

A NATION SOAKS THE RICH | SAM PIZZIGATI
THE ILLUSION OF DEMOCRACY | DAVID CROMWELL
MY ENEMY. MY ALLY | WILLIAM BLUM

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VEGAS: BEHIND THE BRIGHT LIGHTS

There, in the shadows of the elevated sidewalks spanning the non-stop ten-lane highway that feeds the ravenous Strip with cash-laden customers, exists another vastly-contrasting life, testimony to a harsher world where there are no jobs, no homes, no cash – and very little hope . . .

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Cover Photo:
Tony Sutton

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The illusion of democracy

David Cromwell has some thoughts on liberal journalism, Wikileaks and the deceptions of climate change

In an era of permanent war, economic meltdown and climate ‘weirding’, we need all the champions of truth and justice that we can find. But where are they? What happened to trade unions, the green movement, human rights groups, campaigning newspapers, peace activists, strong-minded academics, progressive voices? We are awash in state and corporate propaganda, with the ‘liberal’ media a key cog in the apparatus. We are hemmed in by the powerful forces of greed, profit and control. We are struggling to get by, never mind flourish as human beings. We are subject to increasingly insecure, poorly-paid and unfulfilling employment, the slashing of the welfare system, the privatisation of the National Health Service, the erosion of civil rights, and even the criminalisation of protest and dissent.

The pillars of a genuinely liberal society have been so weakened, if not destroyed, that we are essentially living under a system of corporate totalitarianism. In his 2010 book, *Death of the Liberal Class*, the former *New York Times* reporter Chris Hedges notes that: ‘The anemic liberal class continues to assert, despite ample evidence to the contrary, that human freedom and equality can be achieved through the charade of electoral politics and constitutional reform. It refuses to acknowledge the corporate domination of traditional democratic channels for ensuring broad participatory power.’ (p. 8)

Worse, the liberal class has: ‘lent its voice to hollow acts of political theater, and the pretense that democratic debate and choice continue to exist.’ (pp. 9-10)

This pretense afflicts all the major western ‘democracies’, including the UK, and it is a virus that permeates corporate news reporting, not least the BBC. For example, the BBC’s political editor Nick Robinson has a new book out with the cruelly apt title, *Live From Downing Street*. Why apt? Because Downing Street is indeed the centre of the political editor’s worldview. As he explains in the book’s foreword: ‘My job is to report on what those in power are thinking and doing and on those who attempt to hold them to account in Parliament.’ (Added emphasis).

Several observations spring to mind:

1. How does Nick Robinson know what powerful politicians are thinking?
2. Does he believe that any discrepancy between what they really think and what they tell him and his media colleagues is inconsequential?
3. Why does the BBC’s political editor focus so heavily on what happens in Parliament? What about the wider spectrum of opinion outside Parliament, so often improperly represented by MPs, if at all? What about attempts in the wider society to hold power to account, away from Westminster corridors and the feeble, Whip-constrained platitudes of party careerists? No wonder

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Robinson might have regrets over Iraq, as he later concedes when he says:

‘The build-up to the invasion of Iraq is the point in my career when I have most regretted not pushing harder and not asking more questions.’ (p. 332).

4. Thus, right from the start of his book Robinson concedes unwittingly that his journalism cannot, by definition, be ‘balanced’.

But, of course, corporate media professionals have long propped up the illusion that the public is offered an ‘impartial’ selection of facts, opinions and perspectives from which any individual can derive a well-informed world view. Simply put, ‘impartiality’ is what the establishment says is impartial.

The journalist and broadcaster Brian Walden once said: ‘The demand for impartiality is too jealously promoted by the political parties themselves. They count balance in seconds and monitor it with stopwatches.’ (Quoted, Tim Luckhurst, ‘Time to take sides’, *Independent*, July 1, 2003). This nonsense suggests that media ‘impartiality’ means that one major political party receives identical, or at least similar, coverage to another. But when all the major political parties have almost identical views on all the important issues, barring small tactical differences, how can this possibly be deemed to constitute genuine impartiality?

The major political parties offer no real choice. They all represent essentially the same interests crushing any moves towards meaningful public participation in the shaping of policy; or towards genuine concern for all members of society, particularly the weak and the vulnerable.

The essential truth was explained by political scientist Thomas Ferguson in his book *Golden Rule* (University of Chicago Press, 1995). When major backers of political parties and elections agree on an issue – such as international ‘free trade’ agreements, maintaining a massive ‘defence’ budget or refusing to make the necessary cuts in greenhouse gas emissions – then the parties will not compete on that issue, even though the

public might desire a real alternative.

US media analyst Robert McChesney observes: ‘In many respects we now live in a society that is only formally democratic, as the great mass of citizens have minimal say on the major public issues of the day, and such issues are scarcely debated at all in any meaningful sense in the electoral arena.’ (McChesney, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*, The New Press, 2000, p. 260).

As the *Washington Post* once noted, inadvertently echoing Ferguson’s *Golden Rule*, modern democracy works best when the political ‘parties essentially agree on most of the major issues’. The *Financial Times* put it more bluntly: capitalist democracy can best succeed when it focuses on ‘the process of depoliticizing the economy.’ (Cited by McChesney, *ibid.*, p. 112).

The public recognises much of this for what it is. Opinion polls indicate the distrust they feel for politicians and business leaders, as well as the journalists who all too frequently channel uncritical reporting on politics and business. A 2009 survey by the polling company Ipsos MORI found that only 13 per cent of the British public trust politicians to tell the truth: the lowest rating in 25 years. Business leaders were trusted by just 25 per cent of the public, while journalists languished at 22 per cent.

And yet recall that when Lord Justice Leveson published his long-awaited report into ‘the culture, practices and ethics of the British press’ on November 29, he made the ludicrous assertion that ‘the British press – I repeat, all of it – serves the country very well for the vast majority of the time.’

That tells us much about the nature and value of his government-appointed inquiry.

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The Flagship Of Liberal Journalism On The Rocks

Damning indictments of the liberal media were self-inflicted by its vanguard newspaper, the *Guardian*, in two recent blows. First, consider Decca Aitkenhead’s hostile inter-

view with Wikileaks co-founder Julian Assange in which he is described as a ‘fugitive’ who has been ‘holed up’ in the Ecuadorian embassy in London for six months. Aitkenhead casts doubts over his ‘frame of mind’, with a sly suggestion that he might even be suffering from ‘paranoia’. She claims Assange ‘seems more like an in-patient than an interviewee [...]. If you have ever visited someone convalescing after a breakdown, his demeanour would be instantly recognisable. Admirers cast him as the new Jason Bourne, but in these first few minutes I worry he may be heading more towards Miss Havisham.’

He ‘talks in the manner of a man who has worked out that the Earth is round, while everyone else is lumbering on under the impression that it is flat’. Aitkenhead continues: ‘it’s hard to read his book without wondering, is Assange a hypocrite – and is he a reliable witness?’ Indeed ‘some of his supporters despair of an impossible personality, and blame his problems on hubris.’

Aitkenhead asks him ‘about the fracture with close colleagues at WikiLeaks’ and wants him to ‘explain why so many relationships have soured.’ She gives a potted, one-sided history of why the relationship between the *Guardian* and Wikileaks ‘soured’, saying dismissively that ‘the details of the dispute are of doubtful interest to a wider audience’.

The character attack continues: ‘the messianic grandiosity of his self-justification is a little disconcerting’ and ‘he reminds me of a charismatic cult leader’. Aitkenhead concludes: ‘The only thing I could say with confidence is that he is a control freak.’

The hostile, condescending and flippant tone and content contrast starkly with the more respectable treatment afforded to establishment interviewees such as Michael Gove, Michael Heseltine, Christopher Meyer and Alistair Darling. Aitkenhead almost fawns over Darling, then the Chancellor:

‘His dry, deadpan humour lends itself to his ironic take on the grumpy old man, which he plays with gruff good nature. [...] He re-

minds me of childhood friends’ fathers who seemed fearsome until we got old enough to realise they were being funny.’

Darling says that ‘I was never really interested in the theory of achieving things, just the practicality of doing things.’ Aitkenhead sighs: One might say this has been Darling’s great strength. The pragmatic clarity made him a highly effective minister... But it may well also be his weakness – for at times he seems almost too straightforward, even high-minded, for the low cunning of political warfare.’

Sometimes people would approach the Chancellor in public and demand that he fix the economy. Darling recalls that one chap accosted him at a petrol station: ‘“I know it’s to do with oil prices – but what are you going to do about it?” People think, Well, surely you can do something, you are responsible – so of course it reflects on me.’

Aitkenhead asks him sweetly: ‘Is it painful to be blamed so personally?’

Two days after the *Guardian*’s hit job on Julian Assange, it was followed by the paper’s low-key announcement of its public poll for person of the year: Bradley Manning, the US soldier suspected of leaking state secrets to Wikileaks. The implication of the *Guardian*’s grudging note was that Manning had only won because of ‘rather fishy voting patterns’: ‘Manning secured 70 percent of the vote, the vast majority of them coming after a series of @Wikileaks tweets. Project editor Mark Rice-Oxley said: “It was an interesting exercise that told us a lot about our readers, our heroes and the reasons that people vote.”’

Although the short entry appeared in the *Guardian*’s online news blog, there was no facility for adding reader comments, thus avoiding any possible additional public embarrassment. Perhaps the paper is mortified that it has been shown up by Wikileaks and Manning for not doing its job of holding power to account.

As Jonathan Cook, a former *Guardian* journalist, wrote last year: ‘The *Guardian*, like other mainstream media, is heavily invested

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– both financially and ideologically – in supporting the current global order. It was once able to exclude and now, in the internet age, must vilify those elements of the left whose ideas risk questioning a system of corporate power and control of which the *Guardian* is a key institution.'

So much for the British flagship of liberal journalism then.

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Climate Betrayal And Deceptions
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One of the biggest failures of the liberal class has been its inability to see, far less challenge, the inherently destructive and psychopathic nature of corporations.

We at Medialens once wrote to Stephen Tindale, then executive director of Greenpeace UK, and asked him why they did not address this in their campaigning:

'Let us see Greenpeace (and other pressure groups) doing more to oppose, not so much what corporations do, but what they are; namely, undemocratic centralised institutions wielding illegitimate power.' (Email, January 7, 2002)

Ignoring or missing the point, Tindale replied: 'We will continue to confront corporations where necessary [...] we are an environmental group, not an anti-corporate group. We will therefore work with companies when we can do so to promote our campaign goals.' (Email, January 28, 2002)

Corporate Watch has pointedly asked of nongovernmental organisations, such as Greenpeace: 'Why are NGOs getting involved in these partnerships?' One important factor, it seems, is 'follow the leader'. Corporate Watch notes: 'For many NGOs, the debate on whether or not to engage with companies is already over. The attitude is "all the major NGOs engage with companies so why shouldn't we?" ' (Corporate Watch, 'What's Wrong with Corporate Social Responsibility?', 2006, p. 2).

The sad reality is that Greenpeace and other major NGOs accept the ideological premise that the corporate sector can be persuaded to

act benignly. To focus instead on the illegitimate power and inherent destructive nature of the corporation is a step too far for today's emasculated 'pressure groups', whether they are working on environmental protection, human rights or fighting poverty.

Adding to the already overwhelming evidence of corporate power protecting itself at almost any cost, a recent book titled *Secret Manoeuvres in the Dark* (Pluto Books, 2012) exposes the covert methods of corporations to evade democratic accountability and to undermine legitimate public protest and activism. Using exclusive access to previously confidential sources, Eveline Lubbers, an independent investigator with SpinWatch.org, provides compelling case studies on companies such as Nestlé, Shell and McDonalds. 'The aim of covert corporate strategy', she observes, 'is not to win an argument, but to contain, intimidate and ultimately eliminate opposition.'

Lubbers also points out that dialogue, one of the key instruments of 'corporate social responsibility', is exploited by big business 'as a crucial tool to gather information, to keep critics engaged and ultimately to divide and rule, by talking to some and demonizing others.' Lubbers' book, then, is yet another exposure of corporate efforts to prevent civil society from obtaining real power.

And yet virtually every day comes compelling evidence showing how disastrous this is for humanity. A new scientific report reveals that global carbon emissions have hit a record high: 'In a development that underscores the widening gap between the necessary steps to limit global warming and the policies that governments are actually putting into place, a new report shows that global carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions will likely reach a record high of 35.6 billion tonnes in 2012, up 2.6 percent from 2011.'

This is a disaster for climate stability. Meanwhile, a new study based on 20 years of satellite observations shows that the planet's polar ice sheets are already melting three times faster than they were in the 1990s.

In September, senior NASA climate scientist James Hansen had warned of a ‘planetary emergency’ because of the dangerous effects of Arctic ice melt, including methane gas released from permafrost regions currently under ice. ‘We are in a planetary emergency,’ said Hansen, decrying ‘the gap between what is understood by scientific community and what is known by the public.’

As ever, the latest UN Climate Summit in Doha was just another talking shop that paid lip service to the need for radical and immediate action in curbing greenhouse gas emissions in the face of climate chaos.

The failure of the liberal class to rein in, or seriously challenge, corporate power is typified by this appalling gap between climate change rhetoric and reality. The rhetoric is typified by the political call to keep the average global temperature rise to under 2 degrees Celsius by 2100. The appalling reality is that the rise is likely to be in the region of 4-6 deg C (but potentially much higher if run-away global warming kicks in with the release of methane). This gap – actually a chasm of likely tragic proportions – is graphically depicted by climate scientist Professor Kevin Anderson of Manchester University in a recent powerful and disturbing presentation.

Anderson cites an unnamed ‘very senior political scientist’ who often advises the government. This adviser says: ‘Too much has been invested in two degrees C for us to say it is not possible. It would undermine all that has been achieved. It would give a sense of hopelessness that we may as well just give in.’

Anderson also reports that on the eve of the UN Climate Summit in Copenhagen in 2010, he had a 20-minute meeting in Manchester with Ed Miliband, then the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change. Miliband told Anderson: ‘Our position is challenging enough. I can’t go with the message that two degrees C is impossible – it’s what we’ve all worked towards.’

Anderson also relates that he attended a Chatham House event where the message from both ‘a very senior government sci-

entist and someone very senior from an oil company’ – which he strongly hinted was Shell – was this: ‘[We] think we’re on for 4 to 6 degrees C but we just can’t be open about it.’

Anderson warns that this deception is ‘going on all the time behind the scenes’ and ‘that somehow we can’t tell the public’ the truth. The consequences could be terminal for large swathes of humanity and planetary ecosystems.

In short, we desperately need to hear the truth from people like Kevin Anderson, Julian Assange and Bradley Manning.

To return to Chris Hedges on ‘the death of the liberal class’: ‘The liberal class is expected to mask the brutality of imperial war and corporate malfeasance by deploring the most egregious excesses while studiously refusing to question the legitimacy of the power elite’s actions and structures. When dissidents step outside these boundaries, they become pariahs. Specific actions can be criticized, but motives, intentions, and the moral probity of the power elite cannot be questioned.’ (Hedges, op. cit., pp. 152-153)

And he warns:

‘We stand on the verge of one of the bleakest periods in human history, when the bright lights of civilizations will blink out and we will descend for decades, if not centuries, into barbarity. The elites, who successfully convinced us that we no longer possessed the capacity to understand the revealed truths presented before us or to fight back against the chaos caused by economic and environmental catastrophe, will use their resources to create privileged little islands where they will have access to security and goods denied to the rest of us.’ (p. 197)

We must have the vision to imagine that, however bleak things appear now, things can change: if we put our minds to it and work together. **CT**

David Cromwell is co-editor of the British media watchdog Medialens at <http://medialens.org>

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Media barbarians, liberal accomplices

Leveson's Punch and Judy show on the British Press masks 'hacking' on a scale you can barely imagine, writes **John Pilger**

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In Syria, the US, Britain and France are funding and arming the icon of terrorism, al-Qaida. In Latin America, one US bank has laundered \$378bn in drug money
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In the week Lord Leveson published almost a million words about his inquiry into the “culture, practice and ethics” of Britain’s corporate press, two illuminating books about media and freedom were also published. Their contrast with the Punch and Judy show staged by Leveson is striking.

For 36 years, Project Censored, based in California, has documented critically important stories unreported or suppressed by the media most Americans watch or read. This year’s report is *Censored 2013: Dispatches From The Media Revolution* by Mickey Huff and Andy Lee Roth (Seven Stories Press). They describe the omissions of “mainstream” journalism as “history in the un-making”. Unlike Leveson, their investigation demonstrates the sham of a system claiming to be free. Among their top 25 censored stories are these:

Since 2001, the United States has erected a police state apparatus including a presidential order that allows the US military to detain anyone indefinitely without trial. FBI agents are now responsible for the majority of terrorist plots, with a network of 15,000 spies “encouraging and assisting people to commit crimes”. Informants receive cash rewards of up to \$100,000.

The bombing of civilian targets in Libya in 2011 was often deliberate and included the main water supply facility that provided

water to 70 per cent of the population. In Afghanistan, the murder of 16 unarmed civilians, including children, attributed to one rogue US soldier, was actually committed by “multiple” soldiers, and covered up. In Syria, the US, Britain and France are funding and arming the icon of terrorism, al-Qaida. In Latin America, one US bank has laundered \$378bn in drug money.

In Britain, this world of subjugated news and information is concealed behind a similar façade of a “free” media, which promotes the extremisms of state corruption and war, consumerism and an impoverishment known as “austerity”. Leveson devoted his “inquiry” to the preservation of this system. My favourite laugh-out-loud quote of His Lordship is: “I have seen no basis at any stage for challenging the integrity of the police.”

Those who have long tired of deconstructing the clichés and deceptions of “news” say: “At least there is the internet now.”

Yes, there is, but for how long? Alfred W. McCoy, the great American chronicler of imperialism, quotes Obama in one of the recent election debates. “We need to be thinking about cyber security,” said Obama. “We need to be thinking about space.” McCoy calls this revolutionary. “Not a single commentator seemed to have a clue when it came to the profound strategic changes en-

coded in the president's sparse words," he wrote. "Yet, for the past four years, working in silence and secrecy, the Obama administration has presided over a technological revolution... moving the nation far beyond bayonets and battleships to cyber warfare, the weaponisation of space [and] a breakthrough in what's called 'information warfare'."

This is about "hacking" on a vast scale by the state and its intelligence and military arms and "security" corporations. It was unmentionable at the Leveson inquiry, even though the internet was within Leveson's remit. It is the subject of *Cyberpunks: Freedom And The Future Of The Internet*, by Julian Assange with Jacob Appelbaum, Andy Muller-Maguhn and Jeremie Zimmermann (OR Books). That the *Guardian*, a principal gatekeeper of liberal debate in Britain, should describe their published conversation as "dystopian musings" is unsurprising. Understanding what they have to say is to abandon the vicarious as journalism and embrace the real thing.

"The internet was supposed to be a civilian space," Assange writes. "[It] is our space, because we all use it to communicate with each other and with members of our family... Ten years ago [mass interception] was seen to be a fantasy, something only paranoid people believed in" but now the internet is becoming "a militarized zone."

Cost of spying on individuals

When everyone can be intercepted en masse, spying on individuals is redundant. Stasi, the East German secret police, "penetrated" 10 per cent of East Germany society. Today, the cost of intercepting and storing all telephone calls in Germany in a year is less than eight million euros. More than 175 companies now sell the surveillance of whole countries. A whistleblower at the giant US telecommunications company AT&T has disclosed that the National Security

Agency (NSA) allegedly took every phone call, every internet connection. The NSA intercepts 1.6 bn. personal communications every day.

To the "national security state", of which the US is the pioneer and model, "perpetual war" is a given; and the public are the enemy – not terrorists. Google, Facebook and Twitter are all based in the US. In December 2010, Twitter was ordered by the Justice Department to surrender its clients' personal information relevant to the Obama administration's pursuit of WikiLeaks, no matter where in the world people lived. Obama has pursued twice as many whistleblowers as all US presidents combined. This is why Assange and Bradley Manning are targets – along with those rare journalists who do their job and publish in the public interest. Like Assange they, too, are liable to be prosecuted for espionage, regardless of what the US Constitution says. A whistleblower at the NSA, Bill Binney, describes this as "turnkey totalitarianism".

The iniquity of Rupert Murdoch was not his "influence" over the Tweedledees and Tweedledums in Downing Street, nor the thuggery of his eavesdroppers, but the augmented barbarism of his media empire in promoting the killing, suffering and dispossession of countless men, women and children in America's and Britain's illegal wars.

Murdoch has plenty of respectable accomplices. The liberal *Observer* was as rabid a devotee of the Iraq invasion. When Tony Blair gave evidence to the Leveson inquiry, bleating about the media's harassment of his wife, he was interrupted by a filmmaker, David Lawley-Wakelin, who described him as a war criminal. At that, Lord Leveson leapt to his feet and ordered the truth-teller thrown out and apologised to the war criminal. Such an exquisite display of irony contemptuous of all of us. **CT**

John Pilger's documentaries have won academy awards in both the UK and the US. His website is <http://johnpilger.com>

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My enemy. My ally

William Blum on jihadists, school killers, John Lennon and Fidel Castro

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These folks are not
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freedom and
democracy
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France no longer recognizes its children,” lamented Guillaume Roquette in an editorial in the *Figaro* weekly magazine in Paris. “How can the country of Victor Hugo, secularism and family reunions produce jihadists capable of attacking a kosher grocery store?”¹

I ask: How can the country of Henry David Thoreau, separation of church and state, and family Thanksgiving dinners produce American super-nationalists capable of firing missiles into Muslim family reunions in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Somalia?

Does America recognize its children? Indeed, it honors them. Constantly.

A French state prosecutor stated that “A network of French Islamists behind a grenade attack on a kosher market outside Paris last month also planned to join jihadists fighting in Syria.”²

We can add these worthies to the many other jihadists coming from all over to fight in Syria for regime change, waving al-Qaeda flags (“There is no god but God”), carrying out suicide attacks, exploding car bombs, and singling out Christians for extermination (for not supporting the overthrow of the secular Syrian government.) These folks are not the first ones you would think of as allies in a struggle for the proverbial freedom and democracy. Yet America’s children are on the same side, with the same goal of overthrow-

ing Syrian president Bashir Assad.

So how do America’s leaders explain and justify this?

“Not everybody who’s participating on the ground in fighting Assad are people who we are comfortable with,” President Obama said in an interview in December. “There are some who, I think, have adopted an extremist agenda, an anti-U.S. agenda, and we are going to make clear to distinguish between those elements.”³

In an earlier speech, Secretary of State Clinton acknowledged the scope of the threat from such movements. “A year of democratic transition was never going to drain away reservoirs of radicalism built up through decades of dictatorship,” she said. “As we’ve learned from the beginning, there are extremists who seek to exploit periods of instability and hijack these democratic transitions.”⁴

“Extremist” ... “radicalism” ... No mention of “terrorists” (which is what Assad calls them). No mention of “jihadists” or foreign mercenaries. Or that they were preparing their movement to overthrow the Syrian government well before any government suppression of peaceful protestors in March of 2011, which the Western media consistently cites as the cause of the civil war. As far back as 2007, Seymour Hersh was writing in *The New Yorker*:

“The U.S. has also taken part in clandest-

tine operations aimed at Iran and its ally Syria. A by-product of these activities has been the bolstering of Sunni extremist groups that espouse a militant vision of Islam and are hostile to America and sympathetic to Al Qaeda.”

Nor any explanation of what it says about the mission of the Holy Triumvirate (the United States, NATO and the European Union) that they have been supplying these jihadist rebels with funds, arms and training; with intelligence and communication equipment; with diplomatic recognition(!); later we’ll probably find out about even more serious stuff. But President Obama is simply “uncomfortable” with them, because Assad, like Gaddafi of Libya, is a non-Triumvirate Believer, while the Jihadists are the proverbial “enemy of my enemy”. How long before they turn their guns and explosives upon Americans, as they did in Libya?

