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ColdType

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Waging War on Wall Street



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EDITOR'S NOTE

A few years back a book was published in Germany pointing out that that nation's people living during World War II shared collective responsibility for the Nazi holocaust even though they had didn't take part in the savagery, and claimed to have no knowledge of it. Just being there was enough for guilt.

Perhaps the same sentiments should be expressed against the great North American silence on the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Bagram Air Force Base and other 'black' sites around the world, as noted in the first stories in this issue of ColdType.

The Occupy Wall Street movement has proved that there is at last a spirit of resistance against injustice, despite the rantings of various media. Let's hope this feeling is extended further to include victims of Western repression.

Tony Sutton, Editor

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Ten years is too long

Brian Terrell says it's time to stand against illegal detentions and torture, and close the prisons at Bagram Air Base and Guantanamo Bay

Despite ten years of occupation and untold millions of dollars spent on rebuilding Afghanistan's broken judicial and criminal justice system, the Afghan courts are "still too weak," the *Washington Post* reported on August 12, for the United States to relinquish its control over the Parwan Detention Center on Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan. On September 21, the same paper reported that the US military is seeking contractors to significantly increase the capacity of the prison there.

The number of Afghans detained at Bagram has tripled over the past three years to more than 2,600 and the new construction will raise the capacity to 5,500 prisoners. Capt. Kevin Aandahl, a spokesman for the US task force that oversees detention operations in Afghanistan, told the *Post* that the expansion was necessary to "accommodate an increase in the number of suspected insurgents being detained as a result of intelligence-based counter-terrorism operations, which we conduct with our Afghan partners."

Many of those held at Bagram have been there since the US occupied the former Soviet air base in 2001, and some two thirds of prisoners there have not been charged with or convicted of any crime. Corruption is rampant in Afghan courts and among police there as it is in many other places but

the major fear of the United States is not that the Afghan courts will not function according to their constitution and accepted norms of law, but that they will. In order for Afghanistan to take sovereignty over its own judiciary and prison system, the Afghans must first fix the "cracks of an undeveloped legal system" and adopt essential "reforms," including adoption of the US practice of detaining suspected insurgents indefinitely without trial.

Included among the "weaknesses" of Afghan law that the United States needs to see addressed is a guarantee that a prisoner in Afghanistan must be formally charged with a crime within three days or be released. To be convicted of a crime, Afghan law requires that evidence against a defendant be presented in open court and that hearsay evidence and evidence gained by torture be excluded. (How primitive is that!) Such protections exist, on paper at least, in most countries, and the US Constitution guarantees these rights as well. A more mature and robust legal system such as our own, however, US officials seem to suggest, can be counted on to set aside such protections to "deal with the demands of wartime criminal justice."

Just as with the detainees held for these past ten years at the US prison at Guantanamo in Cuba, few of those held at Bagram would be convicted in a fair trial. Most have

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been captured on the strength of tips by informers and other hearsay and with no forensic evidence. “Right now,” a senior US official is quoted in a January 30, 2011 article published in the *Guardian*, “if we turned them over to the Afghans tomorrow, they’d be in a position, under their laws and their constitution, that they may be released.”

While the number of prisoners held at Guantanamo is slowly decreasing, the number of those held at Bagram is skyrocketing, due to increased “intelligence-based counter- terrorism operations,” a euphemism for what are more accurately called night raids. The Open Society Foundations and The Liaison Office in Kabul released a report on September 19, “The Cost of Kill/Capture: Impact of the Night Raid Surge on Afghan Civilians.” In their Executive Summary, the report’s authors state, “Nighttime kill and capture operations (“night raids”) by international military have been one of the most controversial tactics in Afghanistan. They are as valued by the international military as they are reviled by Afghan communities. Night raids have been associated with the death, injury, and detention of civilians, and have sparked enormous backlash among Afghan communities. The Afghan government and the Afghan public have repeatedly called for an end to night raids.”

This report cites a sharp escalation in raids that has “taken the battlefield more directly into Afghan homes sparking tremendous backlash among the Afghan population.” While civilians not directly participating in hostilities are supposed to be protected from such attacks by the Geneva Conventions, these raids are often “heavily (if not primarily) motivated by intelligence gathering.” One US military officer responsible for authorizing night raids explained, “If you can’t get the guy you want, you get the guy who knows him.” Often in night raids, all male adolescent and adult members of a household or even of a whole village are bound and held, and techniques such as masked informants giving thumbs

up or down, noting who has a beard or who lacks the calloused hands of a farmer, are used to decide who is taken to a US base for further questioning. Such are the “intelligence-based counter-terrorism operations” that are taxing the capacity of the US prison at Bagram.

After gutting its own constitution in the name of a “war on terror,” the United States is now adding to the injury and insult of a brutal occupation by demanding of the Afghan government that it pledge to be as lawless as the US, to continue our oppression of its people in our absence before we will give them sovereignty over their own judicial system.

Ten years ago the United States attacked and occupied Afghanistan and began a system of illegal and irrational detention at Bagram that on January 11, 2002, was exported to Guantanamo. Ten years is far too long. Our first concern needs be for those harmed by our nation’s policies, those who suffer torture and deprivation of liberty in places like Bagram and Guantanamo and their families and communities. We need be concerned as well for what happens to us, to our souls, to our schools, churches, to our nation, if we stand silent in the face of such crimes done in our name. It is time to rise up anew to say no to torture and call for the closure of Bagram and Guantanamo, accountability for the torturers, and justice for the victims of US abuse.

Please consider joining human rights organizations, legal collectives, grassroots groups, and people of conscience in Washington on January 11, 2012 for a protest against US detention policies, rallying to form a human chain from the White House to Congress and to demand real change – by far the biggest such demonstration since the “War on Terror” began. **CT**

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Brian Terrell is a co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence. For more information on the National Day of Action Against Guantanamo, see <http://witness torture.org>

The top secret torture drawings

Abu Zubaydah’s pictures would tell a grim story of waterboarding and other murky deeds – if only we were allowed to see them, writes **Jason Leopold**

In 2002, not long after he was subjected to so-called “enhanced interrogation techniques” by Bruce Jessen and James Mitchell, psychologists under contract to the CIA, high-value detainee Abu Zubaydah made about ten drawings depicting the torture he endured while in custody of the agency.

One of the drawings Zubaydah had sketched captured in incredible detail the waterboarding sessions he underwent. Another showed him being chained by his wrists to the ceiling of a CIA black site prison where he was held, while another showed him strapped to a chair and being doused with water as part of a sleep deprivation program, according to two counterterrorism officials who have seen Zubaydah’s drawings.

Zubaydah drew the pictures of the torture techniques he was subjected to on a sheet of paper measuring about 8 x 11 inches and on pieces of paper about the size of an index card. In some instances, Zubaydah drew several of the torture techniques on a single piece of paper.

Zubaydah’s “artwork is very detailed right down to the straps that were used when he was on the waterboard and almost looks like a photograph,” said one of the counterterrorism officials, who requested anonymity in order to discuss classified material.

Brent Mickum, Zubaydah’s attorney, previously told the web site *Truthout* that in the

absence of the 92 interrogation videotapes, which the agency destroyed, the drawings Zubaydah made contain the best description of the torture techniques used against him while he was being held at the agency’s black site prison facilities.

“These are a good group of drawings and he is a pretty good artist,” Mickum told *Truthout* last year. Mickum said he is prohibited from discussing the contents of Zubaydah’s drawings because they remain classified. However, he said, “the depictions would be of interest” and agreed that Zubaydah “can draw and with great detail.”

Additionally, Zubaydah wrote poetry, short stories, and articles while in CIA custody. The content of his writing, however, is not known.

But the CIA refuses to release any of his drawings or writings and won’t even acknowledge that those materials exist. If Zubaydah’s drawings and writings do exist, the CIA said, it would be part of the agency’s “operational files,” which means “records and files detailing the actual conduct of [CIA’s] intelligence activities.”

The CIA, which maintains the “enhanced interrogation techniques” interrogators used on Zubaydah were “safe” and “legal,” made that disclosure in two separate responses to requests *Truthout* filed with the agency seeking a Mandatory Declassification Review (MDR) of Zubaydah’s drawings and writings.

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“it is deeply troubling that the government continues to censor the best evidence of detainee abuse”
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An MDR is a procedure under a section of an executive order signed by President Obama (which replaced a similar executive order signed by former President Bush) that allows the public to seek the declassification review of specific classified material.

“We have conducted a thorough review of your request and have determined that responsive records, should they exist, would be contained in operational files,” states a September 21 letter Susan Viscuso, the CIA’s information and privacy coordinator, sent to *Truthout* in response to an MDR request related to Zubaydah’s drawings.

In response to *Truthout*’s MDR request related to Zubaydah’s writings, Viscuso said in a letter dated September 28 that those materials, “should they exist,” would be “contained in properly designated CIA operational files” and are also exempt from FOIA searches, reviews, and “disclosure requirements.”

A section of “the CIA Information Act, as amended,” Viscuso said, “exempts operational files from the search, review, publication, and disclosure requirements of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).”

The revised regulations still says “declassification review requests will not be accepted... for any document or material containing information contained within an operational file...”

Alex Abdo, a staff attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union’s (ACLU) National Security Project, said, “it is deeply troubling that the government continues to censor the best evidence of detainee abuse.”

The government “has destroyed 92 videotapes of CIA interrogations, suppressed 2,000 photographs of abuse throughout Afghanistan and Iraq, and even classified the detainees’ own accounts of their mistreatment at proceedings in Guantanamo,” Abdo said.

“This selective suppression of evidence has allowed the government to perpetuate the myth that the abuse of detainees was aberrational, when it was, in fact, the result of policy decisions made at the highest levels

of our government. And it allows advocates of torture and mistreatment to obscure the truly horrific nature of the mistreatment authorized by the Bush administration.”

The ACLU’s FOIA lawsuits against the Bush and Obama administrations related to the treatment of detainees at Guantanamo Bay and in Iraq and Afghanistan prisons has resulted in the release more than 100,000 pages of secret government documents.

Recently, the CIA revised its MDR regulations “to more clearly reflect the current CIA organizational structure and policies and practices, and to eliminate ambiguous, redundant and obsolete regulatory provisions.”

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Judge Silences Zubaydah

However, it’s not just Zubaydah’s drawings that the government wants to keep secret. In a four-page order issued earlier this year, US District Court Judge Richard Roberts, who presides over Zubaydah’s habeas corpus case, issued an order that said that any statements Zubaydah has made to his attorneys describing the torture he endured must remain classified and cannot be revealed publicly in court filings. Zubaydah has given his attorneys a signed declaration totaling about 15 pages detailing the torture he was subjected to during his imprisonment at CIA-run prisons.

Roberts’ order was issued in March, in response to a motion Zubaydah’s legal team filed nearly two years earlier that accused the government of “improper classification” of documents that included statements Zubaydah made describing “the interrogation techniques inflicted upon him while in CIA custody ... other personal knowledge of his experience within the CIA Torture and Rendition Program and ... statements made by [Zubaydah’s] counsel based upon information that is found within the public domain.”

Roberts said Zubaydah’s legal team, in seeking to have Zubaydah’s statements re-

lated to his treatment declassified, was essentially trying to bring “a FOIA challenge in the midst of a habeas petition.”

“... The government must provide petitioner’s counsel, not the public at large, with classified information unless the government moves for an exception to disclosure,” Roberts wrote.

In 2007, during an interview with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Zubaydah described in detail how CIA interrogators tortured him, which included placing him in a “confinement box” and repeatedly slamming his head against a wall. The interview with the ICRC was part of a confidential report on the treatment of 14 high-value detainees in custody of the agency. Journalist Mark Danner obtained the ICRC report and published a lengthy story in the *New York Review of Books* detailing the detainees’ statements about their torture.

Still, Roberts’ order means that anything Zubaydah says or writes or has said or written that has not been officially approved for disclosure by the government is classified and that applies to his interview with the ICRC.

Mickum said Roberts’ order and the secrecy surrounding Zubaydah’s drawings deprives his client of a “voice” and allows former Bush officials, including former Vice President Dick Cheney, to control the narrative about Zubaydah’s treatment and the efficacy of his torture.

“One of the great frustrations that we as Zubaydah’s defense counsel have faced is the inability to tell his story,” Mickum said in an interview. “That inability is brought about by two things: one, the government’s misuse and improper use of the classification system to essentially muzzle our client and his attorneys to prevent telling his side of the story. And the other is the unwillingness of the district court to make decisions on motions that have been fully briefed, in some cases, for almost three years. These include motions to declassify his diaries. In the final analysis, nothing that my client says, draws,

or writes is classified. The government is using this as a ruse because they are embarrassed and don’t want this information to be revealed.”

Destroyed videos

Meanwhile, former CIA general counsel John Rizzo confirmed long held suspicions that some of the interrogation videotapes the agency destroyed in 2005 showed Zubaydah being subjected to waterboarding, an admission that fuels speculation the tapes were destroyed to cover up illegal acts, not because the tapes were no longer of any intelligence value, as current and former agency officials have claimed.

“We had a representative in my office early on to review all of the tapes, and he came back, did a report,” Rizzo said during an interview with the PBS news program Frontline. “I also spoke to him in some depth about it, and he made it clear that there were portions of the tapes that clearly showed Zubaydah being waterboarded.”

John Durham, a federal prosecutor from Connecticut who was appointed special counsel by former Attorney General Michael Mukasey to investigate the tape purge, concluded his probe last year without bringing any charges against former CIA officials involved in the destruction. Durham had obtained Zubaydah’s drawings from the government during the course of his investigation, but it’s unclear if Durham used it to assist his probe.

Last year, as *Truthout* first reported, the government, in a federal court filing in Zubaydah’s habeas case, backed off of every major claim the Bush administration had made about him after he was captured in Pakistan in March 2002, stating that their “understanding of [Zubaydah’s] role in terrorist activities has ... evolved with further investigation.”

CT

Json Leopold, the author of News Junkie, is a senior editor at Truthout.org

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Banned by Canada

Former Guantanamo detainee **Moazzam Begg** tells how he flew to North America, but didn't get any further than immigration control

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Despite having had a book published there, I've never been to the US – although America has been to me
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Last month I became the first ever former Guantánamo prisoner to have stepped on North American soil as a free man.

Since my return from Guantánamo in 2005, I have travelled the world extensively and been welcomed by ordinary people, as well as world leaders, to talk about the effects of detention without trial and the uncontrolled abuse of power exercised during the US-led “war on terror”.

And I've had meetings with some of the most powerful political figures in Europe, including Britain, and have delivered speeches in front of presidents and prime ministers. These countries include France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Sweden, Norway, Spain, Slovakia, Poland, South Africa, Kenya, Malaysia, Iran, Pakistan, UAE, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Sudan – and Libya, where I met with some of that country's new leaders, who had themselves been victims of US- and British-instigated rendition. I have not been hindered when entering any of these countries.

What I hadn't done, however, is to take my message to North America, where, undoubtedly, I believe it matters most. Despite having had a book published there, I've never been to the US – although America has been to me. Notwithstanding numerous videolink lectures I've given to American colleges and institutions, I was

not prepared to risk a visit to the US. And I'm certain the feeling is mutual, at least on a governmental level.

Canada, on the other hand, was a different matter – or so I thought.

I took an Air France flight from Paris to Montreal. My plan had been to go there to meet with former rendition victims Maher Arar and Abdullah Almalki – both of whom have been subjects of official inquiries of the Canadian government's role in their rendition and torture in Syria. A

Iso, I had intended to meet with the family and legal teams of Omar Khadr, the only Canadian citizen in Guantánamo – whom I first saw in US custody in Bagram as a 15-year-old in 2002, when he was brought in suffering horrific wounds to his body and face, and whose testimony obtained by torture was used to falsely identify Arar as a member of al-Qaida.

Khadr is also the subject of award-winning film, *You Don't Like the Truth*, made by Montreal filmmakers, which I have been helping to promote and whose screening I was due to attend a couple of months ago in Canada, in addition to a conference on, ironically, Islamophobia.

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Couldn't board flight

However, back then, I was told by Air Canada staff that I could not board the London

to Toronto flight because I was on a US no-fly list. I told them I was not going to the US, but the response I got was that, in the unlikely event of the flight being re-routed into US territory or airspace, they were not prepared to take the risk.

I had some inhibitions about attempting to return to Canada, then, which I communicated to some friends over there; but I couldn't know what would happen until I tried. So, I rescheduled my trip with another carrier to arrive slightly further north of US territory, and sure enough, I was allowed to board unhindered all the way to Montreal. Clearly, I wasn't on a Canadian no-fly list.

Then, upon landing in Montreal, just when I'd allowed myself to relax, an announcement was made for everyone to remain seated. Three uniformed police officers boarded the aircraft and headed straight for me. At that point, I knew, in some corners of the world, I will always be the Guantánamo prisoner, the terrorism suspect, who is unwelcome no matter what he does.

Escorted by armed men

I was taken off the aircraft in full view of all the passengers and escorted by these armed men to immigration, in order to be told that I was being refused entry to Canada because I'm "a terrorist". The reasons stated were that based on "open source" information that I "was detained by the United States from 2002 until 2005 in Guantánamo", and that I signed a confession during that time that I was member of al-Qaida and the Taliban, even if it had been under duress.

I argued that even the Canadian government recognised officially that the US practised torture and that the implications of this decision mean that Canada, a signatory of the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, is acting on information that is obtained by torture and

abusive treatment and, crucially, which is devoid of the rule of law.

While they recognised that I said the statement may have been given under duress and that after being interrogated by the world's leading law enforcement and intelligence agencies, I have not only never been charged or tried for any crime but have rather been the recipient of compensation from the British government for what happened and praise from US government officials for my work since my release, their decision had already been made.

I could either stay in a detention centre and challenge the decision or return home. I opted for the latter, as I've had my fair share of being detained without charge or trial.

During my short sojourn in Canada, I was also visited by a member of the Canadian intelligence services, CSIS. I tried explaining to both him and the border police that denying me entry would look bad for Canada. In the great scheme of things, I suppose it doesn't matter too much. Omar Khadr is a Canadian national and he hasn't even made it to the airport.

I intend taking this issue up through the legal process, as that is where I believe this battle has to be fought; but I may have a battle on my hands. Nelson Mandela, who was convicted for terrorism by the apartheid regime in South Africa, remained on the US no-fly list until 2008, which was more than a decade after he'd served five years as president of South Africa; and Maher Arar, who received compensation and official apology from his government for complicity in his torture, is still on the list.

Yes, I was the first former Guantánamo prisoner to step onto North American soil as a free man – be free to remain in a detention centre or to go back to where I came from.

