees with tear gas and rubber bullets. These days, Halabieh said, crossing is almost impossible. The fences are higher. There are more cameras, more guards, more dogs. "But even with all these procedures," he said with a smile, "there are some people who still go." He had decided not to take the risk, but to wait and hope for the situation to change. Meanwhile, he has co-founded a photography collective called Jungle Eye that documents life in the camp, and he volunteers at a charity canteen that distributes more than 1,000 dinners a day. Since it became clear that the French intended to evict the inhabitants of the southern half of the Jungle, he has spent more time than he would like talking to visiting journalists. His message is simple: "We aren't criminals. We're not terrorists. We are just trying to find a safe place. We're here because of the actions of European governments in our countries. We are the outcome of your actions."

Against the grey sky and the mud, the Jungle is a colourful mess of red and green and blue tents, and tiny shacks draped with blue polypropylene tarps, everything snapping and shivering in the wind. Some of the shelters seem professionally constructed, with plywood flooring and right-angled walls of well-planed lumber. Others are

improvised: Dirt floors beneath pieces of particleboard and corrugated metal, scraps of blanket tied over frames of crudely cut branches, makeshift chimneys venting oil-barrel stoves. There's mud everywhere, and small mountains of rubbish, and rows of portable toilets.

There's a lot of activity: An endless stream of men in jeans and parkas and shalwar kameez trudge in all directions, weighed down by bags of groceries distributed by one aid group or another. Long queues form behind delivery vans. A child rides past on a bicycle, falls and tumbles in the mud. Another boy pedals by, laughing at his friend's bad luck. The call to prayer rings out from a wide tent that functions as a mosque. There's an Orthodox church, too, with a sign in Ethiopic script and crosses painted on its bright blue plywood doors. There's even a high street lined with shops and cafés, bustling with refugees and throngs of European volunteers. The Afghans have a monopoly on the grocery trade, selling their wares out of sheds with counters and plexiglass display windows. They offer canned soup, fizzy drinks and juice, crisps, batteries, earbuds, phone chargers, sacks of onions and potatoes. One of the shopkeepers told me he arrived from Kabul five months ago, gave up trying to slip into England and used his money to invest in a shop. "Life is bad here," he said, but he can make €200 on a busy day.

### **Restaurants and hot water**

There are at least a dozen restaurants, one Kurdish, the rest Afghan: The Hamid Karzai Rastorant, the White Mountain, the Three Star Hotel. Khan, an Afghan from Kunduz who bakes bread at the White Mountain, makes €20 a day. Inside the restaurant, men sit, smoke shishas and talk. The Eritreans run a bar and nightclub, a dark and cavernous tent that's empty at mid-day. There's a bathhouse, too: €3 gets you a bucket of hot water, shampoo, and a measure of dignity that's absent at the Jules Ferry day centre down the road,

where refugees queue for entrance tickets, and then again for hurried showers. Not everything has to be paid for: There are two canteens run by volunteers that attempt to make up for the absence of the major NGOs. Refugees run schools that teach English and French: There's an art school and a theatre, a multilingual newspaper, even a radio station.

### **Eurotunnel and asylum seekers**

They have only recently been making headlines again, but refugees have been gathering in Calais for years. Asylum seekers en route to England began to arrive in Calais not long after the opening of the Eurotunnel in 1994. In 1999, the French government asked the Red Cross to concentrate the newcomers, most of them Kosovan Albanians, in a single site: A warehouse in Sangatte built to store construction equipment for the tunnel. Refugees continued to stream in, from Afghanistan and the Kurdish north of Iraq. Crossing was easier in those days, and the British tabloids were soon whipping up a panic over the "asylum invasion." Asylum applications, in fact, dropped in 2001, but within a few weeks of 9/11, the Express was claiming that al-Qaida had infiltrated the Sangatte camp. A year later, with the agreement of the then-home secretary, David Blunkett, and his French equivalent, Nicolas Sarkozy, the camp was closed. Blunkett called the Sangatte site "a festering sore in Anglo-French relations." Sarkozy spun its closure as an act of goodwill towards migrants: "We have put an end to a situation that was characterized by massive inhumanity to those people who were living in the centre." Three months later, in February 2003, the two men signed the treaty of Le Touquet, allowing for "juxtaposed controls" at the ports of Dover and Calais. French immigration inspectors would work at Dover, while the UK Border Force would operate in Calais. The frontier between Britain and the Schengen zone, with its open borders,

had been pushed back across the English Channel.

People kept coming, sleeping in the woods and taking over empty buildings. In 2009, the French police bulldozed a settlement in the dunes, arresting 300 migrants and chasing off hundreds more. Within months a new one had replaced it. Refugees lived in small encampments scattered around the edge of the town: an Eritrean camp here, a Hazara squat there, a Sudanese camp somewhere else. Fresh raids and demolitions followed. Police violence became a constant feature of refugee life in Calais. At the port, the UK Border Force employed more sophisticated methods: not just dogs and fences, but infrared cameras, heartbeat detectors and carbon dioxide probes – Foucauldian biopower at its most concrete. In September 2014, the two governments agreed to a comprehensive action plan that would "protect vulnerable people," while deterring "illegal migrants from congregating in and around Calais." Its main feature was a British pledge of €5-million a year to strengthen port security and build "robust fences" to keep the migrants away from motorways.

By early 2015, the number of refugees had increased dramatically. The French government responded with its now characteristic pairing of humanitarian gestures with naked efforts at control. The local authority opened the Jules Ferry day centre on the site of an old children's holiday camp four miles east of the town. It would give migrants the use of showers and toilets, as well as one hot meal a day. (As prime minister in 1884, Ferry, one of the architects of French colonial expansion, told the Chamber of Deputies that "indeed the higher races have a right over the lower races.") The police began telling migrants that they must abandon their squats and could camp only on the site of a former rubbish dump outside the Jules Ferry centre. The town's refugee problem would be safely out of sight. This was the origin of the current Jungle.

Perhaps it was the rain, but almost no one

**The police began telling migrants that they must abandon their squats and could camp only on the site of a former rubbish dump outside the Jules Ferry centre. The town's refugee problem would be safely out of sight. This was the origin of the current Jungle**

**When Ali and his brother said they didn't have any money, the masked men hit his brother on the head with an iron rod, knocking him out with one blow. They hit Ali in the face, splitting his lip**

turned out for the demonstration organized by a walrus-moustached former soldier called Willy Destierdt, and billed as an apolitical “citizens’ promenade” to honour General Christian Piquemal, the former French Foreign Legion commander who had been arrested at a larger pro-Pegida, anti-migrant rally two weeks before. (“This is France,” the 75-year-old Piquemal had scolded the police, “the great France, the eternal France, which used to be the lighthouse of the world.”) By the time I arrived, Destierdt and three others had been arrested. Only about 20 of the general’s admirers had shown up, but 150 police were still lingering outside the train station. They carried the tear gas launchers that they routinely use against migrants.

In the first round of regional elections last December, Marine Le Pen’s National Front won 49 per cent of the vote in Calais. All the refugees I spoke to said they were afraid to go into the town after dark. One Egyptian migrant told me he was walking back to the camp when four masked men in a black car swerved directly into a large group of refugees. A car filled with police, right behind the black car, did nothing, he said. Shahin Ali, a 27-year-old Kurd, told a more harrowing story. He had been a university student in Kobani until Islamic State assaults sent his family into Turkey. (Conditions in the refugee camps there, he said, were better than in Calais.) Late one night, Ali, his brother and a friend were walking back to the Jungle after trying and failing to stow themselves away on a Dover-bound lorry when they saw two figures approaching. The men were wearing black masks, black gloves, black clothes and boots – what looked like police uniform without the insignia. The men forced them to go to an isolated spot and demanded their phones and money. When Ali and his brother said they didn’t have any, they hit his brother on the head with an iron rod, knocking him out with one blow. They hit Ali in the face, splitting his lip. He and his friend handed over their phones. The men searched their

pockets. “They took everything.” The Kurds were carrying all the money they had, more than €1,000 each. The men took their documents, too: passports and Syrian ID, everything they would need to file a credible asylum claim. They even took their shoes. And still, Ali said, the men kept beating them: “I said to myself it’s our end, they will finish us.” But, in the end, they told them to go. His brother was unconscious, and his friend’s face was smashed. Ali couldn’t walk. They dragged themselves back to the camp, and someone took them to hospital. “They were not robbers,” Ali said. “After they took everything they continued to beat us. Their main aim was to beat us.”

Médecins sans Frontières, which operates a clinic in the camp, treats a steady 10 to 15 migrants a week for injuries sustained in assaults. Most are inflicted by the police, according to MSF’s Marlène Malfait, but about 10 per cent are not. The stories are similar: Masked men attacking migrants outside the camp at night. “I’m not sure we can call it a militia,” Malfait said, “but some of them are really, really organized.” On January 30, an Afghan shopkeeper called Mohamed Islam cycled into town to buy supplies. His body was found 11 days later, floating near the ferry terminal.

### **The bulldozers arrive**

Last November, bulldozers arrived in the Jungle and began clearing an area inhabited by about 500 refugees. A few weeks later, the first containers arrived, with heating, windows and doors. This was the French government’s response to a lawsuit demanding better conditions for migrants, a new camp, separated from the Jungle by wire fencing. Each of the 125 containers they have since installed can house 12 people, who have to register with the préfecture and allow their hands to be biometrically scanned. One refugee who had moved into the new camp, an engineer from Aleppo, who told me his name was

Sam, and then, with a wink, changed his mind and said it was David Cameron, complained that there was no ventilation, and barely space to stand between the bunk beds. The noise and overcrowding were driving him mad. “They let us live like animals,” he said.

Most of the refugees I met had no intention of leaving their tents and shelters, or of giving their handprints to the French. Everyone had heard rumours of migrants who made it across to Dover only to be told by the immigration authorities that their fingerprints had been registered in France, making it impossible for them to apply for asylum in the UK. (The Dublin Regulation assigns responsibility for asylum seekers to the first EU member state where they made an identifiable claim.) In the containers, they knew, they would have no access to cooking facilities, and would have to give up all the communal arrangements and systems of mutual support that made life in the Jungle bearable. With its high perimeter fence and evenly spaced rows of beige containers, the new camp makes the chaos of the Jungle look almost welcoming. “It’s like a prison,” a refugee from Darfur told me, as we sat on salvaged leather sofas around a stove in a roomy shed in the Jungle while breakfast was being cooked over a gas burner.

On January 18, the French authorities levelled another strip of land next to the motorway, displacing 2,000 refugees. Two weeks later, the bulldozers returned and demolished a mosque and the Jungle’s only Protestant church in order to complete a 100-metre ‘security zone’ around the camp’s perimeter.

On February 12 the préfecture announced its plans to demolish the entire southern half of the camp, which includes most of the restaurants and shops, the Orthodox church, mosques, schools, the theatre, two legal centres and an immunization clinic. Calais’s mayor, Natacha Bouchart, spoke to the press of the “necessary firmness” required to correct conditions she deemed “unworthy of human nature.” The Jungle

would have to be destroyed for its residents to be saved, and the authorities promised a humane solution to a problem they insisted was not theirs. They estimated the population of the southern half of the camp at a mere 800 to 1,000, admitting at the same time that there was only room in the containers and the Jules Ferry camp for 300. Temporary shelter elsewhere had been found for another 856. Help Refugees, a British charity working in the Jungle, counted a more credible 3,455 people living in the zone marked for demolition, including 440 children. At a court hearing in Lille on February 23, the deadline for the eviction, the judge, Valérie Quéméner, ordered the demolition to be postponed. Two days later she issued a ruling that was either a compassionate compromise or a cynical dodge: All the communal structures – schools, clinics, places of worship, restaurants and shops – could stay. The people who built and used them would have to go. The interior minister, Bernard Cazeneuve, promised that the evictions would be gradual. “It was never a question,” he said, “of evacuating the south zone in a brutal fashion using bulldozers.”

The bulldozers arrived the following Monday. Early that morning, work crews and police gave refugees one hour to leave. By afternoon, tear gas had flooded the camp.

A few days before the court gave its verdict, Baraa Halabieh had predicted that the French government wouldn’t be happy until the entire Jungle had been razed. He was right. Bouchart told Reuters that the northern half was the next target: Once it’s demolished, work can begin on a €675 million expansion of the port. “The city of Calais,” she declared, “has lived up to its humanitarian commitments.”