.....
Seeing is believing, and believing is seeing

Is it easier for a believer to deal with a tragedy like the one in Newtown, Connecticut than it is for an atheist? The human suffering surrounding the ending of life forever for 20 small children and six adults made me choke up again and again with each news report. I didn’t have the comfort that some religious people might have had – that it was “God’s will”, that there must be a “reason” for such profound agony, a good reason, which you would understand if you could receive God’s infinite wisdom, if you could be enlightened enough to see how it fit into God’s Master Plan.

“How could God let this happen?”, asked a Fox News reporter of former Republican governor of Arkansas and presidential candidate, Mike Huckabee. “Well,” replied Huckabee, “you know, it’s an interesting thing. We ask why there is violence in our schools, but we’ve systematically removed God from our schools. Should we be so surprised that schools would become a place of carnage because we’ve made it a place where

we don’t want to talk about eternity, life, what responsibility means, accountability? That we’re not just going to have to be accountable to the police, if they catch us. But one day, we will stand before a Holy God in judgment. If we don’t believe that, then we don’t fear that.”

So the former governor is clearly implying that the tragedy was the lord’s retribution for not believing in, or not fearing, or just ignoring His Master Plan. Believing this may well reduce the grief Huckabee feels about what happened; perhaps even provide him some satisfaction that those who were not “accountable” are being punished. Whether he includes the children in this group, or only their parents, teachers, school officials and Democrats I don’t know.

Local pastor Jim Solomon recounted the story of a girl in the first grade who, by playing dead, was the only one in her room to survive: “She ran out of the school building covered from head to toe with blood and the first thing she said to her mom was, ‘Mommy, I’m OK but all my friends are dead.’” This child was spared, said the pastor, “by God’s grace”.⁵

Ah yes, God’s grace. Do I need to ask the obvious question?

It may be relevant to recall that the fellow who slaughtered 87 young people in Norway last year was a fundamentalist Christian.

“With or without religion, good people will do good things and bad people will do bad things. But for good people to do bad things – that takes religion.” - Steven Weinberg, Nobel Prize-winning physicist

“Guns don’t kill people. People kill people.”

How true. And nuclear bombs don’t kill people. Government leaders who decide to use nuclear bombs kill people. So why have any bans on nuclear bombs? Get one for each member of the family; well, for those over 16 at least.

The crazed and the disturbed will always walk amongst us. What we must do is strive to deny them the facile ability to engage in

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Mike Huckabee, the former governor and presidential candidate, is clearly implying that the tragedy was the lord’s retribution for not believing in, or not fearing, or just ignoring His Master Plan

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**It's a mass-
production
terrorist assembly
line working
three shifts even
if the bin Laden
model has been
discontinued**
.....

mass murder. Everything else being equal, if the Connecticut killer's mother didn't have an arsenal of guns at home, including an assault weapon, the story would probably have been a very different one. Ah, but I hear you asking – on the left and on the right – so you wanna let the government have all the guns and the people nothing to defend themselves with? To which I reply: Do you really think the people could hold their own in an armed battle with the police and the military? Mass suicide.

In the past decade various important rights and freedoms of Americans have been seriously curtailed by the Bush and Obama administrations. Did the 300 million guns in private hands prevent any of this from happening? No. And the rights and the freedoms were taken away much more by pieces of paper than guns.

I'd be in favor of eliminating all guns except for some law enforcement purposes. But if that is not feasible, the goal should be to have as few guns in circulation as possible. Or just ban ammunition, which would be a lot easier and probably even more effective. It would be a good start toward our cherished national goal of becoming a civilized society.

.....
The death of Osama bin Laden. What does it profit a country?

The books and the films are coming out. The subject is a sure winner. The American tracking down and execution of Osama bin Laden in May of 2011. Has there ever been a better example of Good triumphing over Evil? Of Yankee courage and cleverness? "The bin Laden operation was a landmark achievement by our country, by our military, by our Intelligence Community, and by our Agency," said the acting Director of the CIA, Michael Morell. ⁶

But even if everything the government has told us about the operation is true ... How important was it really? What did it change in Washington's glorious War on

Terror? American taxpayers are not spending a penny less on the bloody spectacle. American soldiers still die in Afghanistan as before. American drones still bring extreme anxiety, death and destruction to children and parents in the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa. Guantánamo still holds numerous damned souls who wonder why they are there as they bang their head against a brick wall.

Anti-American terrorists are still being regularly created as a result of US anti-terrorist operations. (Even the way bin Laden was "buried" increased the hatred.) It's a mass-production terrorist assembly line working three shifts even if the bin Laden model has been discontinued. If only one in 10,000 of the world's 1.6 billion Muslims is moved to want to attack the US because of Washington's repeated outrages against Muslims, the United States will have created a pool of 160,000 Muslims devoted to seeking revenge against Americans.

"Remember when the United States had a drug problem and then we declared a War on Drugs, and now you can't buy drugs anymore? The War on Terrorism will be just like that," declared author David Rees in 2008. ⁷

The fear mongering remains as is; airport security has not gotten any less stupid, embarrassing, or destructive of civil liberties than before, only worse. "Will that be frisked or naked pictures with your airline ticket, sir?" The No-Fly list grows bigger with each passing day, listing people who are too guilty to fly, but too innocent to charge with anything.

Wherever you go – "If you see something, say something!"

People are entrapped as much as ever, charged with some form of terrorism (or "terrorism"), staged and financed by government agents, put away for terribly long periods. The State Department puts a country on its terrorist list, then the FBI persecutes Americans for helping someone in that country, perhaps no more than medical aid.

And surveillance of Americans ... the sci-

ence fiction methods are expanded without end ... no escape from Fortress America. Protestors in America are monitored and harassed and recorded as much as before; witness the recent revelations concerning the FBI/Homeland Security/et al and the Occupy Movement. The Patriot Act is still the law of the land, now joined by the National Defense Authorization Act which makes it easier than ever to hold people in indefinite detention, for any reason, or no reason, including American citizens. And now we have the president's clandestine "kill list". 8 Could it be any worse if bin Laden were still alive?

Just imagine

Imagine there's no countries

It isn't hard to do.

Nothing to kill or die for

And no religion too ...

John Lennon's "Imagine".

Sung New Years Eve by a performer at Times Square.

Such subversive talk.

And on worldwide television.

Followed immediately by NBC-TV commentator Carson Daly declaring that we have to honor our brave soldiers.

I'm surprised that he didn't also mention honoring God.

Toshiba sponsored the giant glass ball which rose up to the top at midnight.

Viewers had the name "Toshiba" flashed in their face a hundred times during the evening in all kinds of ways.

Imagine that John Lennon had called upon us to "Imagine there's no Toshiba".

Without Toshiba would there not have been a New Years Eve?

Stuck in 2012 forever?

Imagine.

"Summer, 1969: I sit next to Fidel Castro as he watches on the University of Havana's color TV the astronauts landing on the moon. At times he asks me to render certain idioms. He watches with fascination. The program had begun with 'TANG: THE BREAKFAST FOOD PRESENTS ... THE

MOON LANDING.'

"And without Tang," Castro asks, "would there have been no moon landing?"

- Saul Landau, author of numerous books and films on Cuba

One way to look at it

Capitalism can be seen in historical evolutionary terms, independent of any moral point of view or judgement. Broadly speaking, the organization of mankind's societies has evolved from slavery to feudalism to capitalism. And it's now time for the next step: socialism.

Socialism or communism have always been given just one chance to work, if that much, while capitalism has been given numerous chances to do so following its perennial fiascos. Ralph Nader has observed: "Capitalism will never fail because socialism will always be there to bail it out."

Capitalism gave rise to some very important innovations, such as mass production and distribution, and many technological advances. But now, and for some time past, the system has caused much more harm than good. It's eating its young. And our environment. We can take the advances instituted by capitalism for the purpose of profit and use them to create a society based on putting people before profit. Just imagine. **CT**

Notes

1. Washington Post, October 21, 2012
2. Associated Press, October 11, 2012
3. Washington Post, December 11, 2012
4. Washington Post, October 15, 2012
5. Huffington Post, December 17, 2012
6. Washington Post, December 22, 2012
7. In his book *Get Your War On*
8. New York Times, May 29, 2012

William Blum is the author of "*Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War I*", "*Rogue State: a guide to the World's Only Super Power*" and "*West-Bloc Dissident: a Cold ar Political memoir*"

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Socialism or communism have always been given just one chance to work, if that much, while capitalism has been given numerous chances to do so following its perennial fiascos

The tragic truth about the State of Israel

The oppressed have become the oppressors, writes **Luke Hiken**

.....
If someone had suggested that we were purchasing guns, and missiles, instead of agricultural tools, we would have fought them on the spot
.....

In the 1940's and 50's, I was raised on the North Shore of Chicago, in a suburb named Glencoe. The town was at least 95% Jewish, and everyone knew who the three black families were, knew the handful of Christians and "others" who resided near us. We understood that we comprised one of the wealthiest, fanciest Jewish ghettos in the United States, and perhaps the world. The great majority of us went to temple at the North Shore Congregation Israel, and donated \$5 a shot for stickers to purchase "trees" to plant in the new State of Israel. We were going to transform the desert into a promised land and help the oppressed Jews of Europe to create a homeland where pogroms, ghettos and the Holocaust were a thing of the past. For literally decades, Zionists had perpetuated the myth that the territory that would become the State of Israel was "a land without a people, for a people without a land." How noble and just it all seemed.

If anyone would have asked us why we were planting trees in Israel, when the Holy Land was already covered with Olive trees planted by Arab families for more than five centuries, we would have accused them of rank anti-semitism. If someone had suggested that we were purchasing guns, and missiles, instead of agricultural tools, we would have fought them on the spot. Yet history judges us harshly and we now have

a reckoning to deal with.

I represented men and women on death row in California for over 25 years. All of the defendants on death row, without exception, were brutalized as young children, either by their parents, or their community. The great majority of prisoners were victims of brutality, and they responded to the society that brutalized them by killing in return.

One would have expected that those who were brutalized as children would have recognized how horrible the experience was and rejected such behavior when it was their turn to have authority over others. But that is simply not so. Humans, unfortunately, by and large, grow up to perpetrate the same atrocities that were perpetrated upon them against those they are close to. While this phenomenon is not universal, it is so common as to be the expectation for law enforcement and society at large. Children of convicts are expected to become criminals when they grow up, and the society does everything in its power to ensure that that expectation is met. Young black children in this country have to be saints to stay out of reformatories and prisons. One out of three black people in the United States are in prison or on parole.

So, too, do we watch this phenomenon being tragically repeated in the State of Israel. One would expect that a people who had been subjected to the atrocities of World

War II, to the Holocaust, to the discrimination and slaughter perpetrated against the Jews, would be the first nation on earth to oppose a similar oppression against others. Yet, the sad reality is that the racism and violence perpetrated against Palestinians in the State of Israel is outlandish and inexcusable.

Gaza is nothing short of a concentration camp. Children are starving there and Israel will kill any individual or group that attempts to bring food or water into that land. Israel is the last country on the face of the earth that has dared to impose a formal state of apartheid against an indigenous population. Israeli checkpoints are the precise duplicates of what the Nazi checkpoints at the borders of the ghettos looked like in 1938 Germany. The excuses and rationalizations used by Israel to perpetuate this oppression against the Palestinian people are precisely those used by the Nazis: Palestinians pose a threat to the security of the nation; they will steal jobs and security from the rightful people of the nation; they are untrustworthy, and owe no allegiance to the nation. The parallels are terrifying.

That this should be the situation in 2013 is so pathetic as to be comical in an historical context. The anti-semitism of the prevailing nations of World War II, the United States and Great Britain was so profound as to obviate the possibility that Jews would be permitted to immigrate or seek sanctuary in either of those victorious countries. The Christian majorities of those countries so hated the Jews that allowing them to seek sanctuary in either country was out of the question.

Instead, anti-semitic nations decided to give the Jews who survived the Holocaust land that belonged to the Palestinians. Kill two birds with one stone. Keep Jews out of the US and Great Britain, and give them the land of a bunch of Muslims that, according to the US and Great Britain, were little more than savages. Certainly, the Western powers could control any opposition the lo-

cal population might put up to prevent the Jews from entering the new state of Israel. It would be a walk in the park for these countries to disenfranchise the Palestinian people, who had lived on the land for centuries. The fact that Jews had lived in Palestine for centuries without undergoing the sort of atrocities perpetrated by European Christians upon them was quickly overlooked. Give us our land, said the Zionists, and we will take care of the rest.

So now, we are confronted with the situation where there is not a Muslim on the face of the earth that does not see Israel's occupation of the Holy Land as an unjustified invasion of their land. The only difference between this and the initial colonization of the United States of America, is that, unlike what happened to the American Indians, Caucasians, whether Christian or Jewish, have not been able to eradicate sufficient numbers of indigenous people to take over the land without opposition. The Muslims have not acceded to the colonial expansion of the "settlers" in Israel, to the US demand for expansion of the militarist Israeli state, or to the eradication of those who inhabited the land before the Jews arrived.

In virtually every temple and Jewish Community Center in the United States, Israel is seen as "the good guy" in the Middle East, and the Arabs are seen as devils. The impact this has had on Jews in the United States is to divide the community into two totally distinct communities: those who are Zionists and those who identify with being Jewish, but reject the racism and violence perpetrated by Israel against the entire Muslim world. It is impossible for Jews who take pride in their heritage, to participate in their own communities without endorsing the atrocities perpetrated by Israel against Arabs throughout the world. Jews who reject Zionism are outcasts in the established Jewish communities. They have no base and no community. We are either anti-Muslim or invisible. We are left with no alternatives within the broader community.

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Kill two birds with one stone. Keep Jews out of the US and Great Britain, and give them the land of a bunch of Muslims that, according to the US and Great Britain, were little more than savages
.....

THE VIOLENCE OF VICTIMS

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Non-Zionist Jews are like the non-existent Left in the United States – we are simply not included in the debates of our nation or among our people
.....

The US is perfectly content to let Israel serve as the buffer between hostile Arab nations and US imperialism. After all, it is the Jews who are fighting Muslims on a daily basis, not Americans. But once the State of Israel is defeated because of its bellicose intransigence and intolerance to those with whom they should be sharing the land, Jews everywhere will suffer the consequences and be at risk. One could not write a more ironical conclusion. Non-Zionist Jews are like the non-existent Left in the United States – we are simply not included in the

debates of our nation or among our people; and, because Zionists permit no rational debates or discussions, they are without a clue as to the international implications of their cruelty toward the Palestinian peoples. The world will not put up with this indefinitely. It is just a matter of time. **CT**

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Bungling billions while Haiti starves

Bill Quigley & Amber Ramanauskas wonder where all the aid money went after the Haiti earthquake

Despite billions in aid which were supposed to go to the Haitian people, hundreds of thousands are still homeless, living in shanty tent camps as the effects from the earthquake of January 12, 2010 remain.

The earthquake devastated Haiti in January 2010 killing, according to Oxfam International, 250,000 people and injuring another 300,000. 360,000 Haitians are still displaced and living hand to mouth in 496 tent camps across the country according to the International Organization of Migration. Most eat only one meal a day.

Cholera followed the earthquake. Now widely blamed on poor sanitation by UN troops, it has claimed 7,750 lives and sickened over a half a million. The Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti and their Haitian partner Bureau des Avocats Internationaux have filed legal claims against the UN on behalf of thousands of cholera victims. Recently the Haitian government likewise demanded over \$2 billion from the international community to address the scourge of cholera.

Haiti was already the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere with 55 percent of the population living below the poverty line of \$1.25 a day. About 60 percent of the population is engaged in agriculture, the primary source of income in rural areas. Haiti imports more than 55 percent of its food.

The average Haitian eats only 73 percent of the daily minimum recommended by the World Health Organization. Even before the earthquake 40 percent of households (3.8 million people) were undernourished and 3 of 10 children suffered from chronic malnutrition.

In November 2012, Hurricane Sandy leveled yet another severe blow to the hemisphere's poorest country. Wind and twenty inches of rain from Hurricane Sandy killed over 50 people, damaged dozens of cholera centers, and badly hurt already struggling farming communities.

Despite an outpouring of global compassion, some estimate as high as \$3 billion in individual donations and another \$6 billion in governmental assistance, too little has changed. Part of the problem is that the international community and non-governmental organizations (Haiti has sometimes been called the Republic of NGOs) has bypassed Haitian non-governmental agencies and the Haitian government itself. The Center for Global Development analysis of where they money went concluded that overall less than 10% went to the government of Haiti and less than 1% went to Haitian organizations and businesses. A full one-third of the humanitarian funding for Haiti was actually returned to donor countries to reimburse them for their own civil and military work in the country and the

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A survey by USAID found that housing options are so few that people have moved back into over 50,000 “red” buildings which engineers said should be demolished
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majority of the rest went to international NGOs and private contractors.

With hundreds of thousands of people still displaced, the international community has built less than 5000 new homes. Despite the fact that crime and murder are low in Haiti (Haiti had a murder rate of 6.9 of every hundred thousand, while New Orleans has a rate of 58), huge amounts of money are spent on a UN force which many Haitians do not want. The annual budget of the United Nations “peacekeeping” mission, MINUSTAH for 2012-2013 or \$644 million would pay for the construction of more than 58,000 homes at \$11,000 per home.

There are many stories of projects hatched by big names in the international community into which millions of donated dollars were poured only to be abandoned because the result was of no use to the Haitian people. For example, internationals created a model housing community in Zoranje. A two million dollar project built 60 houses which now sit abandoned according to Haiti Grassroots Watch.

Deborah Sontag in the *New York Times* tells the stories of many other bumbles in a critical article which reported only a very small percentage of the funds have been focused on creating permanent housing for the hundreds of thousands displaced. Many expect 200,000 will be still in displacement camps a year from now.

The majority of the hundreds of thousands of people still displaced by the earthquake have no other housing options. Those who were renters cannot find places to stay because there is a dramatic shortage of rental housing. Many of those who owned homes before the earthquake have been forced to move back into their despite the fact that these homes are unsafe. A survey by USAID found that housing options are so few that people have moved back into over 50,000 “red” buildings which engineers said should be demolished.

One new program, 16/6, promises to pay a one-time \$500 maximum rental subsidy

for a family to relocate from tent camps but this program will only benefit a tiny percentage of the displaced population because it is currently available only for about 5% of the people displaced. It is limited to those living in the 6 most visible public camps in Port au Prince. With the housing shortage in Port-au-Prince there are few places available to rent even with a subsidy.

Most of the people living under tents are on private property and are subjected to official and private violence in forced evictions according to Oxfam. Over 60,000 have been forcibly evicted from over 150 tent camps with little legal protection. Oxfam reports many in camps fear leaving their camps to seek work or food worried that their tents and belongings will be destroyed in their absence.

Dozens of Haitian human rights organizations and international allies are organizing against forced evictions in a campaign called Under Tents Haiti.

The fact that these problems remain despite billions in aid is mostly the result of the failure of the international community to connect with Haitian civil society and to work with the Haitian government. Certainly the Haitian government has demonstrated problems but how can a nation be expected to grow unless it leads its own reconstruction? Likewise, Haitian civil society, its churches, its human rights and community organizations, can be real partners in the rebuilding of the country. But the international community has to take the time to work in a respectful relationship with Haiti. Or else the disasters of the earthquake and hurricanes will keep hammering our sisters and brothers in Haiti, the people in our hemisphere who have already been victimized far too frequently. **CT**

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Bill Quigley is a human rights lawyer and teaches at Loyola University New Orleans.

Amber Ramanauskas is a lawyer and human rights researcher. Thanks to Sophia Mire and Vladimir Laguerre for their help.

Blisters and sanctions

Shahriar Khateri & Narges Bajoghli on the hell of gas warfare
– and the agony of getting treatment under Western sanctions

Shahriar Khateri is an Iranian veteran of the Iran-Iraq war. Exposed to chemical warfare agents during the fighting, Khateri became a doctor at war's end, and since 1997 he has been involved in caring for chemical weapons survivors. He now heads a NGO – <http://scwvs.org> – in Iran that advocates effectively on behalf of survivors of chemical warfare from Iran and Iraq, and is a founder of the Tehran Peace Museum – <http://www.tehranpeacemuseum.org>. This article is written in his voice.

It was February 1987, at the front lines near Khorramshahr, in the south of Iran along the Iraqi border. We had been engaged in heavy battles for over a week. Our troops had penetrated fortified Iraqi positions, and the Iraqis were making us pay: Artillery and mortar shells rained down on us with a vengeance, as did bombs from Iraqi planes.

It was hell. Dead bodies, both Iranian and Iraqi, were scattered across the field. The bodies were strewn like broken dolls over the war-ravaged landscape, resting on their sides, with limbs folded in awkward positions and heads blown off.

The faces were frozen in expressions of fear, of pain – and, at times, of relief. The smell of blood and sweat was overwhelming. It's a smell that has never left me after all these years...it has permeated me through

my pores. I was scared, but still proud of myself for managing to join the army as a volunteer at the age of 15. I felt brave and strong.

But in the midst of all that death, I thought of my mother, knowing how much she must be worrying. My brother, after recovering from his chemical burns, had returned to the war front, only to be killed months afterward. My mother was never able to bury him and find comfort in mourning at his grave. His body is missing to this day.

She begged me not to go to the front. "It's enough that I've lost one son," she cried. But I didn't listen, wanting to follow in the footsteps of my hero brother. On that day in 1987, I was sure she was listening to news of the offensive and crying again, not knowing if her sole remaining son was alive or dead.

"Gas! Gas!" Soldiers began screaming in terror. I saw the ominous cloud drifting toward our trenches and my nostrils immediately caught its strange odor.

Our commanders shouted: "Put on your gas masks. Be quick!" I donned my gas mask that very second and ran with the other soldiers in the opposite direction from the approaching poisonous vapor. It was difficult to breathe while running with the mask on. I felt that I might suffocate, but the other soldiers pushed me along.

We were lucky – the wind changed direction and blew the gas cloud away from us.

.....
"Gas! Gas!"
Soldiers began screaming in terror. I saw the ominous cloud drifting toward our trenches and my nostrils immediately caught its strange odor
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THE COST OF SANCTIONS

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Companies from Great Britain, France, West Germany, Spain, the United States, India, Egypt and other countries were involved in selling and providing material to Iraq for the chemical weapons
.....

Looking back on it now, I know what a big miracle that was. We would have lost many more comrades if the wind hadn't changed direction.

A few in our battalion were positioned exactly in the middle of the gas attack zone. I tried to return to the site to help them, but my commanders would not allow it. I removed my gas mask and felt my eyes burning for the first time. Around me, others were coughing violently and some fainted. I overheard on an officer's radio that we had sustained heavy casualties: The gas killed many instantaneously. Others had critical injuries.

Well into the night, I received pieces of bad news: Some of my closest buddies had been killed in the attack. I started weeping but had to suppress the tears. My eyes were burning. I tried to scream, but it was too difficult to breathe.

My lungs were on fire from the gas.

.....
Chronically ill survivors

Starting in 1981, and picking up steam a couple years later, Iraq fired countless chemical warheads at Iranian soldiers and at people in Iraqi Kurdish towns, as part of the eight-year Iran-Iraq war. Today, 24 years on, Iran is home to the world's largest population of chemical weapons survivors, a significant proportion of whom are chronically ill.

The 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war was the longest conventional war of the twentieth century and one of the bloodiest. For the first time since World War I, armies slugged it out in trenches. There were more than a million casualties, combining those on both sides.

Iraqi troops carried out the first extensive chemical attack on Iran in March 1981, with shells containing tons of sulfur mustard and nerve agents. Later, with the help of West Germany, Iraq began to manufacture mustard gas and nerve agents in large amounts. Following several requests from the Iranian government, the "international community" sent three official investigative teams

to Iran starting in March 1984, but only after helicopters built by the Germans, Soviets and French had dumped still more tons of poison on Iranian soil.

In March 1984, the UN secretary-general, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, ordered an investigation that exposed Iraq as a violator of the 1925 Geneva Protocol outlawing the use of poisonous gas in wars. Member states ignored the finding. Two more official investigations took place: one in February-March 1986 and another in April 1987. Again, the international community disregarded the results.

Companies from Great Britain, France, West Germany, Spain, the United States, India, Egypt and other countries were involved in selling and providing material to Iraq for the chemical weapons. To date, no company has been prosecuted for its involvement in this trade.

