

ColdType

ISSUE 170

WRITING WORTH READING ● PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

MID-OCTOBER 2018

A boy a slum and a photo- grapher

Flavio was 12 and suffering from asthma and malnutrition. Then a magazine story changed his life – [Pages 8-11](#)

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ColdType

Mid-October 2018 • Issue 170

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CJ HOPKINS

Please remember not to vote!

**You probably think I'm kidding. I'm not. Do not vote in these
midterm elections. Or in any other American elections.
Not while the system remains as it is**

So, it's just a few weeks before the US midterm elections, and it looks like we have got ourselves a horse race! That's right, folks, once again, it's time to start playing with those forecast maps on Real Clear Politics and FiveThirtyEight, and obsessively following the fluctuating poll numbers of congressional candidates you have never heard of competing in districts you couldn't locate if someone held a gun to your head. You need to start doing this immediately, if not sooner, as the stakes in these midterms could not be higher. Nothing less than the continued existence of "American democracy" hangs in the balance, so the ruling classes need every last one of us to get out there and vote for somebody!

The fact that it only marginally matters who that somebody that you vote for is should not dissuade you from voting for somebody. Voting for somebody is your civic duty, and is no less important than rooting for a sports team, or maintaining a personal favourite colour, or celebrity, or brand of haemorrhoid creme. Remember, if you don't vote for somebody, somebody else is going to win, and we can't afford to let that happen!

Now, your choices this year are particularly exciting, despite the fact that they are exactly the same as in every other US election since approximately the 1970s. Yes, that's right, once again, it's the Transgender Panethnic Communists of Colour versus the Old White Cisnormal Capitalist Nazis, and what a spectacle it promises to be!

The Old White Cisnormal Capitalist Nazis (hereinafter the "OWCCN") currently control ... well, pretty much everything (ie, the House, the Senate, and executive branch), and so the Transgender Panethnic Communists of Colour (hereinafter the "TP-CoC") are hungry, and are looking for some serious pay-back after getting their butts kicked in 2016. Rumour has it, the TP-CoC are preparing to unleash a "Blue Tsunami" on vulnerable OWCCN incumbents, take control of the House of Representatives, and then not impeach the ass clown president they've been telling everyone for the last two years is both a traitorous Russian intelligence asset and the resurrection of Adolf Hitler.



CJ HOPKINS

And, if that isn't exciting enough for you already, they've got all kinds of other life-and-death issues to emotionally pressure you into picking a team to fanatically root for on social media, and then getting out and voting for somebody. How blatantly to humiliate illegal immigrants, how affluent you have to be to obtain an abortion, how much interest banks can charge when you pay for your chemo with an Amazon card, and which pronouns law enforcement officers are required to use to refer to people whose homes they barge into and unintentionally murder, are just a few of the many "hot-button" questions requiring your democratic input.

Other questions, like whether to invade or just strategically bomb Iran or Syria, or some other non-ball-playing Middle East country, or pour billions more in military aid into Israel, or sell billions in weapons to Saudi Arabia, or foment a coup in Venezuela, or maintain almost 800 military outposts in more than 70 countries, are questions that do not require your input. The global capitalist ruling classes, the corporations they own and operate, their friends in the government and the intelligence agencies, and the corporate media will take care of all that. Same goes for those Wall Street banks, and the next looming global financial crisis, and those mass extinctions, and this wacky weather. The grown-ups with the fancy suits

and haircuts are handling all that complicated stuff. You just worry about all those other issues, and get out there and vote for somebody!

Seriously, though, for those unfamiliar with the ins and outs of US politics, our election cycle, and these midterm elections, and thus do not have the slightest idea what I'm even referring to, here's what's going on in a nutshell ...

On November 6, 2018, Americans will be returning to the polls to exercise their inalienable right to choose between two corporate-financed, ruling class-vetted political stooges competing for the chance to pretend to represent them in the House of Representatives and the Senate, and in various gubernatorial, municipal, and somewhat lesser distinguished chambers. A selection of non-ruling-class-vetted candidates will also appear on a handful of ballots. Americans will be free to vote for such candidates, as long as they realise they are just wasting their time, and possibly damaging the "serious" candidates, which the corporate media will remind them they are doing at every available opportunity.

See, unlike in backward European countries, where some semblance of a parliament still exists, and there are actual campaign finance restrictions and limits on televised campaign advertising, in the United States, where everyone is free, voting for non-ruling-class-vetted candidates, in a midterm or any other election, is about as effective as voting for a sandwich ... or for, you know, some narcissistic billionaire ass clown who swears he is going to "drain the swamp", and build "a beautiful wall", or whatever. The system is designed to guarantee that no matter which ruling class stooge you vote for, and even if you vote for a character like Trump just to stick it to the establishment for once, it makes no difference ... or, OK, very little difference.

The reason for this is not a big mystery. When a seat in the Senate goes for ten-million dollars and a seat in the House for over a million, and there are no real restrictions on campaign financing, and the corporate-owned media decide in advance which candidates will be given





airtime, and considered “serious” by the mainstream pundits who work for the handful of corporations that own the vast majority of newspapers, television and radio stations, and internet platforms that control the flow of information to the American public ... well, it would kind of be a little odd, wouldn't it, if authentic anti-ruling-class candidates were allowed to enter and compete in that

system?

Most Americans understand this, which is why nearly half of them do not vote. It's humiliating enough to be forced to live, and attempt to support a family, and so on, in a savage, neoliberal marketplace with virtually no social cohesion whatsoever, and in which the only real operative value is money, without also having to debase themselves by participating in the simulation of democracy that the capitalist ruling classes need to maintain in order to pretend that they are not just social parasites with a lot of goons and guns.

Which brings me to the point of this essay. See, normally, I try like hell to avoid telling people what to do in my columns, but, after my last one, a number of readers wrote in asking for advice, so I'm going to make an exception, just this once.

Here's my advice. You're not going to like it.

Do not vote. For anyone. At all. Tell all your friends not to vote for anyone. Join the hundreds of millions of Americans who refuse to participate in the simulation of democracy. Take time off from work to vote, and then do not vote. Go see a movie, or have lunch with someone you haven't seen in a while, or take a nice, long walk

in the woods or something. Whatever you do, do not vote. Seriously. Please stop voting for these people. They're not your friends. They mean you ill. They will shake your hand, kiss your baby, then sell you to the first pharmaceutical lobbyist, or military industrial lobbyist, or Israeli or Saudi Arabian lobbyist, that waltzes into their office with a cheque, or that threatens to turn their voters against them.

You probably think I'm kidding. I'm not. Do not vote in these midterm elections. Or in any other American elections. Not while the system remains as it is. If you really want to vote, move to Europe, where at least there are still parliamentary structures, and a decent variety of political parties, and some restrictions on campaign financing and advertising. All you're doing when you vote in America is reifying a simulation of democracy, and so perpetuating the system as it is.