**CT**

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**Ben Ehrenreich’s** *The Way to the Spring*, based on his reporting from the West Bank, will be published later this year. He is the author of two novels, *Ether* and *The Suitors*. This article originally appeared in the *London Review of Books* – [www.lrb.co.uk](http://www.lrb.co.uk)

**Everyone had heard rumours of migrants who made it across to Dover only to be told by the immigration authorities that their fingerprints had been registered in France, making it impossible for them to apply for asylum in the UK**

# Silencing Israeli army whistle-blowers

History may be written by the victor, but the real truth is always lurking in the background, waiting to be uncovered, writes **Jonathan Cook**

**The historian Ilan Pappé and others noted the suggestive titles of Israeli military operations such as “Broom” and soldiers’ orders to “clean” areas**

One might expect that only historians would care to revisit the 1948 war that created Israel. And yet the debate about what constitutes truth and myth from that period still provokes raw emotions. Much rests on how those events are reconstructed, not least because the shock waves have yet to subside. Israelis fear, and Palestinians crave, a clearer picture of the past because it would powerfully illuminate the present. It might also influence the international community’s proposed solutions for the conflict. That is why the unearthing of an Israeli soldier’s letter from 1948 detailing what was probably the war’s worst massacre – one long buried by Israel – is of more than historical significance. It comes as Moshe Ya’alon, the defence minister, last month accused Breaking the Silence, an Israeli organization that exposes military abuses, of treason for collecting evidence from the army’s current whistle-blowers.

Western understandings of the 1948 war – what Palestinians term their Nakba, or catastrophe – are dominated by an enduring Israeli narrative. Israel’s army, it is said, abided by a strict moral code. Palestinians left not because of Israel’s actions but on the orders of Arab leaders.

In this rendering, the Palestinians’ mass dispossession was the fault of the Arab world – and a solution for the millions of today’s refugees lies with their host countries.

For decades Israel’s chief concession to the truth was an admission that a massacre took place just outside Jerusalem, at Deir Yassin. Israel claimed the atrocity was the exception that proved the rule: A rogue militia killed more than 100 villagers, violating Israel’s ethical codes in the chaotic weeks before statehood was declared.

Palestinians have always known of dozens of other large massacres of civilians from 1948 carried out by the Israeli army. The barbarity, they say, was intended to terrorize the native population into flight. This account puts responsibility on Israel for allowing the refugees back.

But history is written by the victor.

In recent decades a few brave Israeli scholars have chipped away at the official facade. In the late 1990s a Haifa University student collected testimonies from former soldiers confirming that more than 200 Palestinians had been massacred at Tantura, south of Haifa. After the findings were made public, he was pilloried and stripped of his degree.

A decade ago, the historian Ilan Pappé wrote a groundbreaking book, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, arguing that massacres like the one at Tantura were exploited to drive out Palestinians. He and others noted the suggestive titles of military operations such as “Broom” and soldiers’ orders to “clean” areas. Pappé now lives in academic exile in the UK.

The biggest obstacle to shifting Israeli and western perceptions of 1948 has been the lack of a clear paper trail connecting the political leadership to the massacres. Israel locked away bundles of documentation precisely not to jeopardize the official narrative.

But things are changing slowly. Last year a key deception was punctured: That Israel urged many of the war's 750,000 Palestinian refugees to return. In a letter to Haifa's leaders shortly after the city's Palestinians were expelled, David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, demanded that any return be barred.

Now another letter, located by Israeli historian Yair Auron and published last month for the first time in English by the Haaretz newspaper, trashes the idea of an ethical Israel army. Written by Shabtai Kaplan, a soldier and journalist, the letter confirms long-held suspicions of a massacre – one that dwarfs Deir Yassin – at Dawaymeh, near Hebron. Soldiers executed hundreds of men, women and children who offered no resistance. The massacre, near the end of the war, was carried out by elite troops under the command of Yitzhak Sadeh, who developed the Israeli army's famous doctrine of "purity of arms."

Kaplan argues that the Dawaymeh massacre was part of "a system of expulsion and destruction," with a clear goal: "The fewer Arabs who remain, the better." Kaplan's letter was consigned to the vaults, as were so many other documents from 1948 that officials considered too damaging.

Nearly seven decades later, in an age of 24-hour news and social media, Israel is still desperately trying to conceal its darkest episodes by bullying the army's current whistle-blowers.

This month Benjamin Netanyahu's government launched an investigation into Breaking the Silence. Netanyahu called the collection of soldiers' testimonies intolerable, indicating that he may try to ban the group.



**Former US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and Israeli Minister of Defense Moshe Ya'alon, members of the K-9 Special Forces Unit at Camp Adam in Israel, April 23, 2013.** Photo: Erin A. Kirk-Cuomo

It is hard not to see parallels between the cover-ups of 1948 and those of today. Breaking the Silence's disclosures, especially those relating to Israel's series of attacks on Gaza, each of which has left hundreds of civilians dead, similarly give the lie to the army's continuing claims of ethical behaviour.

In his 1948 letter, Kaplan observed of the failure by the political leadership to hold anyone to account for the massacres: "Inaction is in itself encouragement."

Israel's politicians hoped then that the Palestinians could be quickly terrorized from their lands. Decades later, the atrocities continue – and to the same end. But Israel must face facts: The days when such systematic brutality could be kept under wraps are now over. **CT**

**The massacre, near the end of the war, was carried out by elite troops under the command of Yitzhak Sadeh. He developed the Israeli army's famous doctrine of "purity of arms"**

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

## IN THE PICTURE



**SOGGY CIRCUIT:** The Mile O' Mud is an oval track of seven-eighths of a mile with a one-eighth mile diagonal lane slashed through the centre. On average, the muddy water is four- to six-feet deep, with three strategically placed holes.

# All you need is mud

**Malcolm Lightner** captures the joy of a sport you've probably never heard of

*This sport seems to be confined, for now at least, to the Southern US states of Florida, Louisiana and Georgia*

Little boys love playing around in mud. So do grown men, judging by the exuberant photographs in Malcolm Lightner's book, *Mike O' Mud: The Culture of Swamp Buggy Racing*.

In the book's introduction, novelist Padgett Powell coined a phrase that sums up this sporting spectacle, which began in Naples, Florida, and seems to be confined, for now at least, to the Southern US states of Florida, Louisiana and Georgia.

"Refined nutbarism," he calls it.

Powell expands his description: "Re-

efined nutbarism applies to much of human endeavour, especially that which extrapolates a practical modest low enterprise like, say, running whiskey in a car a little faster than the law's into immodest high-art legal-alcohol-sponsored NASCAR. In the case of swamp buggy racing, a Willys Jeep on fat tires (some of the first ones were from WWII bombers, the big goofy balloonny tires that needed to be soft), good for creeping through a swamp in order to shoot something to eat, is extrapolated into a water dragster on wheels as tall as a man and





**RACING MACHINES:** Bonnie Walsh and Randy Johns battle in the pro-modified race. Bonnie later won the Big Feature racing against Troy Ortega with a time of 50.95 seconds.



**LEFT:** Redneck Stadium, 2011. The name "Redneck Stadium" is the creation of Daniel Patrick Hoolihan, IV, who defines rednecks as "People who would probably be having more fun than others"

## IN THE PICTURE



**FINAL LAP, 2003: Leonard Chesser's blazing-orange, pro-modified, two-wheel-drive Dat's Da One outmuscled Tyler Johns' V-8 super stock entry Patriot and the four-wheel drive buggy Dat's It, driven by Leonard's 21-year-old daughter Amy.**

***Take that buggy and put it onto a track that is essentially a mudbank skimmed by a few feet of water and you have the recipe for some serious, filthy, fun***

thin as his arm. The ancestral vehicle is now known as a woods buggy or a hunt buggy; it has still the huge and very broad tires to stay on top of the mud, it is tall, it wants to go slow. The progeny swamp buggy for racing has tall tires, but they are thin enough to cut through the water and get to the mud, or hardpan, through and over which they can run, with speed. The transmutation of the woods buggy to the racing swamp buggy is powered by idleness and the desire to have some fun.”

Take that buggy and put it onto a track that is essentially a mudbank topped by a few feet of sludgy water and you have the recipe for some serious, filthy, fun.

According to the book's publicity, photographer Lightner, a native Floridian, turns this “scared and raw mess into a thing of beauty, surrounded by lush blue sky and re-

storative greens; a community unapologetically celebrating its colourful and unique history, full of wild abandon and enjoying every minute of it.”

Can't argue with that. The photographs, taken over several years at the Mile O' Mud track at Florida Sports Park at Naples, FL, show the clumsy-looking machines skimming and lurching through mud and water, hurling out vast spumes of spray – amphibious machines from a Mad Max futureworld.

Lightner grew up just down the street from the original swamp buggy track and, after moving to New York in 1999, he returned at least once a year from 2002 to 2013 to document the races, missing only 2005 due to a hurricane-forced cancellation.

The photographs in the huge 13 x 12 inch pages of Miles O' Mud show us everything we need to know (and a bit we don't)



**LUMPY 2008:** "She took a half step too far when she went to kick me in the ass. Needless to say, they swelled like oranges and she started calling me 'Lumpynuts.' In time, it shortened to just 'Lumpy.'" – Chris Steinmann



*Lightner's photographs show the clumsy-looking machines skimming and lurching through the water and mud, hurling vast spumes of spray – amphibious machines from a Mad Max futureworld*

**DOWN AND DIRTY:** Mud Wrestling, 2006

## IN THE PICTURE



**ABOVE: Courtney Jolly, Swamp Buggy Queen, 2004**  
The Swamp Buggy Queen pageant is held every April. After Courtney's 2004 tenure as Queen, she began racing her own swamp buggy alongside her mother Bonnie Walsh.

**ABOVE, RIGHT: Kelley McMann, Gator Rebel, 2002.**

about this sport: The waterlogged circuit, serene in the sunshine before being invaded by roaring machines, trucks and trailers, bleachers and sideshows, proudly-redneck fans with tattoos and comfort food, the Swamp Buggy Queen, kids rolling in the mud. And, all the way through, the Stars and Stripes: Good ol' boys celebrating the good ol' US of A.

It's all great fun, so what's not to like about this breath-taking, noisy and soaking wet spectacle? Well, just a couple of things: At the end of his introduction, Lightner paints a grim picture of his home town. "Going to the races has been a bittersweet experience. While it was exciting and adrenaline-filled at the track, the community and my family have seen better times. I am reminded that life is indeed short and full of unexpected bumps in the road. All the more reason to let go and enjoy the ride."

And, given this book's size and weight, expecting readers to flick constantly to the back pages to find descriptions of the photographs without becoming mightily irritated seems short-sighted. When will designers learn that words and pictures really DO belong together?)

– Tony Sutton



### THE BOOK

**Mile O' Mud: The Culture of Swamp Buggy Racing, by Malcolm Lightner, is published by powerHouse Books, Brooklyn, New York. Price: \$50.**

### THE PHOTOGRAPHER

**Malcolm Lightner** is a member of the photography faculty at the School of Visual Arts in New York City. His photography is included in the permanent photography collection at the Southeast Museum of Photography at Daytona Beach, Florida.



**CHESSERS DON'T CRY, 2013:** During a preliminary heat, 2013, Glenn Chesser lost control of his buggy, *Dat's On*, and flipped it upside down. Trapped for only a few seconds, he burrowed through the mud, despite the compound fracture to his arm. "I was down there long enough to talk to God," he said. "I thought about my grandbabies and how I wanted to get out of there to see them again." Glenn was taken by helicopter to a nearby hospital, where a surgeon, worked for seven hours to save the arm.

# How Texaco supported fascism

In this excerpt from his new book, *Spain In Our Hearts: Americans in the Civil War*, **Adam Hochschild** tells of the oilman who loved dictators

**Giant multinationals, sometimes with annual earnings greater than the combined total gross national products of several dozen of the world's poorer countries, are often more powerful than national governments**

“**M**erchants have no country,” wrote Thomas Jefferson in 1814. “The mere spot they stand on does not constitute so strong an attachment as that from which they draw their gains.” The former president was ruing the way New England traders and shipowners, fearing the loss of lucrative transatlantic commerce, failed to rally to their country in the War of 1812.

Today, with the places from which “merchants” draw their gains spread across the planet, corporations are even less likely to feel loyalty to any country in particular. Some of them have found it profitable to reincorporate in tax havens overseas. Giant multinationals, sometimes with annual earnings greater than the

combined total gross national products of several dozen of the world’s poorer countries, are often more powerful than national governments, while their CEOs wield the kind of political clout many prime ministers and presidents only dream of.