Chemical attacks on residential areas occurred more than 30 times in Iran, as well as in the Iraqi Kurdish town of Halabja, where more than 5,000 civilians were killed.

Various chemical agents were used on soldiers and civilians across the span of seven years. Most nerve agents have fatal consequences for human beings and cause damage to the environment as well. Due to the effects of mustard gas on DNA, survivors face long-term afflictions of the respiratory organs, eyes and skin. Chronic lung, eye and skin ailments are common among those exposed.

There can also be further complications, such as cancers and immune system, psychological and genetic disorders. The severity of these conditions depends on the route and duration of exposure, as well as the individual's powers of bodily resistance. Each year, more and more of the chemically wounded die, their lungs finally collapsing after years of excruciating labored breathing and coughing.

To compound this situation, there is very little medical knowledge about how to treat victims of chemical warfare (or, for that mat-

ter, of depleted uranium).

.....
The man with a hoarse voice

It is October 2012 at Tehran's Medical Research Center for Veterans, where I work. There is a light rain. I am in the office working on a report about the health effects of mustard gas, which I am to present at a conference the next week in Europe. My cell phone rings and I see an unfamiliar number on the screen.

A man with a hoarse voice asks for me.

He introduces himself and I am shocked. It is Ali, one of the survivors of the chemical gas attack on that fateful day in 1987. He and I were soldiers in the same platoon. I remember him being badly injured. We had remained in contact for some time, but I had lost touch with him many years ago.

"We need your help, doctor," he rasps over the phone. "You remember how my eyes were damaged by mustard gas in that attack? I've had several surgeries, including a cornea transplant. My doctor has prescribed special medication to prevent rejection of the transplant. But the medicine is no longer available in the drug stores and my doctor says that I'll go blind unless I can get my hands on that medicine soon. And do you remember our commander, Reza, who was hospitalized for two months after the gas attack?"

"Of course I remember him. I know he suffered from serious lung damage. What's happened to him?" I ask.

"He has to use oxygen daily and several inhalers to survive, but the main inhaler that helps him breathe is from the same company that makes my medicine. The pharmacies have said that they no longer have these foreign-produced medications, because the sanctions restrict them from being imported to Iran. We thought of you, doctor, and were hoping you could find a way for us to get the medicine we need."

My heart breaks as he speaks in his tired voice. "I will do my best, Ali," I muster. "I

promise to find the medications and send them to you. You will get better soon. Say hello to Reza." I quickly hang up the phone.

I feel ashamed because I know I cannot help them. It is not only Reza and Ali whose lives are in danger because of the shortage of medicine in Iran now; there are many thousands of survivors of chemical weapons, both civilians and veterans, who have the same problems.

And, as a physician, I know that it is not only survivors of chemical warfare in Iran who face these difficulties, but patients suffering from cancer and other terminal diseases as well. Their medicines are no longer available due to the sanctions. The sanctions themselves do not prohibit importation of medicine, but the reality is that Iranian pharmaceutical companies and the Health Ministry cannot purchase it because of strict restrictions on Iran's Central Bank and the fact that SWIFT, the body that handles global banking transactions, has cut Iranian banks out of its system. Even those Iranian companies that have, so far, managed to circumvent the sanctions by transferring money via a middleman bank are now finding that most of their orders are rejected.

My mind goes to the US presidential debates in the preceding weeks. President Barack Obama and Gov. Mitt Romney were in a race to promise the most "crippling" sanctions on Iran. And all I wish to do is to ask them: Maybe the "international community" has said it is "legal" to cripple a population to this extent. But is it moral? Is it right?
CT

.....
*Narges Bajoghli is a Ph.D. student in anthropology at New York University. She is director of the documentary film, **The Skin That Burns** – <http://www.theskinthatburns.com> (2012), about survivors of chemical warfare in Iran. She has been researching the topic for eight years.*

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I know that it is not only survivors of chemical warfare in Iran who face these difficulties, but patients suffering from cancer and other terminal diseases as well
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Majority versus elite priorities

Edward S. Herman on the double standards of the nation's paper of record

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When there are substantial bulges in the need for workers today the business-alert companies will now hire a batch of additional part-timers, although the existing workers may be doing a good job and expressly want more work

The *New York Times* had a very good front page article on October 28 by Stephen Greenhouse entitled “A Part-Time Life, as Hours Shrink and Shift.” The piece features the steady increase in part-time employment in the retail and hospitality businesses. This development has contributed to the loss of a million full-time jobs since 2006, while adding 500,000 part-timers. The part-timers are in what has long been called a “shape-up system,” which has advanced with the help of improved business software that forecasts business volume each day, and allows the managers to schedule the part-timers day-by-day, and even within days. And they must be ready for these in-day calls. This is, of course, like the famous and widely emulated Toyota “just-in-time” supply system, here applied to the more intensive commodification of labor, although admittedly not new there also.

A large number of the part-timers would like more work, and ultimately full-time work – in fact, an estimated 8.3 million of them seek more work (Catherine Rampell, “US Adds 171,000 Jobs, More Than Estimated,” *NYT*, Nov. 3, 2012). Greenhouse recounts the experiences and frustrations of several such workers (he and his associates interviewed 40). They note that when there are substantial bulges in the need for workers today the business-alert companies will now hire a batch of additional part-timers, although the

existing workers may be doing a good job and expressly want more work. But the managers explain that the shape-up system keeps costs down and enhances “efficiency” – benefits are avoided or kept low, fresher part-timers are less tired on the job.

It is not till the 34th paragraph that Greenhouse mentions the “decline of union power” as a factor explaining the enlarging shape-up system, quoting University of Chicago’s Susan Lambert, who also makes the explicit point that unions “set a standard for what a real job was – Monday through Friday with full-time hours....We’ve moved away from that.” And Greenhouse later cites labor advocate Carrie Gleason on how “We’re seeing more and more that the burden of market fluctuations is being shifted onto workers, as opposed to the companies absorbing it themselves,” but Greenhouse balances this with some further business representatives’ statements on the improved efficiency and worker “enthusiasm” advantages of the on-call part-timers system.

This is a good article and we must give the *NYT* credit for publishing it. But the article itself somewhat buries that relevant context of the decline of union power, and there is no deeper context provided such as the actual and intensified war on labor, the politics of that war, its class war characteristics, with the decline in legal protections of union membership and organizing activities and the growth

and deployment of union-busting and -avoiding specialists, its recent and ongoing display in the political and “reformer-philanthropists” privatization and anti-teachers-union campaign, and its link to the growth of income and wealth inequality.

We should also consider the loneliness of this article, in light of the human importance of its subject matter. With 8.3 million part-timers who want full-time work, and of course another 6 million or more looking for any kind of work (the estimate given in the Rampell article), isn’t this a subject that demands repeated attention and lots of editorial backup?

Maybe as much attention as the NYT gives the Iran “threat”? The contrast here is dramatic. I haven’t counted the NYT articles and editorials on the unemployment situation, but I’m confident that they are not in the same class as those devoted to Iran’s nuclear program. In a forthcoming article on the Iran threat, David Peterson and I found that in the ten year period from July 1 2002 to June 30 2012, the NYT had over 3,000 items on Iran’s nuclear program, including 231 editorials, 89 or more devoted exclusively to that subject. (Herman and Peterson, “The Iran ‘Threat’ in a Kafkaesque World,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Autumn 2012.) Now this is taking a subject seriously, but it is a pretty case of attention focused on a matter of interest to a small elite (including AIPAC and its supporters), and in fact a manufactured threat very much like that of Iraq’s “weapons of mass destruction,” also covered intensively and misleadingly by the NYT in 2002-2003.

By contrast, the part-time (and full-time) unemployment problem is a real threat and one of acute importance to millions of US citizens; in fact, the great majority. Thus despite the high quality of Greenhouse’s article we must keep our praise in perspective. Isolated articles like his, with limited context, indignation and editorial support, won’t make this an urgent priority, and will not arouse the public and force the hand of politicians. But the frenzied focus on Iran can do that.

The NYT did have an editorial on November 3 entitled “Jobs Are Growing, Not Stagnating,” but it never mentions unions, or class warfare techniques applied to labor and part-timers. It is an Obama supportive editorial, contrasting his more-or-less expansionary policies with those of Romney. It says that Obama’s employment agenda “includes school and infrastructure rebuilding and aid to states to hire teachers.” It doesn’t mention his support of Charter Schools and unremitting testing and his failure to support the Chicago teachers strike in September. This is not an editorial follow-up on Greenhouse and the part-timer-unemployment crisis, but a political pitch for the leader who has not delivered on his promises to his union supporters and base.

In another dramatic case of selectivity that serves elite interests and is essentially just building majority support for elite programs, we can consider the attention given the Taliban shooting and injuring the Pakistani girl Malala Yousafzai, and the inattention given to the large number of killings of children in Afghanistan and Pakistan resulting from drone warfare. The Malala attack was despicable and justly condemned, but so were the scores of drone-based injuries and deaths. The difference in attention is surely that in the Malala case blame attaches to the enemy, the Taliban, whereas in the drone case, the attackers were US forces.

Malala’s shooting was front page news in the NYT, with a picture of the victim and lead article by Declan Walsh, “Taliban Gun Down a Girl Who Spoke Up for Rights” (Oct. 10, 2012). On the following day there was another article by Walsh on “Pakistanis Unite in Outrage Over Girl’s Shooting by Taliban,” with a large accompanying photo of grieving women in “A Show of Support.” Then two days further along the paper supplied another front page picture, this time of a Pakistani boy with the picture heading “Prayers and Tears for a Wounded Girl” (Oct. 13, 2012). This was by no means the end of photos and articles on the Malala case. In fact, through October 28 the

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NYT had 14 articles, including three items on the editorial page, on the Malal case.

In the midst of this series the NYT ran an article by Alissa J. Rubin on “3 Children Die in Afghan Strike by NATO-Led Coalition” (Oct. 18, 2012). This article was on page A12, had no pictures, and the children were unnamed. The article stresses the “coalition’s” claim of “deep regret” for this incident and its taking of “full responsibility for what occurred.” Most of the article is devoted to a discussion of Taliban actions in the strike area and coalition policy designed to protect civilians. But Rubin and the NYT couldn’t find people grieving or indignant or anything else to humanize the victims or condemn the killings as outrageous.

In Pakistan itself, many children have been victimized by “coalition” warfare. The September 2012 report *Living Under Drones* (jointly issued by the Stanford Law School and the NYU School of Law) claims that the children in the target areas are traumatized and living in fear, and many have been killed or injured. According to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism at the City University of London, US drone strikes in Pakistan alone killed between 2,593 and 3,370 persons from 2004 through October 2012, and between 475 and 885 civilians, and 176 children. (See the webpage devoted to “Covert War on Terror – The Data,” Bureau of Investigative Journalism, with continuous updates. But the NYT has yet to find this report newsworthy (as of November 5).

A qualification here: there have been two NYT Blog articles addressing “Living Under Drones,” one by the print edition regular Scott Shane, who found the drone report impressive (“Report Cites High Civilian Toll in Pakistan Drone Strikes,” Sept. 25, 2012). But still, 14 entries on the Malala case in the more widely read and important print edition, none there on a detailed report on drone warfare that killed possibly 176 children. We are back to the concepts of “worthy and unworthy victims.” We may recall that the NYT had more articles on the 1984 killing of priest

Jerzy Popieluszko by the Communist government of Poland than they did for 100 religious killed in US client states in Latin America, 1964-1985 (see *Manufacturing Consent*, Table 2-1). The bias ratio is higher here (176-1), but the political basis of selective attention and indignation is unchanged.

So is the finding of outrage in Pakistan. Hostility to the United States has grown remarkably in the last few years of the drone war, a Pew study recently indicating that 74 percent of Pakistanis regard the United States as an enemy. But while the NYT can write that “Pakistanis Unite in Outrage Over Girl’s Shooting by Taliban,” those children’s deaths, traumatization, and the poll-indicated hostility to the United States does not yield articles or editorials about Pakistanis “uniting in outrage” at “coalition” violence.

In a recent article in the *London Guardian* entitled “The victims of Fallujah’s health crisis are stifled by Western silence” (Oct. 25, 2012), Ross Caputi states that “Ever since two major US-led assaults destroyed the Iraqi city of Fallujah in 2004, Fallujans have witnessed dramatic increases in rates of cancers, birth defects and infant mortality in their city. Dr Chris Busby, the author and co-author of two studies on the Fallujah health crisis, has called this ‘the highest rate of genetic damage in any population ever studied.’”

Caputi points out that “four new studies on the health crisis in Fallujah have been published in the last three months. Yet, one of the most severe public health crises in history, for which the US military may be to blame, receives no attention in the United States.”

It should not surprise people that through November 5, the NYT has yet to mention any of these studies of the Fallujah victims. After all, it is very unlikely that the *Volkischer Beobachter* reported on casualties in Guernica back in the late 1930s.

CT

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Edward S. Herman is professor emeritus of finance at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania and has written extensively on economics, political economy, and the media

Excusing torture. Again!

Ray McGovern tells how the *Washington Post* let ex-CIA official get away with denying torture in the interrogation that helped get Osama bin Laden

Would-be tough guys like former CIA torturer-in-chief José A. Rodriguez Jr. brag that “enhanced interrogation” of terrorists – or doing what the rest of us would call “torturing” – has made Americans safer by eliciting tidbits of information that advanced the search for al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

Rodriguez makes this case again in the January 6’s *Washington Post* Outlook section in the context of the new “hunt-for-bin-Laden” movie, “Zero Dark Thirty,” though Rodriguez still disdains the word “torture.” He’s back playing the George W. Bush-era word game that waterboarding, stress positions, sleep deprivation and other calculated pain inflicted on detainees in the CIA’s custody weren’t really “torture.”

Entitled “Sorry, Hollywood. What we did wasn’t torture,” Rodriguez’s article amounts to a convoluted apologia – no, not an apology; an apologia – for torture, partly by trivializing what was done. For instance, Rodriguez explains that in the CIA’s waterboarding, “small plastic water bottles were used,” not “a large bucket,” and the detainees were strapped to “medical gurneys,” as if the size of the water-delivery system and the use of a medical device somehow make torture not torture.

Yet, while quibbling with some details of the movie and its gory depiction of “en-

hanced interrogation techniques,” Rodriguez largely agrees with the film’s suggestion that the harsh tactics played a key role in getting the CIA on the trail of bin Laden’s courier who eventually led Seal Team 6 to bin Laden’s hideout in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

Rodriguez writes, “I was intimately involved in setting up and administering the CIA’s ‘enhanced interrogation’ program ... our program worked – but it was not torture ... and enhanced interrogation techniques played a role in getting bin Laden.”

But others familiar with the chronology of events dispute that the “enhanced interrogation techniques” were responsible for any significant breaks in the case. Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Carl Levin, chairs of the Senate Intelligence Committee and the Armed Service Committee respectively, have asserted that “The original lead information had no connection to CIA detainees” and a detainee in CIA custody who did provide information on bin Laden’s courier “did so the day before he was interrogated by the CIA using their coercive interrogation techniques.”

Beyond those comments by the committee chairs, the Senate Intelligence Committee on Dec. 13 approved a long-awaited report concluding that harsh interrogation measures used by the CIA did not produce significant intelligence breakthroughs, offi-

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cials have said.

The report is said to make a detailed case that subjecting detainees to “enhanced interrogation” did not help find bin Laden and often was counterproductive in the broader campaign against al-Qaeda. Feinstein called the CIA’s decisions to build a network of secret prisons and employ these harsh interrogation measures “terrible mistakes.”

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The Downside of Torture

Besides the moral opprobrium that the practices brought upon the United States, the CIA’s use of torture alienated many Muslims who otherwise would have felt no sympathy for Islamic extremists. For example, US military interrogators report that the vast majority of jihadists who came to fight against US forces in Iraq were motivated by the disclosures about torture at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo.

FBI interrogators also have said their rapport-building techniques with an early detainee, logistics specialist Abu Zubaydah, were succeeding in eliciting important information from him before the CIA interrogators arrived and insisted on applying their brutal methods.

Author Jane Mayer in her book *The Dark Side* writes that the two FBI agents, Ali Soufan and Steve Gaudin, “sent back early cables describing Zubayda as revealing inside details of the [9/11] attacks on New York and Washington, including the nickname of its central planner, ‘Mukhtar,’ who was identified as Khalid Sheikh Mohammad [KSM]. ...

“During this period, Zubayda also described an Al Qaeda associate whose physical description matched that of Jose Padilla. The information led to the arrest of the slow-witted American gang member in May 2002, at O’Hare International Airport in Chicago. ...

“Abu Zubayda disclosed Padilla’s role accidentally, apparently. While making small talk, he described an Al Qaeda associate

he said had just visited the US embassy in Pakistan. That scrap was enough for authorities to find and arrest Padilla” who was suspected of plotting a “dirty bomb” attack inside the United States (although he was never charged with that offense).

In 2009, Soufan broke his personal silence on the topic in an op-ed in the *New York Times*, citing Zubaydah’s cooperation in providing information about Padilla and KSM before the CIA began the harsh tactics. “It is inaccurate ... to say that Abu Zubaydah had been uncooperative,” Soufan wrote. “Under traditional interrogation methods, he provided us with important actionable intelligence.” [NYT, April 23, 2009]

Nevertheless, Bush administration defenders have cited the information wrested from Zubaydah – who was waterboarded at least 83 times in August 2002 – as justification for the interrogation tactics that have been widely denounced as torture.

The problem of eliciting false intelligence was demonstrated by the handling of another al-Qaeda captive, Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, who responded to threats of torture by fabricating an operational link between Saddam Hussein’s government and al-Qaeda. It was exactly the kind of information that the Bush administration had been seeking to justify its desired invasion of Iraq.

By Feb. 11, 2003, as the countdown to the US invasion progressed, CIA Director George Tenet began treating al-Libi’s assertions as fact. At a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing, Tenet said Iraq “has also provided training in poisons and gases to two al-Qa’ida associates. One of these associates characterized the relationship he forged with Iraqi officials as successful.”

But the CIA’s promotion of al-Libi’s information ignored the well-founded suspicions voiced by the Defense Intelligence Agency. “He lacks specific details” about the supposed training, the DIA observed. “It is possible he does not know any further details; it is more likely this individual is intentionally misleading the debriefers.”

The DIA's doubts proved prescient. In January 2004, al-Libi recanted his statements and claimed that he had lied because of both actual and anticipated abuse. In September 2006, the Senate Intelligence Committee criticized the CIA for accepting al-Libi's claims as credible. "No postwar information has been found that indicates CBW training occurred and the detainee who provided the key prewar reporting about this training recanted his claims after the war," the committee report said.

Al-Libi ended up in a Libyan prison during the period when Col. Muammar Gaddafi was cooperating with the US in hunting down "terrorists." Al-Libi "committed suicide" just two weeks after being visited in the Libyan prison by a team from Human Rights Watch in April 2009.

'No Good Intelligence'

The al-Libi case demonstrated one of the practical risks of coercing a witness to talk. To avoid pain, people often make stuff up, an obvious point that other truth-tellers also have noted. On Sept. 6, 2006, for example, Gen. John Kimmons, then head of Army intelligence told reporters at the Pentagon, in unmistakable language:

"No good intelligence is going to come from abusive practices. I think history tells us that. I think the empirical evidence of the last five years, hard years, tells us that."

Gen. Kimmons is a rare species – a general officer with guts, not to mention an intelligence career focusing mostly on interrogation practices.

He was well aware that President George W. Bush had decided to claim publicly, just two hours later, that the "alternative set of procedures" for interrogation – methods that Bush had approved, like waterboarding – were effective.

So the real experts say one cannot acquire "good intelligence" from torture, i.e. an empirical reality upon which to base sound policy. But what about bad intelli-

gence, especially preferred bad intelligence? If your goal in 2002 and 2003 was to make a case showing operational ties between al-Qaeda and Iraq – when none existed – well, then, torture works like a charm.

Yet, Jose Rodriguez now seeks to rewrite this sordid chapter in the CIA's history and put his own complicity in a more favorable light.

One could say his first major move in this cover-up came in 2005 when he ordered the destruction of videotaped evidence of these "enhanced interrogation techniques." Surely, it is easier to soft-pedal the cruel reality of waterboarding and other abusive tactics if people can't actually see the human suffering.

And the *Washington Post*, which once basked in the glory of its investigation of the Watergate cover-up, now gives generous space for a practitioner of both waterboarding and destruction of evidence to make excuses without challenge.

Just think how Official Washington's attitude toward respect for the law has degraded over the past three decades or so. Not even President Richard Nixon dared to destroy the incriminating tapes of Watergate, even though he knew only too well that the evidence on them would be his undoing.

Yet, Rodriguez never faced criminal charges for destroying 92 videotapes recording hundreds of hours worth of CIA black-site interrogation footage. Rodriguez ordered the tapes destroyed at precisely the time when Congress and the courts were intensifying their scrutiny of the CIA interrogation program. Yet – surprise, surprise – nowhere in January 6's *Post* is there mention of that felony fact.

Indeed, as Rodriguez and his torture-friendly colleagues seek to use the occasion of the new Hollywood blockbuster to burnish their image, they are getting a helping hand from neocon newspapers like the *Washington Post*.

It's reminiscent of several years ago when Tenet and other complicit figures got to go

The real experts say one cannot acquire "good intelligence" from torture, i.e. an empirical reality upon which to base sound policy

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When the subject of international law was raised, Clarke writes that the President responded vehemently: "I don't care what the international lawyers say, we are going to kick some ass"
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on national television and insist that "we do not torture," as Tenet told Scott Pelley of "60 Minutes" in five consecutive sentences on May 1, 2007.

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A Failed Investigation

Some will remember, too, that President Barack Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder in 2009 declared the principle that "no one is above the law" but then made very clear that some people are very much above the law, including the likes of Rodriguez.

After Holder began an investigation of torture and other war crimes, the *Post* ran a lead story entitled "How a Detainee Became an Asset: Sept. 11 Plotter Cooperated After Waterboarding." The article supposedly showed that waterboarding and other forms of torture worked, transforming alleged 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheik Mohammed from a "truculent enemy" into what the CIA considered its "preeminent source" on al-Qaeda.

The article declared, "this reversal occurred after Mohammed was subjected to simulated drowning and prolonged sleep deprivation, among other harsh interrogation techniques."

The story's sentiment dovetailed nicely with the biases of the newspaper's top brass, forever justifying the hardnosed "realism" of the Bush administration as it approved brutal and perverse methods for stripping the "bad guys" of their clothes, their dignity, their sense of self – all to protect America.

Three weeks later, seven CIA directors – including three who were themselves implicated in planning and conducting torture and assassination – asked President Obama to put the kibosh on Holder's investigation. CIA Director Leon Panetta, by all reports, gave them full support.

In a Sept. 18, 2009, letter to the President, the seven asked him to "reverse Attorney General Holder's August 24 decision to re-open the criminal investigation of CIA

interrogations that took place following the attacks of September 11." Eventually, they got their way as Holder decided against proceeding with indictments. After all, everything had been properly authorized.

In his memoir, *At the Center of the Storm*, Tenet notes that what the CIA needed were "the right authorities," i.e. legal permission, and a policy determination to do the bidding of President George W. Bush:

"Sure, it was a risky proposition when you looked at it from a policy maker's point of view. We were asking for and we would be given as many authorities as CIA had ever had. Things could blow up. People, me among them, could end up spending some of the worst days of our lives justifying before congressional overseers our new freedom to act." (p. 178)

Tenet noted that counterterrorism chief Cofer Black later told Congress, "The gloves came off" on Sept. 17, 2001, when President Bush "approved our recommendations and provided us broad authorities to engage al-Qa'ida." (p. 208)

Presumably, it was not lost on Tenet that no lawmaker dared ask exactly what Cofer Black meant when he said, "the gloves came off." Had they thought to ask Richard Clarke, former director of the counterterrorist operation at the White House, he could have told them what he wrote in his book, *Against All Enemies*.