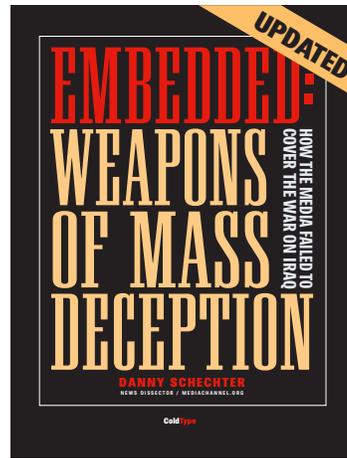
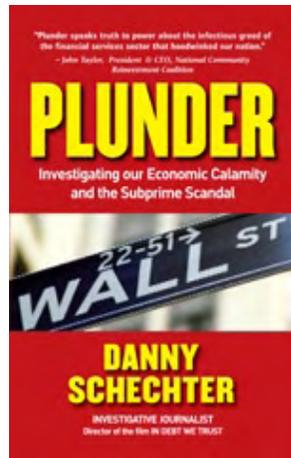
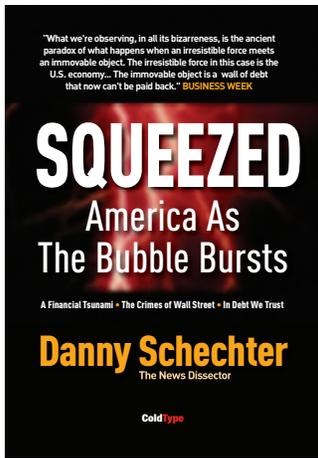
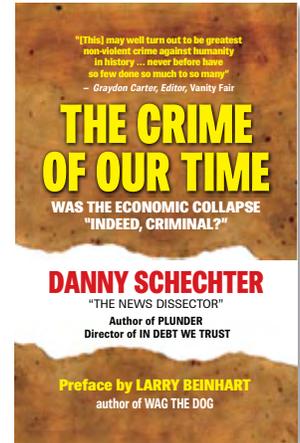
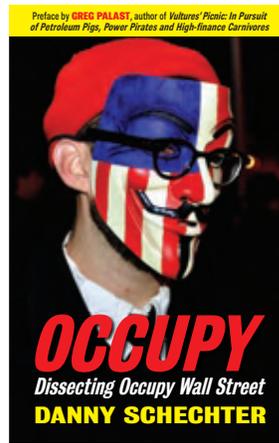
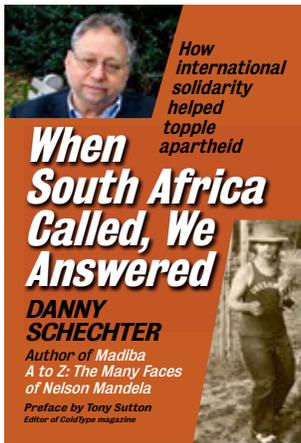
Oh, and while you're at it, if you happen to work for any of those pharmaceutical companies, or any of those weapons manufacturers, or their suppliers, or for an investment bank, or a hedge fund, or private equity firm, or any other company, corporation, firm, consultancy, or department of government that is central to keeping the American political and economic system going as it is, quit your job and do something else.

Seriously, go into the office today (or get up from your desk right now) and quit, and go find something else to do with the gift of your sentient life on this planet. I realise that might be a scary proposition, but that's what it's going to take to change things, a lot of people deciding they have had it and are not going to play the game anymore.

That's pretty much all the advice I've got. Sorry ... I told you you weren't going to like it. **CT**

***CJ Hopkins** is an award-winning American playwright, novelist and satirist based in Berlin. His plays are published by Bloomsbury Publishing (UK) and Broadway Play Publishing (USA). His debut novel, ZONE 23, is published by Snoggsworthy, Swaine & Cormorant. He can be reached at cjhopkins.com or consentfactory.org*

REMEMBERING **Danny SCHECHTER** 1942 - 2015



7

Danny Schechter, the NewsDissector, was acclaimed as one of the most politically astute journalists in recent memory. As a tribute to him and an appreciation of his work with ColdType, we are giving away free downloads of these seven books, all published in association with ColdType.net. Download them at:

<http://coldtype.net/SchechterBooks.html>

GORDON PARKS

A boy, a slum, and a photographer

Flavio was 12 and suffering from malnutrition and asthma. Then a magazine story changed his life



8

THE FLAVIO STORY

Gordon Parks

Published by Steidl
www.steidl.de

\$75

WHEN he travelled to Brazil in March, 1961, to photograph the slums of Rio de Janeiro for *Life* magazine, Gordon Parks had no idea of the impact his work would have. Profiling the da Silva family, which lived in a hillside favela close to a wealthy enclave of Rio, Parks' 12-page photo-essay, *Freedom's Fearful Foe: Poverty*, published in the magazine's June 16, 1961 issue, led to an extraordinary chain of events.

The story focused on the family's eldest son 12-year-old Flavio – who suffered from crippling asthma and malnutrition – as he cooked, cleaned, scavenged for supplies, and cared for his siblings while his parents worked outside the home in the Catacumba favela.

Brazil was so enraged by the telling of the story, that the editors of *O Cruzeiro*, the country's leading news magazine, retaliated by sending Henri Ballot to document poverty in New York's Spanish Harlem and Lower East Side. There, Ballot found Puerto Rican immigrants Felix and Esther Gonzalez, who lived



Flavio da Silva feeds Zacarias, his 17-month-old brother at their slum home in Rio de Janeiro.



GORDON PARKS



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ABOVE: Flavio da Silva stands on his bed in his family's favela home.

Right: The family's day begins in the biggest room of the Rio shack in which Flavio shares with his parents and six siblings.

with their six children in a derelict one-room apartment in a tenement building on the Lower East Side. His reportage, which echoed Parks' portrayal of the da Silvas, was published in *O Cruzeiro's* October 7, 1961, issue in a 12-page spread titled, *New American Record: Misery*.

Undeterred, *Life* embarked on a "rescue" effort that involved moving Flavio to a Denver hospital for treatment, and relocating his family to a new home.

The fascinating tale behind Parks'





Home for the Silva
family in Rio's
ramshackle
Catacumba favela.



GORDON PARKS

amazing journey, which drew more than 3,000 letters and \$25,000 in donations from *Life* readers to help the family and other struggling residents of the favela, has been brought up to date in a stunning photo-book, *The Flavio Story*, published by Steidl in conjunction with the Gordon Parks Foundation.

The Flavio Story includes the photos taken during Parks' visits to Rio to do the original and follow-up stories, Henri Ballot's counterwork in New York, together with reproductions of the spreads as they were published in *Life* and *O Cruzeiro*, and several excellent essays explaining the development and consequences of the story.

What happened to Flavio, who is featured on the book's cover under the protective arm of Parks, as he

embarked on his journey to the US?

In 1990, Parks found him, aged 50, living in a shed behind the home that *Life* and its readers had bought 28 years earlier. A father of three, separated from his family, Flavio was unemployed, surviving on occasional construction work. The book concludes, poignantly, with a 2016 interview with Flavio, now in his late 60s, living alone with his dreams in a half-derelict home, its roof leaking: "Already I don't have any more of my things from the past, because there's water came in, pressing the roof over the house, and destroyed everything. My books from Gordon, the magazines, the letters, except for a few. I still have the dog from the cover of *Life*".

Tony Sutton



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Above: Clutching a stuffed toy dog, Flavio is featured on the cover of the July 21, 1961, issue of *Life* magazine, after he had been taken to the United States for treatment.

Left: Flavio huddles behind the protective arm of photographer Gordon Parks.

Photo: Paulo Muniz

Personality cult

The media's spotlight systematically distorts the way we see the world

14

WHAT kind of people would you expect the newspapers to interview most? Those with the most to say, perhaps? Or maybe those with the richest and weirdest experiences? Might it be philosophers? Or detectives? Or doctors working in war zones, refugees, polar scientists, street children, firefighters, base jumpers, activists, writers or free divers? No. It's actors. I haven't conducted an empirical study, but I would guess that between a third and a half of the major interviews in the newspapers feature people who make their living by adopting someone else's persona and speaking someone else's words.