No corporations have been more aggressive in forging their own foreign policies than the big oil companies. With operations spanning the world, they – and not the governments who weakly try to tax or regulate them – largely decide whom they do business with and how. In its quest for oil in the anarchic Niger Delta, according to journalist Steve Coll, ExxonMobil, for example, gave

boats to the Nigerian navy, and recruited and supplied part of the country’s army, while local police sported the company’s red flying horse logo on their uniforms. Jane Mayer’s new book, *Dark Money*, on how the brothers and oil magnates Charles and David Koch spent hundreds of billions of dollars to buy the Republican Party and America’s democratic politics, offers a vivid account of the way their father Fred launched the energy business they would inherit. It was a classic case of not letting “attachments” stand in the way of gain. Fred happily set up oil installations for Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin before the United States recognized the So-

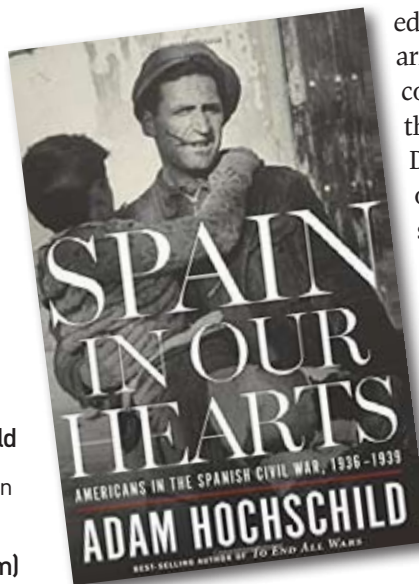
## SPAIN IN OUR HEARTS

Americans in the Spanish Civil War 1939-1938

By Adam Hochschild

Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

\$19.28 (Amazon.com)



viet Union in 1933, and then helped Adolf Hitler build one of Nazi Germany's largest oil refineries that would later supply fuel to its air force, the Luftwaffe.

His unsavoury tale is now part of the historical record, thanks to Mayer. That of another American oil tycoon of the 1930s, who quietly lent a helping hand to a different grim dictator, has, however, gone almost unnoticed. In our world where the big oil outfits have become powerful forces and his company, Texaco, became part of the oil giant Chevron, it's an instructive tale. He helped determine the course of a war that would shape our world for decades to come.

From its beginning in 1936 until it ended early in 1939, some 400,000 deaths later, the Spanish Civil War would rivet the world's attention. For those who no longer remember, here's a thumbnail sketch of what happened. A group of right-wing army officers calling themselves Nationalists, with a ruthless young general named Francisco Franco emerging as their leader, went into revolt against the elected government of the Spanish Republic. They fought with a brutality that would soon become far more common and global. Newspapers around the world reported on the deadly aid that Franco received from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Squadrons of aircraft on loan from Adolf Hitler infamously bombed the town of Guernica into ruins and leveled whole blocks of Madrid and Barcelona, killing thousands of civilians, something that was shockingly new at the time.

#### **Franco's ally in New York City**

By war's end, Italian Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini had dispatched 80,000 Italian troops to fight for the Nationalists. Hitler and Mussolini would supply them with weaponry, ranging from the latest tanks and artillery to submarines. Totally ignored by the world's press, however, would be one of Franco's crucial allies, a man who lived neither in Berlin nor Rome. With a globe on his desk and roll-down maps on the wall of

his elegantly wainscotted office, he could be found high in the iconic Chrysler Building in the heart of New York City.

Not one of the hundreds of foreign correspondents who chronicled the bombing of Madrid looked up at the ominous V-shaped formations of Hitler's bombers and wondered: Whose fuel is powering those aircraft? The oilman who supplied that fuel would, in fact, prove to be the best American friend a Fascist dictator could have. He would provide the Nationalists not only with oil, but also with an astonishing hidden subsidy of money, a generous and elastic line of credit, and a stream of strategic intelligence.

Torkild Rieber was a barrel-chested, square-jawed figure whose presence dominated any occasion. At elegant gathering spots, like New York's 21 Club, where a hamburger-and-egg dish on the menu was named after him, he captivated listeners with tales of his rugged past. Born in Norway, he had gone to sea at 15 as a deckhand on a full-rigged clipper ship that took six months to make its way from Europe around Cape Horn to San Francisco. For the next two years, he signed on with ships carrying indentured labourers from Calcutta, India, to the sugar plantations of the British West Indies. In his deep, gravelly voice, Rieber would tell stories for the rest of his life about climbing to a yardarm to furl sails far above a rolling, pitching deck, and riding out Atlantic hurricanes with a shipload of desperately seasick Indian labourers. On shore years later, however, his dress of choice wasn't a sailor's. He liked to wear a tuxedo when he went out to dinner at "21" and elsewhere because, as he said, "that's the way the Brits ran the colony in Calcutta."

At the age of 22, having survived a knifing by a drunken crewman, he would be naturalized as an American citizen and become the captain of an oil tanker. Forever after, his friends would call him "Cap." The tanker he commanded was later bought by the Texas Company, better known by its service station brand name, Texaco. That was when

**By war's end, Italian Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini had dispatched 80,000 Italian troops to fight for Franco's Nationalists. Hitler and Mussolini would supply them with weaponry ranging from the latest tanks and artillery to submarines**

## BOOK EXCERPT

**Few were paying the slightest attention to where Franco's bounteous supply of oil was coming from. Not a single investigation on the subject appeared in any major American newspaper at a time when the civil war in Spain was front-page news almost daily**

he realized that, in the oil business, the biggest money was to be made on dry land. As the company expanded and the red Texaco star with its green "T" spread to gas stations across the world, he would marry his boss's secretary and climb the corporate ladder to become, in 1935, CEO.

"He cannot sit at a desk," wrote an awe-struck reporter from Life magazine, who visited him at Texaco's New York headquarters. "He bounces up and down, fidgets and jumps up to pace the floor as if it were a deck. He is perpetually restless, on a terrestrial scale. He cannot stay long in one office or in one city or on one continent." Life's sister magazine, Time, was no less susceptible to his rough-diamond charm, calling him a "hard-headed, steel-willed" corporate chieftain with "horse sense, a command of men, and the driving force of a triple-expansion engine."

At the time, Texaco had a reputation as the brashest, most aggressive of the big oil companies; its founder, who first hired Rieber, flew a skull-and-crossbones flag atop his office building. "If I were dying at a Texaco filling-station," a Shell executive once said, "I'd ask to be dragged across the road."

For the company, Rieber muscled his way into oilfields around the world, making deals with local strongmen. In Colombia, a new city called Petrólea arose in the midst of the Rhode Island-sized expanse of land where Texaco had won the right to drill. To pump the oil to a port where tankers could collect it meant building a 263-mile pipeline across the Andes at Captain Rieber Pass.

Beneath his broad shoulders, iron handshake, sailors' oaths, and up-from-the-lower-decks persona, however, lay something far darker. Although not particularly anti-Semitic by the standards of the time – "Why," he would say, "some of my best friends are goddam Jews, like Bernie Gimbel and Solomon Guggenheim" – he was an admirer of Adolf Hitler.

"He always thought it was much better to deal with autocrats than democracies," a friend recalled. "He said with an autocrat

you really only have to bribe him once. With democracies you have to keep doing it over and over."

### **Becoming Franco's banker**

In 1935, the Spanish Republic signed a contract with Rieber's Texaco, turning the company into its major oil supplier. The next year, after Franco and his allies made their grab for power, however, Rieber suddenly changed course and bet on them. Knowing that military trucks, tanks, and aircraft need not just fuel, but a range of engine oils and other lubricants, the Texaco CEO quickly ordered a supply at the French port of Bordeaux to be loaded into a company tanker and shipped to the hard-pressed Nationalists. It was a gesture that Franco would never forget.

From Nationalist officials came messages explaining that, much as they urgently needed Texaco's oil for their military, they were painfully short of cash. Rieber instantly replied with a telegram – "Don't worry about payments" – that became legendary in the dictator's inner circles. Not surprisingly, soon after that, he was invited to Burgos, headquarters of the Nationalist insurgency, where he promptly agreed to cut off fuel sales to the Republic, while guaranteeing Franco all the oil he needed.

Few were paying the slightest attention to where Franco's bounteous supply of oil was coming from. Not a single investigation on the subject appeared in any major American newspaper at a time when the civil war in Spain was front-page news almost daily. Yet the question should have been obvious, as more than 60 per cent of the oil going to both sides in the bitter conflict was being consumed by the rival armed forces and Germany and Italy were incapable of offering Franco any oil, since both were petroleum importers.

The US neutrality legislation of the time made it difficult for American corporations to sell even non-military goods to a country at war, and posed two major obstacles for Franco's Nationalists. The law banned such



cargo from being transported in American ships – and the Nationalists had no tankers. In addition, it was illegal to supply a warring country with credit – and the Nationalists had little money. Spain’s gold reserves were in the hands of the Republic.

It didn’t take long for American customs agents to discover that Texaco tankers were breaking the law. They would leave the company’s pipeline terminal at Port Arthur, Texas, with cargo manifests showing their destinations as Antwerp, Rotterdam, or Amsterdam. At sea, their captains would open sealed orders redirecting them to ports in Nationalist Spain. Rieber was also violating the law in yet another way – by extending credit to a government at war. Nominally, the credit was for 90 days (startlingly lenient terms for the oil business of that era). The real terms were far more generous. As one Nationalist oil official later explained, “We paid what we could when we could.” In effect, an American oil company CEO had become Franco’s banker. Unknown to American authorities, Texaco was also acting as a purchasing agent when the Nationalists needed oil products not in the company’s inventory.

FBI agents did indeed question Rieber about those tankers, but President Franklin D. Roosevelt was leery of getting drawn into the Spanish Civil War in any way, even by prosecuting such a conspicuous violation of American law. Instead, Texaco received no more than a slap on the wrist, eventually paying a fine of \$22,000 for extending credit to a belligerent government. Years later, when oil companies began issuing credit cards to consumers, a joke began making the rounds among industry insiders: Who did Texaco give its first credit card to? Francisco Franco.

### How to Sink a Republic

President Roosevelt continued to maintain a studied neutrality toward the Spanish Civil War that he would later regret. Texaco, on the other hand, went to war.

In recent years, in the archives of the Nationalist oil monopoly, a Spanish scholar,

Guillem Martínez Molinos, made a discovery. Not only did Texaco ship its oil illegally to Franco, but that oil was priced as if the Nationalists had transported it, not the company’s fleet of tankers.

Nor was that the end of the gifts Rieber offered. Mussolini had put Italian submarines in the Mediterranean to work attacking ships carrying supplies to Republican Spain. Franco had his own vessels and planes doing this as well. Commanders directing these submarines, bombers, and surface ships were always remarkably well informed on the travels of tankers bound for the Spanish Republic. These were, of course, a prime target for the Nationalists and during the war at least 29 of them were either damaged, sunk, or captured. The risk became so great that, in the summer of 1937, insurance rates for tankers in the Mediterranean abruptly quadrupled. One reason those waters became so dangerous: the Nationalists had access to Texaco’s international maritime intelligence network.

The company had offices and sales agents across the world. Thanks to Rieber, its Paris office began collecting information from port cities about oil tankers headed for the Spanish Republic. His Paris associate William M. Brewster coordinated this flow of intelligence, passing on to the Nationalists data he received from London, Istanbul, Marseille, and elsewhere. Brewster’s messages often listed the quantity and type of fuel a tanker was carrying and how much had been paid for it, intelligence that would help the Nationalists in assessing Republican supplies and finances. Whenever he could, however, he also delighted in relaying information useful to bomber pilots or submarine captains looking for targets.

On July 2, 1937, for example, he sent a telegram to the chief of the Nationalist oil monopoly about the SS Campoamor, a Republican tanker a Texaco agent had spotted at Le Verdon, a French port near Bordeaux. It had covered its name, hull, and funnel with new coats of black paint, and was preparing to sail soon under a British flag. It had already twice

**An American oil company CEO had become Franco’s banker. Unknown to American authorities, Texaco was also acting as a purchasing agent when the Nationalists needed oil products not in the company’s inventory**

**Rieber sometimes joked with friends that the Führer's anti-Semitism might be a touch excessive, but he was just the sort of strong, anti-communist leader with whom one could do business**

left its anchorage and returned because of reports of Nationalist ships and submarines lying in wait outside Santander, the Republican-held port where it was supposed to deliver its cargo of 10,000 tons of aviation fuel. The news of that repainting and re-flagging would have been useful to the commanders of Nationalist naval vessels. As it happened, though, an even more valuable piece of information was included in Brewster's message: Much of the crew left the ship "almost every evening." Four days later, with many of the crew attending a dance on shore, the *Campoamor* was boarded near midnight by an armed Nationalist raiding party, which quickly sailed it to a port held by Franco.