Clarke describes a meeting in which he took part with President Bush in the White House bunker just minutes after his TV address to the nation on the evening of 9/11. When the subject of international law was raised, Clarke writes that the President responded vehemently: "I don't care what the international lawyers say, we are going to kick some ass." (p. 24)

Tenet and his masters assumed, correctly, that given the mood of the times and the lack of spine among lawmakers, congressional "overseers" would relax into their post-9/11 role as congressional overlookers.

On May 13, 2009, Sen. Lindsey Graham,

R-South Carolina, gave an implicit hat-tip to all manner of infamous tortures past: “The Vice President [Dick Cheney] is suggesting that there was good information obtained, and I’d like the committee to get that information. Let’s have both sides of the story here. I mean, one of the reasons these techniques have survived for about 500 years is apparently they work.”

Back to the days of the Inquisition

Five hundred years takes us proudly back to the Spanish Inquisition when the cardinals at least had no problem calling a spade a spade. Their term for waterboarding was *tortura del agua*. No euphemism like “enhanced interrogation technique” or EIT for short.

As Graham has also explained: “Who wants to be the congressman or senator holding the hearing as to whether the President should be aggressively going after terrorists? Nobody. And that’s why Congress has been AWOL in this whole area.”

The same has been largely true of news executives at the key bastions of the mainstream news media. Months into Obama’s first term, the Washington Post kept warning the young President not to mess with the tough-guys of the CIA who were just trying to keep us all safe.

To this day, the *Post* continues carrying water for the folks who conducted the waterboarding.

In their January 6 article, the *Post* notes that the piece by Rodriguez was “written with former CIA spokesman Bill Harlow,” but again we get no help regarding Harlow’s credibility or how his readiness to mislead the American people helped clear the way for the March 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Just weeks before the invasion, Newsweek ran a story based on the text of the official U.N. debriefing of Saddam Hussein’s son-in-law Hussein Kamel when he defected in 1995. Here’s the lede of the article by John Barry on Feb. 24, 2003:

“Hussein Kamel, the highest-ranking Iraqi official ever to defect from Saddam Hussein’s inner circle, told CIA and British intelligence officers and U.N. inspectors in the summer of 1995 that after the gulf war, Iraq destroyed all its chemical and biological weapons stocks and the missiles to deliver them. Kamel ... had direct knowledge of what he claimed: for 10 years he had run Iraq’s nuclear, chemical, biological and missile programs.”

In a classic understatement, Barry commented, “The defector’s tale raises questions about whether the WMD stockpiles attributed to Iraq still exist.” Barry added that Kamel had been interrogated in separate sessions by the CIA, British intelligence, and a trio from the U.N. inspection team, that Newsweek had been able to verify that the U.N. document was authentic, and that Kamel had told the same story to the CIA and the British. After all that, Barry noted the initial non-reaction from the CIA: “The CIA did not respond to a request for comment.”

Barry’s story was, of course, completely accurate. And it was about something the CIA in 2003 knew with 100 percent certainty – i.e., what Hussein Kamel had said in 1995. So what happened to this story? Remember, Newsweek had the transcript of Kamel’s debriefing and had done its homework in checking the story out.

The CIA issued a strong denial of the story. Spokesman Bill Harlow stated: “It is incorrect, bogus, wrong, untrue.” And the rest of the mainstream media said, in effect, “Oh, Gosh. Thanks for letting us know. We might have run something on it.” Aren’t you glad that newspapers like the *Washington Post* still give folks like Rodriguez and Harlow prominent space to tell their lies. **CT**

Ray McGovern works with *Tell the Word*, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He was an Army Infantry/Intelligence officer in the early 60s and then served in CIA’s analysis division for 27 years.
First published at <http://consortiumnews.com>

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Five hundred years takes us proudly back to the Spanish Inquisition when the cardinals at least had no problem calling a spade a spade
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Medical insurance is great if you have it. But serious illness can drive you into poverty – then you realise that state-provided healthcare isn't a sign of socialism, but a hallmark of civilisation.

Behind the bright lights

Las Vegas. The city that never sleeps. Where a fortune can be made in an instant. But not everyone shares in the wealth. Words & pictures by **Tony Sutton**

Welcome to Las Vegas, bacchanalian strip of bright lights, where fortunes are won at the lucky spin of a roulette wheel, or – more likely – hard-earned salaries lost a dollar at a time in the ravenous maws of thousands of jingle-jangling slot machines. Where the world's most expensive shops share space with extravagantly-slick entertainment spectaculars and restaurant tables struggle to contain vast excesses of food at piled buffets. Home of excitement, profligacy, gluttony. And hope.

But if you take the trouble to glance beneath the facade you'll find a darker side, easy to miss in the glare of the bright lights. In the shadows of the elevated sidewalks spanning the non-stop ten-lane highway that feeds the ravenous Strip with cash- and

credit card-laden customers, there exists another vastly-contrasting life, testimony to a harsher world where there are no jobs, no homes, no cash – and very little hope. And here, just as in the rest of supposedly classless America, there's a hidden social structure at play. The beggars on the Strip are less brutalised: well-bred youngsters with smart-ass signs, street-savvy hustlers who understand the dollar-pulling power of small and friendly dogs, and raucous street musicians. They easily outnumber a smattering of true unfortunates: the disheveled lady whose life has been shattered by her husband's medical bills, the crippled vet, the drug victim.

But head a couple of miles north to Fremont Street, much-promoted heart of downtown, birthplace of this



Beneath the canopy of lights on Fremont Street is a giant cowboy. At night the neon masks the poverty in the street; in the late afternoon gloom, it is impossible to avoid.

PHOTO ESSAY



It's easy to say no when a scruffy street person asks for cash, but not so hard when he's accompanied by a friendly dog . . . especially one that offers tricks for a kiss (below).

gambling city, and the poverty becomes grimmer, grimmer, more desperate. Above the street is a swish, hi-tech seven-block canopy of lights that illuminate the night. Unlit in the afternoon's early-winter gloom, however, they are a giant shroud, casting a murky shadow over the dingy street below.

This is the poorer side of the city that doesn't sleep. Here the street people are not young drifters. They're mainly harder, tougher, broken. Social misfits, amputees, drugged-up and worn down. Begging bowls demand loose change. They embarrass the city. Security guards are everywhere, keeping unfortunates away from punters . . . "Are you having trouble, Sir," one asks, as I chat to a couple of vets. "Are they causing





trouble?” Well, no, actually!

I sit in a cafe at the far end of the street. A man picks a cigarette end from the gutter, pops it into his mouth and lights it as he walks by. People pass, gazing in: the working poor, the impoverished poor, the uncomprehending poor.

Step outside the canopied street and you're in a no-man's land. I ask directions to the Neon Museum, a few blocks away. "Wait for the bus, Sir, you have to pass through a bad area; it's not safe to walk."

Ah, the bus! I decide to give the neon display a miss and, instead, catch one back to the Strip. It's a double-decked mobile advertising billboard, garishly extolling the delights of the *other* city. Conveniently, the ad's woven fabric masks the windows, giving passengers a filtered view of

Left: Playing for his supper – a musician on a chilly Fremont Street plays classics for a sparse passing audience.

Below: "I'm Not A Bum . . ." a hopeful beggar looks for sympathy on the Strip.



I Just Want 2
GO Home
Please Im not A Bum
Las Vegas →
Anything Helps
Boo

so I have to be A
Filthy drunk 2 get
A little help around here!

PHOTO ESSAY

Signs of the times:
A kick in the nuts.
A poor joke. The
truth. Anything for
some spare change
from the passing
crowds.



the passing show without letting outsiders return their stares. A one-way mirror on wheels.

We move out of the guarded Fremont Street into the real heart of downtown, the shabby lower stretch of Las Vegas Boulevard: courthouse, ugly bus station. Gaudy wedding chapels vie for attention with sombre bond bail shops, neon-lit 24-hours convenience stores and fast food hell.

A couple of miles further, we leave the real world and enter one that most of us prefer, where the architecture – the Italian palazzo, the Eiffel Tower, Statue of Liberty, the Egyptian pyramid – is as artificial and honest as the American Dream and its promise of riches and happiness.

Welcome to Vegas: What happens here, stays here. Out of sight. Out of mind. **CT**





Sparkling lights,
hard times:
The beggars on
Fremont Street
are more affected
by poverty than
those on the Strip.
Security guards
warn passers-by
to steer clear of
their unfortunate
compatriots.

.....
Tony Sutton is the
editor of *ColdType*

A nation soaks the rich

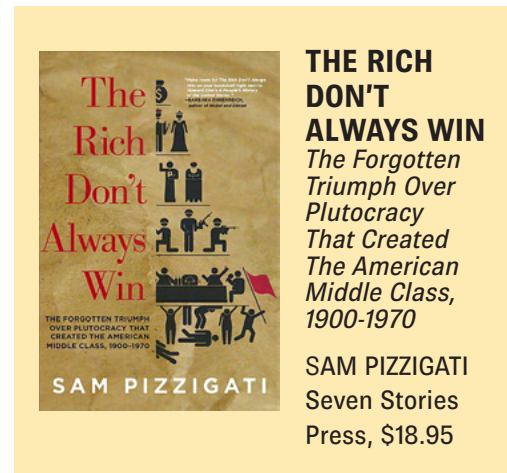
An excerpt from the book *The Rich Don't Always Win*, by Sam Pizzigati

.....
In the middle years of the twentieth century, the United States took a bigger bite out of high incomes than any of the nations – like Sweden – that now rate as the world's most egalitarian outposts
.....

In 1950, Charles E. Wilson sat on top of the global business world. He ran General Motors, the most powerful corporation in the world. For 1950, Wilson reported to the IRS an income from General Motors and his personal investments that totaled \$586,100. He paid \$430,350 of that income in taxes.

Charlie Wilson's tax bill wouldn't be unusual in the decades right after World War II. In the first five years after the war, the federal tax rate on income over \$400,000 never dipped below 82 percent. In 1950, the top rate stood a fraction over 84 percent. That top rate would jump to 91 percent the next year and did not dip below that figure until 1964. America's wealthy had never seen tax rates that high for so long. Neither had the wealthy anywhere else in the world. In the middle years of the twentieth century, the United States took a bigger bite out of high incomes than any of the nations – like Sweden – that now rate as the world's most egalitarian outposts.

Ironically enough, this historic soaking of America's rich peaked under a Republican president, Dwight David Eisenhower. The enormously popular Ike, the architect of the Allied victory over Nazi Germany, entered the White House in 1953, and his entry at first gave America's stiffly taxed rich some reason to be optimistic. Ike had filled his new administration with men of substantial



means.

The first Eisenhower cabinet, commentators would chuckle, featured “nine millionaires and a plumber,” the latter the new secretary of labor, a union leader Ike plucked from the plumbers’ union. But Ike would soon disappoint those wealthy taxpayers eagerly awaiting tax relief from the new Republican president. His first state of the union address promised only “clarification and simplification” of the tax code, nothing about rate reduction. Eisenhower went on to give top-bracket tax cuts the cold shoulder throughout his eight years as president.

Any cuts in the tax rates on high incomes, Ike believed, would be fiscally irresponsible. The United States had an expensive Cold War to wage. The former five-star general

would not countenance cutting taxes while defense and other essential government costs “were still running at formidable levels.” Ike no doubt also had politics on his mind. Harry Truman had won reelection in 1948 railing against the rich and the Republican lawmakers who cut their taxes. Why cut taxes on high incomes and give Democrats another opportunity to make political hay?

But much more than fiscal prudence and political calculation lay behind Ike’s determination to keep tax rates on America’s wealthiest at New Deal levels. Eisenhower had lived through the social horror of the Great Depression. In 1933, he had watched as jobless veterans massed in Washington. He had been part of the military operation that evicted those veterans, burned their camp, and ended their Bonus March protest. The general who directed that operation, Douglas MacArthur, saw the eviction as a triumph over the red hordes. Eisenhower saw only a pitiful spectacle that his country must never let repeat. How to avoid that sort of social disruption? Ike subscribed to the same basic egalitarian worldview that so many other thoughtful movers and shakers took from their experience of depression and war. Americans must never again let wealth concentrate and destabilize the nation.

In 1960, at an address before an auto-industry dinner in Detroit, Ike gave his take on this worldview its clearest expression. We have evolved in the United States, the president would tell his business audience, a socially conscious type of private enterprise “that strives to benefit all the people. We Americans also now recognize,” Ike continued, “the contribution public enterprise” can make. In an ever more complex world, we had come to understand that government needs to help the people do “what the people cannot do for themselves.”

With that understanding, Ike pronounced, has come the historic rise of the great American middle class.

“Other peoples find it hard to believe that an American working man can own his own

comfortable home and a car and send his children to well-equipped elementary and high schools and to colleges as well,” Eisenhower told the assembled auto-industry magnates. “They fail to realize that he is not the downtrodden, impoverished vassal of whom Karl Marx wrote. He is a self-sustaining, thriving individual, living in dignity and in freedom.”

“Unfortunately,” Ike added, “other nations have not yet learned the lessons that Americans had so wisely taken to heart. In many countries of the free world private enterprise is greatly different from what we know here,” he explained. “In some, a few families are fabulously wealthy, contribute far less than they should in taxes, and are indifferent to the poverty of the great masses of the people.”

“A country in this situation is fraught with continual instability,” Eisenhower warned. “It is ripe for revolution.” Any society that tolerates a “fabulously wealthy class” is asking for trouble. “Since time began,” Ike reminded his comfortable corporate listeners, “opulence has too often paved for a nation the way to depravity and ultimate destruction.” That depravity could also destroy us if we foolishly chose to let the rich contribute far less than they should in taxes.” That would not happen on Ike’s watch. He would not lift a finger to lower the steeply graduated tax rates on high incomes that the New Deal had bequeathed to him. Let the rich grumble. Ike would not be moved.

The rich did grumble at postwar tax rates. Many did more. They raged. Cameron Hawley raged. Hawley wrote best-selling novels that tapped his decades of executive experience in Corporate America.

In a 1956 speech before the Pennsylvania Bar Association, Hawley deemed the federal income tax “responsible for a progressively more and more serious deterioration of the moral and ethical standards of a substantial segment of our citizenry.”

P. J. Redford raged. Redford managed the

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tax office for the Walgreen Co. in Chicago. "The federal income tax," he wrote in 1957, "is just what Karl Marx advocated in his Communist Manifesto, written over a hundred years ago, as one of the ways to destroy our free society."

And Richard Lounsbery raged too. Lounsbery had the good fortune to be born the grandson of the founder of the lucrative Homestake Mine in South Dakota. He also came into the world as an heir to the Kern County Land Company fortune in California. The *New York Times* dubbed him the country's most successful personal manager of an inherited estate. His stash of insurance stocks alone, the *Times* marveled, made him "a millionaire several times over." But taxes were eating far deeper into the dividend income from these stocks than Lounsbery felt appropriate.

The United States government makes the old Robber Barons "look like children," Lounsbery told the *New York Times* in 1959. "I wouldn't anymore think of giving an old-fashioned ball in New York today than I would in Moscow. And there's no difference between the Republicans and the Democrats, either. The Republicans are socialists and the Democrats are communists - that's all."

The strangest tax ranter of them all would be T. Coleman Andrews, the eminent accounting company executive who served as Dwight Eisenhower's first chief of the Internal Revenue Service, the federal agency responsible for administering the income tax. Andrews hailed from Virginia, a normally Democratic state that Democratic senator Harry Byrd and his conservative "Byrd machine" had swung to Ike in the 1952 presidential election. The Richmond-based Andrews had been close to Byrd for years, but he didn't need his political connections to get the IRS top slot. Andrews had a distinguished record of accounting public service that went back to the 1930s. During the war, he had even served on Eisenhower's staff in North Africa. Andrews had also served as

the president of the American Institute of Accountants.

Eisenhower fully expected Andrews to do a bang-up job at the IRS. And he did. Andrews created an IRS telephone help line for ordinary citizens, spearheaded the simplification of tax forms, and aggressively went after well-heeled tax evaders. Six months into the Andrews era, his admirers at the National Civil Service League were observing that the new IRS commissioner seemed determined to run the tax service along lines of honesty and genuine merit.

Later that year, before an audience of six hundred accountants at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York, Andrews promised to crack down on illegitimate business tax deductions for entertainment expenses.

The next year, in 1954, he testified to Congress about IRS efforts to get tough on taxpayers who deducted such items as yachts and honeymoons as business expenses. "Businessmen should know better," Andrews told a House Ways and Means subcommittee.

Andrews continued his outstanding work straight through his announcement, midway through October 1955, that he "would be resigning at the end of the month to re-enter business." Treasury Secretary George Humphrey hailed Andrews for the "wonderful job" he had done as IRS commissioner and noted that President Eisenhower regrets very much indeed that Coleman Andrews is leaving.

Andrews did reenter business. He would become the president of the American Fidelity & Casualty Insurance Company. But he would not fade away. Six months after his resignation as the top federal tax-collection official, Andrews emerged on the cover of the *US News & World Report*, the nation's most business-friendly newsweekly, with a feverish denunciation of the federal income tax.

"If we keep on at the present rate of taxation, we will come eventually to the point where no one will have anything to invest

and the man on horseback will be upon us,” Andrews charged in a lengthy interview. “The government will own everything, and we’ll be forced to do the bidding of commissars imbued with the idea that they know better how to spend our money than we, and vested with the authority to do it.”

Andrews went on in the interview to blast FDR’s wartime call for a \$25,000 income cap as “socialistic demagoguery” and then made clear that he objected to the basic notion of income taxation. Advocates of the income tax, he charged, have been “deliberately, avowedly, and unashamedly” aiming to “get at the rich” ever since 1894. The federal income tax, Andrews declared, “was conceived in vengeance.”

“I cannot accept the proposition,” he added, “that a revenue law ought to be used to penalize success.”

The whole idea of taxing income, Andrews insisted, came directly from Karl Marx: “Maybe we ought to see that every person who gets a tax return receives a copy of the Communist Manifesto with it, so he can see what’s happening to him.”

Why this incredible turnaround, from respected enforcer of the nation’s tax laws to frothing anti-income tax fanatic? Historians of modern Virginia politics haven’t yet solved that mystery. We do know that while at the IRS Andrews had meetings with Joseph McCarthy, the Wisconsin senator who would become the symbol of red-baiting terror in the early 1950s. Andrews even called McCarthy “a great American.” Or perhaps fury over the Supreme Court’s landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling against school segregation started Andrews over the edge. We may never know the motives behind the Andrews about-face. But we do know that his turn against the income tax completely marginalized Andrews from America’s mainstream political life. In the mid-twentieth century, anyone in public life who attacked the concept of steeply graduated progressive income taxation was essentially committing political suicide.

Andrews would soon descend deep into the world of ultra-right-wing conspiratorial politics. His first stop would be the States Rights Party. He ran as the party’s standard-bearer in the 1956 presidential election. Two years later, Andrews helped found the notorious John Birch Society, the extremist core of what would soon become known as the radical right.

In midcentury America, anyone or any group opposed to stiff tax rates on America’s rich had to swim against a strong public tide. Some friends of the fortunate felt they could make progress anyway.

They had a plan. To chop down steep tax rates on America’s rich, they would swim below the surface, where the public wouldn’t be able to see what they were doing until after they had done it. The plan came from the American Taxpayers Association, a group with close conservative business ties that had been pushing for tax cuts since the 1920s, and the Committee for Constitutional Government, a panel conservative Republican newspaper publisher Frank Gannett had organized in 1937 to battle the New Deal.

In 1938, a Rhode Island industrialist with links to both groups drafted a constitutional amendment that would replace the 1913 constitutional amendment that enabled the federal income tax with new wording that limited the maximum rate of tax “that Congress could enact to 25 percent, the top tax rate at the end of the 1920s.” The new amendment’s conservative boosters understood quite clearly that their proposal for a 25 percent income tax limit would be dead on arrival in Congress and deeply unpopular with the American public at large. But the tax-cappers had a strategy for end-running that public sentiment. Under the Constitution, two-thirds of the states could compel Congress to call a new constitutional convention. If they could gain support from anything close to the required two-thirds of the states, backers of tax rate cap believed, congressional leaders would panic at the

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prospect of a new constitutional convention and adopt the tax rate cap amendment to forestall that possibility.

Success would depend on stealth. The American Taxpayers Association purposefully began its new campaign, notes historian Isaac William Martin, “in states far outside of national media markets”. Inside those states, the campaign ringleaders would avoid legislative discussions open to the public. “No printed campaign literature survives from the earliest years of the campaign, and probably none existed,” adds Martin. “The backers of the amendment lobbied state legislators in private.” This stealth campaign made steady progress, then emerged on a larger stage in February 1944, when New Jersey signed on to the constitutional amendment resolution as the sixteenth state to take the plunge. But that success in New Jersey brought the tax-cap effort the publicity its advocates had worked so hard to avoid.

By that June, New Deal congressman Wright Patman from Texas was denouncing the pro tax-cap Committee for Constitutional Government as “the most sinister lobby in America.” Shortly after that blast, Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau had his researchers release a report that documented how a 25 percent tax cap would shift the tax burden onto the backs of low-income Americans and cripple the federal government’s capacity to respond effectively to national emergencies. The new publicity quickly stalled the secretive campaign. State lawmakers started defeating the resolution, and the tax-cappers had to regroup. They began adding various fudge clauses to their original amendment that would let Congress raise tax rates on the rich above the 25 percent cap if the nation faced an emergency.

The fudging brought a wider array of national groups behind the campaign in the early 1950s, the US Chamber of Commerce and the American Bar Association among them. But the concessions would also sap the enthusiasm of many of the tax-cap

amendment’s original advocates. The more conservative of the tax-cappers didn’t want to give Congress an escape hatch that would allow tax rates on the rich above 25 percent. They simply wanted to end high taxes on high incomes once and for all. Without their militant antitax enthusiasm, the cap-the-tax-rate amendment campaign fizzled out in the mid-1950s.

Few noticed the campaigns demise. The effort enjoyed precious little public support. In June 1957, Gallup pollsters asked Americans if they favored “changing the Constitution to place an income tax limit of 25 to 35 percent on what any person would have to pay.” Only 17 percent approved the proposition, with 68 percent objecting. But public support for tax progressivity wouldn’t be the only reason the tax rate limit campaign floundered. Political opportunism played a role too.

High rates made loopholes valuable, and lawmakers in both parties “tacitly embraced them,” explains tax historian Joseph Thorndike. As long as rates stayed high, members of Congress could do a brisk business selling tax preferences.

These preferences brought the effective tax on high incomes down below the statutory rate in the postwar years, sometimes substantially so. “Liberals wanted to get rid of tax shelters, thereby making effective rates closer to statutory rates, but they were frustrated by conservative control of the Senate Finance and House Ways and Means committees,” notes Bruce Bartlett, a one-time top policy aide to President Ronald Reagan. “Over the years, members of those committees had largely been responsible for creating the very loopholes that were the targets of reformers.”

The higher the statutory tax rate, the more valuable loopholes would be. The more valuable the loopholes, the more valuable would be lawmakers who could deliver them. How valuable? The guardian in chief of the biggest loophole of them all – the oil depletion allowance – would end

up in the White House.