This is such a bizarre phenomenon that, if it hadn't crept up on us slowly, we would surely find it astounding. But it seems to me symbolic of the way the media works. The media's problem runs deeper than fake news. What it offers is news about a fake world.

I am not proposing that the papers should never interview actors, or that they have no wisdom of their own to impart. But the remarkable obsession with this trade blots out other voices. One result is that an issue is not an issue until it has been voiced by an actor. Climate breakdown, refugees, human rights, sexual assault: none of these matters, it seems, can surface until they go Hollywood.

This is not to disparage the actors who have helped bring them to mainstream attention, least of all the brave and brilliant women who

exposed Harvey Weinstein and popularised the #MeToo movement. But many other brave and brilliant women stood up to say the same thing – and, because they were not actors, remained unheard. The #MeToo movement is widely assumed to have begun a year ago, with Weinstein's accusers. But it started in 2006, when the motto was coined by the activist Tarana Burke. She and the millions of others who tried to speak out were neither literally nor metaphorically in the spotlight.

At least actors serve everyone. But the next most-interviewed category, according to my unscientific survey, could be filed as "those who serve the wealthy": restaurateurs, haute couturists, interior designers and the like, lionised and thrust into our faces as if we were their prospective clients. This is a world of make believe, in which we are induced to imagine we are participants, rather than merely gawpers.

I am not proposing papers should never interview actors, or that they have no wisdom of their own

The spotlight effect is bad enough on the culture pages. It's worse when the same framing is applied to politics. Particularly during party conference season, but at other times of the year as well, public issues are cast as private dramas. Brexit, that is likely to alter the lives of everyone in Britain, is reduced to a story about whether or not Theresa May will keep her job. Who cares?

GEORGE MONBIOT

Perhaps, by now, not even Theresa May.

Neither May nor Jeremy Corbyn can carry the weight of the personality cults that the media seeks to build around them. They are diffident and awkward in public, and appear to writhe in the spotlight. Both parties grapple with massive issues, and draw on the work of hundreds in formulating policy, tactics and presentation. Yet these huge and complex matters are reduced to the drama of one person's struggle. Everyone, in the media's viewfinder, becomes an actor. Reality is replaced by representation.

Even when political reporting is not reduced to personality, political photography is. An article might offer depth and complexity, but is illustrated with a photo of one of the 10 politicians whose picture must be attached to every news story. Where is the public clamour to see yet another image of Theresa May – let alone Boris Johnson? The pictures, like the actors, blot out our view of other people, and induce us to forget that these articles discuss the lives of millions, not the life of one.

The media's failure of imagination and perspective is not just tiresome; it's dangerous. There is a particular species of politics that is built entirely around personalities. It is a politics in which substance, evidence and analysis are replaced by symbols, slogans and sensation. It is called fascism. If you construct political narratives around the psychodramas of politicians, even when they don't invite it, you open the way for those who can play this game more effectively.

Already, this reporting style has led to the rise of people who, though they are not fascists, have demagogic tendencies. Boris Johnson, Nigel Farage and Jacob Rees-Mogg are all, like Donald Trump, reality TV stars. The reality TV on which they feature is not *The Apprentice*, but the BBC's *Question Time*, and other news and current affairs programmes. In the media circus, the clowns have the starring roles. And clowns in politics are dangerous.

The spotlight effect allows the favoured few to set the agenda. Almost all the most critical

issues remain in the darkness beyond the circle of light. Every day, thousands of pages are published and thousands of hours broadcast by the media. But scarcely any of this space and time is made available for the matters that really count: environmental breakdown, inequality, exclusion, the subversion of democracy by money. In a world of impersonation, we obsess about trivia. A recent story carried by BBC News was headlined *Meghan Closes a Car Door*.

The BBC has just announced that two of its programmes will now start covering climate change once a week. Given the indifference and sometimes outright hostility with which it has treated people trying to raise such issues over the past 20 years, this is progress. But business news, though less important than environmental collapse, is broadcast every minute, partly because it is treated as central by the people who run the media, and partly because it is of pressing interest to those within the spotlight. We see what they want us to see. The rest remains in darkness.

The task of all journalists is to turn off the spotlight, roll up the blinds and see what's lurking at the back of the room. There are some magnificent examples of how this can be done, such as the Windrush Scandal reporting by Amelia Gentleman and others. This told the story of people who live far from where the spotlight falls. The articles were accompanied by pictures of the victims, rather than those of the politicians who had treated them so badly: their tragedies were not supplanted by someone else's drama. Yet these stories were told with such power that they forced even those within the spotlight to respond.

The task of all citizens is to understand what we are seeing. The world as portrayed is not the world as it is. The personification of complex issues confuses and misdirects us, ensuring that we struggle to comprehend and respond to our predicaments. This, it seems, is often the point. **CT**

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*George Monbiot's latest book, **How Did We Get Into This Mess?**, is published by Verso. This article was first published in the Guardian. Monbiot's web site is www.monbiot.com*

CATHERINE MOIR

Inside Australia's internment camps

Sydney exhibition shows how German civilians were held during World War I

ON August 15, 1914, a German steamship called the Lothringen reached Melbourne from Antwerp after 47 days at sea. Without access to telegraphy during their journey, the sailors had no idea that war had broken out between the German and British empires. When the Lothringen docked, a company of Australian naval officers informed the Germans of the news.

16 Friedrich Meier, one of the sailors on board, recorded in his diary on August 18, 1914 that he and his comrades were “arrested, [...] unsuspectingly, as prisoners of war”. Meier was removed to Langwarrin Internment Camp in Victoria, one of 11 “German Concentration Camps” around the

country in which so-called enemy aliens were held during the war.

At first, only those born in countries with which Australia was at war were interned. Later, the policy was extended to include Australian-born descendants of enemy nations. Like Meier, those detained were often civilians, thought to pose a threat purely on the basis of their heritage. Around 7,000 people were interned in Australia during the World War I, including 4,500 with German ancestry, who had been born or resident in Australia at the time war broke out. A new exhibition in Sydney at the State Library NSW showcases the papers of German internees, one of six sets of holdings at the Library with UNESCO Memory of the World status.

Thanks to a collaborative translation project between the library and faculty and students from the University of Sydney's Department of Germanic Studies, visitors to the exhibition, which runs until March 2019, can read internees' stories in their own words.

Though conditions varied between camps, life inside them was generally hard. A strict regime operated: “veille” at 6.30 a.m., lights out at 10 p.m. Prisoners were required to submit to roll call twice a day, and to assemble for parade three times. In between, they might occupy themselves by reading, playing cards, or working.

Visits from relatives were permitted, and correspondence was allowed, though letters could



Locations of internment camps.

Source: National Archives of Australia

CATHERINE MOIR



ABOVE: The Censor's office at Holsworthy Camp.

RIGHT: Croatian internee employed as a translator in the Censor's office at Holsworthy. Photos: State Library NSW

only be written in English. It was forbidden to keep a diary or any other written materials in German, or to write about political matters. A strict censorship system operated, with prisoners who spoke German or Croatian used to intercept potentially risky correspondence. Whatever was found was confiscated, though the letters, diaries, and newspapers that remain demonstrate that much escaped the censors.