#### **Awarded by Franco**

Rieber traveled to Nationalist Spain twice during the war, at one point getting a VIP tour of the front lines near Madrid. By April 1939, Franco had won the war and Rieber was assured that the gamble he had made would pay off big time. Texaco's coffers would at last receive the money for the nearly three years' worth of fuel he had supplied on credit. In total, he sold the Nationalists at least \$20-million worth of oil during the war, the equivalent of more than \$325-million today. Texaco's tankers took 225 trips to Spain, and ships the company chartered another 156. Franco later made Rieber a Knight of the Grand Cross of Isabella the Catholic, one of Spain's highest honors.

After the Spanish war ended, Texaco continued to make its own foreign policy. Even after Germany went to war with Britain and France in September 1939, Rieber made no secret of his enthusiasm for Hitler. He sometimes joked with friends that the Führer's anti-Semitism might be a touch excessive, but he was just the sort of strong, anti-communist leader with whom one could do business. This Rieber did, with gusto, selling Texaco oil to the Nazis, ordering tankers built in Hamburg shipyards, and traveling to Germany after the

Polish Blitzkrieg so that Hermann Göring could take him on a tour by air of key industrial sites. On that trip he spent a weekend at the Luftwaffe commander's country estate, Carinhall, soon to be extravagantly decorated with art treasures looted from across Europe.

Eventually, Rieber's love of dictators got him in trouble. In 1940, it was revealed, among other things, that several Germans he had hired were Nazi spies using Texaco's internal communications to transmit intelligence information to Berlin. Rieber lost his job, but thanks to a grateful Franco the deposed tycoon landed on his feet: The dictator made him chief American buyer for the Spanish government's oil company. He went on to a succession of other high-paying positions and directorships in the oil industry and shipbuilding and died a wealthy man in 1968, at the age of 86.

Rieber is long forgotten, but we still live in a world he had such a hand in shaping. Texaco oil helped Franco win the Spanish Civil War and so be in a position to aid the Nazis in the far larger war that followed. Untold numbers of American sailors lost their lives thanks to the 21 German U-Boats based on Spain's Atlantic coast. 45,000 Spaniards volunteered for Hitler's army and air force, and Spain supplied an essential stream of strategic minerals to Germany's war industry. In the United States three quarters of a century later, well-funded climate change deniers and the political network supported by the Koch brothers are testimony to the enduring power of the oil industry. **CT**

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*Adam Hochschild, teaches at the Graduate School of Journalism, University of California at Berkeley. He is the author of eight books, including *King Leopold's Ghost* and *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918*. This piece – first published at [www.tomdispatch.com](http://www.tomdispatch.com) – is adapted from his new book, *Spain in Our Hearts: Americans in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt).*

# A terrible beauty

**Conn M. Hallinan** on Ireland's 1916 Easter Rising and its relevance to the struggles taking place in Europe 100 years later



Shortly after the last Irish rebel was shot, the British launched the Battle of the Somme

**GREEN IS THE COLOUR:** Dublin remembers, Easter Monday, 2016.

Photo: William Murphy

“**P**oblacht na hEireann.” The speaker of these words, standing on the front steps of Dublin’s General Post Office and reading from a proclamation, the ink was barely dry, of the “provisional government of the Irish Republic” was the poet Padraig Pearse. It was just after noon on March 24, 1916, the opening scene in a drama that would mix tragedy and triumph, the twin heralds of Irish history.

It is 100 years since 750 men and women threw up barricades and seized strong-points in downtown Dublin. They would be joined by maybe 1,000 more. In six days

it would be over, the post office in flames, the streets blackened by shell fire, and the rebellion’s leaders on their way to face firing squads against the walls of Kilmainham Jail.

And yet the failure of the Easter Rising would eventually become one of the most important events in Irish history, a “failure” that would reverberate worldwide and be mirrored by colonial uprisings almost a half-century later.

Anniversaries – particularly centennials – are equal parts myth and memory, and drawing lessons from them is always a tricky business. And, while 1916 is not



**DRESSED FOR REBELLION: Re-enactment of the Easter Rising in Dublin, Easter Monday, 2016.** Photo: William Murphy

**What was a disciplined Marxist intellectual and trade union leader like James Connolly doing taking up arms with mystic nationalists like Padraig Pearse and Joseph Mary Plunkett?**

2016, there are parallels, pieces of the story that overlap and dovetail in the Europe of then with the of Europe today.

Europe in 1916 was a world at war. The “lamps,” as the expression goes, had gone out in August 1914, and the continent was wrapped in barbed wire and steeped in almost inconceivable death. Shortly after the last Irish rebel was shot, the British launched the battle of the Somme. More than 20,000 would die in the first hour of that battle, and by the end, there would be more than 1-million casualties on both sides.

Europe is still at war, some ways influenced by the footsteps of a colonial world supposedly long gone. Britain is fighting its fourth war in Afghanistan. Italian Special Forces are stalking Islamists in Libya. French warplanes are bombing their old stomping grounds in Syria and chasing down Tuaregs in Mali.

And Europe is also at war with itself.

Barbed wire is once again being unrolled, not to make killing zones out of the no man’s land between trenches, but to block the floods of refugees generated by European – and American – armies and proxies in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, and Syria.

### **First victims of colonization**

In many ways, the colonial chickens are coming home to roost. The British and French between them secretly sliced up the Middle East in 1916, using religion and ethnicity to divide and conquer the region. Instability was built in. Indeed, that was the whole idea. There would never be enough Frenchmen or Englishmen to rule the Levant, but with Shiites, Sunnis and Christians busily trying to tear out one another’s throats, they wouldn’t notice the well-dressed bankers on the sidelines – “tut tutting” the lack of civilized behavior and counting their money.

The Irish of 1916 understood that gambit; after all, they were its first victims.

Ireland was a colony long before the great powers divided up the world in the 18th and 19th centuries, and the strategies that kept the island poor, backward and profitable were transplanted elsewhere. Religious divisions kept India largely docile. Tribal and religious divisions made it possible to rule Nigeria. Ethnic conflict short-circuited resistance in Kenya and South Africa. Division by sect worked well in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq.

Ireland was the great laboratory of colonialism where the English experimented with ways to keep a grip over the population. Culture, religion, language and kinship were all grist for the mill. And when all else failed, Ireland was a short sail across the Irish Sea: Kill all the lab rats and start anew.

The fact that the English had been in Ireland for 747 years by 1916 was relevant. The Irish call the occupation “the long sorrow,” and it had made them a bit bonkers. Picking a fight in the middle of a war with one of the most powerful empires in human history doesn’t seem like a terribly rational thing to do (and, in truth, there were many Irish who agreed that it was a doomed endeavour).

The European left denounced the Easter Rising, mostly because they couldn’t make much sense of it. What was a disciplined Marxist intellectual and trade union leader like James Connolly doing taking up arms with mystic nationalists like Padraig Pearse and Joseph Mary Plunkett? One of the few radicals to get it was V.I. Lenin, who called criticism of the rebellion “monstrously pedantic.”

What both Connolly and Lenin understood was that the uprising reflected a society profoundly distorted by colonialism. Unlike in the rest of Europe, in Ireland different classes and viewpoints could find common ground precisely because they had one similar experience: No matter

what their education, no matter what their resources, in the end they were Irish, and treated as inferior by their overlords.

Most of the European left was suspicious of nationalism in general, because it blurred the lines between oppressed and oppressors and undermined the analysis that class was the great fault line. But as the world would discover a quarter-century later, nationalism was an ideology that united the many against the few. In the end, it would create its own problems and raise up its own monsters, but for the vast majority of the colonial world it was an essential ingredient of national liberation.

The Easter Rising was not the first anti-colonial uprising. The Americans threw off the English in 1783; the Greeks drove out the Turks in 1832. India’s great sepoy rebellion almost succeeded in driving the British out of the sub-continent in 1857. There were others as well.

But there was a special drama to the idea of a revolution in the heart of an empire, and it was the drama more than the act that drew the world’s attention. The Times of London blamed the Easter Rising for the 1919 unrest in India, where the British army massacred 380 Sikh civilians at Amritsar. How the Irish were responsible for this, the Times never bothered to explain.

But the Irish saw the connection, if somewhat differently than did the Times. Roger Casement, a leader of the 1916 rebellion who was executed for treason in August of that year, said that the cause of Ireland was also the cause of India, because the Easter rebels were fighting “to join again the free civilizations of the earth.”

As a rising it was a failure, in part because the entire affair was carried out in secret. Probably no more than a dozen or so people knew that it was going to happen. When the Irish Volunteer Force and the Irish Citizens Army marched up to the post office, most of the passersby – includ-

**The plotters imagined that their example would fire the whole of Ireland, but by the time most of the Irish had found out about it, it was over**

## TARGET DUBLIN

● Photographs by William Murphy/Flickr.com – [www.flickr.com/photos/infomatique](http://www.flickr.com/photos/infomatique)



Remembering: Re-enactment of the Easter Rising in Dublin, Easter Monday, 2016.

Photo: William Murphy

**Like the Europe of 1916, the Europe of 2016 is dominated by a few at the expense of the many. The colonialism of empires has been replaced by the colonialism of banks and finance**

ing the English ones – thought it was just the “boys” out having a little fun by provoking the authorities again.

But secrets don’t make for successful revolutions. The plotters imagined that their example would fire the whole of Ireland, but by the time most of the Irish had found out about it, it was over. It was not even an overly bloody affair. There were about 3,000 casualties and 485 deaths, many of them civilians. Of the combatants, the British lost 151, the rebels 83, including the 16 executed in the coming weeks. It devastated a square mile of downtown Dublin, and, when the British troops marched the rebels through the streets after their surrender, crowds spat on the rebels.

But as the firing squads did their work day after day, the sentiment began to shift. Connolly was so badly wounded he could not stand, so they tied him to a chair and shot him. The authorities also refused to release the executed leaders to their families, burying them in quicklime instead. Some 3,439 men and 79 women were arrested and imprisoned. Almost 2,000 were

sent to internment camps, and 98 were given death sentences. Another 100 received long prison sentences.

All of this did not go down well with the public, and the authorities were forced to call off more executions. Plus, the idea of an “Irish Republic” was not going to go away, no matter how many people were shot, hanged or imprisoned.

### Odd bedfellows

The Easter Rising was certainly an awkward affair. Pearse called it a “blood sacrifice,” which makes the rebellion sound uncomfortably close to the Catholic Church’s motto that “The blood of the martyrs is the seat of the church.” And, yet, that is the nature of things like the Easter Rising. It churned up all of the ideologies, divisions, and prejudices that colonialism had crafted over hundreds of years, making for some very odd bedfellows. Those who dreamed of re-constituting the ancient kingdom of Meath manned barricades with students of Karl Marx. Illiterate tenant farmers took up arms with Countess Markievicz, who coun-

selled women to “leave your jewels in the bank and buy a revolver.”

Some of those divisions have not gone away. There were at least two celebrations of the Easter Rising. The establishment parties – Fine Gael, Fianna Fail, and the Labour Party – organized events leading up to the main commemoration on March 27. Sinn Fein, representing the bulk of the Irish left, had its own celebration. Several small splinter groups also presented their own particular story of the Easter Rising.

And if you want to be part of it, you can go on the Internet and buy a “genuine” Easter Rising T-shirt from “Eire Apparent.”

**Everything is for sale, even revolution**

In some ways, 1916 was about Ireland and its long, strange history. But 1916 was also about the willingness of human beings to resist, sometimes against almost hopeless odds. There is nothing special or uniquely Irish about that.

In the short run, the Easter Rising executed the people who might have prevented the 1922-23 civil war between republicans and nationalists that followed the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1921. The Free State was independent and self-governing, but still part of the empire, while the British had lopped off Northern Ireland to keep as its own. Ireland did not become truly independent until 1937.

In the long run, however, the Easter rising made continued British rule in Ireland impossible. In that sense, Pearse was right: The blood sacrifice had worked.

Does the centennial mean anything for today’s

Europe? It may. Like the Europe of 1916, the Europe of 2016 is dominated by a few at the expense of the many. The colonialism of empires has been replaced by the colonialism of banks and finance. The British occupation impoverished the Irish, but they were not so very different from today’s Greeks, Spanish and Portuguese – and yes, Irish – who have seen their living standards degraded and their young exported, all to “repay” banks from which they never borrowed anything. Do most Europeans really control their lives today any more than the Irish did in 1916?

How different is today’s “troika” – the European Central Bank, the European Commission, and the International Monetary Fund – from Whitehall in 1916? The latter came unmasked into Ireland, the former dominates the economic and political life of the European Union.

In his poem, “Easter Week 1916,” the poet William Butler Yeats called the rising the birth of “a terrible beauty.” And so it was. But Pearse’s oration at the graveside of the old Fenian warrior Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa may be more relevant: “I say to the masters of my people, beware. Beware of the thing that is coming. Beware of the risen people who shall take what yea would not give.”