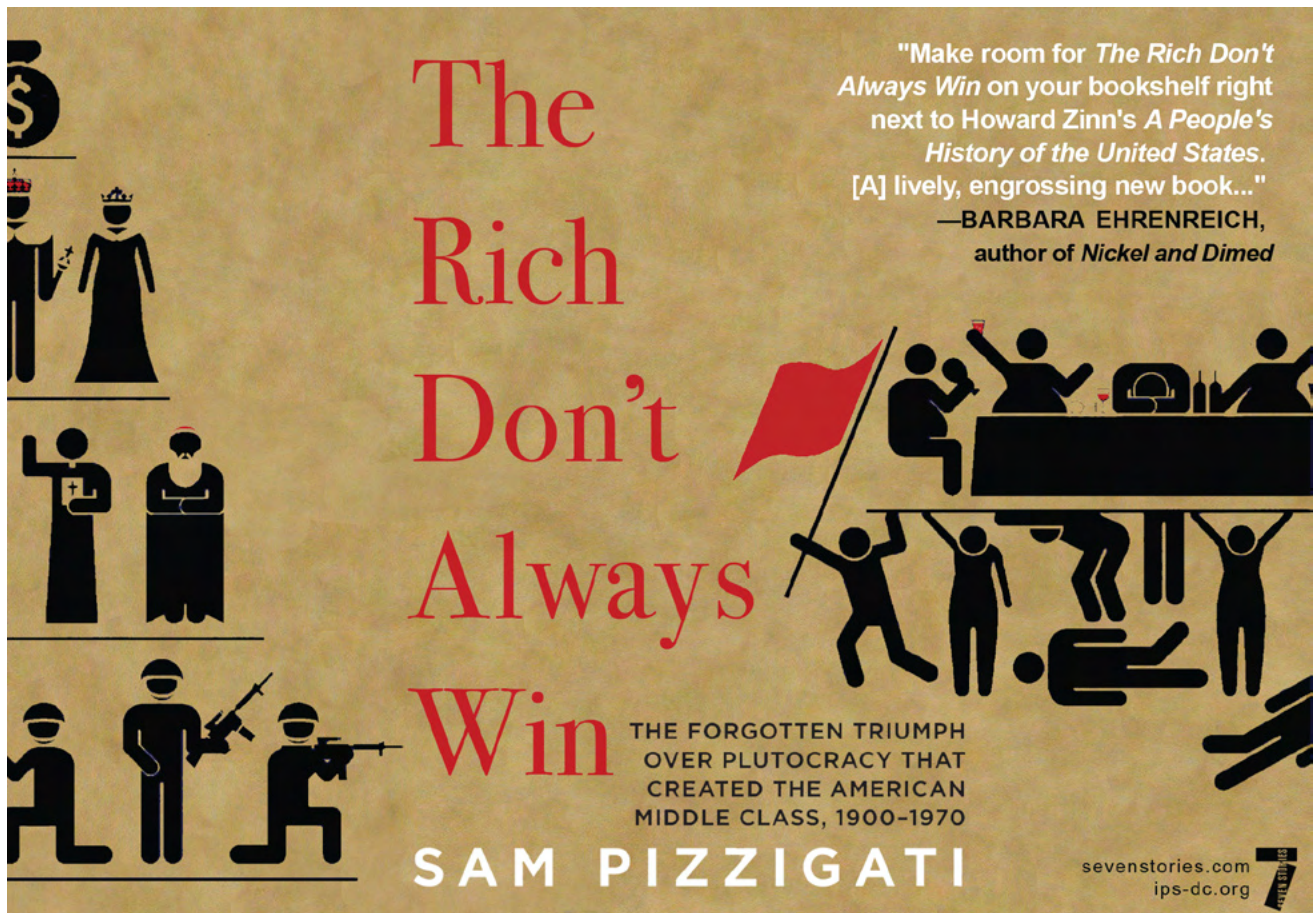
Back at the start of the twentieth century, oil didn't count for all that much in the US economy. Americans used oil for lighting and lubrication. Hardly anyone used oil for fuel. Railroad engines and steamships used coal instead. Oil remained relatively scarce, and John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil monopoly exploited that scarcity to keep oil overpriced. But in 1901 everything changed. Oil prospectors hit a gusher at a marshy knoll known as Spindletop just outside Beaumont, Texas. Within a year, wells at Spindletop were producing more oil than the rest of the world combined. That world now had a new cheap source of energy for anything mechanical that moved, especially those new-fangled automobiles.

Spindletop and the other new Texas wells were soon pumping up fortunes as furiously

as black crude. Powerful corporate interests back East – the Mellon family of Pittsburgh, for one – would quickly dominate oil transporting, refining, and retailing. Locals in Texas concentrated on exploring and drilling.

By World War I, the worldwide demand for oil seemed likely to outstrip production. Experts urged Congress to start giving prospectors and “wildcatters” some special incentives to start exploring in new territory. In 1919, lawmakers delivered the first of these incentives. Seven years later, the special oil tax breaks of the war era became a permanent and enormously lucrative tax code fixture. Tax reformers would come to group all these tax breaks under the “oil depletion allowance” rubric. But the depletion allowance actually represented only one of the three tax breaks that made the oil business such a millionaire-maker.

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Under the depletion allowance, an oilman could deduct 27.5 percent of his gross income off the top. An oilman with a million-dollar income, as the *New Yorker's* John Bainbridge would explain to a rapt readership at midcentury, would consequently start with \$275,000 in totally tax-free income. And that oilman could claim this 27.5 percent allowance year after year. Over time, in other words, oilmen could receive a tax-free return on their investments that actually exceeded their original capital outlay. "In no other industry," marveled Bainbridge, "can a taxpayer enjoy this benefit."

A second tax rule allowed oilmen to deduct all the expenses for any hole that turned out to be dry. This rule made oil drilling irresistibly enticing for taxpayers wealthy enough to sit in the 91 percent tax bracket. A player at that lofty income level, Bainbridge explained, might invest \$100,000 in a well. If the well turned up dry, no big deal. The gamble on that dry well would have cost the rich investor only \$9,000, the difference between the \$100,000 loss on the well and the \$91,000 the investor would save on his federal income taxes after deducting the loss from the rest of his income. Our rich investor, Bainbridge summed up, "has had the fun of taking a hundred-thousand-dollar gamble at a sensationally low price."

The third tax rule loophole for oilmen gave them a special tax break for successful wells. Under this third lucrative loophole, they could immediately deduct all the 'intangible expenses' of drilling a wet well, everything from geological studies to testing, instead of having to space the deductions out over the well's productive life.

The tax savings from all these oil loopholes would be staggering. In 1942, a Treasury Department study documented that the oil depletion allowance cost the federal government three times more than the government would have shelled out if it had paid the entire cost of all wildcat dry holes in 1941. For oilmen, the tax breaks reduced the federal income tax to no more than a

nuisance. Tax lawyer Jerome Hellerstein noted that one oilman he knew had collected \$14 million in income over a five-year period and paid only \$80,000 of that in federal tax. Oil kingpin John Mecom openly boasted that he paid just \$5 million in taxes on \$15 million in annual income – at a time when income over \$400,000 was supposed to face a 91 percent tax rate.

The oil depletion allowance would help oil become, as the *New Yorker* analysis put it, "by far the most important source of modern wealth in the United States." That wealth amassed largely in Texas, virtually unknown to the rest of the nation. By the end of World War II, H. L. Hunt, Roy Cullen, Sid Richardson, and Clint Murchison counted among the richest individuals in America, notes Bryan Burrough's fascinating history of the Texas Big Rich, "and no one knew it."

That anonymity ended when *Life* and *Fortune* magazines started profiling the new Big Rich in 1948. "The articles had editors up and down the Eastern Seaboard scratching their heads," muses Burrough. "America's richest man?" he imagines these editors thinking. "In Texas? And there were more?" Plenty more. In 1957, *Fortune* would name the seventy-six Americans who held fortunes worth at least \$75 million. Over a third of the names on the list, twenty-six of the total, owed their wealth to oil.

Oil wealth fueled a level of consumption that left the rest of America gaping and sometimes guffawing. In 1948, the spouse of Colonel Henry Russell of Dallas explained why her husband had just bought her a new Rolls-Royce. "It goes with my blue hat," she helpfully informed a curious observer.

Clint Murchison's home – the largest residence in Texas, with thirty-four thousand square feet of space and nine servants – had a master suite with eight full-sized beds. This somewhat unusual setup, Murchison explained, would let whatever pals might be in the neighborhood "stay up all night talkin' oil" with him.

In 1959, the oil-fueled Windfohr family

staged the ultimate in debutante balls. The clan had the Olympic-sized swimming pool of Fort Worth's Ridglea Country Club covered with a custom-built parquet dance floor. The guests swayed to the music of three bands – one led by Louis Armstrong – and didn't stop partying until well past dawn.

The morning sun wouldn't bother anyone. The hosts had thoughtfully handed out sunglasses. This debutante ball set the Windfohrs back \$100,000. Upward of \$800,000 today. But oilmen could afford outlays that lavish and still have more than enough left over to defend their cherished oil depletion allowance from any attack.

The attacks came regularly. The US Treasury Department tried to eliminate oil's preferential tax treatment in 1933, 1927, and 1941. In 1950, President Harry Truman called the oil depletion allowance the tax code's most "inequitable" loophole. In 1960, the Democratic Party platform pledged to close the loopholes in the tax laws "by which certain privileged groups legally escape their fair share of taxation" and then identified "depletion allowances" as among the more conspicuous loopholes.

The two most powerful lawmakers in Congress, House Speaker Sam Rayburn and Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Baines Johnson, both Texans, promptly ignored that identification. "The platform pertains only to loopholes, and I see none in oil," Johnson assured his most valuable constituents

Johnson owed his Senate seat to the Texas Big Rich. In 1948, their vast fortunes allowed LBJ to run a Senate primary campaign the likes of which no candidate for public office in the United States had ever run. The Johnson campaign had a war chest huge enough to poll voters week after week, helicopter the candidate from one Texas town to the next, blanket the airwaves with slickly produced ad spots, and, in the end, buy enough votes to win the primary runoff by less than one-hundredth of 1 percent. LBJ would go on to become majority leader and crush any fellow senator foolish enough to challenge oil's

privileged tax position. In 1957, a Senate Republican from Delaware, John Williams, introduced a modest amendment that would have left the depletion allowance in effect, but reduced the rate from 27.5 to 15 percent. Only five senators, beyond the amendment's sponsors, had the courage to even support bringing the rate reduction up for a vote.

Sam Rayburn played the same guardian angel role in the House of Representatives. The House Speaker only allowed Democrats committed to defending the depletion allowance to sit on the Ways and Means Committee, the panel that determined the tax bills that would reach the House floor.

Johnson and Rayburn likely assumed that their noble record on behalf of the oil depletion allowance would be enough to get the Texas Big Rich to ignore the anti-loophole verbiage in the 1960 Democratic Party platform – and presidential candidate John Kennedy's 1958 Senate vote for an amendment that would have kept 27.5 percent depletion in effect, but only for oil producers making less than \$1 million a year. They assumed wrong. The Big Rich came out blasting away at Kennedy's White House bid. John Mecom and friends took out full-page ads in the *Houston Post* urging oilmen to "stand united against the common and undivided forces which seek to destroy us and the system of competitive free enterprise our industry so clearly typifies." And H. L. Hunt circulated two hundred thousand reprints of an anti-Catholic sermon after a Kennedy campaign appearance suggested that taking a look at reforming the depletion allowance might not be a bad idea. Oil anger would almost cost the Democrats Texas in the 1960 race. In the end, they narrowly prevailed, but only because they had a Texan, Lyndon Johnson, on the ticket.

In mid-twentieth-century America, you didn't have to be an oilman to enjoy tax loopholes. The federal tax code offered deep pockets a variety of options for reducing their effective tax rate substantially below

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the marquee 91 percent top income-bracket rate. America's wealthiest could split their income up within their families, sociologist C. Wright Mills would note in his classic 1956 study of American wealth and power, and in the process shift significant sums of income from higher to lower tax brackets. They could donate a portion of their income to charity, take a tax deduction for the contribution, then receive annual income as long as they lived from the charitable fund they had created. At death they could limit the tax on their estates by setting up trusts for their grandchildren. And on and on.

But no loophole outside oil depletion would be as wealth-enhancing as the special tax treatment for capital gains, the profits from wheeling and dealing stocks, bonds, real estate, and other assets. In 1959, Diners Club chairman Ralph Schneider reported an income of \$600,000. If all of that \$600,000 had come from ordinary "income" – that is, salary, bonus, dividends, interest, and the like – Schneider would have faced a federal tax bill amounting to just over 80 percent of his total income. That tax bill would have reflected the federal tax code's descending tax rates on income brackets, from a 91 percent tax on income over \$400,000 and a 90 percent tax on income between \$300,000 and \$400,000 all the way down to a 20 percent tax on any income under \$4,000 left over after standard deductions for dependents. But only \$60,000 of Ralph Schneider's income came from salary, and most all of the rest came from capital gains subject to a maximum tax rate of 25 percent. Schneider's total tax came to just \$175,000, or only 29 percent of his \$600,000 income.

This preferential treatment for capital gains made maneuvering to claim "ordinary" income as "capital gains" the nation's favorite tax-dodging game. The moguls and superstars of Hollywood would be this game's most avid players.

The film industry boasted some of America's highest incomes over the postwar years. In 1947, movie theater magnate Charles P.

Skouras pocketed the highest corporate paycheck in the nation, the equivalent of over \$8.2 million today. Hollywood's sizable incomes kept tax lawyers busy prospecting for loopholes. One favorite in the World War II years would be the "collapsible corporation." *Time* explained how such shelters worked late in 1945: A movie producer creates a corporation, makes a movie under the auspices of that corporation, holds the movie for six months, sells it, claims the profit on the sale as a capital gain, and dissolves the corporation that made the picture.

Lester Cowan, the producer of the 1945 hit, *The Story of GI Joe*, collapsed his way to a \$650,000 tax savings.

Hollywood's tax shelter schemes set the corporate tax-dodging gold standard. The movie industry, as Duke University tax expert Charles L. B. Lowndes noted in 1953, "frequently takes the lead in tax fashions." But public revulsion after World War II – and dedicated IRS professionals – would often shut down shelters not long after they appeared. Midway through 1946, as historian Eric Hoyt points out, the IRS would declare the "collapsible corporation" shelter illegal and go after film producers for unpaid taxes.

Another prized loophole, the eighteen-months exemption, suffered a similar fate. In 1951, Congress exempted from US income taxes income earned abroad if the US taxpayer making that income had spent seventeen of the last eighteen months residing abroad. Lawmakers meant the exemption to help construction and oil workers laboring overseas. Hollywood's top talents suddenly felt the need to join these workers overseas and make movies abroad. US unions soon began attacking the loophole. Lawmakers took note. In 1953, they capped eighteen-month tax-free income abroad at \$20,000.

Eight years later, in April 1961, a newly elected president John F. Kennedy asked Congress to tighten the eighteen-month loophole and deny the \$20,000 exemption to any Americans residing abroad in "eco-

nomically advanced countries”. That proposal represented part of a far broader tax reform package that Kennedy put before Congress “to keep our tax system up to date and to maintain its equity.” Kennedy called for reforms to prevent corporations from deferring taxes on income they earned overseas. He recommended that companies no longer be able to claim yachts and hunting lodges as deductible business expenses. He proposed tax withholding on the checks that corporations and banks sent out for interest and dividends to keep affluent taxpayers from sidestepping taxes on the estimated \$3 billion a year in interest and dividend income that was going unreported to the IRS. Congress would adopt some of the Kennedy proposals in the Revenue Act of 1962.

The next year, 1963, would mark the hundredth anniversary of the IRS, and tax professionals had reason to celebrate. Loopholes did still dot the tax code, but the White House and lawmakers now seemed to be making good-faith efforts to shut those loopholes down. America’s steeply graduated progressive income tax was working. The wealthy, at least those outside Big Oil, were paying a far greater share of their income in federal taxes than Americans of modest means. And the taxes they paid were significantly reducing grand concentrations of income and wealth.

By the 1950s, the incomes of America’s super rich – the nation’s top tenth of 1 percent – had dropped by half from their 1920s level. The nation’s richest tenth of 1 percent owned over 20 percent of America’s wealth in 1929. A quarter century later, that share would be down to about 10 percent.

In the America of the mid-twentieth century, corporations manufactured products, not megamillionaires. Steeply graduated tax rates on salary and bonus income had the same deflating impact on executive compensation as the nation’s widespread union presence.

Michael Trotter graduated from Harvard

Law School into this deflated corporate world in 1962. The nation’s “high marginal income tax rates,” he would remember years later, largely kept executive compensation in check. Too much of a check, leading corporate executives would regularly grouse. “Many of the top executives in some of our largest corporations have spent a lifetime in the field of industrial management without ever having been able to accumulate as much as a million dollars,” Benjamin Fairless, chairman of the US Steel board, ruefully declared in the 1950s, “and I know that to be fact because I happen to be one of them myself.” In 1955, DuPont president Crawford Greenwalt testified to Congress that he was making half the compensation of his predecessor three decades earlier.

Investment bankers and elite Wall Street law firms felt the same downward pressure on their compensation. Halfway through the 1950s, Goldman Sachs partner Sidney Weinberg, the most celebrated investment banker on Wall Street, spent two years orchestrating the initial public offering of the stock of the Ford Motor Company, the biggest sale of a privately held company’s stock to the public in American financial history. A deal that colossal today would generate hundreds of millions of dollars in fees to bankers. For his two years of work, Weinberg collected \$250,000.

In those same years, adds journalist Malcolm Gladwell, principals in the nation’s top law firms looked back wistfully at the days of opulence past. Roswell Magill, a partner at New York’s eminent Cravath, Swaine & Moore, acknowledged in 1956 that law firms can no longer honestly assure promising young men that if they become partners they can save money in substantial amounts, build country homes and gardens for themselves like their fathers and grandfathers did, and plan extensive European holidays.

Those executives who dared to push the tax envelope – and carve out greater than ordinary rewards – would often find tax court judges ready and eager to push right back.

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Indiana executive Frederick Ernest certainly did. Ernest served as the top executive at a 1948 startup in the machine tool trade. The Korean War that began in 1950 had made that trade a hot one, and the revenues at Ernest's company had soared from \$213,400 in 1949 to \$3,237,000 in 1952. Executive pay at the company had soared too. The firm's four top officers saw their take-home jump over tenfold to \$85,000, the equivalent of over \$700,000 today. Accountants at Ernest's flourishing new company claimed this skyrocketed executive pay as a "reasonable" corporate outlay and an appropriate corporate tax deduction. But the IRS rejected that claim. A displeased Ernest took the IRS to court.

The legal dust wouldn't settle until 1961. A federal appeals court that year ruled that Ernest's machine tool firm could only deduct \$35,000 – about \$300,000 today of the \$85,000 each of the company's top four executives received in compensation. These executives, the court concluded, "owed their fabulous pay increases to the demand the Korean War had created for industrial retooling, not any individual business sagacity and industry." Consequently, their company had no right to claim their huge paychecks as a reasonable and deductible corporate expense.

Before the 1950s, emerging new industries had always created grand personal fortunes. Steel, automobiles, and oil had left the nation's economic landscape littered with dynastic wealth. The two greatest economic transformations of the 1950s – the advent of television and the suburbanization of America – created no lasting economic dynasties. The tax code of the 1950s wouldn't let them.

Business analysts from *American Heritage*, *Forbes*, *Fortune*, and the *New York Times* have over recent years assembled inflation-adjusted lists of the richest Americans of all-time. Most of the fortunes on these lists grew to king size before the federal income tax first became a permanent fixture in 1913.

Other fortunes on these lists amassed after 1980, when tax rates on the rich began their steep downward descent. None of the lists of the all-time richest Americans include anyone who hit their economic peak in the mid-twentieth century.

Midcentury America, to be sure, still had rich people. But these would be rich people of a peculiar sort. In a 1969 book, *New Yorker* writer Kenneth Lamott gave the richest of his era a name. He called them the "Income Tax Rich". That label made sense. You couldn't enjoy a great private fortune at midcentury unless you had a privileged relationship with the IRS. You either had to have inherited your fortune from a time before taxes in the United States became steeply progressive, or you had to have been doing your business in an industry – like oil – that shielded you from America's steeply graduated tax rates.

Fortune magazine's 1957 list of America's richest personalized this phenomenon. The *Fortune* list came divided into wealth tiers. In the top tier, between \$700 million and \$1 billion, the magazine found only one contemporary American fortune. That fortune belonged to oilman J. Paul Getty. In the second and third tiers, covering the range from \$200 to \$700 million, *Fortune* found fifteen grand accumulations of wealth, eight inherited, four more either directly or indirectly from oil. The fourth *Fortune* tier – between \$100 and \$200 million – had thirty wealthy Americans listed. Fifteen of these owed their good fortune to inheritance, another six from oil; and in the lowest tier, from \$75 to \$100 million, thirty-one more financially favored Americans, seventeen favored by inheritance and five by oil.

Among America's grand inheritors, none lived as comfortably in the 1950s as Ailsa Mellon Bruce, the daughter of Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon. Ailsa ranked as one of the eight richest Americans on the 1957 *Fortune* list, along with other three other Mellon progeny. Andrew Mellon had expired in 1937, but not before engineering as Treasury secretary what would prove to be

a temporary repeal of the federal gift tax. With that tax on hiatus, Mellon had showered his daughter Ailsa and other dear ones with millions in tax-free gifts, a savvy end run around the estate tax that left Ailsa with a fortune grand enough at midcentury to support three residences in New York City, two in Greenwich, Connecticut, one in Palm Beach, and one more in Syosset, Long Island.

Ailsa only spent three weeks a year on Long Island, but maintained a year-round Syosset staff. Her complement of twelve domestics and twenty-two gardeners, notes historian David Cannadine, kept the cut-flowers in the Syosset manse's thirty-two rooms changed daily, whether she was present or not.

Ailsa could only afford to live this luxuriously because her father's insider manipulations of the temporary gift tax repeal had spared a huge portion of his prodigious wealth from the federal estate tax.

Other scions of great wealth would not have that same good fortune. The wealth they inherited would go through the estate tax wringer.

Between 1941 and 1976, the tax on estate value over \$10 million sat at 77 percent. The actual federal tax paid on total estate value would, of course, amount to much less than that 77 percent. Tax lawyers would see to that and make small fortunes of their own advising wealthy clients how to parlay gifts to charity and other loopholes into lower estate tax liabilities. But the estate tax, even after loopholes, had bite.

And the money inherited after the estate tax did its biting would generate income that faced midcentury's 80 and 90 percent top marginal rates.

Those blessed with inherited wealth chafed at these rates. Anna Dodge, the widow of auto-maker Horace Dodge, simply could not bear the thought of having Uncle Sam levy a 91 percent tax on any dollar of her income. The wealthy widow invested her entire \$56 million legacy from the Dodge

auto fortune in tax-free municipal bonds. Dodge's bonds would yield only \$1.7 million a year in tax-free interest, a royal sum in the 1950s but not enough to maintain the Palm Beach mansion Dodge had bought back in the 1920s. She eventually tore the mansion down and sold off the furnishings in 1957. But Dodge would go out in style, notes wealth historian Larry Samuel, with a grand just-like-the-old-days party.

"More than two hundred members of New York and Palm Beach society," chronicles Samuel, "danced to two orchestras, sipped from a champagne fountain, and snacked on Beluga caviar served from, of course, a carved-ice swan."

Dodge also gave up her mansion in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, as well as her yacht and its seventy-eight-person crew. In an age of high taxes on high incomes, the grand baubles of America's plutocratic golden age had now become white elephants too expensive to maintain. "We super rich," one affluent essayist in *Time* magazine noted, "have unloaded our marble mansions on churches, embassies, labor unions, and institutions of learning that don't have to pay the taxes or cope with the servant shortage." *Who Killed Society?* author Cleveland Amory would ruminate in a 1959 *New York Times* piece that the sons and daughters of grand fortune had little grandness in their future. The great manses of their parents would never be theirs to enjoy. Neither would the precious things in them. "Practically everything in sight in these houses is, because of the tax deductions involved, earmarked not for their children," Amory explained, "but for museums."

Not all the rich would go the charitable deduction route. To spite the tax man, some would spend at various levels of wild abandon. A 1958 *Business Week* dispatch marveled that the rich "are coming out of their holes, and they're having a ball." What could account for this sudden splurging?

"The Draconian income and inheritance taxes levied on the rich," speculates histo-

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The wealthy in the 1950s felt a growing middle class invading ever more of their physical and cultural space. The rich were losing their social preeminence

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America's grandest families – Astors, Vanderbilts, Belmonts, Morgans – had almost all established lavish outposts along this thirty-mile belt of luxury. Midcentury would now see the estates of this past glory sliced and diced for middle-class consumption – or simply left to decay and disintegrate
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rian Larry Samuel, “appeared to be instilling a use-it- or-lose-it philosophy.”

The squeeze on the midcentury rich wouldn't be just financial. The wealthy in the 1950s felt a growing middle class invading ever more of their physical and cultural space. The rich were losing their social preeminence. The nation no longer revolved around them. Average Americans increasingly saw the rich as deadweight, as obstacles in their way.