The remaining records illustrate how internees tried to make the most of their time. A lively parallel society developed in the camps, with cafes and sports clubs, theatre groups and football leagues. One of our students has translated an article in Holsworthy's *Kamp Spiegel* newspaper which details one league's efforts to set up a proper pitch to play on.



CATHERINE MOIR

Kamp Spiegel was one of several German-language newspapers that circulated illicitly inside the camps. Advertisements in *Die Welt am Montag*, the Trial Bay camp weekly, push the wares of Andreas Meiers, the proprietor of Café Habsburg, the “first and biggest food stall in the camp”. The Habsburg opened “every Monday and Thursday” and served a “variety of foods” including the speciality, “braised beef with potato dumplings”.

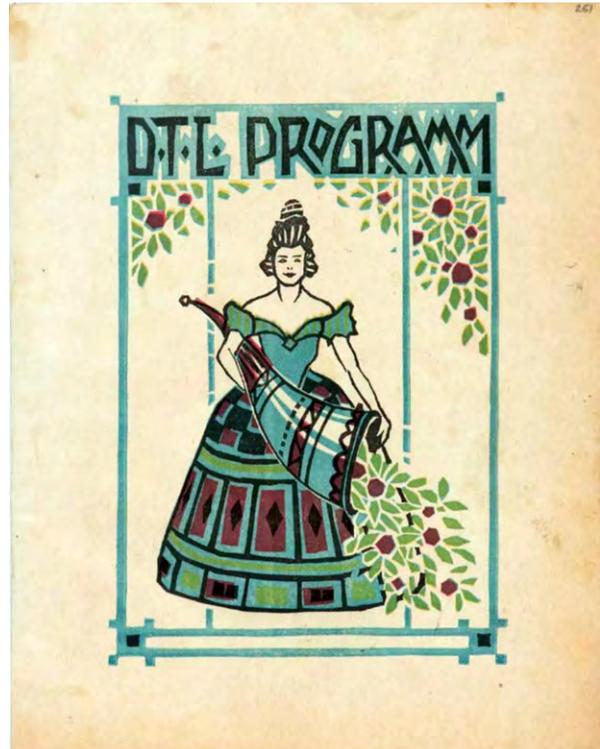
Another restaurant, “next to the roller-skating rink”, advertised itself as a “Newly fitted, spacious and comfortable established locale”, where one could play “billiards and snooker”, and eat the “finest pastries” and “excellent lunches and evening suppers”. The Café Artist Klause, meanwhile, was positioned “opposite the German theatre”.

The dramatic life of some inmates is revealed in the theatre criticism of *Kamp Spiegel*. An anonymous reviewer writes encouragingly of his fellow detainees’ theatrical performances. In 1915 in Holsworthy camp, a theatre troupe, the Deutsche Theater Bühne, staged Hermann Sudermann’s 1905 play *Stein unter Steinen* (Stone among Stones). It tells the story of Jakob Biegler, a young and talented but hard-up stonemason’s apprentice who is sentenced to five years’ imprisonment for killing his landlord in a heated confrontation.

The camp critic tells us that Mr Diederich’s portrayal of Zarncke, the benevolent master stonemason who gives Jakob work, was “quite superb”. Meanwhile, “Mr. Himmelmann’s natural gift for acting” allowed him to play the role of Lore, Jakob’s common law partner, “deftly and realistically”.

The pride in the improvement of each performer and in the ability of “our little stage” to convey the impression of a stonemason’s workshop is touching when one considers that many of these men were themselves manual workers confined for no other reason than their German heritage.

German internees had little choice but to try and make a life in the camps: after all, nobody



Programme cover of 'Deutsches Theater Liverpool' (DTL), the theatre troupe inside Liverpool Camp. State Library NSW

knew how long the war would last. But life was far from rosy. Conditions were cramped and unsanitary: not cleaning up properly after using the toilet facilities carried a punishment of solitary confinement.

Other punishments included restriction to a meagre diet of watery oats, and restraint using leg chains or a body belt. Guards taunted prisoners about life on the outside, and worries about families and businesses drove some to suicide, or to attempt escape.

Among the materials our student translators have unearthed is an illustrated poem from *Der Kamerad* (The Comrade), the handwritten weekly published by prisoners of Torrens Island Camp, South Australia, in June 1915. It recounts a failed escape attempt, though it isn’t clear from the context whether these particular events actually took place or whether the poet is trading on hearsay.

The author tells us that the poem is to be sung to the tune of the German folk song *Es zogen drei Burschen wohl über den Rhein*. In its original

CATHERINE MOIR

form, the song goes:

*Three lads went a wandering over the Rhine,
A landlady welcomed them, gave them some
wine.*

In its modified form, the unnamed prisoner – who dedicates his poem to “The Three Freedom-Seekers” – writes:

*It rained one evening with force so great,
The time in the camp was long after eight.
Three young lads, through the fence they did
crawl,
The guards, they slept – who’d believe it at
all?*

The author continues by telling us that the “freedom-seekers” were caught and returned to the camp after 13 days, with “long hair and beards, many now turned grey” and concludes that “a moral can be learned” from this story: “Don’t run away from Torrens Island!”

After the war ended, these camps were closed. All internees were deported to Germany, regardless of whether they had any family ties there or had set foot on its shores. In a mass letter of complaint, prisoners of Holsworthy camp “with wives, families or other dependants in Australia” pleaded to be released to their home on parole, or

interned on house arrest with their loved ones. More than 1,000 people appealed deportation decisions, but only 306 were allowed to stay.

Like many others, Friedrich Meier was eventually also transported to Holsworthy to await deportation. In his final entry, he writes: “The majority of our camp is expected to depart on the 25th or 26th of month with the “Kursk” ..., which is currently docked in Sydney”.

Unlike so many other German internees, Meier, at least, was returning home.

A hundred years later, World War I is still largely commemorated as a conflict in which members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps – ANZACs – fought with the British Empire against the German and Austrian aggressors. But the full picture is much more complex. While some German Australians fought on the side of the British Empire against their ancestral country, others were interned in camps. Their papers reveal the complex history of Australia’s first world war in more detail than ever before. **CT**

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Catherine Moir is Lecturer in Germanic Studies at the University of Sydney in Australia. This article first appeared at www.theconversation.com

19

LEFT, RIGHT

Marching to the Beat of Imperial Canada

YVES ENGLER

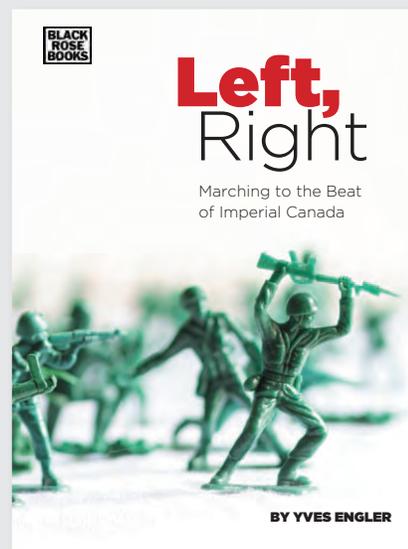
After exposing this country’s real role in the world in **Black Book of Canadian Foreign Policy** and **Canada in Africa – 300 Years of Aid and Exploitation**, **Yves Engler** shines a light on supposedly progressive groups and individuals who support war, interference in other country’s affairs and exploitation in his new book

Left, Right – Marching to the Beat of Imperial Canada

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CONN HALLINAN

The Syrian chessboard

The great "united front" against Teheran by Washington, Tel Aviv and the Gulf monarchies is mostly illusion

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THE Syrian civil war has always been devilishly complex, with multiple actors following different scripts, but in the past few months it appeared to be winding down. The Damascus government now controls 60 percent of the country and the major population centres, the Islamic State has been routed, and the rebels opposed to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad are largely cornered in Idlib Province in the country's northwest. But suddenly the Americans have moved the goal posts – maybe – the Russians have fallen out with the Israelis, the Iranians are digging in their heels, and the Turks are trying to multi-task with a home front in disarray.