**CT**

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# Card sharps

**Bill Berkowitz** recalls his adventures as a 10-year-old chasing autographs in the age of the New York Giants, New York Yankees and Brooklyn Dodgers

**After a day of autograph hunting, I'd sit on my bed late at night in our third floor-walk-up apartment and take inventory**

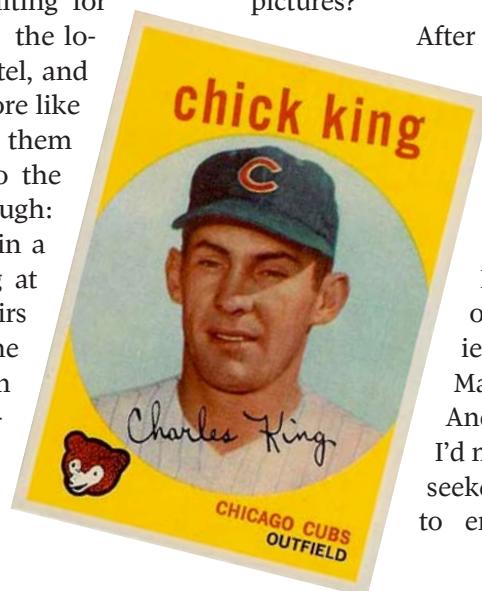
**H**ounding baseball players for their autographs could be challenging for a star-struck 10-year-old during the 1950s. Not that I ever complained, of course. Despite the frustrations of persuading often-grumpy stars to ink their names, it wasn't hard work – hard work was getting up at four in the morning to deliver the Bronx Home Post, or carrying cardboard boxes stuffed with provisions, quart bottles of Ballantine's whisky, and Schlitz beer, from Silver's Grocery, up five dark flights of stairs in the apartment building where I lived with my family.

In fact, living only five blocks from Yankee Stadium made autograph hunting very accessible. Waiting for players to emerge from the local Concourse Plaza Hotel, and walking with them – more like trying to keep up with them – a couple of blocks to the stadium was simple enough: They'd even chat once in a while. However, waiting at the top of the subway stairs for others to arrive at the ballpark, or standing in the parking lot waiting out for team buses to pull in from some downtown hotel, did

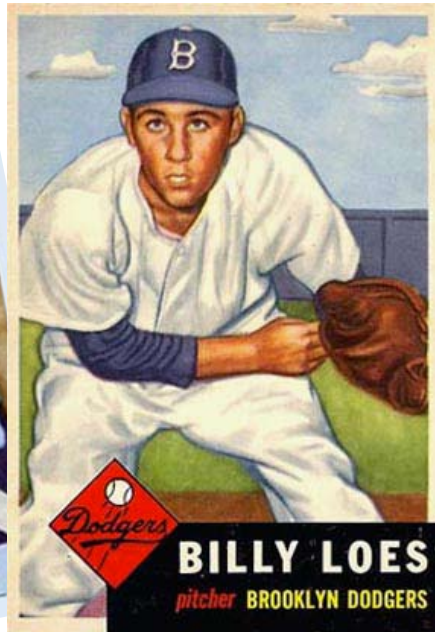
have a downside. It was like a crapshoot, a well-honed art that often went unrewarded, but occasionally paid off with a big name signing.

I was mentored by my friend's older brother, who, after four or five years of autograph collecting, knew the lay of the land. Just 15, he played the game of autograph hunting with a professionalism way beyond his years. His preparation checklist wasn't written down, but his instructions were precise: "Are your cards sorted by the teams in town?" he'd ask. "Do you have enough ballpoint pens? Do you have your scrapbook of glossies? How about a pad for the autographs of players of whom you don't have cards or pictures?"

After a day of autograph hunting, I'd sit on my bed late at night and take inventory. Most of the time, nothing of note had happened, but if I scored an autograph of Ted Williams, Jackie Robinson or Willie Mays, I'd be in heaven. And, the next day, when I'd meet fellow autograph-seekers, there'd be stories to embellish, and proud







moments to be revisited. I was in an exclusive club, one that separated me from most of the other kids in the neighbourhood. I understood the intricacies and the inside baseball stuff that my friends weren't privy to, or – more likely – didn't care about.

**Nudged out of the way**

I was single-minded in my pursuit of autographs. Perhaps an occasional elbow would nudge my fellow autograph-seekers out of the way as I pursued my targets with reckless abandon – well, as reckless as a 10-year-old knew how. But I never dreamed of ripping off the other collectors for an autographed card, no matter how rare that card or autograph was. And I couldn't imagine forging autographs – although there were guys who did just that – to trade for real ones. There was always a mutual respect for the skills of those standing beside me as I geared up for the hunt.

My days of standing in front of the Concourse Plaza Hotel, hanging out at the 161st Street IRT subway stop, and running

through parking lots when the players' buses arrived, didn't last long, however. My mentor soon joined the air force, and I was grappling with my fifth and sixth grades, figuring out how not to get on the wrong side of Mrs Castilla and Mrs Maher.

Later, during my teenage years, I put Scotch tape over most of the autographs, and they are now, as they say in the business, “degraded,” while others – especially those signed in pencil – have faded. What's left of my collection of baseball cards now rests in a box in my bedroom closet. The cards have aged, but my memories are still bright and untarnished. Now, 60 years later, when I bring down that box, I'm magically transported back through time: A star-struck 10-year-old, awaiting my heroes outside the Concourse Plaza Hotel.

**CT**

*Bill Berkowitz is a longtime journalist and observer of the conservative movement. His Conservative Watch columns document the strategies, players, institutions, victories and defeats of the American right.*

**My days of standing out in front of the Concourse Plaza Hotel, hanging out at the 161st Street IRT subway stop, and running through parking lots when the players' buses arrived, were numbered**

# A world war has begun

Massive military build-ups, the development of mini-nuclear bombs, and Western belligerence are pushing us to the edge, writes **John Pilger**

**President Obama stood before an adoring crowd in the centre of Prague, in the heart of Europe. He pledged himself to make “the world free from nuclear weapons”**

I have been filming in the Marshall Islands, which lie north of Australia, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Whenever I tell people where I have been, they ask, “Where’s that?” If I offer a clue by referring to “Bikini,” they say, “You mean the swimsuit. Few seem aware that the bikini swimsuit was named to celebrate the nuclear explosions that destroyed Bikini Atoll. 66 nuclear devices were exploded by the United States in the Marshall Islands between 1946 and 1958 – the equivalent power of 1.6 Hiroshima bombs every day for 12 years.

Bikini is silent today, mutated and contaminated. Palm trees grow in a strange grid formation. Nothing moves. There are no birds. The headstones in the old cemetery are alive with radiation. My shoes registered “unsafe” on a Geiger counter.

Standing on the beach, I watched the emerald green of the Pacific fall away into a vast black hole. This was the crater left by the hydrogen bomb they called “Bravo.” The explosion poisoned people and their environment for hundreds of miles, perhaps forever.

On my return journey, I stopped at Honolulu airport and noticed an American magazine called Women’s Health. On the cover was a smiling woman in a bikini swimsuit, and the headline: “You, too, can have a bikini body.” A few days earlier, in the Marshall Islands, I had interviewed women who had very different “bikini bodies” – each had

suffered thyroid- and other life-threatening cancers.

Unlike the smiling woman in the magazine, all were impoverished – the victims and guinea pigs of a rapacious superpower that is today more dangerous than ever.

I relate this experience as a warning and to interrupt a distraction that has consumed so many of us. The founder of modern propaganda, Edward Bernays, described this phenomenon as “the conscious and intelligent manipulation of the habits and opinions” of democratic societies. He called it an “invisible government.”

How many people are aware that a world war has begun? At present, it is a war of propaganda, of lies and distraction, but this can change instantaneously with the first mistaken order, the first missile.

In 2009, President Obama stood before an adoring crowd in the centre of Prague, in the heart of Europe. He pledged to make “the world free from nuclear weapons.” People cheered, and some cried. A torrent of platitudes flowed from the media. Obama was subsequently awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

It was all fake. He was lying.

The Obama administration has built more nuclear weapons, more nuclear warheads, more nuclear delivery systems, more nuclear factories. Nuclear warhead spending alone rose higher under Obama than under any

American president. The cost over 30 years is more than \$1-trillion.

A mini nuclear bomb is planned. It is known as the B61 Model 12. There has never been anything like it. General James Cartwright, a former vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has said, “Going smaller [makes using this nuclear] weapon more thinkable.”

In the last 18 months, the greatest build-up of military forces since World War Two – led by the United States – is taking place along Russia’s western frontier. Not since Hitler invaded the Soviet Union have foreign troops presented such a demonstrable threat to Russia. Ukraine – once part of the Soviet Union – has become a CIA theme park. Having orchestrated a coup in Kiev, Washington effectively controls a regime that is next door and hostile to Russia: A regime rotten with Nazis – literally. Prominent parliamentary figures in Ukraine are the political descendants of the notorious Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and (Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) fascists. They openly praise Hitler and call for the persecution and expulsion of the Russian speaking minority.

This is seldom news in the West, or it is inverted to suppress the truth.

In Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia – next door to Russia – the US military is deploying combat troops, tanks, heavy weapons. This extreme provocation of the world’s second nuclear power is met with silence in the West.

And what makes the prospect of nuclear war even more dangerous is a parallel campaign against China. Seldom a day passes when China is not elevated to the status of a threat. According to Admiral Harry Harris, the US Pacific commander, China is “building a great wall of sand in the South China Sea.”

What he is referring to is China building airstrips in the Spratly Islands, which are the subject of a dispute with the Philippines – a dispute without priority until Washington pressured and bribed the government in

Manila, and the Pentagon launched a propaganda campaign called “freedom of navigation.”

What does this really mean? It means freedom for American warships to patrol and dominate the coastal waters of China. Try to imagine the American reaction if Chinese warships did the same off the coast of California.

### Distinguished journalists

I made a film called, “The War You Don’t See,” in which I interviewed distinguished journalists in America and Britain: Reporters such as Dan Rather of CBS, Rageh Omar of the BBC, David Rose of the Observer. All said that had journalists and broadcasters done their job and questioned the propaganda that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction; had the lies of George W. Bush and Tony Blair not been amplified and echoed by journalists, the 2003 invasion of Iraq might not have happened, and hundreds of thousands of men, women and children would be alive today.

The propaganda laying the ground for a war against Russia and/or China is no different in principle. To my knowledge, no journalist in the Western mainstream – a Dan Rather equivalent, say – asks why China is building airstrips in the South China Sea.

The answer ought to be glaringly obvious. The United States is encircling China with a network of bases, with ballistic missiles, battle groups, nuclear-armed bombers. This lethal arc extends from Australia to the islands of the Pacific, the Marianas and the Marshalls and Guam, to the Philippines, Thailand, Okinawa, Korea and across Eurasia to Afghanistan and India. America has hung a noose around the neck of China. But this is not news. Silence by media; war by media.

In 2015, the US and Australia staged the biggest single air-sea military exercise in recent history, known as Talisman Sabre. Its aim was to rehearse an air-sea battle plan, blocking sea lanes, such as the Straits of Malacca and the Lombok Straits, that cut off

**Not since Hitler invaded the Soviet Union have foreign troops presented such a demonstrable threat to Russia. Ukraine – once part of the Soviet Union – has become a CIA theme park**

**When the Libyan leader, Colonel Gaddafi, was publicly sodomized with a knife – a murder made possible by American logistics – Hillary Clinton gloated over his death: “We came, we saw, he died”**

China’s access to oil, gas and other vital raw materials from the Middle East and Africa.

## **Grotesque visions**

In the circus known as the American presidential campaign, Donald Trump is being presented as a lunatic, a fascist. He is certainly odious; but he is also a media hate figure. That alone should arouse our skepticism. Trump’s views on migration are grotesque, but no more grotesque than those of Britain’s David Cameron. It is not Trump who is the Great Deporter from the United States, but the Nobel Peace Prize winner, Barack Obama.

According to one prodigious liberal commentator, Trump is “unleashing the dark forces of violence” in the United States. Unleashing them? This is the country where toddlers shoot their mothers and the police wage a murderous war against black Americans. This is the country that has attacked and sought to overthrow more than 50 governments, many of them democracies, and bombed from Asia to the Middle East, causing the deaths and dispossession of millions of people.

No country can equal this systemic record of violence. Most of America’s wars (almost all of them against defenceless countries) have been launched not by Republican presidents but by liberal Democrats: Truman, Kennedy, Johnson, Carter, Clinton, Obama.