This new social reality had Eve Pell's to-the-manor-born mom seething in the post-war years. The Pells in the 1950s were still holding on to a grand fortune that traced back to colonial times. Eve would later title her moving memoir of growing up rich, *We Used to Own the Bronx*. Back in the Gilded Age, Eve's great-grandmother had hosted seated dinners of 125 people, one course after another, with a footman in livery standing behind each chair.

Eve's mother would have been comfortable in that Gilded Age world. But she could never adapt to a new world where the rich had become curiosities from a past soon to be gone forever. “Mummy,” Eve would write in her memoir of her 1950s childhood in what remained of Long Island's once-fabled Gold Coast, “especially hated the Sunday drivers who came out from New York City to look at the rich people's homes and estates – which we called houses and places.” Eve's mother also hated how the new suburban housing developments and the construction of the new Long Island Expressway were blocking off “the riding trails we used.” Mummy “scoffed at the small, new houses with the flat, ugly roofs.”

“All these lower-class people on their quarter-acres,” writes Eve Pell, “were infringing on our territory, spoiling our rides, and cluttering up our roads with their cars.”

The fabulous mansions and estates of the Gold Coast had once stretched from Great Neck to Huntington on Long Island's North Shore. America's grandest families – Astors, Vanderbilts, Belmonts, Morgans – had al-

most all established lavish outposts along this thirty-mile belt of luxury. Midcentury would now see the estates of this past glory sliced and diced for middle-class consumption – or simply left to decay and disintegrate. The seventy-room Hillwood home of cereal heiress Marjorie Merriweather Post became the C. W. Post College administration building. Laurelton, the eight-level, eighty-four-room “private Eden” of Louis Comfort Tiffany, burned down in 1957. Farther out on Long Island, the gaudiest palace of them all – financier Otto Kahn's 126-room ‘Oheka’ – would become first a rest home for New York City sanitation workers, then a military academy, then a vandalized shell. The entrepreneur who bought the Oheka shell in 1984 ended up replacing four hundred windows and doors and filling three hundred trailer-trucks with decades of debris.

With the markers of America's classic plutocracy literally crumbling all about, observers in the 1950s and 1960s found themselves speculating about a future without any super rich at all. “The massive fortunes of the Pittsburgh millionaires of the nineteenth century and the Detroit millionaires of the Twenties are a phenomenon not likely to be repeated,” *New York Times* journalist Joseph Nolan, later an executive with Chase Manhattan Bank, speculated in 1955. “The day of accumulating gargantuan new personal fortunes in the United States is just about ended,” author Ferdinand Lundberg, a best-selling chronicler of America's wealthy, would add in 1968,

Sociologist C. Wright Mills would argue that, in a sense, an America without a super rich had already arrived. We no longer had a plutocracy. We had a corporate rich. “Men of means,” Mills explained, had come to “depend directly, as well as indirectly, for their money, their privileges, their securities, their advantages, their powers on the world of the big corporations.” Their prestige had become a prestige of the office they command,” their place atop the corporate hierarchy. “Instead of servants,” as Mills wrote, “a row of private secretaries.”

To most Americans, the remnants of the old plutocracy that remained would appear increasingly pathetic.

Alfred Corning Clark, an heir to the original Singer sewing machine fortune, had left almost \$50 million to his four sons at the end of the nineteenth century. The second-oldest of the four, Sterling, manically retreated into “cigars, Burgundy, paintings, silver, rare books, racehorses, and manor houses. He stuffed his homes with thirty-nine Renoirs and, after one bout of paranoia, would refuse to speak to his brothers for thirty years. In the 1930s, hatred of the federal income tax turned poor Sterling into a political conspirator. He would be accused, notes one synopsis of Sterling’s sad story, “of joining a cabal of Wall Street plutocrats plotting a coup to replace Franklin Roosevelt with a fascist dictator on the model of Mussolini.” After World War II, an elderly Sterling spited his brothers and federal tax collectors one last time. He hid his art collection away in the Massachusetts hinterland, “where he deemed it less likely to be destroyed in case of atomic attack.”

Lucy Douglas “C. Z.” Guest, the daughter of a Boston investment banker, married a national polo champion and hobnobbed with high society’s midcentury finest. In a Washington Post interview, she explained why women of her station always had a governess raise their children: “Children need someone to discipline them. And after all, Winston didn’t marry me to be a maid.”

J. P. Getty, the richest of America’s midcentury rich, seemed to be a living, breathing cautionary tale for anyone who daydreamed about the glory that surely must come with fabulous fortune. The “human wreckage” of J. P.’s life, notes biographer John Pearson, “started piling up within the old man’s lifetime.” One son killed himself. Another appeared intent on doing much the same through alcohol and heroin addiction. “Still another did fine” – at the cost of cutting himself off from anything to do with his father’s empire.

America’s midcentury politicians could read the zeitgeist of their age. They felt little awe for the men of fantastic means in their midst. To some, like Dwight Eisenhower, the super rich would be politically pitiful. In 1954, in a letter to his brother Edgar, Ike candidly shared his assessment of the super rich working to turn his Republican Party into a battering ram against the New Deal legacy:

“Should any political party attempt to abolish social security, unemployment insurance, and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again in our political history. There is a tiny splinter group, of course, that believes you can do these things. Among them are H. L. Hunt (you possibly know his background), a few other Texas oil millionaires, and an occasional politician or business man from other areas. Their number is negligible and they are stupid.”

The steep progressive tax rates of the postwar years and the cultural disdain for great wealth these taxes seemed to engender left Americans of means agitated and alarmed. Individuals of great talent would never choose to soar, many would complain, in a society where tax rates as high as 91 percent kept the rewards for success painfully puny. In the 1957 Ayn Rand cult novel *Atlas Shrugged*, America’s talented few went on strike against oppressive government regulation and taxation, convulsing the world and proving their indispensability.

Other critics of the midcentury egalitarian order made more sober cases. How could we expect Americans to take entrepreneurial risks, their argument went, when rewards for risk-taking rated as so underwhelming? In 1951, the noted tax lawyer Godfrey Nelson despaired that Americans simply did not appreciate the vast toll that taxes are now taking. “Soak-the-rich policymakers who predetermined that high incomes must be leveled off by some process of liquidation for the good of society,” Nelson wrote in the *New York Times*, “have failed to consider the possible devastating economic effects of

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Bedell spent the bulk of World War II as an army flight instructor, then picked his business up after the war right where he left off. By then, of course, tax rates on America's top-income brackets had risen to their all-time record high. Somehow, Bedell didn't seem to care
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draining our people of their earnings. If current trends continue," he went on to warn, "we shall reach the stage where individual incentives will disappear and private enterprise become a thing of the past.

But private enterprise did just fine in the postwar decades. Entrepreneurs flourished. New industries emerged. The economy grew. No one could "prove" that high taxes on high incomes actually helped true entrepreneurs prosper. But some of these true entrepreneurs felt the connection, one Berkley Bedell among them.

In the world as imagined by the Ayn Rands and Godfrey Nelsons, a Berkley Bedell could not possibly exist. The Iowa-born Bedell, National Council of Churches General Secretary Bob Edgar would later write in a preface to Bedell's life story, has "a resume that makes Horatio Alger look like the manager in your local mini-market."

Bedell seems to have had entrepreneurship in his DNA. He grew up during the Great Depression in a northwest corner of Iowa known as Spirit Lake. In 1937, paperboy Bedell won fifty dollars in a *Des Moines Register* subscription contest and promptly invested his winnings in his own fishingfly business. By his high school graduation, Bedell had turned his bedroom into a warehouse and had hired two classmates to help him manufacture his stock. In January 1941, he began his studies at Iowa State University and would return home nearly every weekend to run his business.

Bedell spent the bulk of World War II as an army flight instructor, then picked his business up after the war right where he left off. By then, of course, tax rates on America's top-income brackets had risen to their all-time record high. Somehow, Bedell didn't seem to care. Between 1949 and 1957, his sales multiplied tenfold. His enterprise, Berkley and Company, soon had the best-selling fishing line in the country.

In the high-tax 1950s, Bedell constantly invested in his business, not in himself. His family would be one of the last in Spirit Lake

to get a TV set. "Berkley thought it better," note biographers Larry Ramey and Daniel Haley, "to live life than watch it." By 1960, his company would be worth \$1.2 million, over \$9 million in today's dollars. His oldest son Ken had no idea the company had reached that size until he read that net worth figure in a newspaper article. "Reading that newspaper," Ken later related, "made me realize for the first time that Dad was wealthy."

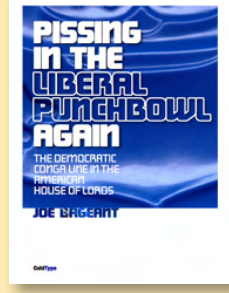
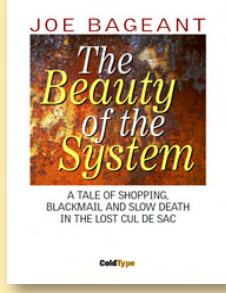
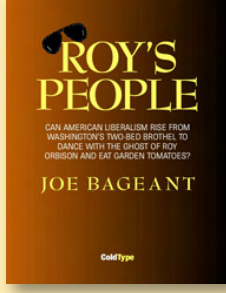
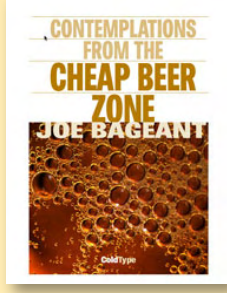
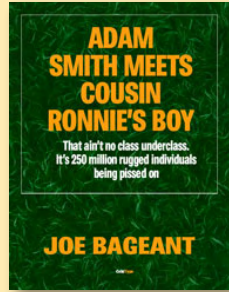
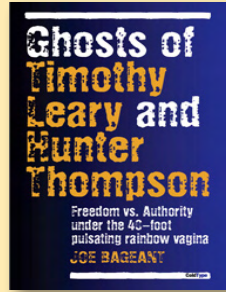
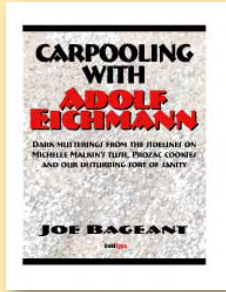
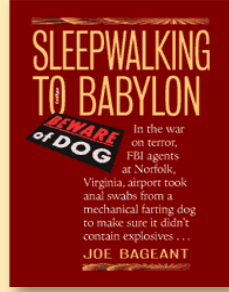
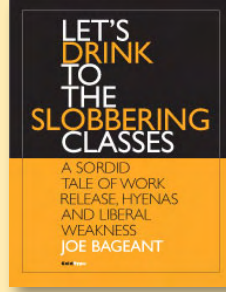
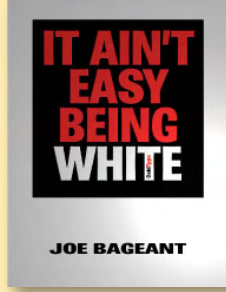
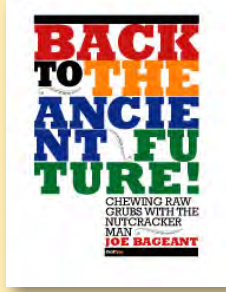
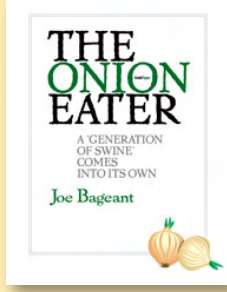
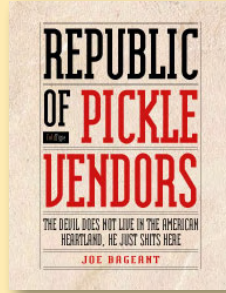
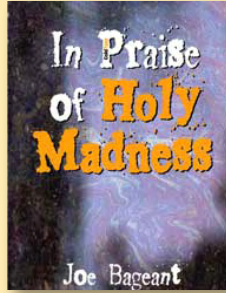
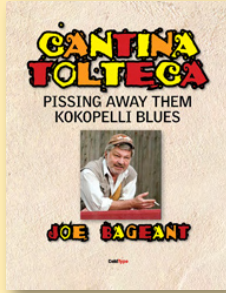
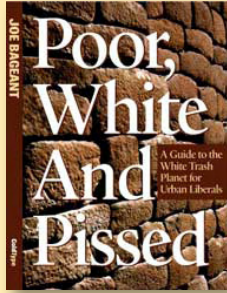
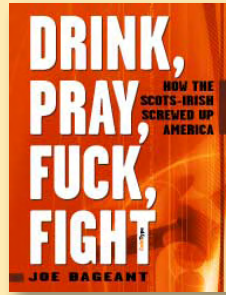
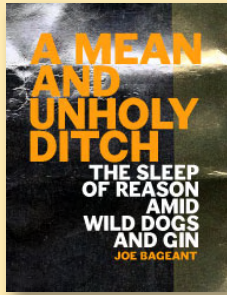
By the mid-1960s, Berkley and Company sales had quadrupled from their late 1950s level, and the national business community was starting to take notice. In 1964, the federal Small Business Administration named Bedell its small businessman of the year. The Iowa entrepreneur would accept his award plaque from President Lyndon Johnson in a Rose Garden ceremony outside the White House.

That same year, Bedell voted for Barry Goldwater in the presidential race. He considered himself a conservative Republican. But the war in Vietnam soon started to crack his political persona. Bedell would run for Congress in 1972 as an antiwar Democrat and lose. He ran again in 1974 and won, eventually serving six successful terms before retiring for health reasons in 1986.

Once recovered, Bedell resumed a hectic schedule and entered the twenty-first century deeply concerned about America's growing inequality. He had done just fine for himself and his family during the soak-the-rich years. Why couldn't any entrepreneur? "When Eisenhower was president," he would tell his biographers early in the new century, "our income tax rates went up to over 90 percent. That did not seem to diminish people's drive to work hard."

"The continued concentration of wealth in America," the 1964 national small businessman of the year would conclude in 2005, "will lead to problems in the future unless something is done." **CT**

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Sam Pizzigati is the editor of the online weekly *Too Much* - <http://toomuchonline.org>



KEEP JOE BAGEANT'S MEMORY ALIVE – DOWNLOAD, READ AND SAVE ALL OF ESSAYS – COLLECTED IN PDF FORMAT AT <http://coldtype.net/joe.html>

Timothy Leary and the Outer Space Connection

In this latest dip into the writing archives of **Joe Bageant**, a renowned seer of the sixties leaves prison bringing visions of extraterrestrial life

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I got comfortable in the back seat, dug out a crumpled pack of smokes, and proffered some rather thin conversation toward other parties involved in this mission
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Few people under 50, maybe 60, understood the impact that Timothy Leary had on American culture. Leary was a respected faculty member at Harvard when he conducted government-funded tests of LSD and psilocybin, which were perfectly legal. Leary believed LSD showed therapeutic potential in psychiatry. He popularized catch phrases such as “turn on, tune in, drop out” and “think for yourself and question authority.” His drug-related notoriety led to his dismissal from Harvard.

Leary became a media sensation and an affront to the establishment, which contributed to LSD being declared an illegal drug. He had a long series of arrests and long prison terms, mostly for possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use. Facing prison, he fled the United States for Europe, North Africa and Central Asia. Leary was eventually caught and extradited, returned to the US where he faced additional charges for jumping bail.

During the 60s and 70s, Leary was arrested often enough to see the inside of 29 different prisons worldwide. President Richard M. Nixon once described him as “the most dangerous man in America” – even though Leary had never physically harmed anybody. The judge at his remand hearing said, “If he is allowed to travel freely, he will speak publicly and spread his ideas.”

Joe Bageant greatly respected the ideas and

the person of Timothy Leary, so much so that Joe named his first son Timothy. Joe met and came to know many big names during his writing career, but he rarely talked about any celebrities or famous writers and musicians he had known. One exception to this was Leary. In his home, Joe had framed a hand-written note from Leary, on the stationery of a Tokyo hotel, praising Joe for his writing.

*After Joe died two years ago, friends of his sent me copies of articles he had written in the 70s. Bageant wrote this for *Rockey Mountain Musical Express* in February 197, after talking to Leary during a two-day visit to Colorado several months after Leary had been released from a California prison. – Ken Smith*

In natural accordance with the laws of God and airports, Stapleton was locked tight in the grip of a traffic jam the night Leary arrived. And since there was nothing to do but make the best of a bad situation, I got comfortable in the back seat, dug out a crumpled pack of smokes, and proffered some rather thin conversation toward other parties involved in this mission – three students from the Colorado University Program Council, Leary’s sponsor. But because I was ten years their senior, didn’t ski and never go to movies, silence gradually won out as memory took over ... dredging up images a decade old.

Flashbacks of Leary on the cover of *Life* magazine, Leary on the street of Haight, Leary the psychologist/acid-priest/revolutionary/fugitive whose name became the pop culture trademark for consciousness expansion and the LSD spiritual movement – a movement touching millions, many of which still look upon as the time of their awakening. Now he was back, released from prison on bail, and somehow it all felt like a rerun as he passed across 70 million TV screens flickering in slow motion to the flashbulb's glare. This time though, he was baffling everyone with science fiction-like statements about radical new world visions, outer space migration, human mutation, human mutation and superintended lifespans and a program called SMILE (Space Migration Increased Intelligence Life Extension).

Finally, the sheer compression of the jam squeezed our rented car, inch by inch to the front of the terminal – where we disembarked to plow through hundreds of strangers under what felt like searchlights, mounted in the ceiling of the lobby. Porters, hippies, soldiers ... pressed, pushed and jostled to the intercom's monotone for a few buzzing minutes, then Leary appeared. There was no mistaking him.

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Tennis shoes and smiles

Decked out East Coast style, in plaid pants and a polo shirt, he was all smiles as he padded forward on glowing white tennis shoes. Even under the harsh light, he didn't look 56. After quick and polite intros all around, luggage clunked, car doors slammed and we were rolling. The car peeled back cold night air on its way to Denver's KTLK radio station where an interview was scheduled to happen.

The clock at the radio station read 9:30 p.m. when Tim Leary breezed its spongy, carpeted corridors to the broadcast booth. A late 20s DJ and a longhaired program director were on hand to welcome their celebrated guest – who was radiating his famous

smile (which seems to go Boiiiiiiiiiiiiing!). Leary laughs readily and displays the charm of a born extrovert. No social exchange is too small for his attention. In fact, the lighter the rap, the more he appears to get off as he winks and cuts up, enjoying himself in a manner which struck me as sort of verbal ice skating. Visually, he is very kinetic and while he talks and moves about, it has a slight tinge of exaggeration, somewhat akin to the way TV actors move.

Showing a delight in the studio's equipment which bordered on possession at times, his hands dart briefly once or twice as Tim Leary declares his belief that: "Radio stations are temples of the religious ritual of electronic communication, with the DJs as modern technology's gurus who are responsible for getting out the signals; nocturnal shamans who bathe the earth in radio waves while the people sleep!" Tim is big on "signals" these days, and as he sees it: "It is one of my tasks to send out signals to that portion of the human race which is ready to mutate and migrate. It is the basis of my program ... using signals to generate the collective energy of those developed to receive them."

Came time for the interview, everyone got a surprise, since a standard question/answer shot was the farthest thing from his mind. Instead, he whips out a sheaf of typewritten scripts, distributing them among whomever happened to be present, announcing: "We're going to do a live radio show. Everybody game?" Caught off guard, our young DJ stammers. "BBBut Mr. Leary, I have these questions for you to answer ..."

"What kind of questions?"

"Questions of burning social and spiritual sig . . ."

"Oh Dear God!" Tim grabs his chest jokingly, pretending to collapse under their weight. "Okay, okay," he concedes, "but let's do the show first, then I'll give you all the time you want. A deal?"

"A deal" agrees our man of burning questions.

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Came time for the interview, everyone got a surprise, since a standard question/answer shot was the farthest thing from his mind
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Radio listeners that night must have wondered what inna hell was going on as their radios broke forth in authoritarian tones warning them to: “Stand by for a transmission from higher intelligence”
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Next thing I know, we are all reading for the various parts in Leary’s production. And mine, to my astonishment, is the role of an amoeba! To be exact, an amoeba named Dr. Protozoa whose speech is being delivered from the bottom of the Pre-Cambrian oceans – concerning a dangerous new trend gaining popularity in the ranks of young amoeba, called “calcium tripping” (calcium being classified as a HARD drug, naturally). I gave it a try, but didn’t get very far.

“No no no,” interrupts doctor Tim. “You sound like you are READING it!”

“Well, uh, you’ve got to admit that it’s kind of unusual dialogue,” I offered lamely.

“We both know that’s not really what’s happening here, don’t we? What’s really happening here is that you aren’t in total control of your nervous system. Right?” (He was completely right, since I’d been awake for about 40 hours at that point.) “Can’t let it get away from you,” he chuckles, and goes back to cajoling the others, all of whom have developed a case of cold feet, excepting the two broadcasters.

“Now this show,” Leary begins, “is called ‘Broadcasts From Higher Intelligence’ and tonight we’re going to be rapping with Gautama Buddha, Homer the Greek street cat, some DNA molecules . . . “

The final product was a half-hour commercial for higher intelligence and space migration – employing humor as a method of slipping a few new ideas over. Radio listeners that night must have wondered what inna hell was going on as their radios broke forth in authoritarian tones warning them to: “Stand by for a transmission from higher intelligence.”

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Transmission from higher intelligence

So imperatively does Tim Leary view the SMILE project that he uses the entire thrust of the media blitz, which began last year, to promote it. In an effort to present an approximate idea of the SMILE concept, of-

fered herein are some of his answer to questions gathered over a two-day period – concerning SMILE and a few other topics.

BAGEANT: “How can you be sure human development is really at the point of implementing such a futuristic program as SMILE?”

LEARY: “Outer space immigration has been part of the trajectory of human development from the very beginning. We’ve been headed in that direction ever since we crawled out of the slime ... but now we are actually there, and have been ever since the astronauts made the first penetrations.”

BAGEANT: “Then we already have the inner biopsychological equipment to move on?”

LEARY: “Sure we do. We all have an extra-terrestrial aspect or side. Anyone who really had a true inner vision during the 60s knows it, has seen it . . . and touched it. It was always inevitable we should have to leave the planet, so why fight it? Let’s just lay back and dig it!”

BAGEANT: So many people in this country have just discovered the land, ecology, etc. Such a stark look upward might be a little scary for some.”

LEARY: “Space migration should not scare anyone, especially Americans. Every American is a descendant of immigrants who in turn were part of some larger migratory chain. The main difference is that we’ve come a long way from creaky little wooden ships.”

BAGEANT: “So far, most of the space projects have been the exclusive area of the government. How do they feel about SMILE?”

LEARY: “Naturally they are against it. So is big business ... which leaves it up to the private sector. But at least they aren’t conspiring against it – they aren’t hip enough

to do that – since they are still hung up in ancient mammalian territorial monkey games which force them to fight rather than respect the limitations of the planet. They spend more money fighting over the old world than it takes to build new ones. Meanwhile, many of the 60s consciousness mutants have come out of their cocoons of internal travel and are pushing outwards toward external progress. Let's forget about astral travel and do some real traveling. Outer space is up for grabs."

BAGEANT: "Any thoughts or observations on the way things have developed since your incarceration, or while you were 'out' so to speak? What about the system in general?"

LEARY: "Well, even though I have gone through prison at the hands of the system, I still feel that, as Americans, we are light-years ahead of the rest of the world – and have more REAL freedom than any place else on earth. Freedom is the capability to change things – more of it now than ever before. Spiritually, the country took a downer about the time of the Kennedy assassination, but now we're getting our hope back, building up a new wave. The 60s mutants are everywhere. Right now there are two great forces at work on the face of this globe: mass centralization, as in China, which breeds insect suspicion, and the American self-realization movement towards individuality and self-improvement. What is at stake here is the future of the human race, so we are playing hard ball playing for keeps."

BAGEANT: "What about the hippies who retreated back to the soil, or embraced Eastern doctrines?"