CT

Moazzam Begg, a former Guantánamo detainee, is a spokesman for Cageprisoners – www.cageprisoners.org

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I was taken off the aircraft in full view of all the passengers and escorted by these armed men to immigration, in order to be told that I was being refused entry to Canada because I'm "a terrorist"

America's own concentration camp

Guantanamo puts America on the same level as Nazi Germany and apartheid South Africa, say **Marti Kiken** and **Luke Lawson**

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What kind of mentality did it take for Cheney, George Bush, Rumsfeld, Rice, Ashcroft, and others to sit down and decide to construct a torture chamber out of a former military base?
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At a time when the US pretends to be a beacon of freedom and liberty to the world, one would expect that Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp – a symbol of blatant repression -- would not exist. It logically would be seen as an anathema the US would want to keep hidden. Instead, the US flaunts it like a teenager showing off his muscles.

Why did the US leadership decide to build it in Cuba in the first place? What kind of mentality did it take for Cheney, George Bush, Rumsfeld, Rice, Ashcroft, and others to sit down and decide to construct a torture chamber out of a former military base?

If the question is approached from a psychological point of view, from a military standpoint, and as a law enforcement question, none of these frameworks explain the continued phenomenon.

When Obama ran for office, shutting down Guantanamo was one of the myriad broken promises made by the president. Even before his election, he was disgusted with the obvious failures of this prison camp.

As a nation all we could do with Bush's atrocities was to shake our heads in disbelief; yet, Obama continues on the same path as his predecessor.

Although Americans have prided themselves in promoting and touting democ-

rary and a justice system based upon constitutional principles, our country remains silent in the face of a prison camp.

A prison camp just doesn't emerge out of nowhere on a particular day; nor does it arise from the destruction of buildings by a terrorist group.

On the contrary, even though there could be military retaliation for a strike on a country's home soil, a prison camp requires much more. Indeed, it is necessary for a people, whether they be citizens or not, to be slowly inculcated with a mentality that imprisoning people in order to ensure national security and the ability to gather intelligence is acceptable legal and moral behavior. It also helps to de-humanize them as "enemy combatants" rather than as suspects or human beings.

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National policy

Guantanamo is not authorized by the constitution of this country. The foundation upon which this country is based, its belief in its legal processes, including due process, as well as our very basic moral dignity, have been thrown out the window. The existence of a Guantanamo renders torture and atrocities as so commonplace as to go unnoticed and make it an approved national policy.

The daily reality of Guantanamo is easy

to ignore. It lies off the coast of the US and remains, basically, out of sight. We hear no news from or about the camp. It is located inside a closed and secured naval military institution, inside another country. Freedom of the press is non-existent in such a concentration camp. It not only has a justice system of its own, outside the purview of the US legal system, it adheres to a justice system clearly incompatible with US law.

The existence of Guantanamo, and its use of violence and torture as legitimate instruments of interrogation, is demonstrated by the fact that the nationally syndicated television show, NCIS [10-18-11], has its fearless hero threaten a potential suspect by suggesting that she would send the man to Guantanamo for questioning if he didn't confess to the crime.

For a concentration camp to exist the general population must become accustomed gradually to the torture of their own people at home on their own territory. This is accomplished by incarcerating hundreds of thousands of people into ad-seg units, Security Housing and Control Management units throughout the country. Justice becomes a different word with a different meaning to Afro-American and Hispanic families constantly under threat from police forces and a prison system that incarcerates them first and foremost. Law and Order becomes the euphemistic words for racism and injustice.

A concentration camp allows for this country's leaders to kill, isolate, and maim at will. In the process they also serve, as all brutal prisons do, to quell angry citizens who might threaten the Pentagon's privileged status.

The camp's existence also demonstrates to the world that the US can intimidate, murder and torture anyone, anywhere, with impunity. It is the essence of arrogance and blatant lawlessness that elevates the hypocrisy of the US government to its highest level.

The ultimate reason for this symbol of violence and lawlessness is that it underscores our military dominance and superiority over the world's people. It establishes the US as the meanest nation in the world where none dare oppose us because nobody could be as vicious and cruel as we are. There is no pretense at truth or justice involved here; rather, it is the exercise of raw power stripped to its most basic core. Granted murder and slaughter take place all over the world, but Guantanamo says to everyone: You want bad, we'll show you bad.

Is it part of the American psyche? Is it based on a psychotic dominance personality and bureaucracy? Torture, renditions, and murder are not info-gathering techniques; they are a dominance factor whether they reside in a Security Housing Unit or Guantanamo. To the extent this camp exists as a manifestation of a psychotic military mentality, it is time for the American people to regain control over our armed forces.

Is it too late to ask: When will we shut down the concentration camp at Guantanamo? This camp is to the American people what concentration camps were to the German people.

How long will we allow this camp to define our national character as so contemptible? For as long as Guantanamo exists, this country will rank with Nazi Germany and pre-apartheid South Africa as one of the most heartless and lawless regimes in the history of mankind. **CT**

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The camp's existence also demonstrates to the world that the US can intimidate, murder and torture anyone, anywhere, with impunity

Son of Africa claims continent's crown jewels

John Pilger analyses President Obama's decision to send special forces to Uhanda, Congo and Central African Republic – a US invasion of Africa

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This is Museveni's bribe to fight a proxy war against America's latest phantom Islamic enemy, the rag-tag al Shabaab group based in Somalia
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On October 14, President Barack Obama announced he was sending United States special forces troops to Uganda to join the civil war there. In the next few months, US combat troops will be sent to South Sudan, Congo and Central African Republic. They will only “engage” for “self-defence”, says Obama, satirically. With Libya secured, an American invasion of the African continent is under way.

Obama's decision is described in the press as “highly unusual” and “surprising”, even “weird”. It is none of these things. It is the logic of American foreign policy since 1945. Take Vietnam. The priority was to halt the influence of China, an imperial rival, and “protect” Indonesia, which President Nixon called “the region's richest hoard of natural resources ...the greatest prize”. Vietnam merely got in the way; and the slaughter of more than three million Vietnamese and the devastation and poisoning of their land was the price of America achieving its goal. Like all America's subsequent invasions, a trail of blood from Latin America to Afghanistan and Iraq, the rationale was usually “self defence” or “humanitarian”, words long emptied of their dictionary meaning.

In Africa, says Obama, the “humanitarian mission” is to assist the government of Uganda defeat the Lord's resistance Army (LRA), which “has murdered, raped and

kidnapped tens of thousands of men, women and children in central Africa”. This is an accurate description of the LRA, evoking multiple atrocities administered by the United States, such as the bloodbath in the 1960s following the CIA-arranged murder of Patrice Lumumba, the Congolese independence leader and first legally elected prime minister, and the CIA coup that installed Mobutu Sese Seko, regarded as Africa's most venal tyrant.

Obama's other justification also invites satire. This is the “national security of the United States”. The LRA has been doing its nasty work for 24 years, of minimal interest to the United States. Today, it has few than 400 fighters and has never been weaker. However, US “national security” usually means buying a corrupt and thug-gish regime that has something Washington wants. Uganda's “president-for-life” Yoweri Museveni already receives the larger part of \$45 million in US military “aid” – including Obama's favourite drones. This is his bribe to fight a proxy war against America's latest phantom Islamic enemy, the rag-tag al Shabaab group based in Somalia. The RTA will play a public relations role, distracting western journalists with its perennial horror stories.

However, the main reason the US is invading Africa is no different from that which ignited the Vietnam war. It is China.

In the world of self-serving, institutionalised paranoia that justifies what General David Petraeus, the former US commander and now CIA director, implies is a state of perpetual war, China is replacing al-Qaeda as the official American “threat”. When I interviewed Bryan Whitman, an assistant secretary of defence at the Pentagon last year, I asked him to describe the current danger to America. Struggling visibly, he repeated, “Asymmetric threats ... asymmetric threats”. These justify the money-laundering state-sponsored arms conglomerates and the biggest military and war budget in history. With Osama bin Laden airbrushed, China takes the mantle.

Africa is China’s success story. Where the Americans bring drones and destabilisation, the Chinese bring roads, bridges and dams. What they want is resources, especially fossil fuels. With Africa’s greatest oil reserves, Libya under Muammar Gaddafi was one of China’s most important sources of fuel. When the civil war broke out and Nato backed the “rebels” with a fabricated story about Gaddafi planning “genocide” in Benghazi, China evacuated its 30,000 workers in Libya.

The subsequent UN security council resolution that allowed the west’s “humanitarian intervention” was explained succinctly in a proposal to the French government by the “rebel” National Transitional Council, disclosed last month in the newspaper Liberation, in which France was offered 35 per cent of Libya’s gross national oil production “in exchange” (the term used) for “total and permanent” French support for the NTC. Running up the Stars and Stripes in “liberated” Tripoli last month, US ambassador Gene Cretz blurted out: “We know that

oil is the jewel in the crown of Libyan natural resources!”

The de facto conquest of Libya by the US and its imperial partners heralds a modern version of the “scramble for Africa” at the end of the 19th century.

Like the “victory” in Iraq, journalists have played a critical role in dividing Libyans into worthy and unworthy victims. A recent Guardian front page carried a photograph of a terrified “pro-Gaddafi” fighter and his wild-eyed captors who, says the caption, “celebrate”. According to General Petraeus, there is now a war “of perception ... conducted continuously through the news media”.

For more than a decade the US has tried to establish a command on the continent of Africa, AFRICOM, but has been rebuffed by governments, fearful of the regional tensions this would cause. Libya, and now Uganda, South Sudan and Congo, provide the main chance. As WikiLeaks cables and the US National Strategy for Counter-terrorism reveal, American plans for Africa are part of a global design in which 60,000 special forces, including death squads, already operate in 75 countries, soon to be 120. As Dick Cheney pointed out in his 1990s “defence strategy” plan, America simply wishes to rule the world.

That this is now the gift of Barack Obama, the “Son of Africa”, is supremely ironic. Or is it? As Frantz Fanon explained in Black Skin, White Masks, what matters is not so much the colour of your skin as the power you serve and the millions you betray. **CT**

John Pilger is to receive the top prize in the annual awards of the Grierson Trust for his documentary films in London this month

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Africa is China’s success story. Where the Americans bring drones and destabilisation, the Chinese bring roads, bridges and dams

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No more time-wasting negotiations

Those who urge the Palestinians to return to talks with Israel are seeking to evade justice, writes **Stuart Littlewood**

.....
Note the old trick of emphasizing Israel's security while planting the idea that Palestine must make do with a barely "viable" existence
.....

Forget Britain's solemn promises nearly a century ago to give the Arabs independence in return for their help in World War I. Forget its pledge in 1922, when accepting the mandate from the League of Nations, to prepare the Palestinians for independence. Under the mandate Jews taking up residence in Palestine were supposed to have Palestinian citizenship. Aware of Arab concerns that the Balfour Declaration was being interpreted in an "exaggerated" way by Zionists and their sympathizers, the British government issued a White Paper that same year clarifying the position. "It is the intention of His Majesty's government to foster the establishment of a full measure of self-government in Palestine. But... this should be accomplished by gradual stages..."

.....
How gradual can you get?

The other day Britain's Foreign Secretary William Hague, attending a United Nations gathering in aid of Libyan regime change, said of the Palestinian situation that the "only real way forward" was to go backwards to the negotiating table. "The consequences of failing to arrive at a two-state solution," he said, "could be catastrophic for the Middle East and the wider world, so we have to keep trying... We want a secure Israel living alongside a viable Palestinian state."

Note the old trick of emphasizing Israel's security while planting the idea that Palestine must make do with a barely "viable" existence. You never hear these jokers talk about a secure Palestine and a viable Israel.

And having changed the law to provide a safe haven for Israelis wanted for war crimes, and to enable Tzipi-Dee-Doo-Dah Livni to do her shopping in Bond Street without fear of arrest, the Israel-firsters in Westminster – and they include 80 percent of Conservative MPs – are now panic-stricken to think that Palestinians, by going direct, might acquire sufficient UN status to take proceeding against their playmates in the International Criminal Court and demand UN peacekeepers kick them off their territory.

What Hague wants to see at the UN is a return to lopsided negotiations to avoid this embarrassment, and he's not saying which way Britain will vote. "Israelis and Palestinians committing themselves to return to negotiations, that is our objective. And that is why we and the 26 other European Union countries have withheld our positions on this. We're trying to use our leverage to persuade Israelis and Palestinians to do that."

Any rational explanation for this endless insistence on more time-wasting negotiations, which are simply a cover for continued Israeli expansion and land-grabs, is carefully avoided.

Last month Alistair Burt, the Foreign Of-

vice minister in charge of Middle East affairs, was telling Parliament: “There is no alternative to negotiations and a solution cannot be imposed from outside...” But, as anyone with a grain of sense knows, there has to be intervention from outside. To heal this cancerous sore the international community must deliver law, justice and equality to the Holy Land. Fundamental human rights and the rule of law are not negotiable. Indeed those who advocate returning to the negotiating table before a level playing field has been established only seek to evade justice and jettison UN resolutions for ever.

Sir Gerald Kaufman, the veteran Jewish MP, said it was inconsistent to support self-determination for people in Libya, Tunisia, Egypt and Syria but not Palestine, whose people “have been waiting 64 years for UN decisions to be implanted.”

He said if the Palestinians seek statehood at the UN and fail, the Israelis will “regard this as a triumph” and end the peace process. Sir Gerald wanted to know, “Will this government stand up and put its hand up for the Palestinian people at the United Nations?”

Burt said the UK was working closely with other nations to ensure that “whatever comes out of the UN, it is in the spirit of both sides feeling that something has been gained and we have a situation which moves toward those negotiations which need to succeed.”

Sir Ming Campbell, a former Liberal Democrat leader, expressed “a profound sense of disappointment” with the government’s attitude, saying that Britain’s influence and reputation would be diminished by its stance. The UK could be accused of “double standards” with the prime minister and foreign secretary in Libya “doing everything to support self-determination.”

Burt and Hague are noted Israeli flag-wavers, as is Prime Minister David Cameron whose loyalty to Israel, he has said, is “indestructible.” Should Palestinians brace themselves for further betrayal?

Even the opposition are singing the same old Zionist song. Douglas Alexander, shadow

foreign secretary, in a letter to Hague, says: “We (the Labour Party) want to see an immediate return to meaningful negotiations.” Were they ever meaningful?

However, he does remind Hague that the 2002 road map required the UN, EU, US and Russia to promote international recognition of a Palestinian state. But he’s soon back in harmony with the other stooges: “These negotiations are ultimately the only way that Palestinians are going to achieve the viable state they seek and that Israel will achieve the security that is their right...” Then he breaks ranks again to say: “Recognition at the United Nations for the Palestinians is one of the steps required to achieve this.”

Equal right

But, like the others, he fails to acknowledge the Palestinians’ equal right to security. A viable state is all they’ll get. The word “viable”, meaning workable or capable of growing under the right conditions, is carefully chosen and repeatedly used because it has a distinctly second-rate ring to it. Then Alexander ad-libs once more: “It has never been the case that recognition can only follow the conclusion of negotiations.” And he finishes by saying: “The British government should be willing to support the recognition of Palestinian statehood as part of the continuing steps to achieve a comprehensive two- state solution.”

Then we had Stephen O’Brien, minister for international development, saying: “It is clear that negotiations toward a two-state solution are the only way to meet the national aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians and to achieve a sovereign, viable and contiguous Palestinian state living alongside Israel in peace and security.” If he were asked what exactly Israel’s “national aspirations” are, how would he describe them? **CT**

Stuart Littlewood is author of Radio Free Palestine, which tells the plight of the Palestinians under occupation

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He said if the Palestinians seek statehood at the UN and fail, the Israelis will “regard this as a triumph”

Jobless nations: The triumph of capitalism

John Kozy says the conventional wisdom that giving handouts to business will create jobs is all wrong

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Giving money to businesses will not end recessions or depressions. In fact, it is likely to prolong them
.....

The Obama administration is intent on applying supply side principles to get the American economy out of the present recession, but supply side principles are based on the belief that if the government cuts taxes on the wealthy, they will invest their savings in new factories, that newly hired workers will increase employment, and that more output will increase tax receipts. But there is no way to make sure the wealthy actually invest their wealth in productive enterprises, especially in the US

This entire theory is based on the mere pop-psychological belief that if you give a person money, s/he will invest it in productive ways. But nothing forces wealthy people to do that, and they haven't, worse, never really have, since creating jobs is not an essential business function, only making money is, and getting financial incentives from government is merely another way of making money. Giving money to businesses will not end recessions or depressions. In fact, it is likely to prolong them, since businesses will not create jobs until it is evident that those jobs will result in profits.

During the California Gold Rush, merchants went to the camps only after gold was discovered, and they left when the lode petered out. They did not use the capital they acquired from the miners to open productive businesses to provide jobs to the

now jobless prospectors. In capitalist economies, capital is not acquired to be spent; it is acquired to be accumulated. Businesses do not exist to create jobs. Jobs are created by businesses only when it suits their purposes.

.....
Dangerous beliefs

Beliefs in conventional wisdom are always dangerous. More often than not, conventional wisdom is wrong. But there are two kinds of conventional wisdom – the pro and the con. Every bit on conventional wisdom has its naysayers, and just as conventional wisdom can amount to nothing more than mere beliefs, so can the beliefs of naysayers. For instance, that today's economy is failing is rather evident, but many critics of it seem to believe that the problems with today's economy are of recent origin. But that's false. The economy today is little different in essence than it was in the 1600s when the colonists brought it with them from England. The horrors of England's 17th Century economy then are exactly its horrors today. Wealth held in the hands of a few and poverty experienced by the many. High levels of crime infused throughout society. Widespread unemployment, underemployment, and degrading employment. The destruction of human dignity. Homelessness, hunger, and frequent wars fought by com-

mon people for the benefit of the merchant class. Prevalent discrimination of various kinds. Government which governs for the wealthy and not for the people in general. And although there have been short-lived periods when the people were led to believe that their prospects were improving, these periods have regularly ended in economic collapses that wiped out any gains the common people had acquired.

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Lesson from history

The universal features of this economy are exemplified in the following historical vignette.

On January 24, 1848, gold was discovered by James W. Marshall at Sutter's Mill in Coloma, California.

When people learned about the discovery, hundreds of thousands rushed to California. Wherever gold was discovered, miners collaborated to put up a camp and stake claims. Rough and Ready, Hangtown, and Portuguese Flat, among many others, sprang up, and merchants flocked to them, set up business in hastily built buildings, lean-tos, tents, and anywhere else serviceable to sell everything imaginable. Miners lived in tents, shanties, and deck cabins removed from abandoned ships. Each camp often had its own saloon and gambling house. Women of various ethnicities played various roles including that of prostitute and single entrepreneurs.