In 1947, a series of National Security Council directives described the paramount aim of American foreign policy as a world substantially made over in America’s own image. The ideology was messianic Americanism. We were all Americans. Or else. Heretics would be converted, subverted, bribed, smeared or crushed.

Donald Trump is a symptom of this, but he is also a maverick. He says the invasion of Iraq was a crime; he doesn’t want to go to war with Russia and China. The danger to the rest of us is not Trump, but Hillary Clinton. She is no maverick. She embodies the resilience and violence of a system whose

vaunted exceptionalism is totalitarian with an occasional liberal face.

As presidential election day draws near, Clinton will be hailed as the first female president, regardless of her crimes and lies – just as Barack Obama was lauded as the first black president and liberals swallowed his nonsense about “hope.” And the drool goes on.

Described by the Guardian columnist Owen Jones as “funny, charming, with a coolness that eludes practically every other politician,” Obama the other day sent drones to slaughter 150 people in Somalia. He kills people usually on Tuesdays, according to the New York Times, when he is handed a list of candidates for death by drone. So cool.

In the 2008 presidential campaign, Hillary Clinton threatened to totally obliterate Iran with nuclear weapons. As Secretary of State under Obama, she participated in the overthrow of the democratic government of Honduras. Her contribution to the destruction of Libya in 2011 was almost gleeful. When the Libyan leader, Colonel Gaddafi, was reportedly publicly sodomized with a knife – a murder made possible by American logistics – Clinton gloated over his death: “We came, we saw, he died.”

One of Clinton’s closest allies is Madeleine Albright, the former secretary of state, who has attacked young women for not supporting Hillary. This is the same Madeleine Albright who infamously celebrated on TV the death of half a million Iraqi children as “worth it.”

Among Clinton’s biggest backers are the Israel lobby and the arms companies that fuel the violence in the Middle East. She and her husband have received a fortune from Wall Street. And yet, she is about to be ordained the women’s candidate, to see off the evil Trump, the official demon. Her supporters include distinguished feminists, such as Gloria Steinem in the US and Anne Summers in Australia.

A generation ago, a post-modern cult now known as “identity politics” stopped many

intelligent, liberal-minded people examining the causes and individuals they supported – such as the fakery of Obama and Clinton; such as bogus progressive movements like Syriza in Greece, which betrayed the people of that country and allied with their enemies. Self-absorption, a kind of “me-ism,” became the new zeitgeist in privileged western societies and signaled the demise of great collective movements against war, social injustice, inequality, racism and sexism.

Today, the long sleep may be over. The young are stirring again. Gradually. The thousands in Britain who supported Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader are part of this awakening – as are those who rallied to support Senator Bernie Sanders.

In Britain, Jeremy Corbyn’s closest ally, his shadow treasurer John McDonnell, committed a Labour government to pay off the debts of piratical banks and, in effect, to continue so-called austerity.

In the US, Bernie Sanders has promised to support Clinton if or when she’s nominated. He, too, has voted for America’s use of vio-

lence against countries when he thinks it’s right. He says Obama has done a great job.

In Australia, there is a kind of mortuary politics, in which tedious parliamentary games are played out in the media while refugees and indigenous people are persecuted and inequality grows, along with the danger of war. The government of Malcolm Turnbull has just announced a so-called defence budget of \$195-billion that is a drive to war. There was no debate. Silence.

What has happened to the great tradition of popular direct action, unfettered to parties? Where is the courage, imagination and commitment required to begin the long journey to a better, just and peaceful world? Where are the dissidents in art, film, the theatre, literature? Where are those who will shatter the silence? Or do we wait until the first nuclear missile is fired?

**CT**

*This is an edited version of an address by **John Pilger** at the University of Sydney, entitled **A World War Has Begun**. Pilger’s web site is [www.johnpilger.com](http://www.johnpilger.com)*

**Where is the courage, imagination and commitment required to begin the long journey to a better, just and peaceful world?**



## Journalist, Filmmaker, Author, Activist, Father, Brother, Friend, Troublemaker, News Dissector

Danny Schechter, the News Dissector, one of the finest journalists in the alternative media in the United States, died a year ago, on March 19, 2015.

Now’s the time to take another look at the special 48-page issue of **ColdType**, produced as a tribute to our brilliant colleague and friend. Download your free copy at . . .

<http://coldtype.net/Assets.15/pdfs/DanTribute48page.pdf>

# Cuba deserves an apology, not US business

Barack Obama's challenge to Cuba over its record on human rights is hypocritical, to say the least, writes **Eamonn McCann**

**It was in retaliation for the seizure of US property that the blockade of Cuba was first imposed. It was not a denial of human rights but of property rights that incurred Washington's wrath**

I wonder if President Obama put in a good word for the Lanskys during last month's visit to Cuba. The family wants its hotel back. Says spokesman Gary Rapoport: "It was through my grandfather's hard work that the hotel was built. By rights it should be our property."

The Hotel Riviera epitomized the glamour of an era long gone. Its casino was among the hottest of Havana hotspots, its guest list a roll call of the celebrities of the age – Marlon Brando, Ava Gardner, Marlene Dietrich, Gary Cooper, Errol Flynn, Buster Keaton and Rocky Marciano, as well as political figures such as Winston Churchill. The hotel was run by the Mob. Meyer Lansky was the Mob's accountant. He had a mutually-enriching relationship with dictator Fulgencio Batista, but was to lose everything when Batista bolted for the airport on New Year's Day, 1959, as Castro's guerrillas exulted into the city.

Meyer was himself a celebrity gangster, represented in the movie *Godfather II* as Hyman Roth, bookkeeper and bagman for Vito Corleone. His real-life grandson now recalls: "Innocent people may have been killed now and then, but not like the crimes of today. That is why my grandfather's era of crime is so popular. They were like gentlemen killers and they dressed nice."

It's arguable that Meyer's role in Cuba was no more damaging than that of the op-

erators of mines, sugar plantations or refineries – Coca Cola, Exxon, etc – respectable enterprises that had ridden roughshod over Cuban rights until Castro put a halt to their gallop, and whose compensation claims are now among 7,000 submitted to the US government for negotiation, as an element in the "normalization" process.

It was in retaliation for the seizure of US property that the blockade of Cuba was first imposed. It was not a denial of human rights but of property rights that incurred Washington's wrath.

The strength of the compensation lobby shouldn't be underestimated. The nationalization of US assets has been estimated in the *Inter-American Law Review* as the "largest uncompensated taking of American property by a foreign government in history." Both Republican and Democratic members of Congress have deemed it an issue needing resolution before tentative détente can develop into friendly relations. The Lanskys won't win the \$70-million they claim they are owed, but they'll get something.

## **Historical blindness**

That the overthrow of the alliance of the Batista regime and US freebooter capitalism can still be seen by some as an illegitimate act that must even now be set to rights says a lot about the historical blindness and



**STAGE TALK:** President Barack Obama participates in a question and answer session at an event with CNN's Soledad O'Brien at La Cerveceria in Havana.

Official White House photo by Pete Souza



**TABLE TALK:** US Secretary of State John Kerry chats with US Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and the US Small Business Administration's Maria Contreras-Sweet on the roof of the Iberostar Parque Central Hotel in Havana.

Photo: US State Department

**Raul Castro might have added there is no prisoner on death row in Cuba, in contrast to the droves awaiting death in the privatized prison cells of the US system**

## SYSTEM CHECK

In 2006, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), a leading global environmental organization, found that Cuba was the only country in the world to have achieved sustainable development



**SPORTING LIFR:** President Barack Obama sits with Cuban President Raul Castro at the Estadio Latinoamericano in Havana, during a baseball match between the Cuban national team and the Tampa Bay Rays.

Photo: US State Department

sheer arrogance of successive Washington administrations: The cheek of a small country cocking a snoot at the indispensable nation!

Obama didn't touch down in Havana with an apology in his pocket for the US having first slathered Cuba in sleaze, organized an invasion by far-right desperadoes, made at least five attempts on Fidel Castro's life, imposed a blockade in an effort to impoverish the country into submission, and erected an internment camp on its soil where perceived enemies of the US could be tortured, some to death.

A brief "Sorry about that," might have been an appropriate opener. But no. Obama wanted to challenge Cuba's human rights record instead. Raul Castro got his retaliation in first, with a reminder that the human rights to health care and education are better realized in Cuba than across the straits in Florida. He might have added there is no prisoner on death row in Cuba, in contrast to the droves awaiting death in the privatized prison cells of the US system. Or that, in contrast to the dismaying drift of events in the US, Cuba has one of the most

liberal abortion laws and one of the lowest rates of infant mortality in the world.

He might have remarked that if Cuba were a satrap state in the Middle East rather than an island in the Caribbean, he could chop the heads off as many political opponents as he liked without Obama uttering a syllable of concern.

None of this is to present Castro's Cuba as a sepia-toned paradise. Down through the years, the tendency of many on the left to swamp any criticism of the latest chosen land in a gush of sentimentality – Cuba is by no means the first example – has served no progressive purpose. Hitching hopes of socialist advance to the fate of a faraway country idealized out of all recognition has served as a comforting alternative to the slog of trying to make a revolution in the place where you actually are. But there's a balance of political morality to be made in the meantime, and the weight of morality is on Cuba's side.

While we wait for an updated version of Meyer Lansky to saunter into his nostalgia-themed Havana casino, just one more time: Cuba si! Yanqui no!

**CT**

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#FEESMUSTFALL

# Born-Frees come of age

40 years after student protests helped end apartheid, a new generation of South Africans is beginning to flex its political muscles

Text: **David Niddrie** Photos: **Adrian de Kock**

**Slavish adherence to World Bank and IMF theories has seen South Africa shrink its economy while consolidating its position as the most unequal society in the world**

South Africa's #FeesMustFall student protests have marked the coming of age of the country's Born-Frees – South Africans born after the first democratic, post-apartheid elections in 1994. Their growth into adulthood has not been easy. All of them – black and white – were born as the triumphant African National Congress (ANC) transformed itself (in practice, if not in policy), from a social democratic liberation movement into an economically conservative populist political party – first under the presidency of Nelson Mandela and, with increasing enthusiasm, under Thabo Mbeki.

They grew through their childhood and early teens in a political vacuum as the new, ANC-constructed state evolved into a hierarchical bureaucracy in which individual entitlement supersedes public service. At the same time, slavish adherence to World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) theories has seen South Africa shrink its economy while consolidating its position as the most unequal society in the world.

Two major political themes dominated the Born-Frees' late teens: Julius Malema's ascendancy to the leadership of the ANC



youth league and eventual breakaway to build his Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) into the country's fourth biggest political party (described by the South African Communist Party as "proto-fascist"), and the ANC's election of Jacob Zuma as president, when his major qualification for the position was an ability to block Thabo Mbeki's bid for a third term.

Eventually, those still interested in political ideas found themselves offered, in their university lectures, hegemonic variations on Francis Fukuyama's End of History theme. Their protests – almost 40 years af-



Above and left: Police clash with student protesters outside Parliament in Cape Town. The police opened a gate on the side entrance to Parliament, moments before throwing a stun grenade to disperse the students.

## #FEESMUSTFALL



University of Stellenbosch students from the movement, *Open Stellenbosch*, posted *Luister*, a documentary movie, on social media. The movie is about racist incidents that have taken place at the university.

**The real campus eruptions came with universities' October announcement of a 2016 10 per cent-plus fee hike**

ter the 1976 school protests that triggered a semi-insurrectionary period, which ended with the fall of apartheid – were not the first protests against South Africa's democratically elected government. A steady increase in the pace and intensity of blandly termed "service delivery protests" in poor and working class communities is inevitable in a country whose Gini coefficient is globally unrivalled.

### **Social media**

However, the students' social media savvy and the physical centrality of the major universities ensured massive media attention, fed by, and feeding into, the protests.

The first protests, under the #Rhodes-MustFall hashtag, started at the University of Cape Town, where students dumped faeces on a statue of Cecil John Rhodes, England's supreme imperialist in Africa. Protests over colonial and apartheid-era

names and artefacts spread throughout the main campuses, scoring several successes.

But the real eruption came with universities' October announcement of a 2016 10 per cent-plus fee hike. Led this time by students, #FeesMustFall knocked aside the colonial statue protests, and went instantly national.

While social media provided the means for instant national communication, the most unique characteristic – other than the sheer numbers involved – was the insularity in which protestors thousands of kilometres apart developed common perspectives and tactics.

Local NGO Code4SouthAfrica tracked tweets and other social media links to establish that most of those linked to #FeesMustFall didn't link to anything else. In the political vacuum created by the ANC's post-apartheid lurch to the right, the protesting students were looking to each other for



Students put flowers on a car that was torched during protests by students at the University of Cape Town. Human feces were thrown over a statue of Cecil Rhodes.