So the devil is still very much at work in a war that has lasted more than seven years, claimed up to 500,000 lives, displaced millions of people, destabilised an already fragile Middle East, and is far from over.

There are at least three theatres in the Syrian war, each with its own complexities: Idlib in the north, the territory east of the Euphrates River, and the region that abuts the southern section of the Golan Heights. Just sorting out the antagonists is daunting. Turks, Iranians, Americans and Kurds are the key actors in the east. Russians, Turks, Kurds and Assad are in a temporary standoff in the north. And Iran, Assad and Israel are in a face-off near Golan, a conflict that has suddenly drawn in Moscow.

Assad's goals are straightforward: reunite the country under the rule of Damascus and begin

re-building Syria's shattered cities. The major roadblock to this is Idlib, the last large concentration of anti-Assad groups, Jihadists linked with al-Qaeda, and a modest Turkish occupation force representing Operation Olive Branch. The province, which borders Turkey in the north, is mountainous and re-taking it promises to be difficult.

For the time being there is a stand down. The Russians cut a deal with Turkey to demilitarise the area around Idlib city, neutralise the jihadist groups, and re-open major roads. The agreement holds off a joint Assad-Russian assault on Idlib, which would have driven hundreds of thousands of refugees into Turkey and likely have resulted in large numbers of civilian casualties.

But the agreement is temporary – about a month – because Russia is impatient to end the fighting and begin the reconstruction. However, it is hard to see how the Turks are going to get a handle on the bewildering number of groups packed into the province, some of which they have actively aided for years. Ankara could bring in more soldiers, but Turkey already has troops east of the Euphrates and is teetering on the edge of a major economic crisis. Pouring more wealth into what has become a quagmire may not sit well with the Turkish public, which has seen inflation eat up their paycheques and pensions, and the Turkish lira fall nearly 40 per-



READY FOR SYRIA: The Russian S-400 anti-aircraft system.

Photo: Pavel Kazachkov, Flickr.com

cent in value in the past year. Local elections will be held in 2019, and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party's power is built on improving the economy.

In Syria's east, Turkish troops – part of Operation Euphrates Shield – are pushing up against the Americans and the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces fighting the Islamic State (IS). Erdogan is far more worried about the Syrian Kurds and the effect they might have on Turkey's Kurdish population, than he is about the IS.

Ankara's ally in this case is Iran, which is not overly concerned about the Kurds, but quite concerned about the 2,200 Americans. "We need to resolve the difficulty east of the Euphrates and force America out", Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said in early September.

That latter goal just got more complex. The US Special Forces were originally charged with aiding the Kurdish and Arab allies drive out IS. President Donald Trump told a meeting in March, "We'll be coming out of Syria like very soon". But that policy appears to have changed. National Security Advisor John Bolton now says US troops will remain in Syria until Iran leaves.

Since there is little chance of that happening, the US commitment suddenly sounds open-ended. Bolton's comment has stirred up some opposition in the US Congress to "mission creep", although Trump has yet to directly address the situation.

The Kurds are caught in the middle. The US has made no commitment to defend them from Turkey, and the Assad regime is pressing to bring the region under Damascus' control. However, the Syrian government has made overtures to the Kurds for talks about more regional autonomy, and one suspects the Kurds will try to cut a deal to protect them from Ankara. The Russians have been pushing for Assad-Kurd détente.

Turkey may want to stay in eastern Syria, but it is hard to see how Ankara will be able to do that, especially if the Turks are stretched between Idlib and Euphrates Shield in the east. The simple fact is that Erdogan misjudged the resiliency of the Assad regime and overreached when he thought shooting down a Russian fighter-bomber in 2015 would bring NATO to his rescue and intimidate Moscow. Instead, the Russians now control the skies over Idlib, and Turkey is

estranged from NATO.

The Russians have been careful in Syria. Their main concerns are keeping their naval base at Latakia, beating up on al-Qaeda and the IS, and supporting their long-time ally Syria. Instead of responding directly to Erdogan's 2015 provocation, Moscow brought in their S-400 anti-aircraft system, a wing of advanced fighter aircraft, and beefed up their naval presence with its advanced radar systems. The message was clear: don't try that again.

But the Russians held off the attack on Idlib, and have been trying to keep the Israelis and Iranians from tangling with one another in the region around the Golan Heights. Moscow proposed keeping Iran and its allies at least 60 miles from the Israeli border, but Israel – and now the US – is demanding Iran fully withdraw from Syria.

The Assad regime wants Teheran to stay, but also to avoid any major shootout between Iran and Israel that would catch Damascus in the middle. Despite hundreds of Israeli air attacks into Syria, there has been no counterattacks by the Syrians or the Iranians, suggesting that Assad has ruled out any violent reaction.

That all came to end on September 17, when Israeli aircraft apparently used a Russian Ilyushin-M20 electronic reconnaissance plane to mask an attack on Damascus. Syrian anti-aircraft responded and ending up shooting down the Russian plane and killing all aboard. Russia blamed the Israelis and a few days later, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that Moscow was sending its S-300 anti-aircraft system

to Syria, along with a series of upgrades in Damascus' radar network. Syria currently uses the S-200 system that goes back to the '60s.

The upgrade will not really threaten Israeli aircraft – the S-300 is dated and the Israelis likely have the electronics to overcome it – but suddenly the skies over Syria are no longer uncontested, and, if Tel Aviv decides to go after the Syrian radar grid, the Russians have their S-400 in the wings. Not checkmate, but check.

How all of this shakes down is hardly clear, but there are glimmers of solution out there. Turkey will eventually have to withdraw from Syria, but will probably get some concessions over how much autonomy Syria's Kurds will end up with. The Kurds can cut a deal with Assad because the regime needs peace. The Iranians want to keep their influence in Syria and a link to Hezbollah in Lebanon, but don't want a serious dust-up with Israel.

An upcoming Istanbul summit on Syria of Russia, France, Turkey and Germany will talk about a political solution to the civil war and post-war reconstruction.

Israel will eventually have to come to terms with Iran as a major player in the Middle East and recognise that the great "united front" against Teheran by Washington, Tel Aviv and the Gulf monarchies is mostly illusion. The Saudis are in serious economic trouble, the Gulf Cooperation Council is divided, and it is Israel and the US that are increasingly isolated over in their hostility to Teheran. **CT**

Conn Hallinan can be read at dispatchesfromtheedgeblog.wordpress.com and middleempireseries.wordpress.com

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Another step towards Internet censorship

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Let's make a big angry noise any time anyone makes a move to silence
dissident political speech in the new media environment

WHILE most indie media was focused on debating the way people talk about Kanye West and the disappearance of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, an unprecedented escalation in internet censorship took place which threatens everything we all care about. It received frighteningly little attention.