At first, the gold was simply "free for the taking." Disputes were often handled personally and violently. When gold became increasingly difficult to retrieve, Americans began to drive out foreigners. The State Legislature passed a foreign miners tax of twenty dollars per month, and American prospectors began organized attacks on foreigners, particularly Latin Americans and Chinese. In addition, the huge numbers of newcomers drove Native Americans out of their traditional hunting, fishing and gathering areas. Some responded by attacking

miners. This provoked counter-attacks. The natives were often slaughtered. Those who escaped were unable to survive and starved to death. Natives succumbed to smallpox, influenza, and measles in large numbers. The Act for the Government and Protection of Indians, passed by the California Legislature, allowed settlers to capture and use natives as bonded workers and traffic in Native American labor, particularly that of young women and children, which was carried on as a legal business enterprise. Native American villages were regularly raided to supply the demand, and young women and children were carried off to be sold. The toll on the American immigrants could be severe as well: one in twelve forty-niners perished, as the death and crime rates during the Gold Rush were extraordinarily high, and the resulting vigilantism also took its toll.

Hydraulicking as a means of extracting the gold became prevalent. A byproduct of this was that large amounts of gravel, silt, heavy metals, and other pollutants went into streams and rivers. Many areas still bear the scars of hydraulic mining since the resulting exposed earth and downstream gravel deposits are unable to support plant life.

The merchants made far more money than the miners. The wealthiest man in California during the early years of the Gold Rush was Samuel Brannan, the tireless self-promoter, shopkeeper and newspaper publisher. About half the prospectors made a modest profit. Most, however, made little or wound up losing money. By 1855, the economic climate had changed dramatically. Gold could be retrieved profitably from the goldfields only by medium to large groups of workers, either in partnerships or as employees. By the mid-1850s, it was the owners of these gold-mining companies who made the money. When the lode petered-out, the merchants abandoned the sites faster than the miners. The gold rush was over.

I have, in the past, written about many

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About half the prospectors made a modest profit. Most, however, made little or wound up losing money
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In capitalist economies, capital is not acquired to be spent; it is acquired to be accumulated
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of these horrid features of Capitalist economies, especially its abject immorality. Today I want to discuss an obvious falsehood that still gets repeated especially by right wing politicians and their counterparts in the economics profession and the business community, that is, businesses, not governments, create jobs.

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Jobs myth

This generic claim is, of course, obviously false and its generality makes it grossly ambiguous. What precisely does it mean, especially since the politicians who utter it spend piles of money and time trying to get jobs that are not created by any business? No business created the jobs of Congressman or President, so what sense does it make for such a person to claim that businesses, not government, creates jobs? The claim is utterly stupid.

In fact, businesses have no interest in creating jobs. Consider the vignette described above. Merchants flocked to the mining camps after gold was discovered and they left when the lode petered out. They did not use the capital they acquired from the miners to open productive businesses to provide jobs to the now jobless prospectors. In capitalist economies, capital is not acquired to be spent; it is acquired to be accumulated.

Employees are merely means to that end, and whenever a business can accumulate capital without the use of employees, it will do it. And that is what has happened in large measure in America today. Businesses have found ways of accumulating capital without the need for American employees and government has aided and abetted businesses in doing so.

So, when a politician advocates giving financial incentives to businesses to induce them to create jobs, those politicians are involved in a ludicrous absurdity. All the proposal does is provide businesses with another tool for extracting money from

common people without even having to deal with them, and the capital acquired by businesses in this way will merely be added to the capital accumulation bank. Why would a business want to create a job with it and put that capital in jeopardy? To assume that businesses will use that capital to create jobs is the fallacy of supply side economics, which, incidentally, is based on nothing but pop-psychology.

Supply side economics is based on the belief that if the government cuts taxes on the wealthy, they will invest their savings in new factories fitted with new technologies that will produce goods at lower costs, that newly hired workers will increase employment, and that more output will increase tax receipts. The economy will lift itself by its bootstraps. But there is no way to make sure the wealthy invest their wealth in productive enterprises, especially in the US This theory is based on the mere pop-psychological belief that if you give a person money, s/he will do “the right thing” with it, namely, invest it in productive ways. But nothing forces wealthy people to do that, and they haven’t, since creating jobs is not an essential business function, only making money is, and getting financial incentives from government is merely another way of making money. Giving money to businesses will not end recessions or depressions. In fact, it is likely to prolong them, since businesses will not go where money cannot be made, because merchants are attracted to money like flies are attracted to dung. Businesses do not exist to create jobs. Jobs are created by businesses only when it suits their purposes. **CT**

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John Kozy is a retired professor of philosophy and logic who writes on social, political, and economic issues. After serving in the US Army during the Korean War, he spent 20 years as a university professor and another 20 years working as a writer. His on-line pieces can be found on www.jkozy.com and he can be emailed from that site’s homepage



Waging War on Wall Street

Essays on New York's Occupy Wall Street protests
by **Tom Engelhardt** and **Richard Pithouse**

Photographs by **David Shankbone**

America's lost decade

Zuccotti Park brings back
memories of the '60s
for Tom Engelhardt

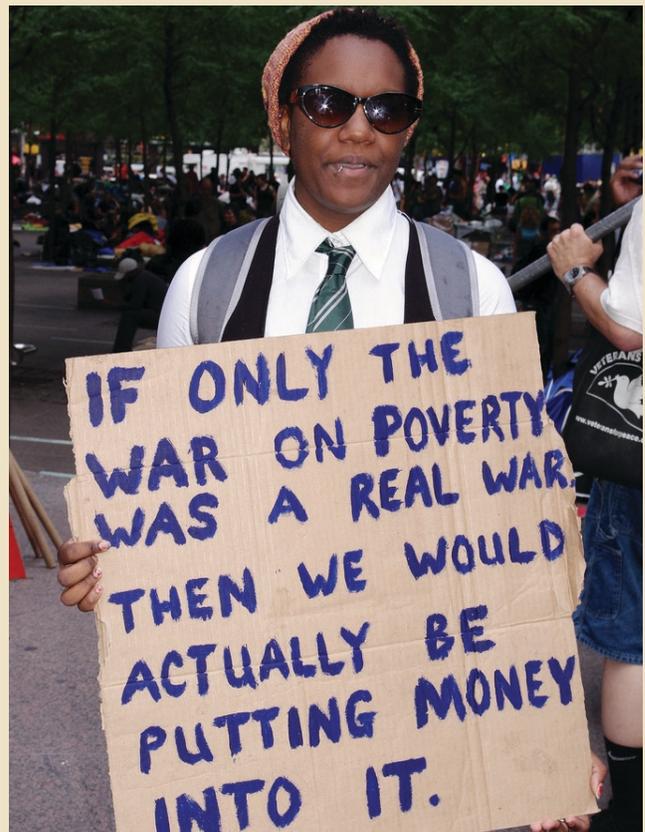
In some ways, Zuccotti Park, the campsite, the Ground Zero, for the Occupy Wall Street protests couldn't be more modest. It's no Tahrir Square, but a postage-stamp-sized plaza at the bottom of Manhattan only blocks from Wall Street. And if you arrive before noon, you're greeted not by vast crowds, but by air mattresses, a sea of blue and green tarps, a couple of information tables, some enthusiastic drummers, enough signs with slogans for anything you care to support, and small groups of polite, eager, well-organized young people, wandering, cleaning, doling out contributed food, dealing with the press, or sitting in circles on the concrete, backpacks strewn about, discussing. If it were the 1960s, it might easily be a hippie encampment.

But don't be fooled. Not only does the park begin to fill fast and the conversation become ever more animated, but this movement already spreading across the country (and even globally) looks like the real McCoy, something new and hopeful in degraded times. Of the demonstrators I spoke with, several had hitchhiked to New York – one had simply quit her job – to be present. Inspired by Tunisians, Egyptians, Spaniards, and Wisconsinites, in a country largely demobilized these last years, they recognized what mat-





PHOTOS BY DAVID SHANKBONE



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It's the moment when the blood stirs and the young, unable to bear the state of their country or the world, hit the streets with the urge to take the fate of humankind in their own hands
.....

ters when they saw it. As one young woman told me, "A lot of people in my generation felt we were going to witness something really big – and I think this is it!"

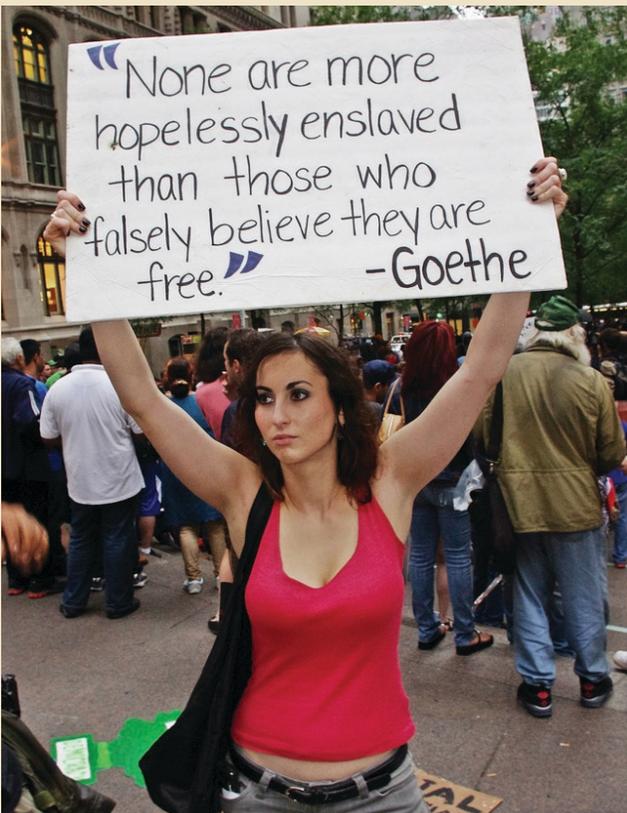
It may be. The last time we saw a moment like this globally was 1968. It's the moment when the blood stirs and the young, unable to bear the state of their country or the world, hit the streets with the urge to take the fate of humankind in their own hands.

It's always unexpected. No one predicted Tahrir Square. No one imagined tens of thousands of young Syrians, weaponless, facing the military might of the state. No one expected the protests in Wisconsin. No one, myself included, imagined that young Americans, so seemingly somnolent as things went from bad to worse, would launch such a spreading movement, and – most important of all – decide not to go home. (At the last demonstration I attended in New York City in the spring, the median age was probably 55.)

The Tea Party movement has, until now,

got the headlines for its anger, in part because the well-funded right wing poured money into the Tea Party name, but it's an aging movement. Whatever it does, in pure actuarial terms it's likely to represent an ending, not a beginning. Occupy Wall Street could, on the other hand, be the beginning of something, even if no one in it knows what the future has in store or perhaps what their movement is all about – a strength of theirs, by the way, not their weakness.

Never have they been more needed. Theirs is certainly a movement, like the ones in the Middle East, inspired in part by economic disaster and aimed at an airless political as well as corporate/financial system controlled by the 1% left out of the signs in the park hailing the 99% of Americans whom Occupy Wall Street hopes to represent. It's a world set on screwing just about everyone in that vast cohort of Americans without compunction, shame, or even, these days, plausible deniability. **CT**



“If all our folks got together”

Richard Pithouse with a view from South Africa on the Wall Street protests

In his book *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck’s novel about the Great Depression, Tom Joad, the novel’s central character, a man who has been made poor and who is on the run from the law, tells his mother in the climactic scene that: “I been thinking about us, too, about our people living like pigs and good rich land layin’ fallow. Or maybe one guy with a million acres and a hundred thousand farmers starvin’. And I been wonderin’ if all our folks got together....”

That wondering is a red thread woven through American history with the promise of a way out of what Martin Luther King called “life as a long and desolate corridor with no exit sign”. In recent years a lot of Americans who have not been born to life in that desolate corridor have been forced in to it. The time when each generation could expect to live better than their parents has passed. Poverty is rushing into the suburbs. Young people live with their parents into their thirties. Most cannot afford university. Most of the rest leave it with an intolerable debt burden. It’s the same in Spain, Greece and Ireland. England is looking pretty grim, too. The borders that surround the enclaves of global privilege are shrinking in from the





PHOTOS BY DAVID SHANKBONE



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The dominant popular response in America. But with the occupation of Wall Street inciting occupations and planned occupations in cities throughout the United States, and as far away as Hong Kong and South Africa, it seems that a response that targets the real source of the problem is gaining more traction
.....

nation state to surround private wealth.

If the problem was that there just wasn't enough money to go around, people would have to accept the situation. But when there is plenty of money, when there is, in fact, an incredible abundance of money but it's being held by a tiny minority, it's perfectly logical to start wondering along Tom Joad's lines.

The financial elite who had, for so long, presented themselves as the high priests of the arcane arts of economic divination on whom our collective wellbeing was dependent caused the financial crisis of 2008. The problem was not a miscalculation in some algorithm. It was the greed of a caste that had been allowed to set itself up above everyone else. As a character in a Bruce Springsteen song about the deindustrialisation of America observes "Them big boys did what Hitler couldn't do". This caste has developed so much power over the media and politicians that it has been allowed to dictate the resolution of the crisis. Their plan, of course, comes down to the proposal that they should continue to profit while the shortfall is recovered

from society. That means more people losing their homes, no longer able to afford health care or child care, dropping out of university, sliding deeper into debt and working two or three jobs to keep going.

There was resistance from the start. But for a long time it looked like right wing populism would be the dominant popular response in America. But with the occupation of Wall Street inciting occupations and planned occupations in cities throughout the United States, and as far away as Hong Kong and South Africa, it seems that a response that targets the real source of the problem is gaining more traction.

The choice of Wall Street as the target for the occupation is, in itself, a perfectly eloquent statement. And slogans like "We're young; we're poor; we're not going to take it any more" are incisive enough. But if the occupation of sites of symbolic power in cities across North America is to win concrete rather than moral victories, and to make a decisive intervention against the hold that finance capital has taken over so much of



political and social life, it will have to do two things. It will need, without giving up its autonomy, to build links with organisations, like churches, trade unions and students groups, that are rooted in everyday life and can support this struggle over the long haul. It will also need to find ways to build its own power and to exercise it with sufficient impact to force real change.

Wall Street is usually a world away from Main Street and bringing it under control is no easy task. But it's encouraging that what links Tahrir Square to Liberty Plaza, the protests in Athens and Madrid and the movements that have emerged in the shack settlements of Port-au-Prince, La Plaz, Caracas and Durban, is a concern with democracy. In Tahrir Square the primary point was to unseat a dictatorship but elsewhere there is a global sense that the standard model of parliamentary democracy is just not democratic enough. This is a crucial realisation because, in many countries, America being one of them, you just can't vote for an alternative to the subordination of society to capital. But

a serious commitment to dispersing power by sustained organising from below can shift power relations. It is the only realistic route to achieving any sort of meaningful subordination of capital to society.

The idea of an occupation as a way to force an exit from the long and desolate corridor to which more and more Americans are being condemned is not new. Martin Luther King dedicated the last years of his life to the Poor People's Campaign. In 1968 he travelled the country aiming to assemble "a multiracial army of the poor", "a new and unsettling force" that would occupy Washington until Congress enacted a poor people's bill of rights providing decent housing and work or a guaranteed income for all. *Reader's Digest* warned of an "insurrection". King was assassinated on the April 4, 1968 but the march went ahead on the May 12, 1968. Up to 50,000 people marched on Washington and occupied Capitol Hill. Thousands built a shanty town known as Resurrection City and held it for six weeks, in which it seemed to rain incessantly, before it was bulldozed.

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When some people are living like pigs and others have land lying fallow it's easy enough to see what must be done
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In that same year there was mass protest, sometimes verging on insurrection, from Prague to Berlin, Paris and Mexico City. Much of it was inspired by the war in Vietnam and much of it took the form, against both the state and the authoritarian left, of direct democracy and collective self-organisation. In 1968 armed third world peasants became the most compelling image of a revolt that, while not global, was certainly international. With the defeat of these struggles the human rights industry was able to recast the third world poor as passive victims requiring charity and guidance from the North.

When some people are living like pigs and others have land lying fallow it's easy enough to see what must be done. But when some people are stuck in a desolate corridor with no exist signs and others have billions in hedge funds, derivatives and all the rest it can seem a lot more complicated. And of course it is more complicated in the sense that you can't occupy a hedge fund in the same way that you can occupy the fallow land of a billionaire.

But the point about finance capital is that it is the collective wealth of humanity. The money controlled by Wall Street was not generated by the unique brilliance, commitment to labour and willingness to assume risk on the part of the financial elite. It was generated

by the wars in the Congo and Iraq. It comes from the mines in Johannesburg, the long labour of the men who worked those mines and the equally long labour of the women that kept the homes of the miners in the villages of the Eastern Cape. It comes from the dispossession, exploitation, work and creativity of people around the world. That wealth, which has been captured and made private, needs to be made public. Appropriated or properly taxed under democratic authority it could fund things like housing, health care, education, a guaranteed income and productive investment.

When a new politics emerges from the chrysalis of obedience, it will, blinking in the sun, confront the world with no guarantees. But we need to get together and commit what we can to try and ensure that 2011 turns out differently to 1968 or, for that matter, 1989. Here in South Africa the immediate task for the young people inspired by the occupations that have spread from Cairo to New York via Madrid and Athens is to make common cause with the rebellion of the poor. **CT**

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John Pithouse teaches politics at Rhodes University at Gramstown, South Africa. This essay originally appeared at www.saccsis.org.za - the website of the South African Civil Society Information Service

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David Shankbone, who took all the photographs in this feature, is a writer and photographer in New York. he has worked on a public photography project for Wikipidia since 2006. He blogs at www.blog.shankbone.org

HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitz



So much for the law

Conor Gearty takes a close look at the UK's counter-terrorism strategy

.....
There is no explanation why those places might be any more dangerous than anywhere else: they are simply 'failed or fragile states' which 'provide an environment conducive to terrorism'
.....

The third instalment of the UK's counter-terrorism strategy, *Contest* (HMSO, £28.50), draws on earlier Labour initiatives – part pseudo-analysis of al-Qaida's current capabilities, part salesmanship – but 'reflects the changing terrorist threat' and 'incorporates new government policies'. Its appearance also reflects 'the government's commitment to transparency' – though it would be more accurate to talk about a commitment to propaganda. With its brandishing of 'fundamental British values' and threats to 'our interests overseas', there's a neocolonial feel to the whole enterprise, as though somebody had dug out something written by Joseph Chamberlain and in place of 'civilising mission' and 'the pacification of the natives' had inserted 'human rights' and 'the rule of law'.