Students at Stellenbosch university demanded that classes be given in English as well as in Afrikaans.

inspiration, for examples, and for tactical advice and political direction.

The ANC, EFF and official parliamentary Democratic Alliance opposition hovered on the margins of the intense debates over the #FeesMustFall campaign, each attracting social media audiences way below their membership in campus branches. The students also largely bypassed the formal elected leadership of student representative councils, relying instead on individuals and collectives thrown up in the protests themselves.

Despite the diversity of their backgrounds – from the extremely affluent suburbs of northern Johannesburg, eastern Pretoria and southern Cape Town to the rural village and urban squatter settlement homes of government bursary recipients – the students retained their focus and tactics throughout, sticking to their demand for dropping the fees increases and remaining (with a few photo-

**The students bypassed the formal elected leadership of student representative councils, relying instead on individuals and collectives thrown up in the protests themselves**

## #FEESMUSTFALL



University of the Western Cape students supporting #feesmustfall movement wait for the outcome of a meeting between their student leaders and vice chancellor Tyrone Pretorius.

**Class origin also took a back seat as those arrested included sons and daughters of South Africa's political and business elites**

op exceptions) mainly non-violent, even when their demands expanded to include improved working conditions for non-academic campus staff.

### **Externally-generated violence**

The bulk of the protests stayed on campus – the students were trying to coerce university administrations, not popularize their campaign – and were largely peaceful and disciplined. Violence by students was marginal and, frequently, brought to an end by other students. Violence at Cape Town students' march on Parliament on October 21, and the 80,000-plus student march to the Union Buildings (the presidential office complex) a week later was the exception – and externally generated – although the drama attracted most media attention

In Cape Town and Stellenbosch (ideological birthplace of apartheid) white students, knowing that even black “public

order” police would be reluctant to assault them as aggressively as their black counterparts, repeatedly occupied the front ranks of protests. Class origin also took a back seat as those arrested included sons and daughters of South Africa's political and business elites – the son of Max Price, the University of Cape Town head, was grabbed and thrown into a police truck, alongside the son of the head of one of the country's biggest media groups, Caxton Media, the sons of Frank Chikane, former head of the presidential administration, the son of the country's leading lawyer, Wim Trengrove, and the grandson of the late ANC stalwart, Phyllis Naidoo.

The primary objective of the protests – getting the fee increased dropped – was achieved within days, although the root of the problem remains. “Academic independence” enjoys constitutional protection, but has been extended to include university

administration: And the big six historically “white” universities, boasting renowned alumni with deep pockets, far grander campuses and globally acknowledged research facilities, traditionally charge their students significantly more. So, although the government allocates almost five per cent of its national budget to tertiary education, and almost a fifth of that (10-billion rands) to bursaries covering everything from board and lodging to tuition, the higher fees of the “big six” mean poor bursary students can’t afford the fees, or have to go into debt to stay on campus. The issue has been further complicated by the fact that they also demand up to a third up-front as a registration fee – that is before students qualifying for state bursaries receive their state bursaries or the proof of registration documents they need

to access loans or private bursaries.

Forcing the universities to drop the planned fee increases, and winning massive cuts in registration fees was thus a big boon for students from poor communities.

Although the have protests continued into 2016, securing major improvements in working conditions for non-academic campus staff – many earning below the proposed national minimum wage – it appears that without the unifying dynamic of a looming fee hike, what the protesters were calling “the Movement” will lose its momentum. But the born-free generation has demonstrated that the high hopes that ushered in South Africa’s democracy are not yet entirely ossified by the bureaucratization and institutionalization of South Africa’s democratic project. **CT**

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# Behind Russia's Crimean reunion

Washington marches in propaganda lockstep about Crimea's decision to rejoin Russia two years ago. The reality is different, says ex-CIA analyst **Ray McGovern**

**The United States, seem to have been guilty, too, in promoting the coup d'état that removed the democratically elected president, and essentially disenfranchised millions of ethnic Russian Ukrainians who had voted for President Viktor Yanukovich**

**W**ith high symbolism Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Crimea on March 20 "to check on the construction of the Kerch Strait Bridge that will link the Crimean peninsula and continental Russia."

It is no accident that he chose that day, because it marked the second anniversary of Russia's annexation of Crimea three weeks after the US-sponsored coup in Kiev on February 22, 2014, and just days after a referendum in which Crimean voters approved leaving Ukraine and rejoining Russia by a 96 per cent majority.

The 12-mile bridge is a concrete metaphor, so to speak, for the re-joining of Crimea and Russia. When completed (the target is December 2018), it will be the longest bridge in Russia. But, the Obama administration continues to decry the political reunion between Crimea and Russia, a relationship that dates back to the 8th century. Instead, the West has accused Russia of violating its pledge in the 1994 Budapest agreement – signed by Ukraine, Russia, Great Britain and the US – "to respect the independence and sovereignty and existing borders of Ukraine," in exchange for Ukraine surrendering its Soviet-era nuclear weapons.

Did Moscow violate the Budapest agreement when it annexed Crimea? A fair reading of the text indicates that it did. Of course, there were extenuating circum-

stances, including alarm among Crimeans over what the unconstitutional ouster of Ukraine's president might mean for them, as well as Moscow's not unfounded nightmare of NATO taking over Russia's major, and only warm-water, naval base at Sevastopol in Crimea.

## **US also guilty**

But what is seldom pointed out is that the other parties, including the United States, seem to have been guilty, too, in promoting the coup d'état that removed the democratically elected president, and essentially disenfranchised millions of ethnic Russian Ukrainians who had voted for President Viktor Yanukovich. In such a context, it takes a markedly one-dimensional view to place blame solely on Russia for violating the Budapest agreement.

Did the Western-orchestrated coup in Kiev violate the undertaking "to respect the independence and sovereignty" of Ukraine? How about the pledge in the Budapest agreement "to refrain from economic coercion designed to subordinate to their own interest the exercise by the Ukraine of the rights inherent in its sovereignty." Political and economic interference were rife in the months before the February 2014 coup.

Did Ukrainian President Yanukovich expect to be overthrown if he opted for Moscow's economic offer, and not Eu-



rope's? Hard to tell. But if the putsch came as a total surprise, he sorely underestimated what \$5 billion in "democracy promotion" by Washington can buy.

After Yanukovich turned down the European Community's blandishments, seeing deep disadvantages for Ukraine, American neoconservatives such as National Endowment for Democracy president Carl Gershman, and Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland pulled out all the stops to enable Ukraine to fulfill what Nuland called its "European aspirations."

The revolution will not be televised, or so the saying goes, but the February 22, 2014, putsch in Kiev was YouTube-ized two-and-a-half weeks in advance. Recall Nuland's amateurish, boorish – not to mention irresponsible – use of an open telephone line to plot regime change in Ukraine with fellow neocon, US Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt, during an intercepted conversation posted on YouTube on February 4, 2014.

Nuland tells Pyatt, "Yats is the guy. He's got the economic experience, the governing experience. He's the guy you know. . . . He has warned there is an urgent need for unpopular cutting of subsidies and social payments before Ukraine can improve."

Arseniy Yatsenyuk (aka "Yats") was quickly named prime minister of the coup regime, which was immediately given diplomatic recognition by Washington. Since then, he has made a royal mess of things. Ukraine is an economic basket case, and "Yats" barely survived a parliamentary vote of no confidence, and is widely believed to be on his way out.

Did Moscow's strong reaction to the coup, to the danger of NATO setting up shop next door in Ukraine come as a surprise to Nuland and other advisers? If so, she ought to get new advisers, and quickly. That Russia would not let Crimea become a NATO base should have been a no-brainer.

Nuland may have seen the coup as creating a win-win situation. If Putin acted decisively, it would be all the easier to demonize

him, denounce "Russian aggression," and put a halt to the kind of rapprochement between President Barack Obama and Putin that thwarted neocon plans for shock and awe against Syria in late summer 2013. However, if Putin acquiesced to the Ukrainian coup and accepted the dangers it posed to Russia, eventual NATO membership for Ukraine might become more than a pipe-dream.

Plus, if Putin swallowed the humiliation, think of how politically weakened he would have become inside Russia. As the National Endowment for Democracy's (NED) Carl Gershman made clear, not only did American neocons see Ukraine as "the biggest prize," but also as a stepping stone to ultimately achieve regime change in Moscow, or as he wrote, "Putin may find himself on the losing end not just in the near abroad, but within Russia itself."

**Russian Equities**

In a formal address in the Kremlin on March 18, 2014, the day Crimea was re-incorporated into Russia, Putin went from dead serious to somewhat jocular in discussing the general issue: "We have already heard declarations from Kiev about Ukraine soon joining NATO. What would this have meant for Crimea and Sevastopol in the future? It would have meant that NATO's navy would be right there in this city of Russia's military glory, and this would create not an illusory but a perfectly real threat to the whole of southern Russia.

"We are not opposed to cooperation with NATO ... [but] NATO remains a military alliance, and we are against having a military alliance making itself at home right in our backyard or in our historic territory. I simply cannot imagine that we would travel to Sevastopol to visit NATO sailors. Of course, most of them are wonderful guys, but it would be better to have them come and visit us, be our guests, rather than the other way around."

A little-noticed remark by Putin a month

**Ukraine is an economic basket case, and "Yats" barely survived a parliamentary vote of no confidence**

## INCONVENIENT FACTS

**Given the US mainstream media's propagandistic reporting on the Ukraine crisis, it's small wonder that the American people forgot about (or never heard of) the putsch in Kiev**

later (on April 17, 2014) was unusually blunt in focusing on one of the main reasons behind Moscow's strong reaction – namely, Russia's need to thwart Washington's plan to incorporate Ukraine and Crimea into the US anti-ballistic missile deployment encircling Russia. Putin was quite direct: “This issue is no less, and probably even more important, than NATO's eastward expansion. Incidentally, our decision on Crimea was partially prompted by this.”

This is a serious bone of contention, with far-reaching implications. If the Russian military becomes convinced that the Pentagon thinks it has the capability to carry out a strategic strike without fear of significant retaliation, the strategic tripwire for a nuclear exchange will regress more than four decades to the extremely dangerous procedure of “launch on warning,” allowing mere minutes to “use 'em, or lose 'em.”

Russia has been repeatedly rebuffed when it has suggested bilateral talks on this key issue. Four years ago, for example, at the March 2012 summit in Seoul, Russia's then-President Dmitry Medvedev asked Obama when the US would be prepared to address Russian concerns over European missile defence. In remarks picked up by camera crews, Obama asked for some space until after the US election. Obama can be heard saying, “This is my last election. After my election, I have more flexibility.” Putin claims to have seen no flexibility on this strategic question.

### **What Coup?**

The Obama administration and its stenographers in the mainstream US media would like the relevant Ukrainian history to start on February 23, 2014, with “Yats” and his coup cronies deemed the legitimate authorities. There was a need to air-brush what George Friedman, president of the think-tank, Strategic Forecasting, Inc. (Stratfor), publicly called “the most blatant coup in history” – the one plotted by Nuland and Pyatt in early February, 2014,

and carried out on February 22.

As for Russia's alleged designs on Crimea, one searches in vain for evidence that, before the coup, the Kremlin had given much thought to the vulnerability of the peninsula and a possible need to annex it. According to the public record, Putin first focused on Crimea at a strategy meeting the day after the coup.

Yet, given the US mainstream media's propagandistic reporting on the Ukraine crisis, it's small wonder that the American people forgot about (or never heard of) the putsch in Kiev. The word “coup” was essentially banished from the US media's lexicon regarding Ukraine. The New York Times went so far as to publish what it deemed an investigative article in early 2015 announcing that there was no coup in Ukraine, just President Yanukovich mysteriously disappearing off to Russia. In reaching its no-coup conclusion, the Times ignored any evidence that there was a coup, including the Nuland-Pyatt phone call. In regards to Ukraine, “coup” became just another unutterable four-letter word.

Last year, when Sen. John McCain continued the “no coup” fiction, I placed the following letter in the Washington Post on July 1, 2015:

“In his June 28 Sunday Opinion essay, ‘The Ukraine cease-fire fiction,’ Sen. John McCain was wrong to write that Russian President Vladimir Putin annexed Crimea without provocation. What about the coup in Kiev on February 22, 2014, that replaced President Viktor Yanukovich with pro-Western leaders favoring membership in NATO? Was that not provocation enough?

“This glaring omission is common in the Post. The March 10 World Digest item ‘Putin had early plan to annex Crimea,’ described a ‘secret meeting’ Mr. Putin held on February 23, 2014, during which ‘Russia decided it would take the Crimean Peninsula.’ No mention was made of the coup the previous day.”