After a massive purge of hundreds of politically oriented pages and personal accounts for “inauthentic behaviour”, Facebook rightly received a fair amount of criticism for the nebulous and hotly disputed basis for that action. What received relatively little attention was the far more ominous step which was taken next: within

hours of being purged from Facebook, multiple anti-establishment alternative media sites had their accounts completely removed from Twitter as well.

As of this writing, I am aware of three large alternative media outlets which were expelled from both platforms at almost the same time: *Anti-Media*, the *Free Thought Project*, and *Police the Police*, all of whom had millions of followers on Facebook. Both the editor-in-chief of *Anti-Media* and its chief creative officer were also banned by Twitter, and are being kept from having any new accounts on that site as well.

“I unfortunately always felt the day would come when alternative media would be scrubbed

from major social media sites”, *Anti-Media’s* chief creative officer SM Gibson told me. “Because of that I prepared by having backup accounts years ago. The fact that those accounts, as well as three accounts from individuals associated with *Anti-Media* were banned without warning and without any reason offered by either platform makes me believe this purge was certainly orchestrated by someone. Who that is I have no idea, but this attack on information was much more concise and methodical in silencing truth than most realize or is being reported”.

It is now clear that there is either (a) some degree of communication/coordination between Twitter and Facebook about their respective censorship practices, or (b) information being given to both Twitter and Facebook by another party regarding targets for censorship. Either way, it means that there is now some mechanism in place linking the censorship of dissident voices across multiple platforms. We are beginning to see smaller anti-establishment alternative media outlets cut off from their audiences by the same sort of coordinated cross-platform silencing we first witnessed with Alex Jones in August.

This is about as acute a threat to our ability to network and share information with each other as anything you could possibly imagine. If news media outlets are beginning to silence dissident voices together in unison, that means we can see entire alternative media outlets not just partially silenced but thoroughly silenced, their ability to grow their audiences and get information out to heavily populated parts of the internet completely crippled.

This is huge, this is dangerous, and this is being under-reported. When I was removed from Twitter in August for “abusing” John McCain, there was a large and outraged uproar on Twitter, and my account was quickly restored with an apology. The phenomenon of multiple high-profile alternative media outlets suddenly being silenced in unison by the two biggest social media platforms should be generating more outrage than some ornery Australian blogger losing her

Twitter account, not less. People should be legitimately freaked out by this, because it affects us all.

Any time you try to talk about how internet censorship threatens our ability to get the jackboot of oligarchy off our necks you’ll always get some guy in your face who’s read one Ayn Rand book and thinks he knows everything, saying things like “Facebook is a private company! It can do whatever it wants!” Is it now? Has not Facebook been inviting US government-funded groups to help regulate its operations, vowing on the Senate floor to do more to facilitate the interests of the US government, deleting accounts at the direction of the US and Israeli governments, and handing the guidance of its censorship behaviour over to the Atlantic Council, which receives funding from the US government, the EU, NATO and Gulf states? How “private” is that? Facebook is a deeply government-entrenched corporation, and Facebook censorship is just what government censorship looks like in a corporatist system of government.

Speaking of the Atlantic Council, it recently published a very interesting 21-page document about a US military conference detailing, in present tense, how Silicon Valley tech giants are being used to nullify the threat that the new media landscape poses to the US power establishment.

Of this document, *World Socialist Website* writes the following: “Enter the social media companies. The best mechanism for suppressing oppositional viewpoints and promoting pro-government narratives is the private sector, in particular ‘technology giants, including Facebook, Google, YouTube, and Twitter’, which can ‘determine what people see and do not see’”.

Watts adds, “Fortunately, shifts in the policies of social media platforms such as Facebook have had significant impact on the type and quality of the content that is broadcast”.

The private sector, therefore, must do the dirty work of the government, because government propaganda is viewed with suspicion by the population. “Business and the private sector may not naturally understand the role they play in combating disinformation, but theirs is one of

CAITLIN JOHNSTONE

the most important. ... In the West at least, they have been thrust into a central role due to the general public's increased trust in them as institutions”.

The best way to deal with a manipulative sociopath is to point and make a lot of noise every time they do something weird and creepy. The more you let them abuse you in private, the more they can rope you in and get you playing along with their sick agendas. If you notice them doing something weird, the best way to nullify all the tools in their wicked little toolbox is to point and yell, “Hey! What are you doing?? Why are you doing that? That’s weird!” Get people looking, because such beasts can’t advance their manipulations with a lot of critical eyes on them.

Propaganda and censorship operates very much the same way. If you are unfamiliar with the concept of the Streisand effect, I encourage you to begin to acquaint yourself with it. Named for an incident in which Barbara Streisand attempted to suppress online photographs of her Malibu residence and thereby inadvertently drew far more attention to them, the Streisand

effect describes the way attempts to hide and censor information can be used to draw more attention to it if the coverup attracts the interest of the public eye. Every censor needs to prevent this from happening in order to do their job effectively; if it looks like removing something from public view would draw more attention to it, then they cannot practice censorship in that case.

So let’s Streisand this thing up, hey? Let’s make a big angry noise about this new cross-platform escalation in internet censorship, and let’s make a big angry noise any time anyone makes a move to silence dissident political speech in the new media environment. Manipulators can only function in darkness, so let’s never give them any. Anything they try, we need to make a ton of noise about it. That by itself would be throwing an enormous stumbling block in their path while we find new ways to clear a path for more and more networking and information sharing. These bastards have controlled the narrative for too long. **CT**

Caitlin Johnstone is an Australian-based blogger. Follow her at www.caitlinjohnstone.com

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JONATHAN COOK

Breaking the silence about Israeli occupation

Former Israeli soldiers face fresh challenges as they expose the brutality of the West Bank occupation

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DO EVEN-PAZ switched on his body camera as his tour group decamped from the bus in Hebron. The former Israeli soldier wanted to document any trouble we might encounter in this, the largest Palestinian city in the occupied West Bank.

It was not Hebron's Palestinian residents who concerned him. He was worried about Israelis – Jewish religious extremists and the soldiers there to guard them – who have seized control of much of the city centre.

Mr Even-Paz, 34, first served as a soldier in Hebron in the early 2000s. Today he belongs to Breaking the Silence, a group of former soldiers- turned-whistleblowers, who leads tours into the heart of Israel's settlement enterprise. After 14 years of operations however, Breaking the Silence is today facing ever-more formidable challenges.

Hebron, 30km south of Jerusalem, is a microcosm of the occupation. A handful of settlers moved here uninvited five decades ago, drawn in part to the what Israelis call the Tomb of the Patriarchs and Palestinians the Ibrahimi mosque. The Herod-era building is erected over the putative burial site of Abraham, Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Since then the settler ranks have swollen to nearly 900 – aided by the Israeli army. Despite their relatively small number,

Israeli soldiers escort Ido Even-Paz and his Breaking the Silence tour through the West Bank city of Hebron.

Photo:
Heidi Levine



however, their territorial footprint has been expanding relentlessly, and now covers two square kilometres.

The settlers and military, says Mr Even-Paz, have worked hand in hand to hijack the freedom of 230,000 Palestinians and turn Hebron's once-vibrant commercial centre into a ghost town. All of this happened with the apparent blessing of the Israeli government.