We learn that in 2009 'there were about 11,000 terrorist attacks around the world causing nearly 15,000 casualties,' with the attacks taking place 'primarily in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq'. There is no explanation why those places might be any more dangerous than anywhere else: they are simply 'failed or fragile states' which 'provide an environment conducive to terrorism'. All we get by way of analysis is: 'The grievances upon which propagandists can draw may be real or perceived, although clearly none of them justify terrorism.' The year 2010 was just as bad, with 13,000 fatalities from 'over 11,500

terrorist attacks ... the vast majority ... still carried out by al-Qaida and associated terrorist groups' in the same places – and now in Somalia too.

I was reminded of an interview I did with Paul Bremer when he was President Reagan's ambassador at large for counterterrorism (sic), long before he went on to infamy as the first governor of occupied Iraq. A huge graph behind him displayed the inexorable rise of terrorist incidents worldwide, with a large upwards spike in a different colour in the year just past following a period of decline. I asked him about this. 'Oh, that's when we redefined what we meant by terrorism.'

Most of the data in *Contest* come from places with names like the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point or the National Counterterrorism Center, a US government body established by George W. Bush in 2004 with the goal of 'integrating all instruments of national power to ensure unity of effort'. *Contest* has many elaborate graphs tracking 'terrorist attacks', 'global stress zones' and the countries of origin of the now 47 'terrorist' groups that are banned in the UK. (I remember when even the IRA wasn't banned, so committed to freedom of association used the UK to be.) Al-Qaida is given different acronyms for its various local insurgency operations, AQ-AP (Arab Peninsula), AQ-M (Maghreb), AQ-I (Iraq), AQ-KB (Kurdish areas) and so on. Attractive boxes set out

nuggets such as the UK's Planning Assumptions 2011-15 ('geographically, vital countries for our counterterrorism work will continue to be Afghanistan and Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and Nigeria'). Where would Britain be without international terrorism? Having lost one empire it has fortuitously found another, an 'evil empire' full of natives that still need subjugating.

There is a fifth column too, a war that needs waging on the home front, against natives who have made it to imperial HQ. The Tories and the Lib Dems made a large fuss about the erosion of freedom when they were in opposition and the smaller coalition party has needed some victories here. So instead of New Labour's control orders we are to have Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (TPIMs) – control orders with a fancier name. Twenty-eight day detention without charge is to be abolished – unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. Section 44 powers of stop and search will be abolished – to be replaced by what *Contest* boasts will be a 'more tightly defined power', a power it fails to define. There is to be an investigation into allegations of collusion in torture by British authorities, though with terms of reference now so blatantly emaciated that the pressure groups that pushed for the inquiry have decided to have nothing to do with it. And still the government refuses to allow into court the kind of intercept evidence that would make counterterrorism subject to the criminal process. The ease with which Lib Dem anxieties about freedom have been seen off and turned into cul-de-sac discussions about surveillance cameras and local authority snooping, has been amazing even to those inured to the lack of fight in the Lib Dem political personality.

The *Contest* strategy is divided into four 'workstreams': 'Pursue', 'Prepare', 'Protect' and 'Prevent', the last of which – designed 'to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism' – merits its own government booklet. *Prevent* (HMSO, £28.50) is targeted against speakers who disseminate 'the ideology asso-

ciated with al-Qaida' and belong to 'extremist groups' which contribute to a 'radicalisation ... process by which people come to support and in some cases to participate in terrorism'. (Never mind that a report commissioned by the Communities and Local Government Department made a 'clear assessment that individuals do not progress through non-violent extremist groups to violent groups'.) Labour is criticised for having worked with Muslim groups: in his speech to a security meeting of European leaders in Munich in February, Cameron complained that 'organisations that seek to present themselves as a gateway to the Muslim community' had been 'showered with public money'; he went on to say that 'we've been too cautious frankly – frankly, even fearful' to stand up to the 'unacceptable views or practices' that 'come from someone who isn't white'.

The problem, then, as the government sees it, is far broader than terrorism. It is with anyone who doesn't share our 'values'. *Prevent's* remit is to tackle 'extremist ideas which are espoused by apparently non-violent organisations very often operating within the law' and – again – those 'groups and speakers who deliberately and carefully stay within the law'. This must be one of the first government publications to make obeying the law seem like a new crime. We are being asked to believe that extremist groups just 'appear to be non-violent' by the subversive trick of 'neither us[ing] violence nor specifically and openly endors[ing] its use by others'. These 'extremist groups' which 'carefully operate within our laws, deliberately avoiding open support for violence' are the 'terrorist sympathisers' against whom we are warned we must be on our guard. Another phrase for them might be 'law-abiding'. So much for the law. **CT**

Conor Gearty teaches human rights law at the LSE. His latest book, a serialised set of web-based essays on human rights, can be found at www.therightsfuture.com. This essay originally appeared in the London Review of books at www.lrb.org.uk

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These 'extremist groups' which 'carefully operate within our laws, deliberately avoiding open support for violence' are the 'terrorist sympathisers' against whom we are warned we must be on our guard. Another phrase for them might be 'law-abiding'

We are not your human resources

David Michael Green wonders why the Masters of the Universe can't see what the Occupy Wall Street protests are all about

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The only two presidents a person her age could have had any mature appreciation of were George W. Bush, the thief and liar, and Barack Obama, another thief and liar
.....

I was talking with a friend the other day about Occupy Wall Street. She said to me “This is what I've been waiting for my whole life”. I told her I feel exactly the same way.

The only difference is that she's in her early twenties, and I'm in my early fifties.

I'm not sure which is better. She's had an entire lifetime full of nothing but the down-sizing of her country, and the theft of her future. The only two presidents a person her age could have had any mature appreciation of were George W. Bush, the thief and liar, and Barack Obama, another thief and liar. She has never known an America that wasn't reeling under the assault of Wall Street plutocrats and the kleptocrats they hire to do their bidding in Washington.

On the other hand, people her age could at most have suffered with the pain of being under this siege for a mere five years or so, unless they happen to have been astonishingly attentive and precocious preteens. My generation, on the other hand, has been living this nightmare for three solid decades now, through Republican abominations and – in many ways, worse – Democratic as well. We have known indisputably throughout this era that a better country is not just a pretty aspiration or a theoretical proposition. We know that because we once lived there. I'm glad I had that experience. But, that said, carrying around the heartache of observing our

national suicide by greed for more than thirty years' has also been a painful, soul-numbing burden I wouldn't wish on anyone.

I don't know what will come of Occupy Wall Street, and its brother an sister movements in cities across the world. On the one hand, this is the most hopeful development I've seen since the dark finale to the year 1980 gave us Ronald Reagan and took away John Lennon. On the other, I've learned through ugly experience and hard-won (and, the more cynical amongst us might say, belated) wisdom not to expect too very much from purported agents of sweeping change. Consider the last two of note. Egyptians rose up and threw off their own violent kleptocracy through mass action. Less than a year later, the military rules the country and is repressing dissent using the same bloody tactics of the prior regime. Closer to home, we've got a Wall Street occupation of a rather different sort than the one in Zuccotti Park. The guy who – when he wanted something from us 99 percenters – spoke passionately of change and hope and the fierce urgency of now, has instead allowed Wall Street to occupy our White House, and has delivered to millions of hurting Americans a substitute program of no change, crushed hope, and the tepid lethargy of whenever.

So hope is not always a good bet. Who therefore knows what will happen on the streets of Manhattan in the coming weeks

and months? At some point, The Man may decide he's had just about enough of this truth-telling shit, thank you very much, and sweep the place clean. Don't want to be giving the ordinary folks watching at home too many ideas, y'know? If that happens, other possibilities immediately arise. Maybe the folks on the street resist. Maybe if they do, lots and lots of people come running to their side to stand up both for what they're protesting and for their very right to protest. Maybe a police sweep could be the best thing that could happen, causing the movement to metastasize in a swelling of national support. It could all get very interesting, very quickly. Or not.

.....
Crucial first step

I dunno. Here's what I do know, however, and why I allow myself to once again risk being hopeful: This is the first time in a very long time that we've had any honest content to our national political discourse. All else follows from there, and thus this is the crucial first step, the sine qua non for any chance whatsoever of righting the badly listing ship of state. If we cannot identify our true maladies, we cannot possibly hope to treat them.

And we have been doing neither for a very long time. The most astonishing and depressing aspect of our era is (or, perhaps, has been) the fact that, at the very time when conditions are such that one could almost not possibly write a script more favorable to the rise of a robust politics of the left in America, precisely the opposite has been happening. What left there is left in the country has been moribund, its heartbeat barely detectable. Meanwhile, what is described as the left, operating under the banner of the Democratic Party, has shown itself every bit as capable of whoring for capital as the other party, though it swims even deeper in the cesspool of treason by pretending it is still the party of the people. And then there's the right, which has absolutely gone insane by increments over these last three decades. I don't know if my

young friend quite believes me when I tell her that the rhetoric and policies of a Cheney or a Bachmann or even a Romney would have been inconceivable (except, by definition, as fringe lunacy) in Gerry Ford's 1970s. But they would indeed have been just that. We have traveled very far from that world.

In any case, think about it. Suppose you were asked to play 'Sim America' and create from whole cloth the conditions you thought most likely to produce a vibrant political left, rising up to reform the country, as it did during the 1930s and 1960s. What factors might you include in your blueprint? How about a nation riddled with economic insecurity at best and widespread real suffering at worst? Check. Rampant and unremitting unemployment? Check. A rapacious class of financial predators and wealthy plutocrats who have taken every penny of economic growth for themselves over the last three decades, leaving only stagnation for the rest of us? Check. A distribution of wealth so skewed toward the rich that it would embarrass Zimbabwe? Check. A political class completely unresponsive to the needs of the people and devoted instead to serving the gluttonous pigs whose money puts them in office? Check. A massively broken health care system devoted to profits instead of health? Check. Endless government spending of taxpayer money to bail out the disastrous bets of sociopathic Wall Street nihilists and their destruction machines, combined with zero support for ordinary citizens struggling with ballooning debt and underwater mortgages? Check. A generation of downsized middle-aged workers who know they will never again be able to restore the basic economic stability they once enjoyed? Check. A generation of young people looking ahead to lives of lousy jobs (when any at all can be found), lousy pay, massive debt, massive taxes to pay for previous borrowing, epic environmental destruction, endless wars, and living at home with their parents rather than starting families of their own? Check. A discredited far-right previous government whose crony capitalist policies

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.....

made profound and direct contributions to all of the above? Check.

And, if none of those items seem alone sufficient to generate a vibrant progressive response, how about all of them (and lots more), all at once? Check, check, double-check, and checkmate. Here is the check for a lovely meal of greed, theft, war and planetary destruction held in your honor. Or at least at your expense. What, you don't want the bill?

I can hardly think of better conditions for the rise of a New New Left. But what do we get, instead? The freaking Tea Party!! As I said, this is the single most depressing characteristic of our time (and because of the deep and broad array of repugnant choices for that loathsome title, that's saying a lot). It's like, even when you win you still lose.

.....
The real enemy

But maybe, at long last, things are finally turning around with the advent of the Occupy movement, and people will at last get it. And maybe they'll figure out who the real enemy is, and act accordingly. Unfortunately, however, even that prospect involves a longer term solution. Consider that the best case scenario for January 2013 is that the hopelessly hapless Barack Inc. Obama will once again be inaugurated as president. And that even if he can't get Larry Summers and Timothy Geithner and Robert Gates to be in his administration because they're all too busy making money, he will most assuredly be getting people like that.

Don't expect to see a Paul Krugman or a Joseph Stiglitz or a Paul Volcker on Obama's team any more than he appointed Elizabeth Warren to run the Consumer Protection Bureau or went for the public option in his health care obombination. And that's the 'best' case scenario. Far more likely will be a Scary Perry or a Ken-Doll Romney taking the oath that day.

There actually is one better scenario, and this is again why the Occupy movement represents a breath of genuine hope (as op-

posed to the merchandised, fast-expiring kind Obama peddled in 15-second TV spots in 2008). Our solutions no longer reside, if they ever did, in the ballot box. The Republicans are a sheer criminal enterprise, whose entire function is to redistribute wealth from the rest of us to already wealthy elites. But the Democrats are actually worse, because they do exactly the same thing, while trading on the party's past reputation for representing the public interest. For my money (which, along with yours, is precisely what is at stake), Obama and Clinton and their ilk in Congress have betrayed me and the country more than, say, any of the Dicks – Cheney, Arme y or Nixon. You expect the asshole kid on the playground to live up to his reputation. It hurts a lot more when your best friend is the one sticking in the knife.

No, while there will still be elections and presidents and a new Congress, no matter who those people are in 2013, they will all be cut from the same cloth, and I guarantee you that you can't afford that frock.

This country is going to have pretty much go all Egypt on the ruling class to have any hope of changing what fundamentally ails us. That doesn't mean the Constitution has to be shredded and new institutions of government created. It just means that, at the end of the day, the people in government must be responsive to the public interest, not the oligarchy's.

That's a hugely tall order in many ways. But, on the other hand, context is everything. People are fed-up now, and growing increasingly sick of being subjected to a steady diet of bogus wars, gay-bashing or empty platitudes in the place of real solutions to real problems. There is a giant vacuum today in American politics, which will only grow dramatically in scale about two years or so into a Republican administration's term.

But political nature abhors a vacuum, and the opportunity today for a genuine set of people-first politics to attract votes (whether as a third party or through a hijacking of the Democratic Party) has not been greater in de-

ades. More and more, Americans are coming to the realization that the choice between Democrats and Republicans is the political equivalent to the choice between Goldman Sachs and Citibank. That is to say, none at all. And more and more they will demand a real alternative, if only from sheer desperation.

I don't think the American political class will see such a development coming, any more than they did in Egypt, and any more than they are able to grapple with Occupy Wall Street.

It's been alternately amazing, amusing, sickening and predictable to observe the reaction that these demonstrations have engendered among our ruling class and their stable of media bots, including the obligatory condescending tropes about dirty hippies and clueless youth occupying the park. That's fine with me. I hope the powers-that-be continue to stand by, establishing a record for themselves of befuddlement and contempt, so that there's no ambiguity whatsoever about which side they were on when the chips were down, and so that they can all the more rapidly and definitively be transformed into the powers-that-were.

Their critiques have been fast and furious, so much so that, golly, it almost seems like the establishment needed to find something for which to criticize the movement, even if they had to invent it. I'm sure the Eric Cantors and *New York Timeses* of this world would never be so nefarious and disingenuous as to do something like that, of course. But it sure seemed that way, especially as you hear the ubiquitous critique that the folks in Zuccotti Park "don't have a message".

Gee, you think? I mean, if ten thousand people march around the Pentagon, what do you think that could mean? That they want an increase in Social Security benefits? A longer baseball season, perhaps? If thousands of blacks march on Selma, what do you suppose is their demand? Deregulation of derivative trading? A ban on cloning? And if thousands decide to occupy Wall Street, what ever might one imagine is the reason they are there in

particular? Because lower Manhattan has the best falafel stands?

No leaders to jail

Still can't figure it out, Masters of the Universe and talking head plastic media arbiters of American culture? How about this for a hint: The protesters keep chanting, "We are the 99 percent! We are the 99 percent!" What could that possibly mean? Yes, it's true that there are no leaders for you to coopt, jail or ridicule, and we know that makes you, er, uneasy. Yes, there is a manifest absence of manifestoes with forty-seven point plans full of tax reform schemes and new educational testing initiatives. But even you pompous blow-dried blow-hards in your gated communities should be able to get the general gist of what we're saying, that we in the 99 percent are sick and tired of being exploited and thrashed for the sake of satiating the pathological greed of the one percent.

Even if you have no brains inside your immaculately coifed heads, you should still be able to decipher that no-brainer. Unless, of course, the problem is that you just don't want to. Take for example the fine specimen of a regressive columnist Mark Steyn, who writes for the *Orange County Register* (of course), and just recently scribbled this drivel: "My colleague Rich Lowry correctly notes that many of the beleaguered families testifying on the "We are the 99%" websites have real problems. However, the "Occupy" movement has no real solutions, except more government, more spending, more regulation, more bureaucracy, more unsustainable lethargic pseudo-university with no return on investment, more more more of what got us into this hole. Indeed, for all their youthful mien, the protesters are as mired in America's post-war moment as their grandparents: One of their demands is for a trillion dollars in "environmental restoration." Hey, why not? It's only a trillion."

What Mr. Steyn doesn't want you to notice (among many other things), and what most

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of his readers won't in fact notice, is the basic lie at the heart of his dismissive assertion. What got us "into this hole" is precisely the opposite of what he suggests. It wasn't some liberal Frankenstein experiment gone shatteringly awry that wrecked the country, but, quite to the contrary, it was in fact the dismantlement of the liberal experiment of the mid-twentieth century, a program that had been so succ

essful that it created a massive and wealthy middle class in America far beyond anything that had ever existed anywhere in the world prior to that time.

But regressives decided to take it apart, and over the last thirty years they've won every policy battle on every question of political economy, from taxes to trade to labor relations to regulation to privatization to deficits and beyond.

Thus, what Mr. Steyn and his ill ilk are desperate for you not to know is that what wrecked the country and the planet is their conservatism (or so-called conservatism – it's really regressivism). That's why they want you to forget who was in the White House when the shit hit the fan. And that the last two Democratic presidents have created White House economic teams comprised of Wall Street executives. And that taxes are far lower than they used to be, and regulation of bankers nearly nonexistent, and social programs dismantled, and job-exporting trade deals signed, and unions crushed, and on and on and on.

These people appear to "not get" Occupy Wall Street because they're desperate for it to disappear. In truth, they get it thoroughly and entirely (and, deep down, they can't believe it's taken this long for it to arrive), and they know it for precisely the existential threat to their sickeningly indulgent lives of infantile greed that it absolutely is.

But just in case I'm being unduly harsh to a class of boardroom rapists and murderers and the media and political marionettes who enable their predatory agenda, let me see if I can be helpful to them and simplify the mes-

sage. It's just this: "We are not your human resources". We. Are. Not. Your. Human. Resources.

.....
Not their equals

The truth is, the one percent in this country sees the rest of us – not as equals, or even as human beings – but as commodities put on this earth to serve them, no different from machines or infrastructure, computers or chemicals. We are their resources, who just happen to have bodies and minds somewhat similar to their own (though of an entirely different class, of course!). Which means we're a pain in the ass because, unlike machines, we have an annoying tendency to want a moderately decent salary and time off to spend with our families, not to mention bathroom breaks on the job. What a drag, eh Thurston?! To them, we're not human beings entitled to human rights and empathetic respect. We are, instead, the frustratingly-expensive remaining elements of a wealth-production machine that cannot (yet) be replaced by computers, robots or Asian peasants.