LEARY: "Too many of the 60s crowd seem to be just fossilizing or sitting around. They got hung up in the Eastern doctrines such as Hinduism, which are pre-scientific and incapable of producing the kinds of results we now need. 'Lay back and be here and now' type solutions not only don't work,

they are boring as hell. They were designed to placate people into waiting for Messiahs which never seem to come. We've got to do the job ourselves or it won't get done."

BAGEANT: "What do you think about the possible new life form they've found on the moon? The one that doesn't move or breathe, but gives off excreta?"

LEARY: "Sounds like they have found Republicans to me."

BAGEANT: "Speaking of politicians, any thoughts on Carter?"

LEARY: "With the election of Carter, we are seeing the blossoming of the 60s in the White House. I think he will be one of the greatest Presidents we've ever had, though I may be wrong and look like a fool five years from now. But he has every chance of it."

BAGEANT: "You might not have to wait five years to look like a fool, considering the way some of the media portrays you."

LEARY: "The media tells the middle class exactly what it wants to hear, so that they in turn will listen to the media. So actually, it only excommunicates a closed-off group of people who are plugged into a cycle which would never allow them to conceive of what I'm about anyway."

BAGEANT: "Do you have anything to say in general to persons waiting for signals?"

LEARY: "Yeah. Change, change, change, change. Keep mutating, keep molting. Go faster, go higher, get better. Follow the genetic imperative to learn and go forward. We are the nation with the vision and the equipment. So, let's go do it!"

Commonly held as the notion is, Timothy Leary is not burned out. At least not in the bombed-out brain cell sense of the word. Moreover, he is not even as crispy round the edges as your average rock star, and this

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Since the middle-class home is always ripe for a nice titillating, shocking infraction of their values, and since the news is always looking for someone to star in the 9 o'clock line up – Leary was a natural for the part
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new Leary seems more logical than the famous acid outlaw of years ago.

The difference in the two Learys (though this is not an entirely fair division) looks to be this: The old Leary sent back signals from deepest intercellular space, reached and perceived via acid, while the current one gathers his signals from the macrocosm, relying on the cold, clean accuracy of his own sort-system. Given that the general direction of his intelligence has always run along academic lines, it seems natural he should wind up depending upon his own intellectual machinery. True to the Leary form, he's determined to reach the farthest limits it will take him, even to the point of fulfilling the Moody Blues musical claim that "He's on the outside looking in."

Considering the contemporary cultural legend Tim Leary represents, only the most naive would fail to see there is more to it than his early endorsements of acid, or the small quantity of weed which sent him into exile and later to prison. Others have done those same things without becoming famous or pulling as much time as Leary has. Leary's legal crimes were just a technicality of the real crime.

What lies at the heart of the matter is the symbolic/conceptual crime he committed when he publicly violated middle-class taboos through the national media. Since the middle-class home is always ripe for a nice titillating, shocking infraction of their values, and since the news is always looking for someone to star in the 9 o'clock line up – Leary was a natural for the part. Along with other players whose crimes were entertain-

ing enough to make the suitable for mass consumption: William Calley, Patty Hearst, Manson, Speck, Cleaver (usually through crimes more brutal than Leary's).

What is fascinating and unique about Leary's though is the fact that his crime was, and still is an ongoing process – instead of a one-time affair. His consciousness is still expanding far outside the realms of the national sensibilities. He won't have to kill anybody or repeat a bank robbery or hawk the rights to his memoirs as quickly as possible, in order to retain future identity. Instead, he has chosen to claim the future as part of HIS identity. Now THAT'S an expanded consciousness.

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Concerning the Leary/Stool Pigeon Charges:

Timothy Leary was released amid widespread rumors that he bought his way out of prison by turning in some of his former cohorts from the old acid days. Since the print media has already mined the subject thoroughly, without producing any hard evidence to support these allegations (or even the source of them in most cases), we have purposefully avoided generating more copy on the subject. Leary's answer to the charge is a challenge to: "Produce one single person who has been indicted or convicted by anything I've told the government." To date, no one has. **CT**

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Joe Bageant's website is www.joebageant.com. Read his essays in pdf format at www.coldtype.net/joe.html

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Mistaking revenge for social justice

John Kozy on retribution and death from the skies

Much is being written both for and against America's use of drones to assassinate those whom Americans consider to be anti-American combatants. Although there is no doubt on which side the moral arguments lie, what's being written strikes me as nugatory. Pious platitudes, legalistic niceties, and sophisticated rationalizations appear to be written by the guilty to convince themselves that they are not the people evil to the marrow that they are, and the dying and the dead couldn't care less. To them, being killed by a bullet or a bomb fired from an AK-47 or a drone makes no difference whatsoever. Dead is dead. Death cannot be sanitized by pronouncements.

The so called advantages of using drones to kill are undeniable; so are the disadvantages. Arguing about these is futile. The fundamental question is not about the advantages or disadvantages of the means, it is about the rightness or wrongness of the end. In the end, what good does killing do?

Although no one seems to have noted it, I find it interesting that so many of Al-Qaeda's "senior commanders" were killed by drones while Osama bin Laden, once located and identified, was not. Why? Was it because killing by drone is too unreliable to be trusted for the task? In fact, killing from the air is always unreliable. During World War II, American pilots often mistakenly attacked American instead of German positions. In *Paths Of Death And Glory*, Charles Whiting quoted people as having said,

"American pilots are idiots.

"This has happened so often that maybe the US should rethink the whole 'flying' thing. Obviously they can't do it worth a damn," and the American Ninth Air Force, which flew out of England, was nicknamed the American Luftwaffe because it regularly mistakenly bombed American troops in Normandy. Just imagine the propaganda catastrophe that would have resulted if a drone had been used and missed or killed bin Laden's wives and children but not him. The entire rationale for the drone program would have been shattered. So as good as drones are, there were not good enough for Osama bin Laden.

Air weapons, as the Germans refer to them, have always been oversold. Their effectiveness has never been established. The military impact of air raids has been the subject of decades of controversy. In World War II, RAF Bomber Command destroyed a significant portion of Nazi Germany's industry, many German cities including Cologne and Dresden, and caused the deaths of up to 600,000 civilians. The stated aim of the offensive was to break the morale of the German working class and it failed miserably.

The indiscriminate nature of the bombing, the heavy civilian casualties and damage stiffened German resistance. Even the effect of Bomber Command's attacks on industrial production was not major, as little as 3% in some years. This lack of success is generally admitted even though Bomber Command was undeniably massively de-

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structive. Many believe that the bombing of Dresden, when the war was essentially over and which killed 25,000 people, symbolizes the ruthlessness and pointlessness of bombing campaigns. Numerous people, including military officials alive at the time, also questioned the need to atom bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki since it was obvious that Japan had been completely defeated by then. The goal of those bombings was merely the utter destruction of two cities and more than 150,000 civilian lives. Although never admitted, the goal was merely retribution.

The American bombing of Hanoi during the Vietnamese War was similarly ineffective. As with the people of London during the Blitz in World War II, the more America bombed the North, the more the resolve of the people grew. More to the point, the two bombing campaigns against the North resulted from the realization that the war was not being won, and they failed to have any notable effect on the war's progress. Olof Palme, the Prime Minister of Sweden, compared the bombing to a number of historical atrocities including the bombing of Guernica, the massacres of Oradour-sur-Glane, Babi Yar, Katyn, Lidice, and Sharpeville, and the extermination of Jews and other groups at Treblinka.

Bombing has no function in wars of conquest. Bombers cannot be used to hold territory, but they can destroy everything in it. Air weapons are clearly only destructive. And the destruction clearly has only one function. Although America's military claims that American war is waged to destroy the enemy's ability to resist, the real purpose of war from the air is to punish those who dare to resist American ambitions. It is meant merely to punish, to destroy and kill, and the killing of civilians has always been an element of wars of plunder. The lesson air war tries to teach is, Resist Uncle Sam at your peril! But consider this:

In the fourteenth century, a Mongol called Amir Timur conquered a vast empire that stretched from Russia to India and

from the Mediterranean to Mongolia. The purpose of his conquests was merely to pillage and plunder. He is remembered in history as a brutal barbarian who razed cities and put entire populations to death, using the victims' skulls to build grisly towers and pyramids. The rulers of Europe trembled at the idea that Timur's hordes were at their borders and sent embassies hoping to avoid attacks. In Western history, he is known as Tamerlane.

No essential difference separates the actions of Tamerlane from those of Britain's Bomber Command or American air wars. Western civilization today uses air weapons as Tamerlane used swords to intimidate and punish those who have the audacity to defy it. In cultures whose goal is plunder, human life has no value. Plunder is more valuable than life. The progress of Western Civilization stalled in the 14th century. Today our plundering elite still live in it. So arguing over the rightness or wrongness of the use of drones is meaningless. Drones are not evil; killing is! As long as ordinary people acquiesce in the killing carried out by their governments, if drones aren't used, some other instruments of murder will be.

Ordinary people living in the West and perhaps everywhere are generally of the opinion that government exists for their benefit and security. Nothing could be further from the truth. Ordinary people exist merely to carry out the aims of governments. Now it is being claimed that the aim of government is to preserve life by killing, and most of us are dumb enough to believe it. How else can you explain the American government's willingness to send more than 4,000 young Americans to their deaths and the maiming of tens of thousands more to avenge the deaths of fewer than 3,000? **CT**

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John Kozy is a retired professor of philosophy and logic who writes on social, political, and economic issues. His on-line pieces can be found on <http://www.jkozy.com>

Lest we forget . . .

Pearl Harbor Day is a day for Americans to cherish the \$1.3 trillion they blow on war preparation every year, writes **David Swanson**

It warms one's heart to recall in the depths of winter that over half the taxes we labor to submit to our government each year go into war preparations. Such bountiful spending is required, because one never knows when the Japs or the Serbians or the Iranians may attack. To appreciate the need for creating so many weapons-producing billionaires and millionaires, we must recall with fondness the glory days of the war that three-quarters of a century back gave us the military industrial complex, the Air Force, the CIA, nuclear weapons, witch hunts, intense environmental destruction, and some 70 million dead bodies.

Ah, who can forget . . .

Nazi Germany, we actually tend to overlook sometimes, could not have existed or waged war without the support for decades past and ongoing through the war of US corporations like GM, Ford, IBM, and ITT. US corporate interests preferred Nazi Germany to the communist Soviet Union, were happy to see those two nations' peoples slaughter each other, and favored the United States entering the oh-so-good-and-necessary World War II on the side of England only once the US government had made that very profitable.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's fervent hope for years was that Japan would attack the United States. This would permit the United States (not legally,

but politically) to fully enter World War II in Europe, as its president wanted to do, as opposed to merely providing weaponry and assisting in the targeting of submarines as it had been doing. Of course, Germany's declaration of war, which followed Pearl Harbor and the immediate US declaration of war on Japan, helped as well, but it was Pearl Harbor that radically converted the American people from opposition to support for war.

On December 7, 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt drew up a declaration of war on both Japan and Germany, but decided it wouldn't work and went with Japan alone. Germany quickly declared war on the United States, possibly in hopes that Japan would declare war on the Soviet Union.

Getting into the war was not a new idea in the Roosevelt White House. FDR had tried lying to the American people about US ships including the Greer and the Kerny, which had been helping British planes track German submarines, but which Roosevelt pretended had been innocently attacked. Roosevelt also lied that he had in his possession a secret Nazi map planning the conquest of South America, as well as a secret Nazi plan for replacing all religions with Nazism. This map was of the quality of the Associated Press's recent "Iranian bomb graph," or Karl Rove's "proof" that Iraq was buying uranium in Niger.

And yet, the people of the United States

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In the 1941 meeting, Churchill told his cabinet, according to the minutes: “The President had said he would wage war but not declare it.” In addition, “Everything was to be done to force an incident”
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didn't buy the idea of going into another war until Pearl Harbor, by which point Roosevelt had already instituted the draft, activated the National Guard, created a huge Navy in two oceans, traded old destroyers to England in exchange for the lease of its bases in the Caribbean and Bermuda, and – just 11 days before the “unexpected” attack – he had secretly ordered the creation of a list of every Japanese and Japanese-American person in the United States.

On April 28, 1941, Churchill wrote a secret directive to his war cabinet:

“It may be taken as almost certain that the entry of Japan into the war would be followed by the immediate entry of the United States on our side.”

On May 11, 1941, Robert Menzies, the prime minister of Australia, met with Roosevelt and found him “a little jealous” of Churchill's place in the center of the war. While Roosevelt's cabinet all wanted the United States to enter the war, Menzies found that Roosevelt,

“ . . . trained under Woodrow Wilson in the last war, waits for an incident, which would in one blow get the USA into war and get R. out of his foolish election pledges that ‘I will keep you out of war.’”

On August 18, 1941, Churchill met with his cabinet at 10 Downing Street. The meeting had some similarity to the July 23, 2002, meeting at the same address, the minutes of which became known as the Downing Street Minutes. Both meetings revealed secret US intentions to go to war. In the 1941 meeting, Churchill told his cabinet, according to the minutes: “The President had said he would wage war but not declare it.” In addition, “Everything was to be done to force an incident.”

Japan was certainly not averse to attacking others and had been busy creating an Asian empire. And the United States and Japan were certainly not living in harmonious friendship. But what could bring the Japanese to attack?

When President Franklin Roosevelt vis-

ited Pearl Harbor on July 28, 1934, seven years before the Japanese attack, the Japanese military expressed apprehension. General Kunishiga Tanaka wrote in the *Japan Advertiser*, objecting to the build-up of the American fleet and the creation of additional bases in Alaska and the Aleutian Islands:

“Such insolent behavior makes us most suspicious. It makes us think a major disturbance is purposely being encouraged in the Pacific. This is greatly regretted.”

Whether it was actually regretted or not is a separate question from whether this was a typical and predictable response to military expansionism, even when done in the name of “defense.” The great unembedded (as we would today call him) journalist George Seldes was suspicious as well. In October 1934 he wrote in *Harper's Magazine*: “It is an axiom that nations do not arm for war but for a war.” Seldes asked an official at the Navy League:

“Do you accept the naval axiom that you prepare to fight a specific navy?”

The man replied “Yes.”

“Do you contemplate a fight with the British navy?”

“Absolutely, no.”

“Do you contemplate war with Japan?”

“Yes.”

In 1935 the most decorated US Marine in history at the time, Brigadier General Smedley D. Butler, published to enormous success a short book called *War Is a Racket*. He saw perfectly well what was coming and warned the nation:

“At each session of Congress the question of further naval appropriations comes up. The swivel-chair admirals don't shout that ‘We need lots of battleships to war on this nation or that nation.’ Oh, no. First of all, they let it be known that America is menaced by a great naval power. Almost any day, these admirals will tell you, the great fleet of this supposed enemy will strike suddenly and annihilate our 125,000,000 people. Just like that. Then they begin to cry for a larger navy. For what? To fight the enemy? Oh my,

no. Oh, no. For defense purposes only. Then, incidentally, they announce maneuvers in the Pacific. For defense. Uh, huh.

“The Pacific is a great big ocean. We have a tremendous coastline in the Pacific. Will the maneuvers be off the coast, two or three hundred miles? Oh, no. The maneuvers will be two thousand, yes, perhaps even thirty-five hundred miles, off the coast.

“The Japanese, a proud people, of course will be pleased beyond expression to see the United States fleet so close to Nippon’s shores. Even as pleased as would be the residents of California were they to dimly discern, through the morning mist, the Japanese fleet playing at war games off Los Angeles.”

In March 1935, Roosevelt bestowed Wake Island on the US Navy and gave Pan Am Airways a permit to build runways on Wake Island, Midway Island, and Guam. Japanese military commanders announced that they were disturbed and viewed these runways as a threat. So did peace activists in the United States. By the next month, Roosevelt had planned war games and maneuvers near the Aleutian Islands and Midway Island. By the following month, peace activists were marching in New York advocating friendship with Japan. Norman Thomas wrote in 1935:

“The Man from Mars who saw how men suffered in the last war and how frantically they are preparing for the next war, which they know will be worse, would come to the conclusion that he was looking at the denizens of a lunatic asylum.”

The US Navy spent the next few years working up plans for war with Japan, the March 8, 1939, version of which described “an offensive war of long duration” that would destroy the military and disrupt the economic life of Japan. In January 1941, eleven months before the attack, the *Japan Advertiser* expressed its outrage over Pearl Harbor in an editorial, and the US ambassador to Japan wrote in his diary:

“There is a lot of talk around town to the

effect that the Japanese, in case of a break with the United States, are planning to go all out in a surprise mass attack on Pearl Harbor. Of course I informed my government.”

On February 5, 1941, Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner wrote to Secretary of War Henry Stimson to warn of the possibility of a surprise attack at Pearl Harbor.

As early as 1932 the United States had been talking with China about providing airplanes, pilots, and training for its war with Japan. In November 1940, Roosevelt loaned China one hundred million dollars for war with Japan, and after consulting with the British, US Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau made plans to send the Chinese bombers with US crews to use in bombing Tokyo and other Japanese cities. On December 21, 1940, two weeks shy of a year before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, China’s Minister of Finance T.V. Soong and Colonel Claire Chennault, a retired US Army flier who was working for the Chinese and had been urging them to use American pilots to bomb Tokyo since at least 1937, met in Henry Morgenthau’s dining room to plan the firebombing of Japan. Morgenthau said he could get men released from duty in the US Army Air Corps if the Chinese could pay them \$1,000 per month. Soong agreed.

On May 24, 1941, the *New York Times* reported on US training of the Chinese air force, and the provision of “numerous fighting and bombing planes” to China by the United States. “Bombing of Japanese Cities is Expected” read the subheadline. By July, the Joint Army-Navy Board had approved a plan called JB 355 to firebomb Japan. A front corporation would buy American planes to be flown by American volunteers trained by Chennault and paid by another front group. Roosevelt approved, and his China expert Lauchlin Currie, in the words of Nicholson Baker, “wired Madame Chaing Kai-Shek and Claire Chennault a letter that fairly begged for interception by Japanese spies.”

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Even before taking office, In March 1935, Roosevelt bestowed Wake Island on the US Navy and gave Pan Am Airways a permit to build runways on Wake Island, Midway Island, and Guam. Japanese military commanders announced that they were disturbed and viewed these runways as a threat

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When Mower expressed surprise, Johnson replied “Didn’t you know the Jap fleet has moved eastward, presumably to attack our fleet at Pearl Harbor?”
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Whether or not that was the entire point, this was the letter:

“I am very happy to be able to report today the President directed that sixty-six bombers be made available to China this year with twenty-four to be delivered immediately. He also approved a Chinese pilot training program here. Details through normal channels. Warm regards.”

Our ambassador had said “in case of a break with the United States” the Japanese would bomb Pearl Harbor. I wonder if this qualified!

The 1st American Volunteer Group (AVG) of the Chinese Air Force, also known as the Flying Tigers, moved ahead with recruitment and training immediately, were provided to China prior to Pearl Harbor, and first saw combat on December 20, 1941, twelve days (local time) after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

On May 31, 1941, at the Keep America Out of War Congress, William Henry Chamberlin gave a dire warning: “A total economic boycott of Japan, the stoppage of oil shipments for instance, would push Japan into the arms of the Axis. Economic war would be a prelude to naval and military war.” The worst thing about peace advocates is how many times they turn out to be right.

On July 24, 1941, President Roosevelt remarked, “If we cut the oil off [the Japanese] probably would have gone down to the Dutch East Indies a year ago, and you would have had a war. It was very essential from our own selfish point of view of defense to prevent a war from starting in the South Pacific. So our foreign policy was trying to stop a war from breaking out there.”

Reporters noticed that Roosevelt said “was” rather than “is.” The next day, Roosevelt issued an executive order freezing Japanese assets. The United States and Britain cut off oil and scrap metal to Japan. Radhabinod Pal, an Indian jurist who served on the war crimes tribunal after the war, called the embargoes a “clear and potent threat to Japan’s very existence,” and concluded the

United States had provoked Japan.

On August 7th four months before the attack the *Japan Times Advertiser* wrote: “First there was the creation of a superbase at Singapore, heavily reinforced by British and Empire troops. From this hub a great wheel was built up and linked with American bases to form a great ring sweeping in a great area southwards and westwards from the Philippines through Malaya and Burma, with the link broken only in the Thailand peninsula. Now it is proposed to include the narrows in the encirclement, which proceeds to Rangoon.”

By September the Japanese press was outraged that the United States had begun shipping oil right past Japan to reach Russia. Japan, its newspapers said, was dying a slow death from “economic war.”

What might the United States have been hoping to gain by shipping oil past a nation in desperate need of it?

In late October, US spy Edgar Mower was doing work for Colonel William Donovan who spied for Roosevelt. Mower spoke with a man in Manila named Ernest Johnson, a member of the Maritime Commission, who said he expected “The Japs will take Manila before I can get out.” When Mower expressed surprise, Johnson replied “Didn’t you know the Jap fleet has moved eastward, presumably to attack our fleet at Pearl Harbor?”

On November 3, 1941, our ambassador tried again to get something through his government’s thick skull, sending a lengthy telegram to the State Department warning that the economic sanctions might force Japan to commit “national hara-kiri.” He wrote: “An armed conflict with the United States may come with dangerous and dramatic suddenness.”

Why do I keep recalling the headline of the memo given to President George W. Bush prior to the September 11, 2001, attacks? “Bin Laden Determined To Strike in US”

Apparently nobody in Washington want-

ed to hear it in 1941 either. On November 15th, Army Chief of Staff George Marshall briefed the media on something we do not remember as “the Marshall Plan.” In fact we don’t remember it at all. “We are preparing an offensive war against Japan,” Marshall said, asking the journalists to keep it a secret, which as far as I know they dutifully did.

Ten days later Secretary of War Henry Stimson wrote in his diary that he’d met in the Oval Office with Marshall, President Roosevelt, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, Admiral Harold Stark, and Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Roosevelt had told them the Japanese were likely to attack soon, possibly next Monday. It has been well documented that the United States had broken the Japanese’ codes and that Roosevelt had access to them. It was through intercept of a so-called Purple code message that Roosevelt had discovered Germany’s plans to invade Russia. It was Hull who leaked a Japanese intercept to the press, resulting in the November 30, 1941, headline “Japanese May Strike Over Weekend.”

That next Monday would have been December 1st, six days before the attack actually came. “The question,” Stimson wrote, “was how we should maneuver them into the position of firing the first shot without allowing too much danger to ourselves. It was a difficult proposition.” Was it? One obvious answer was to keep the fleet in Pearl Harbor and keep the sailors stationed there in the dark while fretting about them from comfortable offices in Washington, D.C. In fact, that was the solution our suit-and-tied heroes went with.

The day after the attack, Congress voted for war. Congresswoman Jeannette Rankin (R., Mont.), the first woman ever elected to Congress, and who had voted against World War I, stood alone in opposing World War II (just as Congresswoman Barbara Lee [D., Calif.] would stand alone against attacking Afghanistan 60 years later). One year after the vote, on December 8, 1942, Rankin put

extended remarks into the Congressional Record explaining her opposition. She cited the work of a British propagandist who had argued in 1938 for using Japan to bring the United States into the war. She cited Henry Luce’s reference in *Life* magazine on July 20, 1942, to “the Chinese for whom the US had delivered the ultimatum that brought on Pearl Harbor.” She introduced evidence that at the Atlantic Conference on August 12, 1941, Roosevelt had assured Churchill that the United States would bring economic pressure to bear on Japan. “I cited,” Rankin later wrote, “the State Department Bulletin of December 20, 1941, which revealed that on September 3 a communication had been sent to Japan demanding that it accept the principle of ‘nondisturbance of the status quo in the Pacific,’ which amounted to demanding guarantees of the inviolateness of the white empires in the Orient.”

Rankin found that the Economic Defense Board had gotten economic sanctions under way less than a week after the Atlantic Conference. On December 2, 1941, the *New York Times* had reported, in fact, that Japan had been “cut off from about 75 percent of her normal trade by the Allied blockade.” Rankin also cited the statement of Lieutenant Clarence E. Dickinson, USN., in the *Saturday Evening Post* of October 10, 1942, that on November 28, 1941, nine days before the attack, Vice Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr., (he of the catchy slogan “Kill Japs! Kill Japs!”) had given instructions to him and others to “shoot down anything we saw in the sky and to bomb anything we saw on the sea.”