And so it goes. More recently, in Jeffrey Goldberg's lengthy magnum opus in the At-

lantic magazine on Obama’s foreign policy, there were two mentions of how Russia “invaded” Crimea, two allusions to Russia’s “invasion” of Ukraine, but not a word about the coup in Kiev.

**Invincible Ignorance**

In Catholic theology, the theory that some people can be “invincibly ignorant” can lessen or even erase their guilt. Many Americans are so malnourished on accurate news that they would seem to qualify for this dispensation.

The following, unnerving example brings this to mind: A meeting of progressives that I attended last year was keynoted by a professor from a local Washington university. Discussing what she called the Russian invasion of Crimea, the professor bragged about her nine-year-old son for creating a large poster in Sunday School saying, “Mr. Putin, what about the commandment “Thou Shall Not Kill?”” The audience nodded approvingly.

This picnic, thought I, needed a skunk. So I asked the professor what her little boy was alluding to. My question was met by a condescending smirk of disbelief: “Crimea, of course.” I asked how many people had been killed in Crimea. “Oh, hundreds, probably thousands,” was her answer. I told her that there were, in fact, no reports of anyone having been killed.

I continued, explaining that, with respect to Russia’s “invasion,” what you don’t see in the mainstream media is that, a treaty between Ukraine and Russia from the late 1990s allowed Russia to station up to 25,000 Russian troops on the Crimean peninsula. There were 16,000 there when a US-led coup ousted the democratically elected government in Kiev on February 22, 2014. (I had grabbed the attention of the audience, but stares of incredulity persisted.)

In contrast to Crimea’s bloodless political secession from Ukraine, the Ukrainian government’s “anti-terror operation” against ethnic Russians in the east who resisted the coup authorities in Kiev has killed an esti-

mated 10,000 people, many of them civilians. But, in the mainstream US media, this carnage is typically blamed on Putin, not on the Ukrainian military, which sent to the front neo-Nazi and other right-wing militias (such as the Azov battalion) contemptuous of ethnic Russians.

A few weeks before the professor’s remarks, after a speaking engagement in Moscow, I had a chance to do a little souvenir shopping on the city’s Arbat. The behavior of the sales people brought me up short. It was decades since I had served as a CIA officer in the Soviet Union; the shopkeepers then were usually taciturn, allergic to discussing politics, and not at all given to bragging about their leaders. This time it was different. The salespeople wanted to know what I thought of President Putin. They were eager to thrust two coffee cups into the shopping bag that I had filled with small gifts for our grandchildren. On one was emblazoned the Russian words for “polite people” under an image of two men with insignia-less green uniforms – depicting the troops that surrounded and eventually took over Ukrainian installations and government buildings in Crimea without a shot being fired. The other cup bore a photo of Putin over the Russian words for “the most polite of people.”

The short conversation that ensued made it immediately clear that Russian salespeople in Moscow – unlike many “sophisticated” Americans – were well aware that the troubles in Ukraine and Crimea began in Kiev on February 22, 2014, with “the most blatant coup in history.” And, not least, they were proud of the way Putin used the “polite green men” to ensure that Crimea was not lost to NATO.

**CT**

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**Ray McGovern** works for *Tell the Word*, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. During his 27-year career as a CIA analyst he headed the Soviet Foreign Policy Branch. In retirement, he helped create *Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS)*

**Russian salespeople in Moscow – unlike many “sophisticated” Americans – were well aware that the troubles in Ukraine and Crimea began in Kiev on February 22, 2014, with “the most blatant coup in history”**

# Truck-stop woman meets the Bull Rider

Buck's been on a two-day bender. Now he has to go home to face his woman. **Dell Franklin** is the man behind the wheel

**He staggers and limps toward me, wiping his nose with the sleeve of a rumpled, booze-stained, too-large western shirt. He halts in front of me, trying to focus sad eyes that, even in the dingy bar, glow with rivulets of pink neon**

**M**y first day and first fare as a cabby was at the Gaslight, the seediest dive in this mostly white, tranquil college town.

At nine in the morning, the bar – situated on the way to the airport, so as not to contaminate the trendy downtown – is busy. A vast energy-sucking pall of smoke hangs over the room, and mournful country and western music wafts from the juke. All the heads along the bar and in the pool room swivel towards me, eyes squinting, as I enter, conspicuous in my polyester uniform.

“Somebody named Buck call a cab?” I ask in a voice that is polite, but loud enough to be heard over the juke.

A middle-aged woman is smoking behind the bar. “He’s in the head,” she says in a monotone. I fold my arms, the heads turn away. A pool shooter in overalls asks, “You the new cabby?” When I nod, he asks, “How long you been hackin’?”

“This is my first day.”

“No shit? You like it?”

“I don’t know yet. This is my first fare.”

“It’s a shit job. I done it in Redding a couple of years back. You’ll hate it. People are assholes. Good luck anyway, Bub, you’ll need it.”

A chorus of derisive giggles crackles

along the bar. Then a man, around 40, mid-sized, bow-legged, with a walrus moustache and flip-flops, and wearing a cowboy hat, lurches out of the head and through the pool room. He staggers and limps toward me, wiping his nose with the sleeve of a rumpled, booze-stained, too-large western shirt. He halts in front of me, trying to focus sad eyes that, even in the dingy bar, glow with rivulets of pink neon.

“Where’s Woody?” he asks.

“I don’t know about any Woody,” I tell him.

“Woody always picks me up. I asked for Woody.”

The bartender says loudly, “They fired Woody last week. This is the new guy.”

“New guy don’t look like much,” says a smoking reptile

sitting alone at the bar. “He’ll never make it.”

“I give him a month,” says the guy beside her. Buck says, “What’s your name, new guy?”

“Emerson Boozer,” I reply.

“Come on, New Guy,” he says, nodding toward the door. As I turn, he places a hand on my shoulder to steady himself. “I gotta get home, sooner or later. This ain’t gonna be easy, Pard.”

Outside, I help him into the cab. In the morning sunlight he looks really beat, and



reeks of smoke, sweat and booze. The corners of his mouth are crusted with white saliva, and his nose runs like a leaky tap, moistening his moustache, which could win awards.

“First of all,” he says in a hoarse voice, “You gotta get me to a liquor store.”

“Buck,” I say, “We’re sitting in the parking lot of a liquor store.”

“Goddammit, we are.” He hands me some bills. “Can you get me a 12-pack of Bud half-quarts?” he asks.

“Sure.” I buy the booze, and place it on his lap as he sits back, cowboy hat pulled low over his eyes. He lifts the hat and points ahead.

“Go to the flower shop. You know where the flower shop is, Pard?”

“No, this is my first day. You’re my first ride. I don’t know where anything is yet.”

“Straight ahead, couple blocks. Shit, I’m in big goddam trouble.”

“What’s wrong?” I ask, turning onto the main street.

“Ole lady kicked me out two nights ago, I think. You know what day it is?”

“Friday.”

“Yeah, I been on a good one for two days. I got to go back and take my medicine sooner or later. I’d sooner ride a goddam bull like I used to than face that woman. She was a hard woman when I met and married her, but since then it’s been like they opened her up and took out whatever was half-way sweet in her and put in a rattlesnake. Maybe she’s cooled down enough so that she won’t shoot me. I went out in my undies. Borrowed these pants and shirt from a pal. I done drunk myself sober in the meantime. I feel awful.”

I spot a florist shop and pull in. Buck hands me a mash of bills and asks me to buy a large bouquet of long-stemmed red roses. I do as he asks, placing the roses on top of the 12-pack in his lap. He’s already guzzling.

“The roses, they’ll help,” he says, sniffing at them. “They always do.” He taps the

beer can against the remnants of the 12-pack. “This always helps, too, but it ain’t a done deal. Now, there’s a video store up the road, I know the owner; you got to tell him Buck wants his usual movies, and he’ll know what to do. Take me to that store. You know where it is?”

“No, Buck, I don’t know where anything is.”

He points ahead, slugging down more suds, in a hurry to drink himself out of his sobriety. I start out. He glances at me. “You look like you could use a snort. Want a beer?”

I shake my head. “Not a hair of the dog man,” I tell him.

He nods. “Sometimes a hair-of-the-dog ends up another twenny-four hours – ‘specially if yah got marchin’ powder. I’d offer yah some of that, but I got to save a few lines for the witch, God save me.”

He tips the half-quart and drains it, sighs with relief, if not pleasure. His moustache is foamed up, beer dripping down his chin onto his neck and shirt. He belches and points ahead.

“Slow down, Pard, here’s the store.” His ruined eyes gleam, his mouth crooking up a grimacing smile as he hands me more crumpled bills. He’s got another can open as I go into the store and tell the grouch behind the counter that I’m Buck’s cabby. He knows what I’m after. We are talking XXX movies.

Mission accomplished, I place the two videos he has given me along with Buck’s roses and beers and drive off. Buck leans back, very tired, then taps the videos.

“These oughta do the trick. If they don’t, nothin’ will, and you’ll read about it in the police report tomorrow morning.”

He points ahead. “Take me home – Oh hell, that’s right, you ain’t Woody.” He has me turn here and there, and a half-mile later we pull up to a two-story apartment building down the road from a mini-mall and small market.

Just as we come to a stop, a woman steps

**He’s got another can open as I go into the store and tell the grouch behind the counter that I’m Buck’s cabby. He knows what I’m after. We are talking XXX movies**

## ON THE ROAD

He sighs massively, hands me a heap of bills and tells me to keep the change – a \$6-plus tip

out of one of the bottom apartments in a bathrobe. She slouches in the doorway, arms across her chest, and aims one of the most malignant stares I've ever witnessed. In the pantheon of mean, tough, vile-looking truck-stop women I've seen over the years as a bartender, she tops the list.

"Good Christ," I mutter as she continues to glare. "How the hell'd you get tangled up with her, man?"

He's wilting at the sight of her. "Drunk. Horny. I've screwed a few, and she'll screw your ass off. Only thing kept us together."

He sighs massively, hands me a heap of bills and tells me to keep the change – a \$6-plus tip. I get out of the cab and help him out, stack him up with his purchases.

He seems more hangdog than ever as

he gazes at his woman. "Wish me luck, Pard."

"Good luck, Buck."

He weaves toward the woman who is still at the door in the same sullen posture. As he draws closer, her cold dark eyes fix on the goodies in his arms. When he lurches up to her and halts, she takes one of the videos, scans it briefly, nods, pats Buck on the ass as he hurries past her, and then levels me with one last murderous scowl before following him in and closing the door behind her.

**CT**

*Dell Franklin is a long-time journalist and founder of the Rogue Voice literary magazine. He blogs at [www.dellfranklin.com](http://www.dellfranklin.com)*

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# Republicans try to stop the revolution of the rubes

A poem by **Philip Kraske**

I have to admit it's been really fun,  
Republicans frantic to undo what they've done,  
To put the toothpaste back into the tubes,  
And thus head off the Revolution of Rubes.

Since Reagan they've pulled on the heartstrings of greed,  
Of wallets, low taxes, all the better to feed  
The craving for guzzlers, the show of good life,  
Government being but a WalMart midwife.

Down and down the public head dumbed,  
Till now a point that it's totally numbed  
To the needs of compatriots or Latin wannabe,  
Who heal their hunger with crime gonnabe.

But finally Repubs have seen their creation,  
Go to the polls and raise a tarnation,  
And elect the ultimate in anti-gov grit,  
Whose anti-gov talk for once is no skit.

Mitt and John M. have condemned in riposte,  
Though I have to wonder what troubles them most:  
The fact that Donald owes the party but zilch,  
Or that foreign policy from them he will filch.

Neocons, y'see, like f.p. with a bang,  
Be it from drones or the army's big fang.  
But Don, who knows a bad deal when it squawks,  
Reads the wall's writing: "it's the smart guy who walks."

And walk he will as the going gets toughy  
From Iraq and Af-Pak and others as scruffy.  
For Don sees the world as profit evolved,  
And won't be troubled by calls for "resolve."

But Repubs, the party, shouldn't take all the blame.  
Saturday N. L. made Don's race-hate a game.  
Fox News called up Trump to comment on matters,  
Classic Fox trites known as "thinking-man spatters."

To give him his due, Trump played his cards smart,  
Using news moguls and opportunity's art.  
Nobody thought he'd be taken for real,  
But now that he is, the Republicans squeal.

Cooler t'would be to run a Pink Revolution,  
Orange or vermilion as per your solution.  
But it seems our rev will be of the Rubes,  
Such is America: dumbed down the tubes.

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*Philip Kraske lives in Madrid, Spain, where he teaches English on a freelance basis and does some translation.  
His four novels, of varied plots but centring on American politics and society, began to appear in 2009.  
His website is <http://philipkraske.com>*

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