This is – in the minds of the one percent – a pure relationship of sheer exploitation. In truth, it fundamentally differs little from slavery or patriarchy or environmental destruction. What all these systems have in common is the age-old notion of one class of people living large at the expense of other creatures' misery.

And rarely in the last century have the oligarchs and plutocrats been as successful at doing just that as they are today. Moreover, under the generous leadership of an entire political class ranging from Barack Obama to Scott Walker, they are at this moment still relentlessly attempting to destroy what little is left of American middle class prosperity in the name of unquenchable elite greed. And why not? Since when were three yachts ever enough?

What frightens these people about Occupy Wall Street – and, make no mistake, their attempts at ridicule are the purest possible

expressions of their fear – is the idea that the public might actually be on to their game at last. That a critical mass might have reached critical mass.

That we might no longer be susceptible to diversion by means of ethnic or lifestyle divisions pitting us against one another, or by foreign bogeymen and the endless national security ‘crises’ they are said to represent.

That we might remember that things were once better here, before we abandoned our humanity and wisdom in the name of greed and expediency and oligarchy.

That we might realize how weak the one percent actually are – just as our Egyptian brothers and sisters found out about their own kleptocracy – and that we might discover how easily toppled corrupt regimes are once exposed for what they are.

That we might demand a modest but fair share of the national wealth, and a political

system in which people, not just special interest campaign contributors, actually have a voice in policy decisions.

That we might insist on a decent quality of life for ourselves, and a real future for our children.

And that we understand ourselves to be real people, with real rights, real needs and real aspirations, rather than as tools placed here for the realization of their pathologically bloated obsessive greed.

Because – Mr. Steyn, Mr. Walker, Mr. Cantor, Mr. Murdoch and, yes, Mr. Obama – however much you might stamp your feet, hold your breath, and insist otherwise:

We are not your human resources. **CT**

David Michael Green is a professor of political science at Hofstra University in New York. More of his work can be found at his website, www.regressiveantidote.net.

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Kill! Smash! Grab!

Felicity Arbuthnot looks back on ten bloody years in Afghanistan

.....
**With the bombs,
aid parcels were
indeed dropped.
They were the
same colour as
the accompanying
cluster bombs**
.....

*As the clever hopes expire
Of a low dishonest decade:
Waves of anger and fear
Circulate over the bright
And darkened lands of the earth,
Out of the mirror they stare,
Imperialism's face
And the international wrong.*
(W.H. Auden, 1907-1973.)

What a murderous, infanticidal, appalling, shameful, ignorant and decade-long war crime “Operation Enduring Freedom”, turned “Operation Enduring Slaughter” has become.

Announcing the assault on Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, George W. Bush said, citing “Enduring Freedom”, that it defended “... the freedom of people everywhere to live and raise their children free from fear.

“If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers themselves, (a) lonely path ...”

He added, “The oppressed people of Afghanistan will know the generosity of America and our allies. As we strike military targets, we’ll also drop food, medicine and supplies to the starving and suffering men, women and children of Afghanistan.”

“We’re a peaceful nation”, the President assured the world.

In London, “ally”, then Prime Minister Tony Blair was reading from the same script: “We are peaceful people. But we know that sometimes to safeguard peace, we have to fight ... We only do it if the cause is just. This cause is just.”

In this pursuit of justness, between October 7 and December 10, 2001, 12,000 bombs were dropped in 4,710 sorties on a population of just 28 million people (*Globe and Mail*, January 19, 2002) with 42% of the population aged 0-14; children being thus raised in unimaginable terror, rather than “free from fear.”

With the bombs, aid parcels were indeed dropped. They were the same colour as the accompanying cluster bombs. Predictably, those who rushed to collect brightly coloured yellow packages, in anticipation – so often children – had limbs blown off at best, or life blown away. Exited anticipation turned terminal. The US belatedly issued warnings.¹

Between October 2001 and early 2002, United States aircraft dropped 1,228 cluster bombs containing 248,056 bomblets, in 232 strikes on locations throughout the country, according to *Cluster Munitions Monitor*.²

It is unclear whether they have been further used. Though coalition forces have confirmed deploying cluster munitions for possible use.³

The indiscriminate carnage of the early

days should not be obscured by that of the subsequent years mass graves and ongoing, frenetic destruction by “The United States of America, a friend to the Afghan people, and of almost a billion worldwide who practice the Islamic faith”, as also declared by Bush in his October 7, 2001 address.

Four days later, Khorum a village of mud huts, 29 kilometres west of Jalalabad, was “systematically bombed” by US warplanes. As many as 200 people were killed, with whole families wiped out.⁴

“Survivors accounts were consistent. Just after early morning prayers, two US warplanes circled, then attacked the village.

“On the first run, only a few were injured, but as people came out, they returned twice, killing men, women and children, including refugees from Jalalabad, who had fled to the isolated dwellings feeling they would be safer there. There was no military, or Taliban presence nearby,” wrote Norman Dixon, in his carefully researched piece, written at the time.

Donald Rumsfeld’s denials, first as “ridiculous”, then lies, then declaring “certain knowledge” of a nearby military installation (statements now so familiar in mass murders across Afghanistan, Iraq and since March, Libya) were soon found to be baseless.

A reporter in the village showed the TV programme Nightline “extensive footage” of the destruction, confirming “that the village had been ‘completely obliterated’, estimating at least 100 people had been killed. Giant craters were where houses once stood. Dead animal carcasses littered the area. Survivors angrily denied that there were military installations or al Qaeda ‘training camps’ anywhere near Khorum.”

Further: “Having run out of targets within days of the start of the bombing campaign, Washington has authorised pilots to seek ‘emerging targets’, meaning that they can blast just about anything they like.

“Four workers employed by a United Nations mine-clearing operation died while

they slept, when a US cruise missile demolished their Kabul building in early hours of October 9.

“On October 12, a 900-kilogram satellite-guided US ‘smart’ bomb, hit houses almost two kilometres from Kabul airport, destroying four house, killing at least four people.

“On October 13, a bomb landed in a busy market in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, killing five people.

“A refugee (stated) that 160 people were taken to hospital when US bombs hit Khushkam Bhat, near Jalalabad airport, on October 13. An unknown number may have died. More than 100 houses were ‘damaged or flattened’.

“On October 16, at least two US bombs hit Red Cross warehouses near Kabul, wounding an employee, and setting them on fire. Wheat, medicines and supplies were destroyed. The roofs of the buildings were emblazoned with vast Red Cross insignia.

“The Pentagon confirmed the strike.

“The previous day as US missile exploded just 150 metres from a World Food Programme warehouse in Kabul as trucks were loading, injuring a worker.

“Later on the same day that US warplanes had bombed the Red Cross warehouses, President Bush was visiting the headquarters of the American Red Cross in Washington to promote his appeal for US kids to give a dollar each for the children of Afghanistan.

“‘Winter arrives early in Afghanistan. It’s cold, really cold. The children need warm clothing, they need food, they need medicines. And thanks to the American children, fewer children in Afghanistan will suffer this winter’, Bush told an assembled group of children.

“He didn’t mention the bombs.”⁵

Lying and destroying food stocks, medicines and essential services are tried and tested (illegal) tactics. In Iraq the UK and US repeatedly did the same in 1991, and then between 1993 and the 2003 invasion – even dropping lighted flares on harvested wheat

.....

On the first run, only a few were injured, but as people came out, they returned twice, killing men, women and children, including refugees from Jalalabad, who had fled to the isolated dwellings feeling they would be safer there

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Afghanistan's child mortality is the second highest on earth. Life expectancy for men and women is just 44 years old.
.....

and crops (a crime still, allegedly, ongoing.)

In Libya, the same is happening – the vocabulary has changed, they call it bombing “command and control posts.”

If the above carnage is a tiny snapshot, of several very small areas, and that wrought in little over three months, what is the true cost of Afghanistan, in human terms, little over 3,650 days later?

In June 2004, with “President” Hamid Karzai, in the White House, Bush declared Afghanistan a success, indeed, a model for Iraq. Women’s rights and education had “risen from the ashes”, Iraq would follow in the same mould (*China Daily*, June 16, 2004). Iraq is now estimated to have an upper estimate of approaching two million excess, invasion-related deaths, since 2003.

Just before last year’s marking of the ninth anniversary of the onslaught on Afghanistan, of which George W. Bush had predicted in his invasion speech: “We will win this conflict by the patient accumulation of successes ..”, Professor Marc Herold wrote an encyclopaedic, searing summary of these “successes.”⁶

Included was: “In Afghanistan, according to the United Nations’ Childrens Fund, about 600 under-five children perish every day from preventable diseases, such as diarrhea, cholera, dysentery, typhoid, parasitic worms and pneumonia.”

Dr Gideon Polya, author of *Body Count – Global Avoidable Mortality Deaths since 1950*, cites the death rate for under-five-year-old Afghan infants, as higher in percentage than their Polish counterparts in Nazi occupied Poland, or French-Jewish children in Nazi occupied France.

Afghanistan’s child mortality is the second highest on earth.⁷ Life expectancy for men and women is just 44 years old. Further, according to the *Afghan Human Rights Monitor*, in 2010, an average of seven civilians were killed by occupying forces, every day. Given the remoteness of so much of the country, that figure is almost certainly an underestimate.

In Blair’s near carbon copy of Bush’s onslaught-day speech, he said: “It is now nearly a month since the atrocity occurred (9/11.) It is more than two weeks since an ultimatum was delivered to the Taliban to yield up the terrorists or face the consequences... They were given the chance of siding with justice (or) terror. They chose terror.”

Well, no, as Iraq’s non existent WMD’s were a fabrication for war, so was this. On the same day, CNN reported:

“The White House on Sunday rejected an offer from Afghanistan’s ruling Taliban to try suspected terrorist leader Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan under Islamic law.

“The offer came as the United States massed forces in southwest Asia for a possible strike against Afghanistan if the Taliban refuse to surrender bin Laden. A Bush administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, rejected the Taliban offer and repeated US demands that bin Laden be turned over unconditionally.

“The Taliban’s ambassador to Pakistan, Abdul Salam Zaeef, made the offer at a news conference in Islamabad. Zaeef said **the Taliban would detain bin Laden and try him under Islamic law if the United States makes a formal request and presents them with evidence.**” Emphasis mine, CNN October 7, 2001.⁸

On October 7 this year, General Stanley McCrystal, who commanded coalition forces in Afghanistan during 2009-2010, told the US Foreign Relations Committee that the US had gone in to Afghanistan with a “frighteningly simplistic view.” After ten years they still lack knowledge and were little better than 50% towards reaching their war goals. (That gas pipeline through the country still not built, then?)

“We didn’t know enough and we still don’t know enough,” he said. “Most of us, me included, had a very superficial understanding of the situation and history, and we had a frighteningly simplistic view of recent history, the last 50 years.” Can they not read? Did they truly know nothing of this

“graveyard of Empires”?

In 330 BC., even Alexander the Great met his match, nearly being killed by an arrow to his leg, one of his soldiers later writing, “Here the foe does not meet us in pitched battle, as other armies we have dueled in the past. . . . Even when we defeat him, he will not accept our dominion. He comes back again and again. He hates us with a passion whose depth is exceeded only by his patience and his capacity for suffering.”⁹

Little has changed. Seemingly, US Generals and military planners ignore the lessons of history. They did not make enough effort, said the General, to understand the culture; forces made little effort to learn the languages. There are 49 listed languages in Afghanistan, General. And here is just one of many history reading lists, with, at a quick count, about three hundred titles.¹⁰

Going into Iraq two years later, whinged the General, didn’t make things any easier. It didn’t make them any easier for the Iraqis in their mass graves since, either. The culture and language was also not understood there. Remember the countless shootings at road blocks, where culturally ignorant troops stood with arm up, palm out? Uncounted car loads of families and other innocents ended blown to pieces as they resultantly drove through. The gesture the American soldiers used means “Welcome.”

“The headlines of the past decade in Afghanistan have been written in blood”, wrote Declan Welsh last month in the *Guardian*, adding: “the greatest failures have been

political.”

Indeed, and towering arrogance and pig ignorance of not even the desire to learn and understand the ways of ancient lands, McDonald-free civilizations. Simply to kill, smash, grab – and then blame the invaded.

To return to George W. Bush’s words, Britain and America, have seemingly become: “government sponsors, the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers themselves, (a) lonely path ...”

CT

Felicity Abuthnot is a journalist and political activist based in London

Notes

1. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/monitoring/media_reports/1624787.stm
2. <http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/news/?id=3394>
3. *ibid*
4. <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/24053>
5. *ibid*.
6. <http://globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=21174>
7. <http://pulitzercenter.org/articles/afghanistan-poverty-child-mortality>
8. http://articles.cnn.com/2001-10-07/us/ret.us.taliban_1_abdul-salam-zaeef-surrender-bin-taliban-offer?_s=PM:US
9. <http://www.stevenpressfield.com/the-afghan-campaign/>
10. <http://www.afghanweb.com/books/books.html>

Remember the countless shootings at road blocks, where culturally ignorant troops stood with arm up, palm out? Uncounted car loads of families, individuals, ended blown to pieces as they resultantly drove through

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Helping the DEA

Fred Reed has a few suggestions for the lady in charge of the war on drugs

.....
I know all sorts
of people in
their sixties now,
veterans of Dong
Ha or Woodstock,
some of them
vets of both, and
most of them
do grass and
not infrequently
hallucinogens
.....

I may have to take over drug policy for the United States. Maybe not, though. I'll hold off if I get a call from Michelle Leonhart, who runs the Drug Enforcement Administration, asking me how she ought to do her job, and what she ought to think about Mexico, and what is wrong with Washington's whole approach to mind candy. (I'm expecting her call any day now.) I will answer as follows:

Now, look here, Ma'am. You need to re-think this drug thing. It's not going well. It isn't going to go well. The Bare Skirmish on Drugs (BSkOD) may have seemed a good idea when *Reefer Madness* came out, or even in the Sixties a half century ago. Everyone with the brains of a microwave oven knows that DEA serves only to keep prices up so that the narcos in Mexico can afford classy military weaponry and gorgeous mansions.

It isn't the fault of DEA. In my days on the police desk I knew a fair few DEA guys, including the magnificent Frank White and... well, others. They were ballsy, smart, savvy, and realistic cowboys, the best company I can imagine. They did their jobs as well as they could which, under the circumstances, was well indeed.

That's them. Fact is, though, DEA as an organization ain't done jack-shit about drugs. I'm sorry, but there it is. It's like a law of logic. If you set out to do something impossible, you won't do it. That's DEA.

A little history if I may. In the Sixties, when mind candy went universal, we had pot, acid, shrooms, mescaline, and various amphetamines. Scag was a ghetto drug for strung-out crashers like William Burroughs, coke mostly unknown, and crack nonexistent.

OK, half-century later. To my certain knowledge, today in suburban Washington, as for example at Washington and Lee High where my daughters did time, kids can buy all the aforementioned goodies, plus nitrous, Ecstasy, crystal and, within a five-minute drive, there may still be an open-air crack market in the parking lot of Green Valley pharmacy. Crack isn't a kid drug, but it is easily available all over Washington.

Further, I know all sorts of people in their sixties now, veterans of Dong Ha or Woodstock, some of them vets of both, and most of them do grass and not infrequently hallucinogens. I'm talking door-gunners, Special Forces guys, at least two Ivy profs, just plain people. So, Michelle, what exactly has the War on Half the Population accomplished?

You certainly aren't protecting kids in high school, or even middle school, from becoming drooling stoners living in dumpsters. They have easier access to drugs than you do. What protects kids from becoming needle-cases is – I am aware of the preposterousness of this – the common sense of teenagers. They aren't druggies because they don't want to be. They aren't alkie because

they don't want to be. Most don't smoke because they don't want to. DEA has nothing to do with it. Kids could easily do all of these things. America is up to the armpits in drugs, tobacco, and booze. So you see, Michelle, the DEA is like a man sitting on a raft in mid-Pacific, trying to outlaw water.

Now we come, tangentially anyway, to Mexico. It is being torn apart, toward God knows what future, because it lives next to the world's most gluttonous market for drugs. It seems to Mexicans that Washington is forcing them to die for a BSkoD that Washington won't fight on its own soil.

Is this an unreasonable suspicion? Why is it unreasonable? A couple of things you might do to persuade Mexico that you really want to do your part.

First, why don't you put a youngish DEA guy, or gal, in each of about ten universities chosen at random: say, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Harvard Medical, Julliard, Haverford, Berkeley, UCLA, and Dartmouth. (I say they're random). See, young agents could rig their apartments for sound and video. In six months you could arrest hundreds of children of senators, Fortune Five Hundred CEOs, and people high in the Executive branch. You could give them the same sentences that slum blacks get. Think of the headlines: "Senator's Kid Gets Five Years in the General Population in Leavenworth." Is that a concept or what?

Mexicans think you don't do this for reasons of politics. Mexicans just don't understand the essential probity of America.

Another thing you could do to demonstrate your good faith: You could ask Congress to legislate that people selling drugs to children in high school be tried as adults. Since most of these dealers are themselves in high school, you could put the daughters of lawyers in women's slam in places like the Cook County Jail. Think how many interesting things they could learn about compulsory lesbian sex.

I mean, you are sincere about wanting to punish dealers, aren't you?

OK. More and more I see suggestions that the US send troops to Mexico to Right Wrongs and make Mexico into Iowa. The Pentagon is sneaking psychopaths of the CIA and "retired" military men into the country, apparently wanting to showcase its systemic incapacity to win any war. Here is a chance for you to do something useful. DEA agents are not idiots, but colonels are.

You might try to drill into the Pentagonal mind – I would suggest a cold chisel and a sledgehammer – that Mexico differs in a fundamental way from the military's other comic efforts at martial enterprise: The narcos have a million gringo hostages. Or maybe five hundred thousand. Nobody is sure exactly how many Americans live in Mexico. They – we – are very soft targets. We live in a sort of sprawl across Mexico, concentrated in places well known, grouping in known bars, unarmed and utterly defenseless.

A minor contact I have with the bad guys says that, now, attacking Americans carries a death sentence from people who would carry it out with a blow torch over a period of days. "Oh no. Don't fuck with the gringos," says this guy. Like most Mexicans, the narcos figure the US is looking for a pretext to invade. They are happy with the current semi-partnership with Washington and don't want interference.

But piss these bad boys off – they are very, very bad boys – and they could begin killing gringos by hundreds. Logically it would be an easy way of putting pressure on Washington to back off. Washington could write off aging vets living on disability from Nam, but a lot of expats here live in houses costing a million doomed green dollars.