When Mr Even-Paz arrived in Hebron as a teen soldier at the height of the Second Intifada, he was keen to distinguish himself as a combat soldier by fighting Palestinian “terrorists”, and impress his father, a retired career officer. His political awakening however, didn’t begin until much later, in 2008, as Israel launched a massive assault on the Gaza Strip. Later, he discovered the more than 1,000 testimonies recorded by *Breaking the Silence*, in which Israelis acknowl-

edged that they had participated in or witnessed war crimes during their military service.

“Those stories were exactly like mine. I thought I’d done nothing significant during my military service, that it was boring. I started to realise it was the very mundanity of the occupation – its round-the-clock oppression of Palestinians – that was the core of the problem”.

He believes the problem of the occupation is systemic rather than the result of misconduct by

individual soldiers. “Whatever a soldier believes when they begin their military service, there is no way to behave ethically in the occupied territories”, he says. “It’s a system in which Palestinians are always treated as inferior, always viewed as the enemy, whoever they are.

“Every day the job is to inflict collective punishment. We were told explicitly that we were waging psychological war, that we were there to intimidate them. In the middle of the night we raided families’ homes, chosen randomly, waking up frightened children. We violently broke up Palestinian protests. I arrested Palestinians every day to ‘dry them out’ – to teach them a lesson, to make them understand who is boss”.

Yet, in Israel, the military is regarded as an almost sacred institution. Breaking the Silence casts a long, dark shadow over claims that Israel’s is the most moral army in the world.

Hebron is ground zero for much of the group’s work, where military service is a rite of passage for Israeli combat soldiers. The group’s tour attracts some back later in life, either after they grow troubled by their earlier experiences enforcing the occupation or because they want to show family members what their service was like.

Some go on to testify to the group, says Ori Givati, Mr Even-Paz’s colleague on the tour. “When they come with us to places like Hebron, the memories flood back. They recall things they did that they can now see in a different light”.

With the spread of phone cameras in recent years, the dark underbelly of the occupation in Hebron has been ever harder to conceal, confirming the soldiers’ testimonies.

Palestinians have captured on video everything from terrified small children being dragged off the street by soldiers into military Jeeps to an army medic, Elor Azaria, using his rifle to execute a prone Palestinian man by shooting him in the head from close range.

Israel has carved Hebron into two zones, part of its “separation policy”. H1, the city’s western side, is nominally under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority, except when Israel de-

cides otherwise. H2, a fifth of the city and home to somewhere between 20,000 and 30,000 Palestinians (the number is contested), is where settlers and soldiers rule. They are supported by a much larger neighbouring settlement of 8,000 religious Jews, Kiryat Arba, hemming in Hebron’s eastern flank.

Many of the settlers have licences to carry army-issue rifles and handguns

The chain of settlements form a spear of territory thrusting into Hebron’s throat from the main body of H2 and Kiryat Arba.

“The idea is to make life so intolerable the Palestinians will choose to expel themselves”, Mr Even-Paz says. “Unemployment among Palestinians is about 70 per cent in H2, so the pressure is on the residents to move into H1 or out of Hebron entirely”.

In their place, the settlers have taken over. Carefree looking couples wander with push chairs, men and boys hurry to seminaries, bored teenagers study their phones on street corners, and families lounge at bus stops for the frequent services connecting them to Jerusalem and elsewhere. Everything, says Mr Even-Paz, from water and electricity to rents and public transport, is subsidised to encourage Jews to move here.

Amid the surrounding Palestinian homes, all of this “normality” takes place in a controlled environment that is anything but. It is enforced by heavily fortified checkpoints, razor-wire, watch-towers, army patrols and rooftop sentries watching every move. Many of the settlers have licences to carry army-issue rifles and handguns.

As elsewhere in the occupied territories, Israel has imposed two systems of law. Palestinians, including children, face summary arrest, military trial and draconian punishment, while settlers operate under an Israeli civil law that involves due process and a presumption of innocence – though even this is rarely enforced against them.

“They know they are untouchable”, says Mr Even-Paz. “The army’s rules of engagement mean soldiers can’t enforce the law on Israeli ci-

vilians. Soldiers are not allowed to respond if the settlers commit a crime or assault a Palestinian. They are even under orders not to shoot back if a settler opens fire at them”.

Not that such a scenario has occurred often. Many soldiers are religious settlers themselves, and even the secular ones sympathise with Hebron’s settlers. “When I served, they brought us hot drinks on a cold day, and iced drinks on a hot day. During Shabbat [the Sabbath], they invited us to come and eat in their homes. They became like family to us”.

But that welcome has turned sour since Mr Even-Paz joined Breaking the Silence. Settlers have thrown eggs, water-bombs, coffee grounds and mud at him. Yehuda Shaul, the founder of Breaking the Silence, was recently punched in the face during a tour of Hebron, and another guide had paint poured over her.

The army and settlers appear to be working hand-in-hand to stymie the group’s tours

It’s not just settlers targeting the group. Government ministers routinely accuse Breaking the Silence of treason and of aiding supposed efforts by Europe to damage the army and Israel’s image. Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has in the past called for the group’s members to be investigated by the police. He also refuses to meet any foreign dignitary who has dealings with Breaking the Silence. That policy resulted in a highly publicised snub last year to the German foreign minister, Sigmar Gabriel.

In July, the parliament passed a law barring Breaking the Silence from schools, even though visits by ‘loyal’ soldiers are a mainstay of the curriculum. Now the army and settlers appear to be working hand-in-hand to stymie the group’s tours. In fact, 10 years ago, the army issued an order banning the group’s trips to Hebron, though Breaking the Silence eventually won a costly legal battle to have them reinstated.

But, in recent weeks, the settlers have markedly intensified efforts to break up the tours. The army, meanwhile, appears to be exploiting the upsurge in settler violence to crack down on

Breaking the Silence, on the pretext that restrictions are necessary to “prevent friction”.

The same rationale was originally used to implement the system of restricted access for Palestinians to areas of Hebron coveted by settlers. In 1994, shortly after the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships signed the Oslo peace accords, a fanatical settler, Baruch Goldstein, opened fire in the Ibrahimi mosque, killing and wounding some 150 worshipping Muslims.

It should have provided the moment for Yitzhak Rabin, Israel’s then prime minister, to remove the small settler community from Hebron. It was a necessary first step in proving that Israel was serious about the Oslo process and creating a Palestinian state in the occupied territories.

Instead, Mr Even-Paz observes, Israel entrenched the settlers’ rule, crafting the situation visible on the ground today. For more than 15 years, Israel has forbidden entry for Palestinians to what was once Hebron’s main thoroughfare and central shopping area along Shuhada Street. Now it has been rebranded in Hebrew as King David Street, and declared what the army terms a “sterilised area”. The closure severs the main transport routes for Palestinians between north and south Hebron.

Most of the Palestinian inhabitants have been driven from the city centre by endless harassment and attacks by settlers, bolstered by arrests and night raids conducted by the army, says Mr Even-Paz.

The few Palestinians still living in the area are literally caged into their own homes – their doors welded shut and their windows covered with bars. The bars are there for their own protection because settlers throw stones, eggs and soiled nappies at their windows. The families are forced to enter and leave via the rooftops into back streets to shop, work and meet friends.

The dozens of stores that once drew shoppers from throughout the southern West Bank have been sealed up long ago. The army, according to our guide, has turned a blind eye to the settlers requisitioning some for their own use.