General George Marshall admitted as much to Congress in 1945: that the codes had been broken, that the United States had initiated Anglo-Dutch-American agreements for unified action against Japan and put them into effect before Pearl Harbor, that the United States had provided officers of its military to China for combat duty before Pearl Harbor. It is hardly a secret that it takes two war powers to wage a war (unlike

Nine days before the attack, Vice Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr., had given instructions to him and others to “shoot down anything we saw in the sky and to bomb anything we saw on the sea”

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The legend of Pearl Harbor, re-used on 9-11, is responsible not for the destructive pro-war policies of the 1920s and the 1930s that brought World War II into being, but responsible for the permanent war mentality of the past 71 years, as well as for how World War II was escalated, prolonged, and completed
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when one war power attacks an unarmed state) or that this case was no exception to that rule. An October 1940 memorandum by Lieutenant Commander Arthur H. McCollum was acted on by President Roosevelt and his chief subordinates. It called for eight actions that McCollum predicted would lead the Japanese to attack, including arranging for the use of British bases in Singapore and for the use of Dutch bases in what is now Indonesia, aiding the Chinese government, sending a division of long-range heavy cruisers to the Philippines or Singapore, sending two divisions of submarines to “the Orient,” keeping the main strength of the fleet in Hawaii, insisting that the Dutch refuse the Japanese oil, and embargoing all trade with Japan in collaboration with the British Empire.

The day after McCollum’s memo, the State Department told Americans to evacuate far eastern nations, and Roosevelt ordered the fleet kept in Hawaii over the strenuous objection of Admiral James O. Richardson who quoted the President as saying “Sooner or later the Japanese would commit an overt act against the United States and the nation would be willing to enter the war.” The message that Admiral Harold Stark sent to Admiral Husband Kimmel on November 28, 1941, read, “IF HOSTILITIES CANNOT REPEAT CANNOT BE AVOIDED THE UNITED STATES DESIRES THAT JAPAN COMMIT THE FIRST OVERT ACT.” Joseph Rochefort, cofounder of the Navy’s communication intelligence section, who was instrumental in failing to communicate to Pearl Harbor what was coming, would later comment: “It was a pretty cheap price to pay for unifying the country.”

The night after the attack, President Roosevelt had CBS News’s Edward R. Murrow and Roosevelt’s Coordinator of Information William Donovan over for dinner at the White House, and all the President wanted to know was whether the American people would now accept war. Donovan and Murrow assured him the people would

indeed accept war now. Donovan later told his assistant that Roosevelt’s surprise was not that of others around him, and that he, Roosevelt, welcomed the attack. Murrow was unable to sleep that night and was plagued for the rest of his life by what he called “the biggest story of my life” which he never told, but which he did not need to. The next day, the President spoke of a day of infamy, the United States Congress declared the last Constitutional war in the history of the republic, and the President of the Federal Council of Churches, Dr. George A. Buttrick, became a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation committing to resist the war.

Why does it matter? Because the legend of Pearl Harbor, re-used on 9-11, is responsible not for the destructive pro-war policies of the 1920s and the 1930s that brought World War II into being, but responsible for the permanent war mentality of the past 71 years, as well as for how World War II was escalated, prolonged, and completed.

“Disturbed in 1942,” wrote Lawrence S. Wittner, “by rumors of Nazi extermination plans, Jessie Wallace Hughan worried that such a policy, which appeared ‘natural, from their pathological point of view,’ might be carried out if World War II continued. ‘It seems that the only way to save thousands and perhaps millions of European Jews from destruction,’ she wrote, ‘would be for our government to broadcast the promise’ of an ‘armistice on condition that the European minorities are not molested any further. . . . It would be very terrible if six months from now we should find that this threat has literally come to pass without our making even a gesture to prevent it.’ When her predictions were fulfilled only too well by 1943, she wrote to the State Department and the *New York Times*, decrying the fact that ‘two million [Jews] have already died’ and that ‘two million more will be killed by the end of the war.’ Once again she pleaded for the cessation of hostilities, arguing that German military defeats would in turn ex-

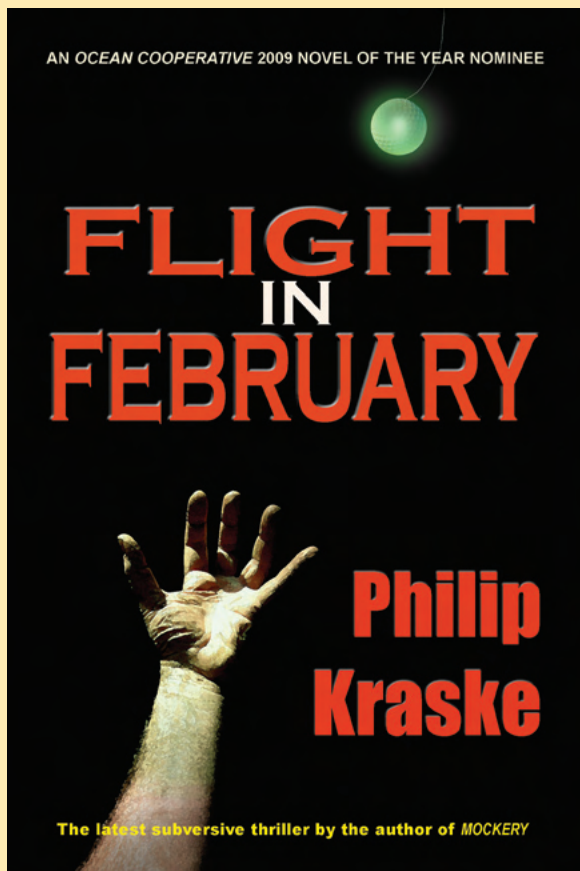
act reprisals upon the Jewish scapegoat. 'Victory will not save them,' she insisted, 'for dead men cannot be liberated.'"

Hitler killed millions of Germans, but the allies killed as many or more, Germans ordered into battle by Hitler or Germans in the wrong place when allied bombs fell. And, as Hughan pointed out at the time, the war drove the genocide, just as the vengeful settlement of the previous war a quarter century before had fueled the hostility, the scapegoating, and the rise of Hitlerism. Out of the resistance to war by US conscientious objectors would come, finally, the development of civil resistance to racial segregation in US prisons that later spread to the nation outside the prisons as activists sought to duplicate their victories on a larger scale. But

also out of that very worst thing our species has ever done to itself, World War II, would come the permanent military industrial complex. We would extend the power to vote to more and more Americans while, in the cruelest of jokes, transforming voting into an ever more meaningless enterprise. We would paint a fresh coat of glossy pretense on our democracy while hollowing it out from the inside, replacing it with a war machine the likes of which the planet had never seen and may not be able to survive. **CT**

David Swanson's books include "War Is A Lie." He blogs at <http://davidswanson.org> and works as Campaign Coordinator for the online activist organization <http://rootsaction.org>

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Won't get fooled again?

David Edwards on the hyping of Iran's WMD threat

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What is actually going on in the minds of people who know that exactly the same ploy was exposed as a cynical deception just a few years ago? Do they view the public with contempt?
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Reading about crimes of state over many years, it is tempting to try to fathom the mind-set of political leaders. What actually is going on in their heads when they order sanctions that kill hundreds of thousands of children? What is in their hearts when they wage needless wars that shatter literally millions of lives? Are they desperately cruel, mindlessly stupid? Do they imagine they are living in a kind of hell where monstrous acts have to be committed to avoid even worse outcomes? Are they indifferent, focused on what will bring them short-term political and economic gain? Are they morally resigned, perceiving themselves as essentially powerless in the face of invincible political and economic forces ('If I didn't do it, someone else would.')?

Similar questions come to mind as the US and UK governments once again raise the spectre of 'weapons of mass destruction' to demonise a target for 'regime change', this time in Syria. What is actually going on in the minds of people who know that exactly the same ploy was exposed as a cynical deception just a few years ago? Do they view the public with contempt? Are they laughing at us? Are they playing the only card they perceive to be available to them; one that they know will work imperfectly, but will have to do?

In the US, NBC commented: 'US officials tell us that the Syrian military is poised tonight to use chemical weapons against its own

people. And all it would take is the final order from Syrian President Assad.'

US media watch dog Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting asked: 'So where did all of this new information come from?' The familiar, ominous answer: 'Anonymous government officials talking to outlets like the *New York Times*.' This, for example: 'Western intelligence officials say they are picking up new signs of activity at sites in Syria that are used to store chemical weapons. The officials are uncertain whether Syrian forces might be preparing to use the weapons in a last-ditch effort to save the government, or simply sending a warning to the West about the implications of providing more help to the Syrian rebels.'

"It's in some ways similar to what they've done before," a senior American official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters. "But they're doing some things that suggest they intend to use the weapons. It's not just moving stuff around. These are different kind of activities." (Michael Gordon, Eric Schmitt, Tim Arango, 'Flow of arms to Syria through Iraq persists, to US dismay,' *New York Times*, December 1, 2012)

FAIR commented: Absent any further details, that would seem to be a strange standard for confirmation... But the theatrics – satellite images, anonymous sources speaking about weapons of mass destruction and so on – are obviously reminiscent of the lead up to the

Iraq War.’

They are indeed. On May 26, 2004, the New York Times published a humbling mea culpa titled, ‘The Times and Iraq.’ The editors commented: ‘Editors at several levels who should have been challenging reporters and pressing for more skepticism were perhaps too intent on rushing scoops into the paper.’

As a result, the paper published a ‘Confidential News Sources Policy’, which included: ‘In any situation when we cite anonymous sources, at least some readers may suspect that the newspaper is being used to convey tainted information or special pleading. If the impetus for anonymity has originated with the source, further reporting is essential to satisfy the reporter and the reader that the paper has sought the whole story.’ (Confidential News Sources, *New York Times*, February 25, 2004.)

Clearly this has all been forgotten.

The same claims about Syrian WMD have of course also poured out of the UK media. A December 5 leading article in the *Times* was titled: ‘Assad’s Arsenal.’ The first line of the editorial: ‘The embattled Syrian regime may be preparing to use chemical weapons. That would be a catastrophe; it must be averted, whatever it takes.’

As ever, Rupert Murdoch’s editors – and, no doubt, the boss, standing just over their shoulders – regretfully declared that Western military ‘intervention’ might turn out to be the only answer: ‘we must also hope that the US and its allies would take any action that was deemed necessary to prevent the human and moral disaster that would be caused by the Syrian regime attempting its final exit in a cloud of mustard gas’.

War, for the West, is now as normal as the air we breathe. Obviously it is the job of the West, with its blood-soaked track record, to save the peoples of the world from tyrannies that just happen to obstruct its geostrategic goals.

In November 2002, as war loomed on Iraq, The Times reported: ‘President Saddam Hussein has been trying to buy from Turkish suppliers up to 1.25 million doses of atropine, a

derivative of deadly nightshade.

‘It has wide-ranging medical uses but also protects the body from nerve agents that can paralyse their victims and kill in as little as two minutes.’ (Elaine Monaghan, ‘Iraq move increases chemical war fear,’ the *Times*, November 13, 2002)

In 2010, the *Times* published the claim that Iran intended to develop a ‘trigger’ for a nuclear weapon. Investigative journalist Gareth Porter reported: ‘US intelligence has concluded that the document published recently by the Times of London... is a fabrication, according to a former Central Intelligence Agency official.’ The counterterrorism specialist Porter had in mind, Philip Giraldi, commented: ‘The Rupert Murdoch chain has been used extensively to publish false intelligence from the Israelis and occasionally from the British government.’

In April 2011, the *Times* reported of Libya: ‘There are increasing fears that Colonel Gaddafi could use suspected stocks of chemical weapons against [Misrata]... There are also fears that Colonel Gaddafi has stocks of nerve gas in the southern desert city of Sabha.’ (James Hider, ‘Amid rigged corpses and chemical weapon threat, city fears for its life,’ the *Times*, April 27, 2011)

No matter, the *Times* might yet see a Libya-style ‘intervention’ in Syria. The *Guardian* reports this week: Britain’s military chiefs have drawn up contingency plans to provide Syrian rebels with maritime, and possibly air, power in response to a request from David Cameron, senior defence sources said on Monday night.’

The UK government is planning to fight with ‘rebels’ despite clear evidence of war crimes and the involvement of numerous foreign mercenaries armed and funded by regional tyrants. The Syrian government also stands accused of appalling crimes.

In the *Guardian*, Matt Williams and Martin Chulov used dramatic language to report claims ‘that the [Syrian] regime is considering unleashing chemical weapons on opposition forces’.

The *Guardian* article cited CNN, which

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SAME OLD STORY

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in turn cited ‘an unnamed US official as the source of its report’. Williams and Chulov expressed not a word of scepticism in their piece, adding a two-sentence denial from the much-demonised Syrian ‘regime’ as ‘balance’.

A BBC article managed this reference to scepticism: ‘Pressed in the interview by the BBC’s Frank Gardner, he said he could understand why the public might be sceptical after the blunders made over Iraq’s alleged weapons of mass destruction 10 years ago.’

To his credit, the BBC’s Jonathan Marcus did rather better: ‘Was there an element of political spin here to accompany Nato’s decision to deploy patriot missiles in Turkey?’

‘Sources contacted by the BBC say that there are indications of activity at certain chemical weapons storage sites.

‘However it is of course impossible to determine if this is a preliminary to the weapons’ use or, as some analysts believe, much more likely, the movement of munitions to ensure their security. Indeed such movement has been noted in the past.’

Despite the caution, Marcus promoted the idea that Syrian WMD might fall into the ‘wrong’ hands and that the US might need to intervene to prevent that happening.

In the *Independent* Robert Fisk went much further, pouring scorn on the claims: ‘The bigger the lie the more people will believe it. We all know who said that – but it still works. Bashar al-Assad has chemical weapons. He may use them against his own Syrian people. If he does, the West will respond. We heard all this stuff last year – and Assad’s regime repeatedly said that if – if – it had chemical weapons, it would never use them against Syrians.

‘But now Washington is playing the same gas-chanty all over again. Bashar has chemical weapons. He may use them against his own people. And if he does...’

Fisk added: ‘over the past week, all the usual pseudo-experts who couldn’t find Syria on a map have been warning us again of the mustard gas, chemical agents, biological agents that Syria might possess – and might use. And the sources? The same fantasy special-

ists who didn’t warn us about 9/11 but insisted that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction in 2003: “unnamed military intelligence sources”... And yes, Bashar probably does have some chemicals in rusting bins somewhere in Syria.’

If accurate, Fisk’s ‘rusting bins’ make a nonsense of the ‘considerable pressure’ on ‘the US to come up with plans to secure the Syrian weapons in the event of the collapse of the regime’ described by Marcus.

Alex Thomson of Channel 4 News wrote an excellent piece titled: ‘Syria, a weapon of mass deception?’: ‘Without wishing to delve too far into The Who’s back catalogue... we need to remind ourselves in the UK that we won’t get fooled again.’

Thomson offered a rare ‘mainstream media’ example of rational thinking on the issue: ‘But just to be old fashioned: what’s the evidence of any threat? What’s the basis for all this? What, in short, are they all talking about? Yes, by all accounts Syria has nerve and chemical agents. But possession does not mean threat of use. Israel is not credibly threatening to use nuclear weapons against Iran, despite possessing them.’

He noted that ‘the story built upon nothing [has been] accepted as global fact when it’s nothing of the kind’ and made the obvious point: ‘After Iraq and WMD, if the CIA or MI6 say it’s cold at the north pole, any sensible person would seek at least a couple more sources or would fly there and check.’

Amid the standard channelling of propaganda, then, a small number of journalists have learned from the past and are willing to challenge official claims. But we should also not be fooled by these admirable but rare examples of dissent. The overwhelming majority of corporate media reports – notably the TV broadcasts reaching millions of people – echo the claims of government ‘impartially’; that is, without the least sign of independent thought or critical comment. The best journalists reject such an obviously compromised version of ‘professionalism’ – but they are few and far between. **CT**

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is co-editor of
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British media
watchdog –
<http://medialens.org>

The new Soviet asylum

Time to take this pill, Comrade, says **Fred Reed**

Today I'm going to explain why gun control is not only entirely reasonable but also certain to be effective. Only the ignorant can deny this.

First, some orientation. Cement-headed NRA types need to recognize, and state manfully, that the illegalization of guns is in fact perfectly practical. History has shown this repeatedly. When the government outlaws something that huge numbers of people very much want, the outlawed items immediately disappear from society. This has been shown countless times.

When Washington outlawed alcohol, booze vanished overnight and everyone stopped drinking. Can anyone deny this? When Washington banned the use of cannabis, all of those of us made insane by Reefer Madness quit smoking dope, and today there is probably not a town in America in which one might buy a joint. Similarly, Washington made illegal the downloading of copyrighted music – which also stopped immediately. No one now has illegal music. Ask your adolescent daughter.

So with guns. They are small, easily smuggled, of high value to criminals and will be of higher value when only criminals have them, so it is virtually certain that they will vanish when the government says so.

Mexico, where I live, has stringent laws against guns, which have proved at least a partial success. Criminals have AKs, RPGs,

and grenades, while nobody else has anything. That's a partial success, isn't it?

While I am in favor of illegalizing guns and thus ending crime, I think the principle should be democratically applied. Let us begin by disarming the Pentagon. If this seems unreasonable, ask yourself: who kills more children in a month, Ritalin-addled little boys in America, or the US Air Force in every Moslem country it has heard of? All I ask is an honest body count. I will accept your numbers.

But let's ask the question which, being critical, ain't asked. I suppose it makes no sense to confuse ourselves with the essentials of things. Anyway, why have American school boys, who in my rural Virginia high school of 1964 were armed to the eyeballs with deer guns and varmint rifles, and never shot anybody intentionally or accidentally, or had the idea pass through their whirring libido-crazed minds, if any – suddenly start shooting their friends in school? Why now?

We who wended our strange ways through the Sixties know that lengthy use of psychoactive stimulants produces ... wild ideas and worse behavior. For example, Ritalin, the first drug I ever tried, in Istanbul – or dex, or ... lots of others ... produces crashes as we called them, ferocious depressions accompanied by inability to sleep, anger, and irrationality. We're talking serious psychosis in a bottle. I've known speed freaks consistently

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ted families**
.....

ignore stop lights, not bothering to look to either side. And what do they give little boys bored with schools run by intellectual termites? Well . . .

But let's look at the question from a different angle. This column is a repository of perfect understanding of everything, and occasionally likes to let a bit of wisdom dribble forth. Herewith a dribble: The problem is that we don't have anything worthwhile to do.

Used to be, almost everybody worked on farms, because they wanted to eat. Being males, the males killed each other, neighboring tribes, and all reachable nationalities, but they generally did not murder their own children – though anyone who has been a parent can understand the temptation. People were too busy making stuff that mattered – food, clothes, roofs.

Then farming got automated, so people started making other things that were sensible. Refrigerators. Penicillin. Actual glass for windows. Electricity.

As time went by, nearly everything people really had any use for got made, mostly by automation. This meant two things. First, consumerism became essential to keep the economy going. Nobody much needed designer water, or Farrumcoochie boots, or SUVs, or McMansions with enough space for a large colony of Barbary apes. Which typically they contained. These things were kinda fun, like Corvettes and iPads and whoopee cushions, but hardly vital. Mostly nobody would have thought of buying them if not beaten about the head and shoulders with advertising campaigns as subtle as a sock full of hog kidneys.

The second part of the bog of consumerism was that all of this deplorable nonsense was rolling off automated assembly lines. Consequently, people didn't have anything to do that needed doing or that wouldn't have been better not done. Yet they still wanted to eat. Two solutions offered: The Democratic, which was to give everybody everything he wanted as an entitlement, and the Repub-

lican, which was to have people work their lives away in meaningless jobs that allowed them to buy the unnecessary things advertising told them they wanted. This required the creation of huge numbers of meaningless jobs. Of course, it was politically wiser not to describe them just this way.

An obvious and expandable source of unwork was the government. Conservatives always say that they don't like big government, but their choice is to pay federal drones to occupy offices pointlessly or else to fire them and put them on obvious welfare. Being decayed Calvinists, conservatives choose the former.

Consider this seriously. The United States has no military enemies, or only those of its own manufacture. Suppose it simply fired the entire force. Whole towns would die overnight with the bases they support, the troops would go on unemployment, and the vast discreet industries that make unnecessary weapons would unemploy uncoun-
ted families. For that matter, do you really believe that the Department of Education, Commerce, HUD, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs do anything worth doing? But we can't just fire them because there is nothing for them to do other than the nothing that they are already doing.

But even government couldn't supply the demand for JAI (Job-Appearing Indolence). However, the inexhaustible fertility of the American uneconomy welled up to fill the gap. Nail parlors popped up. Bureaucracies in public schools grew to outnumber the students. Enormous school systems in places like DC and Detroit hired educrats like the sands of the sea who taught nothing to anyone, reasonably enough since they didn't know anything.

Universities decided that all children needed to go to college, though a maximum of fifteen percent had the intelligence or the desire. This produced a mother lode of Job-Appearing Indolence as professors of low grade churned out grammatically frightening attempts at research whose chief virtue

was that no one read it.

So, panting, we come to murder as economic flywheel.

Suburbia contains a lot of unpleasantly nice people, in particular effeminate men and bored housewives with a Mussolini complex, who want power, money, and something to fill the empty hours. Enter psychotherapy. This is quietly a very big industry. Anybody who is mildly unhappy – and who wouldn't be, working in a pointless unjob? – is urged to Seek Professional Help. The Helpess – they are usually, but not always, female – will establish a vaguely sadomasochist relationship with you in which you, or your teenage daughter, will be forced to reveal the most intimate and embarrassing details of her inner head. The Helpess will then prescribe at least one and perhaps several forms of suburban soma – Prozac, Depakote, Welbutrin, Ritalin – which frequently have unpredictable but documentably awful effects on brain chemistry.

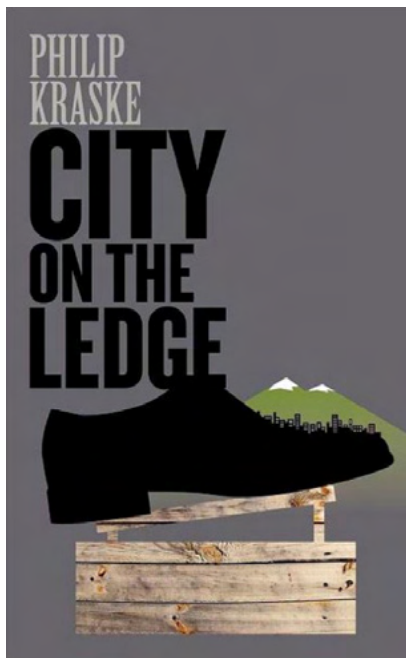
These drugs are heavily – heavily – promoted by Big Pharma, which is the supply

arm of the business of compulsory doping of American children, just as Lockheed-Martin is the supply arm of the Pentagon's burning of Asian children. There's money in this, boys and girls. Lots of it. Especially in ADD, anorexia, and bulimia, which didn't exist until the Helpesses needed them to be in the DSM-IV so insurance companies would pay for treating them. (Stray thought: Why were at least half of the childless women in their – tick-tick-tick – thirties I dated in Washington taking some happy-pill or other?)

But enough. I've got a bright idea. (I told you we do bright ideas here.) In a country in which everyone has access to machetes, ice picks, guns, and straight razors, let's keep putting little boys on half-understood psychotropics, Ritalin, expose all of them to crystal. Big Pharma is too important to die. Kids don't seem to be.

Edward S. Herman is professor emeritus of finance at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania and has written extensively on economics, political economy, and the media

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CITY ON THE LEDGE

PHILIP KRASKE

Quito, Ecuador. In this unknown Andean capital ladled along the ledge of a volcano, an eruption is taking place. After centuries of oppression, the workers are on strike against the banana plantations. And if Ecuador, the top banana exporter in the world and the bargain basement of the industry, raises its price, then so will the others. Set against the emerald majesty of the Andes, full of local color, **City on the Ledge** witnesses the machinations of politicians, spies, diplomats, and lovers to pull off a revolution, or kill it before it can bloom.

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