Tell you what, Michelle. You folks at DEA know what's out there. You know who the narcos are, and what they are, and what they are capable of doing. Maybe you could explain it to people a lot dumber than you are, such as soldiers, pols, and combative columnists in panties at the *Washington Post*. What think?

Sincerely, Fred.

CT

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In six months you could arrest hundreds of children of senators, Fortune Five Hundred CEOs, and people high in the Executive branch. You could give them the same sentences that slum blacks get

.....
Fred Reed has worked on staff for Army Times, The Washingtonian, Soldier of Fortune, Federal Computer Week, and The Washington Times. His web site is www.fredoneverything.net

Israel's window to bomb Iran

Ray McGovern on signs that Israel is planning to start another bloody war in the Middle East

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Begin made clear to his followers at home and abroad that Carter, if freed from the political pressure of facing reelection, might push Israel into accepting a Palestinian state
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There are mounting signs that the right-wing Israeli government may think the timing is right for an attack on Iran, with growing alarms inside Israel about alleged Iranian progress on building a nuclear bomb – and with President Barack Obama fearing loss of key Jewish political support in 2012 if he doesn't go along.

On Sept. 26, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated Iran's alleged progress, telling interviewer Charlie Rose that "time is short" before Iran obtains nuclear weapons and poses a direct threat to Israel and the rest of the world.

Yet, the key factor in any Israeli decision to send its aircraft and missiles to Iran is the degree to which Netanyahu and other hard-line Likud leaders believe that President Obama is locked into giving blanket support to Israel – particularly as Election 2012 draws near.

The Israelis might well conclude that the formidable effectiveness of the Likud Lobby and kneejerk support of the US Congress as well as still powerful neoconservatives in the Executive Branch (and on the opinion pages of major American newspapers) amount to solid assurance of automatic support for pretty much anything Israel decides to do.

If Israel translates this into a green light to attack Iran, the rest of the world – even

Washington – may get little or no warning.

Netanyahu and his associates would presumably be reluctant to give Obama the kind of advance notice that might allow him to consult some adult political and military advisers and thus give him a chance to try to spike Israeli plans.

Consequences of blindsiding? There would be a strong argument in Tel Aviv that past precedent amply demonstrates that there are few if any consequences for blindsiding Obama on Israeli actions.

There is also the precedent of how an earlier generation of Likud leaders reacted to a possible second term by a Democratic president who was suspected of having less than total loyalty to Israel.

In 1980, Prime Minister Menachem Begin was angered by President Jimmy Carter's pressure that had forced Israel to surrender the Sinai in exchange for a peace treaty with Egypt. Begin made clear to his followers at home and abroad that Carter, if freed from the political pressure of facing reelection, might push Israel into accepting a Palestinian state. So, Begin quietly shifted Israel's political support to Republican Ronald Reagan, helping to ensure Carter's lopsided defeat.

Similarly, some Israeli hard-liners suspect that Obama in a second term might be liberated from his fear of Israeli political retaliation and thus renew pressure on Netanyahu

to halt Jewish settlements in the occupied territory of Palestine and to reach a true accommodation with the Palestinians.

Under this analysis, a second-term Obama might add to Israel's growing isolation in the Middle East, which even Defense Secretary Leon Panetta noted recently, telling reporters that Israel must restart negotiations with the Palestinians and work to restore relations with Egypt and Turkey.

"Is it enough to maintain a military edge if you're isolating yourself in the diplomatic arena?" Panetta asked. "And that's what's happening."

A very bad year

Indeed, 2011 has been the worst year in recent memory for Israel, ushering in a highly unfavorable sea change in its strategic position.

Israel has lost the support of formerly friendly governments in Egypt and Turkey and finds itself increasingly isolated internationally, as the occupation of Palestinian territory begins its 45th year and the plight of the Palestinian people garners more and more attention – and sympathy.

As Netanyahu and his right-wing advisers look at the new constellation of stars, it is a safe bet they discern an imperative to readjust them in Israel's favor.

But, by attacking Iran? Okay, I know it sounds crazy. It is crazy. The question, however, is whether it sounds crazy to Israel's leaders, accustomed as they are to a reality in which the tail can wag a large dog at will.

Besides, the Israelis are sounding increasingly desperate and the notion of attacking Iran and involving the US might well be seen by desperate leaders as a way to stem further erosion of their strategic position – or at least to show they still have a very powerful supporter.

In my view, an attack on Iran would have a two-fold purpose: (1) to set back Iran's nuclear development program and infrastruc-

ture, and (2) to mousetrap Washington into an even closer military relationship with Israel. Let's put some context around these one by one.

First, the bugaboo about an Iranian nuclear weapon. Let me say at the outset that I could readily believe that Iran is working on a nuclear weapon. There are all sorts of reasons why one could understand Tehran seeing this as a reasonable course of action.

(As has been pointed out, Iraq had no nukes and we know what happened to it; North Korea has a handful of nukes and we know what did not happen to it.)

Trouble is, it doesn't matter what I – or anyone else – might believe. For substantive analysts faith-based analysis is not an option (or, at least, it didn't use to be). Empirical evidence is the coin of the realm for us.

Unlike Israel, which has refused to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty and has some 200 to 300 nuclear weapons, Iran did sign the NPT and insists it has no interest in nuclear weapons, only enriched uranium for medical research and energy. Unlike Israel, Iran has allowed UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors in to verify compliance with its commitment not to build nukes.

Still, there continue to be "beliefs," and suspicions that Iran, for example, may be laying the groundwork for an eventual break-out capability, and Tehran has not always fulfilled all its obligations under the safeguards regime.

Yet, despite the spin often applied to IAEA reports by the Fawning Corporate Media (FCM) and particularly the *New York Times*, the IAEA has never detected the diversion of enriched uranium from declared sites for the purpose of building a nuclear weapon. That is fact.

Beyond that inconvenient truth, some other recent history may be worth bearing in mind.

In 2007, President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney, with full-throated support from Israel and the FCM,

The Israelis are sounding increasingly desperate and the notion of attacking Iran and involving the US might well be seen by desperate leaders as a way to stem further erosion of their strategic position

NEXT TARGETS

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Actually, truth be told, every other year since 1995 US intelligence had been predicting that Iran could have a nuclear weapon in about five years
.....

were drumming up support for countering what they claimed was Iran's determination to build a nuclear weapon. On Oct. 22, 2007, the Israeli Ambassador to the United States insisted publicly that "very little time" remained to keep Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.

Really? Even were there to have been a nuclear program hidden from the IAEA, no serious observer expected Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon until several years later. Actually, truth be told, every other year since 1995 US intelligence had been predicting that Iran could have a nuclear weapon in about five years.

It became downright embarrassing – like a broken record. The repetition was punctuated by the likes of former CIA Director James Woolsey, a dyed-in-the-wool neocon who kept warning that the US may have no choice but to bomb Iran to halt its nuclear weapons program.

In mid-2006, Woolsey, who has called himself the "anchor of the Presbyterian wing of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs," put it this way: "I'm afraid that within, well, at worst, a few months; at best, a few years; they [the Iranians] could have the bomb." That was five years ago.

In early October 2007, Russian President Vladimir Putin, unencumbered by the Likud Lobby which enforces Washington's neocon-dominated "group think," publicly mocked the "evidence" that had been adduced to show that Iran intended to make nuclear weapons.

Then, during a visit to Iran on Oct. 16, 2007, Putin sprinkled salt on the wounds of "bomb-Iran" neoconservatives; he warned, "Not only should we reject the use of force, but also the mention of force as a possibility."

This brought an interesting outburst from President Bush the next day at a press conference.

Q. "Mr. President, I'd like to follow on Mr. – on President Putin's visit to Tehran ... about the words that Vladimir Putin said

there. He issued a stern warning against potential US military action against Tehran. ... Were you disappointed with [Putin's] message?"

Bush: "I – as I say, I look forward to – if those are, in fact, his comments, I look forward to having him clarify those. ... And so I will visit with him about it."

Q. "But you definitively believe Iran wants to build a nuclear weapon?"

Bush: "I think so long – until they suspend and/or make it clear that they – that their statements aren't real, yes, I believe they want to have the capacity, the knowledge, in order to make a nuclear weapon. And I know it's in the world's interest to prevent them from doing so. I believe that the Iranian – if Iran had a nuclear weapon, it would be a dangerous threat to world peace.

"But this is – we got a leader in Iran who has announced that he wants to destroy Israel. So I've told people that if you're interested in avoiding World War III, it seems like you ought to be interested in preventing them from have the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon. I take the threat of Iran with a nuclear weapon very seriously."

.....
Honest intelligence

Just weeks later in November 2007, the US intelligence community completed a formal National Intelligence Estimate in the best tradition of speaking truth to power. The NIE was the fruit of a bottom-up investigation of all evidence over the years on Iran's nuclear activities and plans.

But the NIE's conclusions bore no resemblance to what Bush, Cheney, their Israeli counterparts and the FCM had been claiming about the imminence of a nuclear threat from Iran.

The following is from the paragraph introducing the Key Judgments of the NIE of November 2007 that headed off war with Iran:

“A. We judge with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program; we also assess with moderate-to-high confidence that Tehran at a minimum is keeping open the option to develop nuclear weapons. ...

“Tehran’s decision to halt its nuclear weapons program suggests it is less determined to develop nuclear weapons than we have been judging since 2005. Our assessment that the program probably was halted primarily in response to international pressure suggests Iran may be more vulnerable to influence on the issue than we judged previously.”

Having reached these conclusions, it is not surprising that the NIE’s authors make a point of saying up front (in bold type) **“This NIE does not (italics in original) assume that Iran intends to acquire nuclear weapons.”**

There being no guarantee that, even with an honest Estimate, reason would prevail in the White House, Joint Chiefs Chairman Mike Mullen and other senior officers like CENTCOM commander Adm. William Fallon took the unusual step of insisting that the Estimate’s key judgments be declassified and made public.

They calculated, correctly, that this would put an iron rod into the wheels of the juggernaut then rolling toward a fresh disaster – war with Iran.

Recall that Adm. Fallon, who became CENTCOM commander in March 2007, let the press know that there would be no attack on Iran “on my watch.” He was fired in March 2008.

His senior military colleagues, while not as outspoken as Fallon, shared his disdain for the dangerously simplistic views of Bush and Cheney on the use of military power.

What is perhaps most surprising is the disarming (if that is the correct word) candor with which George W. Bush has explained his chagrin at learning of the unanimous judgment of the intelligence community that Iran had not been working on a

nuclear weapon since late 2003.

Bush lets it all hang out in his memoir *Decision Points*. Were one to assume that he and Cheney were genuinely worried about a threat from Iran, a long sigh of relief – or at least some follow-up questions – might have been reasonably expected in reaction to the NIE’s judgment.

Instead, Bush complains revealingly that the NIE “tied my hands on the military side,” noting that the NIE opened with the “eye-popping” high-confidence finding that Iran halted its nuclear weapons program in the fall of 2003.

The former president adds that the “NIE’s conclusion was so stunning that I felt it would immediately leak to the press.” He writes that he authorized declassification of the key findings “so that we could shape the news stories with the facts.” Facts?

Sure. New and different “facts.” Did not the experience on Iraq prove that the “intelligence and facts” could be “fixed around the policy,” as the famous Downing Street Memo of July 23, 2002, put it regarding the need for the US and U.K. to cook the intelligence and facts to “justify” attacking Iraq?

On Iran, though, a crestfallen Bush writes, “The backlash was immediate. [Iranian President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad hailed the NIE as a ‘great victory.’” Bush’s apparent “logic” here is to use the widespread disdain for Ahmadinejad to discredit the NIE through association, i.e. whatever Ahmadinejad praises must be false.

But can you blame Bush for his chagrin? Alas, the NIE had knocked out the props from under the anti-Iran propaganda machine, imported duty-free from Israel and tuned up by neoconservatives here at home.

How embarrassing. Here before the world were the key judgments of an NIE, the most authoritative genre of intelligence report, unanimously approved “with high confidence” by all 16 intelligence agencies and signed by the Director of National Intelligence, saying, in effect, that Bush and

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The NIE had knocked out the props from under the anti-Iran propaganda machine, imported duty-free from Israel and tuned up by neoconservatives here at home

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It is entirely possible that the Iran-war juggernaut would have been repaired and turned loose anyway, were it not for strong opposition by the top military brass who convinced Bush that Cheney, his neocon friends and the Israeli leaders had no idea of the chaos that war with Iran would bring
.....

Cheney had been lying about the nuclear threat from Iran.

Quid Est Veritas?

In his memoir, Bush laments: “I don’t know why the NIE was written the way it was. ... Whatever the explanation, the NIE had a big impact – and not a good one.” Spelling out how the Estimate had tied his hands “on the military side,” Bush included this (apparently unedited) kicker:

“But after the NIE, how could I possible explain using the military to destroy the nuclear facilities of a country the intelligence community said had no active nuclear weapons program?”

Thankfully, not even Dick Cheney could persuade Bush to repair the propaganda juggernaut and let it loose for war on Iran. The avuncular Cheney has made it clear that he was very disappointed in his protégé. On Aug. 30, 2009, he told “Fox News Sunday” that he was isolated among Bush advisers in his enthusiasm for war with Iran.

“I was probably a bigger advocate of military action than any of my colleagues,” Cheney said when asked whether the Bush administration should have launched a pre-emptive attack on Iran before leaving office.

And it is entirely possible that the Iran-war juggernaut would have been repaired and turned loose anyway, were it not for strong opposition by the top military brass who convinced Bush that Cheney, his neocon friends and the Israeli leaders had no idea of the chaos that war with Iran would bring.

Regrettably, Adm. Mullen just retired, and Adm. Fallon was fired in 2008 for speaking truth. It is far from clear that their replacements will be as able to act as counterweight to the neocons who continue to wield extraordinary influence in Official Washington.

For the record, despite the periodic alarms being raised among the usual suspects about the growing danger from Iran, US intelligence analysts and top officials, to their

credit, have continued to play it straight, so far as I can tell.

Although they have pretty much worn out the subjunctive mood in their testimony to Congress, the bottom line is that there is no new intelligence information that would warrant significant change in the judgments of the NIE of November 2007.

There is still no intelligence to “justify” a preventive attack on Iran (as if preventive attacks are ever justified under international law).

And this time senior intelligence officials should be called to testify under oath about the evidence and analytical conclusions, before Israel gets the US embroiled in another catastrophic war that would make Iraq and Afghanistan look like a skirmish.

.....
Mousetrapping the President

I promised, so many paragraphs ago, to address how Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu might see an attack on Iran as “mousetrapping” Washington into an even closer military relationship with Israel.

My own sense is that, despite his recent bravura performance in Washington – which included a speech to a joint session of Congress in which Republicans and Democrats competed to see who could jump to their feet fastest and applaud the loudest at every phrase uttered by the Israeli prime minister – Netanyahu is running scared.

I believe he thinks he needs the US now more than ever. And on that I would have to agree.

This shone through his answers to David Gregory of NBC’s “Meet the Press” on Sept. 25. Gregory could hardly get a word in edgewise, but that was good in a way, since a loquacious Netanyahu provided ample grist for analysis. The Prime Minister seemed to be reaching – and came across, at least to me, as defensive:

GREGORY: “Israel is arguably as isolated as it’s ever been in the midst of Arab spring. Turkey has turned against you, the Arab

world has moved away from dictators who supported Israel, had peace treaties with Israel, and is now more negative towards Israel. In this day and age, at this particular moment, despite Israel's well-known and substantial security concerns, how can you occupy Palestinian territory at this moment?"

NETANYAHU: "Well, you've got two assumptions in your questions, and I want to parse out and actually suggest that they're wrong. The first one is that we're isolated. Well, we're not isolated in this country, which happens to be the strongest country on earth.

"I walked yesterday in the – in, in Central Park. You know, people met me. Jewish-Americans, but many non-Jewish-Americans and they said, 'Keep the faith. We're strong. Be strong. We're with you.'

"A former lieutenant colonel in the Marines who's now a teacher met me in a restaurant in New Jersey, great view of the United – of New York City. He said, 'We're with you all the way. Stay strong.' A New York NYPD policeman, he says, 'I'm not Jewish. We support you. Stay strong.' America supports Israel in unparalleled way, unprecedented ways, number one. ...

"Every one of the US presidents represents and acts on the tremendous innate friendship of the American people to Israel. And by the way, a piece of news, Israel is the one country in which everyone is pro-American, opposition and coalition alike.

"And I represent the entire people of Israel who say, 'Thank you, America.' And we're friends of America, and we're the only reliable allies of America in the Middle East."

However, there can be little doubt with Israel's loss of key allies in Turkey and Egypt that its strategic position in the region is more tenuous than it has been in recent memory. Grassroots movements are also taking root in America showing sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians, even if Official Washington continues to march in lockstep behind Netanyahu.

Yet what matters most, in my view, is how Netanyahu and his associates read Obama; specifically, how afraid is he of diverging one iota from the pro-Israel stance he has adopted. There is quite enough evidence they feel he is putty in their hands, and it is hardly necessary to rehearse that here.

Activism exposes cowardice

Let me instead try to draw a lesson from my experience last summer as a passenger on the US Boat to Gaza, "The Audacity of Hope."

When we made a break from Greece for the high seas on July 1, it was a mere 33 minutes before a Greek Coast Guard boat intercepted us. After a standoff of well over an hour, black-clad, black-masked commandos showed up in a black rubber boat, climbed onto the Coast Guard boat, and pointed their machine guns at us.

It was more than a little bizarre: not one of us 37 passengers, 12 media journalists, or five crew flinched, much less hit the deck. When our captain discerned that his delaying tactics would not prevent us from being boarded, he acquiesced to the Greek Coast Guard orders to return to Piraeus, where "The Audacity of Hope" was (and is still) impounded.

We later learned that on that same day, the government of Greece issued a directive without precedent in that legendary seafaring nation. The order prohibited any boat from leaving Greek ports bound for Gaza.

It was clear that the Israeli government was pressuring Athens, in private and in public, to stop the ten boats of this year's flotilla from setting out for Gaza. It is unlikely, though, that Israel alone would have been able to reverse four millennia of Greek history and embarrass the Greeks so pointedly.

It became obvious to me that it was Washington that brought the most decisive pressure to bear on the Greeks. Why? In short, because Obama has far more influence with

Grassroots movements are also taking root in America showing sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians, even if Official Washington continues to march in lockstep behind Netanyahu

.....
**Asked directly,
three times,
whether the
US government
considers the
Israeli blockade of
Gaza legal,
Ms. Nuland would
give no answer**
.....

Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou than with Netanyahu. And this, despite the \$3 billion the US gives Israel every year.

Before leaving the United States, I was cautioned by a source with access to senior staffers at the National Security Council that not only did the White House plan to do absolutely nothing to protect our boat from Israeli attack or boarding, but that White House officials “would be happy if something happened to us.”

The way this happy message was phrased was that NSC officials would be “perfectly willing to have the cold corpses of activists shown on American TV.” Former UK Ambassador Craig Murray was told essentially the same thing by former colleagues reporting what they had learned from senior State Department officials.

In other words, senior national security and foreign policy officials in Washington were claiming they viewed with equanimity the possibility that we would meet the same type of welcome given by the Israeli Navy to last year’s flotilla to Gaza – though, on sober reflection, it appears to me that the Obama administration’s preferred outcome was that we simply be bottled up in Greece.

In last year’s attempt to break the Gaza blockade, Israeli commandos attacked the flotilla on the early morning of May 31, 2010, in international waters. The commandos killed eight Turkish civilians and a 19-year-old American, Furkan Dogan. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan protested – and Turkey continues to demand an Israeli apology, compensation, and an end to the blockade of Gaza.

In contrast, not a whimper came from President Obama. Actually, it gets worse. The White House and State Department did their level best to duck any responsibility to protect American citizens; instead, Official Washington spread the erroneous notion that Dogan was not a red-white-and blue American but rather some sort of hybrid “Turkish-American.”

They knew that was incorrect. He was

born in Troy, New York; he never applied for Turkish citizenship.

.....
Blockade’s legality

As for the legality of the Israeli blockade, happily, there remain at the State Department some sticklers for international law, apparently with the courage to quit loudly if State were to give its blessings to the outlandish notion that the Israeli blockade is legal.

There are enough recalcitrant professionals – experts on the Law of the Sea and international conventions – to put their weight down behind the notion that all countries, Israel included, should abide by those laws. Thankfully, their professionalism prevented even further embarrassment from US behavior vis-à-vis international law.

That stubborn professionalism may account for one of the most bizarre State Department press conference I have seen. On June 24, AP reporter Matt Lee and some of his colleagues decided to be more matter-of-fact than diplomatic with State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland, the wife of Robert Kagan, a neoconservative national security adviser to Vice President Cheney from 2003 to 2005 (and now a *Washington Post* columnist).

Asked directly, three times, whether the US government considers the Israeli blockade of Gaza legal, Ms. Nuland would give no answer.

“I am not a Law of the Sea expert,” she insisted (four times). Her talking points were that the US Boat to Gaza should not be a “repeat of what happened last year” (four times). As though last year’s flotilla was responsible for the attacks by Israeli naval commandos and this year’s flotilla would be considered responsible as well.

It seems likely that, however discreet we passengers on “The Audacity of Hope” tried to be with our messaging, US officials became aware that we were on the verge of making a break for the high seas and Gaza

(damn the torpedoes and commandos).

What seems clear in retrospect is that, whereas macho officials at State and the NSC would have been comfortable, as they claimed, seeing our cold corpses on US TV, Obama had the presence of mind to consult his handful of adult advisers who understood that something had to be done – and quickly – since a PR disaster was in the making.

An attack on a US-registered boat endangering us passengers, including author Alice Walker (not to mention the journalists on board from the *New York Times*, CBS, CNN, Democracynow.org, et al.) was to be avoided at all costs.

Mr. Milquetoast himself could not match Obama in pandering to the Israelis. That said, the President does try to keep to a minimum those times when it is acutely embarrassing to defend the kind of Israeli behavior the rest of the world finds heinous.

If there were a “repeat of what happened last year,” it would prove more difficult this time to avoid criticizing Israel (though, when push came to shove, Obama could probably summon the political “courage” to remain silent again).

However, if President Obama could not summon up the courage to ask Prime Minister Netanyahu to ensure safe passage for “The Audacity of Hope,” that display of timidity would not be lost on the Israeli leaders; one can imagine them being amused by it.

But if he did ask Netanyahu, Obama apparently received the gesture that seems to

have become Netanyahu’s trademark in reacting to entreaties from Washington (right thumb on nose, fingers flapping).

In that case, Obama would have been forced to recognize that his influence with Netanyahu is nil, and rather than risk a dust-up with Israel, the safer course would be to put the screws to the less formidable Greeks to bring us back to shore and keep us there.

Fortunately for Obama, considerable leverage was available on Greece since it was in dire economic straits and in need of another fiscal bailout. With bigger fish to fry, so to speak, Greek Prime Minister Papandreou did what he was told and kept us ashore.

The middle-level Greek officials, including some of the Coast Guard, whom we encountered, were very apologetic, virtually holding their noses as they forced us to comply.

So, put yourself in the position of Netanyahu and his colleagues. Try to see Obama as they do and reflect on the various political equities and strategic considerations mentioned above. If you were Netanyahu, would you worry very much that Obama might get in the way if Israel decided to take a whack at Iran?

CT

Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He served a total of 30 years as a US Army officer and then a CIA analyst, and is co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS)

.....
The middle-level Greek officials, including some of the Coast Guard, whom we encountered, were very apologetic, virtually holding their noses as they forced us to comply

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Memories of war, messages of peace

After being awarded the Nuremberg International Human Rights Award Colombian journalist **Hollman Morris** gave the following speech

.....
Mexico today lives in the terror of the drug wars, while the government responds with more violence and persecutes social leaders and covers up for the corrupt
.....

After receiving the Nuremberg International Human Rights Award, journalist Hollman Morris, director of the program Contravia, gave an emotional speech at the city's Opera House, where more than 3,000 citizens of Nuremberg heard him speak on "The Street of Human Rights". They expressed their solidarity with the victims in Colombia, as well as asking for a peaceful future for the country peace. This is an edited version of Morris's speech:

He who speaks in front of you comes from a big neighborhood called Latin America. Mixed blood runs through my veins: Indigenous, European, and African as well. The genes of our people contain the memory of the tragedies, the suffering, dreams and hopes. To have a Latin memory is to know that one day we are immigrants jumping borders, unwanted visitors, prostitutes, exiles, missing. We know populist leaders and cruel dictators. But within our tradition we also have the never-ending capacity of solving problems, and creating solutions in the middle of crisis.

All the people in my neighborhood share the same problems and the same hopes. Today, in the south of the continent, a beautiful movement of Chilean university students is uprising to protest for more and better public education. Their slogan is valid for all of Latin America. In our continent a secondary education and public health access are not acquired

rights, but merchandise that is traded like any other. The Chilean youngsters refused to be stripped from the little education they already have, or to have its cost increase. They succeeded in stopping that reform.

If we go north, all the way to Mexico, we see a citizen movement rising against violence and drug-trafficking, against the death lords, against corruption and bad government. Mexico today lives in terror of the drug wars, while the government responds with more violence and persecutes social leaders and covers up for the corrupt.

But the "Caravans for Peace" that today cross the whole country, listening to the tales of family members of the victims of murder and kidnapping, show that these victims are not isolated cases. They insist in remembering their friends and family, in recovering the memory, and bringing a message of peace.

Across the continent the indigenous movements remind us that not everything in this world can be bought, and that not everything in this world has a price. That people are not worth only what they produce and consume. They remind us all the time, that in the roots of our original people, relations are defined by the "WE", and not by the "ME".

Today, while we are going through a new mining boom, our ancient people remind us of a story that is more than 500 years old: the conquistadors of "El Dorado". El Dorado, that city of gold mentioned by our natives, that

was frantically sought by the conquistadors in the times of the colony.

In their search, the conquistadors destroyed territories, killed indigenous people, and transformed relationships inside their communities forever. Today, that same “Dorado” is the large deposits of copper in Chile, gas in Bolivia, carbon in Argentina, gold in Peru and Colombia, all sought by powerful companies with the same perseverance as shown five centuries ago.

However, unlike great indigenous leaders like Atahualpa, or the great Cacica Gaitana, the current bosses of our nations make it very easy for the big mining companies to exploit our resources. The madness in the search of the big Dorado continues. It is the source of a wave of human rights violations and the cause of more violence in the whole continent.

We will keep denouncing, but one more step needs to be taken. Big companies cannot keep operating and taking advantage of serious social problems, of the fragility of the governments, and from the greed of some Latin American leaders.

A woman from a banana region in Colombia, where the multinational Chiquita Brand financed extreme right and leftist groups, support that ended up with the killing of thousands of farmers, said: “Here, there is no banana tree that has not been fertilized by a dead body”. Quoting her, we might say that in Latin America there is no oil without blood stain, carbon not involved in the pollution of a swamp, gold that has not ended the life and resources of indigenous communities in this continent called Latin America.

However, our isolated struggle will not be enough. Just as with one of our biggest problems, drug trafficking, in the field of mining it is necessary to seriously assume the principle of co-responsibility. We can’t continue to pay for the social and environmental cost by ourselves, as well as for the cost in human lives associated with these struggles, while the first world countries do not implement politics with the purpose of controlling the demand for these products. We are willing to cooper-

ate, but we need people outraged in the developed world, who question themselves about the origin and “how” of so many natural resources. We are tired of contributing with the dead for their development.

Let me finish this trip along our continent by mentioning two worrying cases. In our indigenous Guatemala it is very possible that an ex-military man, with a past full of human rights violations, ends up elected president. In the meanwhile, in Honduras, we have an outrageous number of murdered journalists; their current situation is very worrying.

And so, despite certain improvements that we have seen in terms of democracy, when comparing our current situation to the one a few decades ago when the whole region was run by authoritarian governments, the road ahead in the defense of human rights is still very long. This must be a fundamental part of our agenda.

Now allow me to talk about my home in that neighborhood: Colombia, a country in which neither my grandparents, my parents, myself, nor my children, have known one single day of peace. On the contrary, the tree of war has grown very strong, growing roots of hate, producing unimaginable fruits of a barbarism that trap us, and grow stronger every day. There are four million domestic victims of forced displacement, humble farmers stripped of their land, fifty thousand missing, two thousand unionists murdered in the last decades, one hundred and seventy journalists murdered in thirty years. And I could continue with the numbers.

To continue with the demonstrations of greatness and dignity of our people, civil society in Colombia gathers to talk about peace; an audacious posture in the middle of a century-long conflict. And those communities which have most suffered the assassination, forced displacement and disappearing, are the ones that nowadays take the initiative in order to negotiate a way out to the conflict; the only possible way out.

Another great example that shows how in the face of adversity, Latin America does not

.....
Colombia, a country in which neither my grandparents, my parents, myself, nor my children, have known one single day of peace

.....
A good portion of Colombian society continues to view the human rights defender, the peace advocate, the independent journalist, as an enemy of society, and not as what we really are: its ally
.....

.....
Hollman Morris is a Colombian journalist who has spent more than 15 years covering Colombia's internal armed conflict, with a particular focus on human rights issues. Since 2002, Morris has directed the television series *Contravía* (Countercurrent)
.....

give up; she rises and keeps moving forward.

In the last chapter of history written in Colombia, we have the previous government betting for war. A bet, that some say made the country safe again. However, others emphasize how much it cost us.

For example, the unlawful execution by military forces of more than two thousand poor youngsters; massive and arbitrary detentions, criminal persecution by the state's own security forces against whoever dared to think differently, my family and myself being victims of this hunt, just like more than three hundred people and their organizations. If this wasn't enough, it was the ex-president himself who publicly disqualified us, knowing very well that this disqualification meant putting our lives in danger.

There are many sad passages left after this persecution, but the most damaging and sickening was the labeling of every single one who talked about peace. As a consequence, a good portion of Colombian society continues to view the human rights defender, the peace advocate and the independent journalist as an enemy of society, and not as what we really are: its ally.

This is why, today, from here, and with you as my witness, I ask the president of Colombia Juan Manuel Santos to call for a public act of amendment, in a gesture of greatness with the victims of this persecution by the state,

I also make a call that the crimes organized by the state during the last government do not remain in impunity. In the case of espionage by government security forces, the investigation has reached high levels, and we, the victims, do not believe in the lack of awareness by ex-president Alvaro Uribe Velez regarding these facts.

Reality is harsh, but there are plenty of us Colombians who, from diverse fronts, work for a dignified and peaceful country. We are not naïve by thinking that peace is only about the silence of the guns, we believe that peace is about structural reform; in the re-distribution of the country's wealth, of its land, in access to public health and education, and equal

opportunity.

I demand that the guerrillas cease kidnapping, release all the kidnapped now, and send clear signs of a strong will for peace. I am not alone in this. I speak in the name of many others who are waiting for justice from the solitude of the graves of their loved ones or those from whom we never heard again; those who moaned in torture and are still moaning in the pain of their family members; those who lost everything due to terror and fear.

This prize won't be passive. In the contrary, I put it in the service of Colombia's peace; for freedom of expression and for human rights; in order to have more citizens able to express different points of view.

We believe that better-informed citizens will be more independent, and freer. We believe in peace, and freedom of expression as fundamental rights of the men and women of the world.

I want to thank Nuremberg's major Ulrich Maly, the office of human rights of the city of Nuremberg and its director Martina Mittenhubern.

I want to thank my Contravía work team. We believe that poverty and suffering have a face that society must get to know. We also believe that the voice of the victims needs to be heard stronger than the sound of the guns. It is the work of journalism to make sure the voice of the weakest and poorest rises higher.

I also want to mention the hundreds of people from Colombia and abroad have supported our journalism project, specially the Open Society Institute and its Media Program.

I have infinite gratitude for those who still believe that in our huge neighborhood, Latin America, not everything is lost. For our workers, students, farmers, and intellectuals, who show us day by day that Latin America is about "people without legs, but who walk".

I am going to finish my speech with a phrase that is already part of my country: "Because we have memory, we are still in Contravía".

We carry on!

CT

Show me the money

We have a democratic right to know who is funding public advocacy, writes **George Monbiot**

Since the late 19th Century, the very rich have been paying people to demand less government. The work of Herbert Spencer, for example, was sponsored by Andrew Carnegie, John D Rockefeller and Thomas Edison(1). Spencer believed that society changed according to evolutionary laws. Humans were evolving towards perfection, but this process was inhibited by interference from the state. By protecting people from the consequences of their own actions (or their own bad luck), it stopped the winnowing process which would otherwise result in the survival of the fittest.

Social security, publicly-funded education, compulsory vaccination, laws enforcing safety at work all interrupted social evolution. But a self-regulated free market would swiftly ensure that those who were best-adapted would survive and triumph. It's not hard to see why the millionaires loved him. They saw themselves as winners of the evolutionary race, taking their rightful place at the pinnacle of the social order. Any attempt to limit their freedoms would prevent society from achieving perfection.

Today, sponsorship by millionaires and corporations explains why free market thinktanks outnumber and outspend the thinktanks arguing for public services and the distribution of wealth. Or so I guess. But their absence of accountability means that

guesswork is all we've got. Only one of the rightwing thinktanks I contacted was prepared to reveal who funded it(2). All the others refused on the grounds that they had to respect the privacy of their donors. These organisations exert great influence in public life. But we have no means of discovering on whose behalf they do it.

Revelations about this secret funding network have now brought down a cabinet minister. Liam Fox was enmeshed in a web of corporate influence about which we still know little. The organisation he founded, Atlantic Bridge, was registered with the Charity Commission as a thinktank*(3). Like many others, it looked more like a lobbying outfit, demanding privatisation, deregulation and tax cuts. The key question remains unanswered: who funded it?

As a result of better transparency laws in the US, we know more about Atlantic Bridge's partner organisation, the American Legislative Exchange Council. It claims, like most thinktanks, to stand for limited government and free markets. What this means in practice is lobbying against government action such as regulating tobacco and greenhouse gases(4). By an astonishing coincidence, it turns out to have been funded by the tobacco companies Altria and Reynolds American, by the oil giant Exxon and by the billionaire Koch brothers, who run a fossil fuel and chemicals empire

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Today, sponsorship by millionaires and corporations explains why free market thinktanks outnumber and outspend the thinktanks arguing for public services and the distribution of wealth

.....
The law should insist that all organisations which seek to influence public opinion should reveal sources of funding greater than £1,000
.....

they call “the biggest company you’ve never heard of.”(5,6)

Freedom is what all these groups claim to stand for. But the freedom they promote is of a particular kind. They are not campaigning for freedom from hunger or poverty. They are not demanding free access to health and education. They are not lobbying for freedom from industrial injuries, exploitation, pollution or unscrupulous banking. When these libertarians say freedom, they mean freedom from the rules which prevent their sponsors behaving as they wish: mistreating their workers, threatening public health and using the planet as their dustbin.

Like everything else about these lobbyists, the true, unacceptable meaning of the freedom they espouse is hidden behind an acceptable front. Thinktanks and lobby groups are the bane of democratic politics. They are the means by which corporations and the ultra-rich influence public life without having to reveal their hand. Their refusal to reveal who funds them, and the British state’s failure to demand it, are deeply undemocratic.

In October, in the *Guardian*, Michael White wondered why Liam Fox did not make his friend Adam Werrity an officially-sanctioned special adviser(7). Had he done so, Werrity’s presence in his department would not have broken civil service rules, and Fox might still be in his post. But it would also have meant that Werrity’s activities would have been subject to Freedom of Information requests, and that could have been fatal to what he was doing.

What this case highlights is the asymmetry of information in public life. The public sector is now so transparent that we have a right to read the private emails of climate scientists working for a state-sponsored university. The private sector is so opaque that we have no idea on whose behalf the people who appear every day on the BBC, using arguments that look suspiciously like corporate propaganda, are speaking.

The Labour government weakened the

rules on lobbying transparency. The ministerial code published in 2007 dropped the requirement that meetings between ministers and lobbyists should be recorded(8). It also rebuffed MPs’ demands for a register of lobbyists. You’ll be surprised to hear who the villain was: Tom Watson, then a Cabinet Office minister, now a heroic campaigner for corporate accountability. He brushed aside the call for a register with the claim that “we have a pretty good system in the UK.”(9) In fact we have no system at all: the Commons Public Administration Committee has pointed out that “lobbying activity in the United Kingdom is subject to no specific external regulation.”(10)

Thanks to the Fox scandal, the coalition government will now be forced, at last, to do something. But unless new legislation also applies to the thinktanks, their funders will keep using them to promote their interests without disclosure. The law should insist that all organisations which seek to influence public opinion should reveal sources of funding greater than £1,000.

The government might also take a look at charity law. It seems remarkable to me that groups like Policy Exchange, the Institute of Economic Affairs and the Global Warming Policy Foundation have charitable status. The Charity Commission disqualified Atlantic Bridge on the grounds that “it is not permissible for a charity to promote a particular pre-determined point of view.”(11) Should this not disqualify all of them? Can you imagine the IEA deciding that private companies should get their noses out of the NHS? Can you picture Lord Lawson’s Global Warming Policy Foundation announcing that climate change is an urgent threat and fossil fuel companies need stricter regulation? Is it credible that these organisations do not have “a particular pre-determined point of view”?

And shouldn’t it be a basic requirement of charity law that we know who, as taxpayers, we are subsidising? How can an organisation qualify as a charity if we don’t

even know whose interests it is promoting? I strongly suspect that we are granting tax breaks to multi-millionaires and corporations to help them change public opinion. I invite the thinktanks to prove me wrong.

Let's also demand that the BBC reform its editorial guidelines, so that no one working for a group whose purpose is public advocacy can take part in a programme unless it has published a registry of interests. Otherwise the BBC is granting free airtime to corporations without disclosing who they are or what their interest in the question might be. So come on you free-market libertarians, let's hear your arguments against transparency and accountability. And let's hear how you reconcile them with your professed love of freedom.

CT

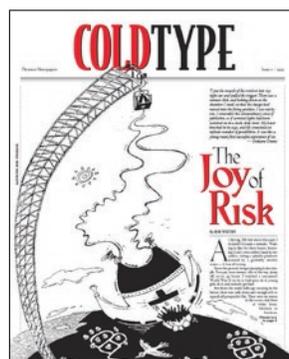
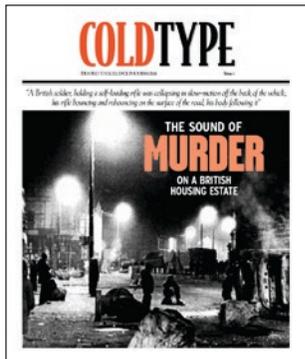
George Monbiot's latest book is "Bring On The Apocalypse". This piece first appeared in London's Guardian newspaper.

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2. <http://www.monbiot.com/2011/09/12/think-of-a-tank/>
3. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/oct/16/lessons-atlantic-bridge-questioning>

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6. See also <http://prwatch.org/news/2011/07/10914/alec-exposed-warming-climate-change>
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9. Tom Watson, 19th June 2008. Public Administration Committee – Minutes of Evidence. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmpublicadm/36/8061901.htm>
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11. http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/RSS/News/pr_atlanticb.aspx

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American history

William Blum thinks it's time US students were taught the truth about what their country has done to the rest of the world

.....
Bennett felt obliged to post a statement on Facebook saying that his experience in World War II had taught him that "war is the lowest form of human behavior"
.....

Is history getting too close for comfort for the fragile little American heart and mind? Their schools and their favorite media have done an excellent job of keeping them ignorant of what their favorite country has done to the rest of the world, but lately some discomfiting points of view have managed to find their way into this well-defended American consciousness.

First, Congressman Ron Paul during a presidential debate last month expressed the belief that those who carried out the September 11 attack were retaliating for the many abuses perpetrated against Arab countries by the United States over the years. The audience booed him, loudly.

Then, popular-song icon Tony Bennett, in a radio interview, said the United States caused the 9/11 attacks because of its actions in the Persian Gulf, adding that President George W. Bush had told him in 2005 that the Iraq war was a mistake. Bennett of course came under some nasty fire. FOX News (September 24), carefully choosing its comments charmingly as usual, used words like "insane", "twisted mind", and "absurdities". Bennett felt obliged to post a statement on Facebook saying that his experience in World War II had taught him that "war is the lowest form of human behavior." He said there's no excuse for terrorism, and he added, "I'm sorry if my statements suggested anything other than an expression of love for my country."

(NBC September 21)

Then came the Islamic cleric, Anwar al-Awlaki, an American citizen, who for some time had been blaming US foreign policy in the Middle East as the cause of anti-American hatred and terrorist acts. So we killed him. Ron Paul and Tony Bennett can count themselves lucky.

What, then, is the basis of all this? What has the United States actually been doing in the Middle East in the recent past?

- the shooting down of two Libyan planes in 1981
- the bombing of Lebanon in 1983 and 1984
- the bombing of Libya in 1986
- the bombing and sinking of an Iranian ship in 1987
- the shooting down of an Iranian passenger plane in 1988
- the shooting down of two more Libyan planes in 1989
- the massive bombing of the Iraqi people in 1991
- the continuing bombings and draconian sanctions against Iraq for the next 12 years
- the bombing of Afghanistan and Sudan in 1998
- the habitual support of Israel despite the routine devastation and torture it inflicts upon the Palestinian people
- the habitual condemnation of Palestinian resistance to this

- the abduction of “suspected terrorists” from Muslim countries, such as Malaysia, Pakistan, Lebanon and Albania, who were then taken to places like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, where they were tortured
- the large military and hi-tech presence in Islam’s holiest land, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere in the Persian Gulf region
- the support of numerous undemocratic, authoritarian Middle East governments from the Shah of Iran to Mubarak of Egypt to the Saudi royal family
- the invasion, bombing and occupation of Afghanistan, 2001 to the present, and Iraq, 2003 to the present
- the bombings and continuous firing of missiles to assassinate individuals in Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan, and Libya during the period of 2006-2011

It can’t be repeated or emphasized enough. The biggest lie of the “war on terrorism”, although weakening, is that the targets of America’s attacks have an irrational hatred of the United States and its way of life, based on religious and cultural misunderstandings and envy. The large body of evidence to the contrary includes a 2004 report from the Defense Science Board, “a Federal advisory committee established to provide independent advice to the Secretary of Defense.” The report states:

“Muslims do not hate our freedom, but rather they hate our policies. The overwhelming majority voice their objections to what they see as one-sided support in favor of Israel and against Palestinian rights, and the long-standing, even increasing, support for what Muslims collectively see as tyrannies, most notably Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Pakistan and the Gulf states. Thus, when American public diplomacy talks about bringing democracy to Islamic societies, this is seen as no more than self-serving hypocrisy.”

The report concludes: “No public relations campaign can save America from flawed policies.” (*Christian Science Monitor*, November 29, 2004)

The Pentagon released the study after the *New York Times* ran a story about it on November 24, 2004. The *Times* reported that although the board’s report does not constitute official government policy, it captures “the essential themes of a debate that is now roiling not just the Defense Department but the entire United States government.”

“Homeland security is a rightwing concept fostered following 9/11 as the answer to the effects of 50 years of bad foreign policies in the middle east. The amount of homeland security we actually need is inversely related to how good our foreign policy is.” – Sam Smith, editor of *The Progressive Review*

The lies that will not die

In his September 22 address at the United Nations, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad mentioned the Nazi Holocaust just twice:

“Some European countries still use the Holocaust, after six decades, as the excuse to pay fines or ransom to the Zionists.”

“They threaten anyone who questions the Holocaust and the September 11 event with sanctions and military action.”

That was it.

By the term “questions the Holocaust” the Iranian president has made clear repeatedly over the years what he’s referring to. He has commented about the peculiarity and injustice of a tragedy which took place in Europe resulting in a state for the Jews in the Middle East instead of in Europe. Why are the Palestinians paying a price for a German crime? he asks. And he has questioned the figure of six million Jews killed by Nazi Germany, as have many historians and others of all political stripes who think the total was probably less. This has nothing to do with the Holocaust not taking place.

But, as usual, the Western media pretends that it doesn’t understand.

The *New York Post* (Sep 22) referred to the Iranian president as “the world’s foremost Holocaust denier, the would-be genocidist

.....
Ahmadinejad has questioned the figure of six million Jews killed by Nazi Germany, as have many historians and others of all political stripes who think the total was probably less

.....
Once again I must point out that I have yet to read of Ahmadinejad ever saying simply, clearly, unambiguously, and unequivocally that he thinks that what we know as the Holocaust never happened
.....

Ahmadinejad”.

Agence France Presse (Sept 22) stated: “The Iranian leader repeated comments casting doubt on the origins of the Holocaust.”

The *Washington Post* wrote of “Ahmadinejad’s speech suggesting larger conspiracies were behind the Holocaust and the Sept. 11 attacks caused delegates to walk out.” (Sept 23)

And Amy Goodman on Democracy Now! (Sept 23) included this amongst the radio program’s news headlines: “For the third straight year, Ahmadinejad sent delegates to the exits after questioning the Nazi Holocaust.”

Without further explanation of that incendiary term – and none was given – what can “questioning the Nazi Holocaust” mean or imply to most listeners other than that Ahmadinejad was questioning whether the Holocaust had actually taken place?

Once again I must point out that I have yet to read of Ahmadinejad ever saying simply, clearly, unambiguously, and unequivocally that he thinks that what we know as the Holocaust never happened. For the record, in a speech at Columbia University on Sept 24, 2007, in reply to a question about the Holocaust, the Iranian president declared: “I’m not saying that it didn’t happen at all. This is not the judgment that I’m passing here.”

Indeed, I do not know if any of the so-called “Holocaust-deniers” actually, ever, umm, y’know ... deny the Holocaust. They question certain aspects of the Holocaust history that’s been handed down to us, but they don’t explicitly say that what we know as the Holocaust never took place. (Yes, I’m sure you can find at least one nut-case somewhere.)

Another enduring lie about Ahmadinejad is that he has called for violence against Israel: His 2005 remark re “wiping Israel off the map”, besides being a very questionable translation, has been seriously misinterpreted, as evidenced by the fact that the following year he declared: “The Zionist regime will be wiped out soon, the same way the Soviet

Union was, and humanity will achieve freedom.” (Associated Press, Dec 12, 2006) Obviously, the man was not calling for any kind of violent attack upon Israel, for the dissolution of the Soviet Union took place peacefully.

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Carl Oglesby

The president of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), 1965-66, died on Sept 13, age 76. I remember him best for a speech of his I heard during the March on Washington, Nov 27, 1965, a speech passionately received by the tens of thousands crowding the National Mall:

The original commitment in Vietnam was made by President Truman, a mainstream liberal. It was seconded by President Eisenhower, a moderate liberal. It was intensified by the late President Kennedy, a flaming liberal. Think of the men who now engineer that war – those who study the maps, give the commands, push the buttons, and tally the dead: Bundy, McNamara, Rusk, Lodge, Goldberg, the President [Johnson] himself. They are not moral monsters. They are all honorable men. They are all liberals.

He insisted that America’s founding fathers would have been on his side. “Our dead revolutionaries would soon wonder why their country was fighting against what appeared to be a revolution.” He challenged those who called him anti-American: “I say, don’t blame me for that! Blame those who mouthed my liberal values and broke my American heart.”

We are dealing now with a colossus that does not want to be changed. It will not change itself. It will not cooperate with those who want to change it. Those allies of ours in the government – are they really our allies? It saddens me to think that virtually nothing has changed for the better in US foreign policy since Carl Oglesby spoke on the Mall that day. America’s wars are ongoing, perpetual, eternal. And the current war monger in the White House is regarded by many as a liberal, for whatever that’s worth. **CT**

The ‘liberation’ of Libya

Bill Van Auken sees the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi as more a victory of imperialist power and a return to colonialism than a war of liberation

Libya’s NATO-backed National Transitional Council (NTC) is set to announce the supposed completion of the country’s “liberation” in the third week of October following the lynching of former ruler Muammar Gaddafi.

What is being celebrated with the speech delivered by NTC Chairman Mustafa Abdel Jalil, Gaddafi’s former justice minister, is not the liberation of the Libyan people, but rather the victory of the major imperialist powers in a war aimed at turning the clock back to the days of colonialism.

It has been achieved by means of a NATO bombing campaign that has reduced much of the country’s infrastructure to rubble and left thousands of Libyan men, women and children dead and wounded. Its final chapter, the barbaric siege of the coastal city of Sirte and the murder of Gaddafi, his son and other former members of his regime, only underscores the criminality of the entire venture.

These crimes provide the ultimate exposure of the pretense that the war in Libya was waged for “humanitarian” aims, to protect Libyan civilians from the Gaddafi regime. In Sirte, NATO provided air cover for a “rebel” army carrying out precisely the kind of bloody assault on a civilian population center that the US-NATO intervention was purportedly designed to prevent.

From its outset, the war has been one for regime-change, prosecuted by the United

States and the Western European powers in pursuit of definite geo-strategic and economic interests. Their war aims included inflicting a sharp reversal on China and Russia, which had both concluded significant oil, infrastructure and arms deals with the Gaddafi regime, challenging Western hegemony in a key energy-producing country on the Mediterranean.

The NATO powers saw in the overthrow of Gaddafi the prospect of establishing far tighter control over Libya’s oil and gas reserves by major Western energy conglomerates such as BP, ConocoPhillips, Total and ENI. They also saw the installation in Tripoli of a wholly subservient client regime as a means of asserting military power in a region that has been convulsed by popular upheavals, both in Tunisia to the west and Egypt to the east.

Gangster dominated

The regime taking shape in Tripoli and Benghazi will be one dominated by gangsters, Western intelligence “assets” and bribed former Libyan officials, all offering their services in the re-colonization of the country. Only the most morally and politically corrupt elements of the so-called “left” in Europe and America can equate this filthy enterprise with “liberation” and “democracy.”

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Both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* responded to the murder of Gaddafi with editorials urging Washington to take an aggressive role in asserting US dominance in Libya. The killing, the *Post* wrote, "must be seen as the beginning and not the end of Libya's transformation." Noting that Libya's oil wealth can "pay for a US training mission for security forces," the editorial argued that the US should "take the lead." It added that Libya's "stabilization under a democratic government could help tip the broader wave of change in the Arab Middle East toward those favoring freedom." Here the word "freedom" is used in the traditional manner of US foreign policy to signify being under American domination.

The *New York Times* counseled that "More than money – thanks to oil, Libya is wealthy Libya will need sustained technical advice and full-time engagement." No doubt, such "advice" will encompass the rewriting of the terms of Libya's oil contracts.

Both editorials include worried passages about the existence of dozens of "rebel" militias and the dispersal of Libya's arms stockpiles, including surface-to-air missiles, implicitly supplying the pretext for continued US-NATO military intervention.

The brutal death of Muammar Gaddafi was a state murder that was openly demanded by Washington. Barely 48 hours before NATO warplanes and a US Predator drone attacked the convoy in which Gaddafi was fleeing Sirte, leaving him to the mercy of the "rebels," Secretary of State Hillary Clinton flew into Tripoli and called for the ousted Libyan head of state to be "captured or killed" as quickly as possible.

.....
Officers' coup

Inspired by Nasserism, Gaddafi led a young officers' coup in September 1969. By the time of his death, he had long since abandoned any suggestion of revolutionary nationalism. In those early days, nationalist regimes like the one in Libya had come to power in a

number of countries proclaiming a national and social agenda that was bound up with the mass anti-colonial movement.

In Libya, this included the overthrow of the corrupt monarchy of King Idris, which was completely subservient to US and British imperialism, the closure of Wheelus Air Base, the largest US military facility on the African continent, the striking of harder bargains with the foreign oil companies and the push for OPEC to use oil as a weapon, including by instituting embargoes.

It was this policy that led Henry Kissinger, then the US national security advisor, to push in 1969 for approval of covert action to kill or overthrow Gaddafi.

Like all of the radical nationalist rulers, Gaddafi sought to gain greater room for maneuver on the international arena by balancing between imperialism and the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy, while utilizing a combination of repression and reforms to suppress social struggles within the country. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 left Libya and similar regimes scrambling to reach an accommodation with the imperialist powers.

In 2003, in the wake of the US invasion of Iraq, Libya sought a normalization of relations with the West, renouncing any ambitions toward nuclear weapons and condemning terrorism, while collaborating with the CIA in the global crusade against Al Qaeda. Once he had taken this course, Gaddafi was courted by Washington and every major power in Western Europe for oil deals, arms contracts and other lucrative agreements.

Nevertheless, the imperialist powers never forgave Gaddafi for his early radicalism and never trusted him. Thus the same political figures who had fawned over him not so long ago gloated over his grisly murder.

Told of Gaddafi's death, Hillary Clinton – who in 2009 had welcomed the Libyan ruler's murdered son Moatessem to the State Department – laughed and declared, "I came, I saw, he died."

This sums up the gangsterism of the Amer-

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ican government, headed by a president who has gone before the television cameras three times in the last six months to claim credit for a state murder, in one case that of a US citizen, the New Mexico-born Muslim cleric Anwar al-Awlaki.

In his speech after the killing, Obama claimed that the murder of Gaddafi had proven that “we are seeing the strength of American leadership in the world.”

This is nonsense. Assassination as a continuous instrument of foreign policy is a symptom not of US strength but of historic decline. It reflects the desperate and irrational belief within the ruling elite that acts of naked violence can somehow compensate for the profound crisis and decay of American capitalism.

The debacles produced by the US invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan have only laid the foundations for new and even bloodier wars. With Obama having used the assault on Libya to enunciate a preventive war doctrine that allows for US aggression anywhere

that perceived American “values and interests” are at stake, such wars will not be long in coming.

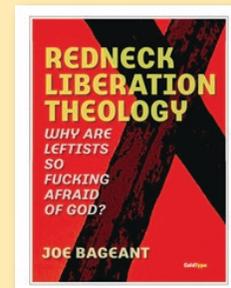
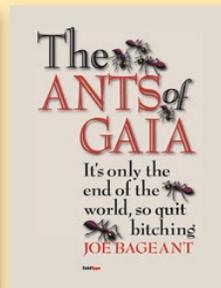
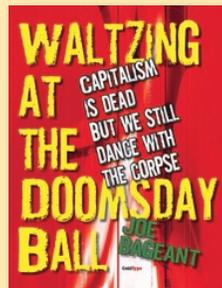
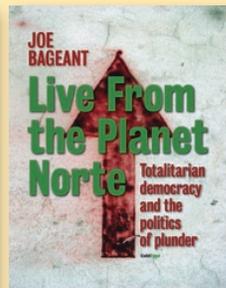
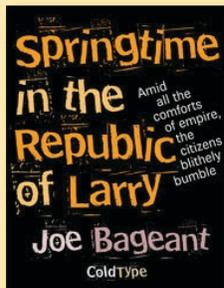
The war in Libya, culminating in the murder of Gaddafi, has served to acquaint working people all over the world once again with the real character of imperialism, described by Lenin as “reaction all down the line.” Predatory wars abroad in the interest of finance capital are one component of a counterrevolutionary policy directed ultimately against the working class. They are inevitably combined with a ruthless assault on both the social and democratic rights of the working class at home.

The fight against war and the struggle against the destruction of jobs, living standards and basic rights are inseparable. They can be won only through the political mobilization and international unity of the working class in the struggle for socialism.

Bill Van Auken is editor of the World Socialist Web Site - www.wsws.org

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