As we moved into the settler-controlled heart

JONATHAN COOK

of Hebron, we got a taste of the new official policy of intimidation and harassment against Breaking the Silence.

It started early on when an officer approached to tell us we were not allowed to move without a military escort. Soldiers and Jeeps shadowed us closely. Our group hardly looked combative. It included European staff from a human rights organisation; curious holidaymakers; a group of young friends brought along by an Israeli leftist they were visiting; and a young Jew from Brooklyn who was in Israel to understand the occupation and his Jewish identity more deeply.

The last, who asked to be identified only as Todd for fear that his entry into Israel might be blocked next time by the authorities, said it was his first time in the West Bank.

“I feel an obligation to understand what’s going on because it’s done in the name of Jews. But it is very hard to see this up close. It hurts”.

The only crossing point on Shuhada Street still open to Palestinians, Bab al-Khan, is littered with half a dozen checkpoints, which only Palestinian children returning from school appeared willing to pass. Even that route is under threat. Settlers have occupied two Palestinian homes either side of the road in an attempt to force the army to close the street to Palestinians entirely, says Mr Even-Paz.

The confidence of the settlers today – and

their support from the government and among a significant section of the Israeli public – was starkly on show during the recent Sukkot holiday, or Feast of the Tabernacles.

Every few minutes a truck converted into open-backed tour bus offered a free lift for some two dozen Israeli “tourists” at a time, taking them from the Tomb of the Patriarchs up the Palestinian-free Shuhada Street to the settlements.

But while these Jewish visitors had the run of the place, our escort of heavily armed soldiers soon blocked the way ahead.

Half-way up Shuhada Street, before we could reach the last two, most extreme illegal settlements, the military commander issued an order that we were denied further access to “prevent friction”.

As we stood at the side of the road contesting the ban, Israelis on the tour buses plied past, staring at us like unwelcome gatecrashers at their party.

“It seems there are only two kinds of people not allowed to walk through the centre of Hebron”, Mr Even-Paz observed. “Palestinians and Breaking the Silence”. **CT**

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

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

– **Tony Sutton, Editor**



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Gimme some truth

The words of John Lennon tells it like it is

“You gotta remember, establishment, it’s just a name for evil. The monster doesn’t care whether it kills all the students or whether there’s a revolution. It’s not thinking logically, it’s out of control”. – John Lennon (1969)

*Woman is the nigger of the world, yes she is
If you don’t believe me take a look to the one
you’re with
Woman is the slave to the slaves
Ah yeah, better scream about it.*

32

LONG before Bette Midler was roundly condemned for tweeting “Women, are the n-word of the world”, John Lennon – never one to pull his punches – proclaimed in song “*Woman Is the Nigger of the World*”.

Unlike Midler and the rest of the politically correct world, which refuses to say, let alone print, the word “nigger”, lest they be accused of racism, Lennon didn’t just use the “n” word – he wrote a whole song about it and included it on his 1972 album *Some Time In New York City*.

Titled *Woman Is the Nigger of the World*, the song – with lyrics inspired and co-written by Yoko Ono – has Lennon’s brand of truth-telling stamped all over it:

*Woman is the nigger of the world
Yes she is, think about it
Woman is the nigger of the world
Think about it, do something about it*

*We make her paint her face and dance
If she won’t be a slave, we say that she don’t
love us
If she’s real, we say she’s trying to be a man
While putting her down we pretend that she is
above us*

Blacklisted by most radio stations, the controversial song was widely condemned as racist and anti-woman.

The song was neither.

Initially released as a single in April 1972, a month after Congress voted to add the Equal Rights Amendment to the US Constitution, *Woman Is the Nigger of the World* was Lennon’s way of calling out the hypocrisy of a world that claimed to recognise women as equals while treating them as less worthy of equal rights.

That hypocrisy is still playing out today.

As African-American civil rights activist Congressman Ron Dellums noted in his defence of the song, “If you define ‘nigger’ as someone whose lifestyle is defined by others, whose opportunities are defined by others, whose role in society is defined by others, the good news is that you don’t have to be black to be a nigger in this society. Most of the people in America are niggers”.

All these years later, not much has changed.

Women are still treated like the niggers of the world: used, abused and conveniently discarded.

And in the eyes of the American police state, most of the citizenry – black, white, brown and every shade in between – are still treated

JOHN W WHITEHEAD



SPEAK UP, SPEAK OUT: Yoko Ono and John Lennon at Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam, 1969.

Photo: Joost Evers/Anefo

like slaves: brutalised, dehumanised, branded, chained, bought and sold like chattel, and stripped of their basic rights and human dignity.

Truth is rarely comfortable. Nor is it palatable, or polite, or politically correct.

For that matter, John Lennon, born on October 9, 1940, was rarely polite or politically correct.

Lennon was a musical genius and pop cultural icon who also happened to be a vocal peace protester and anti-war activist and a high-profile example of the lengths to which the US government will go to persecute those who dare to challenge its authority.

Lennon never shied away from telling it like it is, and neither should we.

Lennon dared to speak truth to power about the government's warmongering, and as a result, he became enemy number one in the eyes of the US government, his phone calls monitored and data files collected on his activities and associations.

Until the day he died, Lennon continued to speak up and speak out.

In honour of what would have been Lennon's 78th birthday, here are some uncomfortable truths about life in the American police state:

1. The government is not our friend. Nor does it work for "we the people".

2. We no longer have a government that is "of the people, for the people and by the people". For that matter, our so-called government representatives do not actually represent us, the citizenry. We are now ruled by an oligarchic elite of governmental and corporate interests whose main interest is in perpetuating power and control.

3. The US is on the brink of bankruptcy, as many economists have been warning for some time now, with more than \$21-trillion in debt owned by foreign nationals and corporations.

4. Elections are not exercises in self-government. They are merely manufactured illusions conjured up in order to keep the populace compliant and convinced that their vote counts and that they still have some influence over the political process. No matter which party is in control, the

police state will continue to grow. In other words, it will win and “we the people” will lose.

5. Twenty years ago, a newspaper headline asked the question: “What’s the difference between a politician and a psychopath?” The answer, then and now, remains the same: None. There is virtually no difference between psychopaths and politicians.

6. Far from being a benevolent entity concerned with the well-being of its citizens, whether in matters of health, safety or security, the government is concerned with three things only: power, control and money.

7. More than terrorism, more than domestic extremism, more than gun violence and organised crime, the US government has become a greater menace to the life, liberty and property of its citizens than any of the so-called dangers from which the government claims to protect us.

8. Not only does the US government perpetrate organised, systematic violence on its own citizens, especially those who challenge its authority nonviolently, in the form of SWAT team raids, militarised police, and roaming VIPR checkpoints, but it gets away with these clear violations of the Fourth Amendment because the courts grant them immunity from wrongdoing.

9. America’s shadow government – which is comprised of unelected government bureaucrats, corporations, contractors, paper-pushers, and button-pushers who are actually calling the shots behind the scenes right now and operates beyond the reach of the Constitution with no real accountability to the citizenry – is the real reason why “we the people” have no control over our government.

10. You no longer have to be poor, black or guilty to be treated like a criminal in America. All that is required is that you belong to the suspect class – that is, the citizenry – of the American police state. As a de facto member of this so-called criminal class, every US citizen is now guilty until proven innocent.

11. By gradually whittling away at our freedoms – free speech, assembly, due process, privacy, etc. – the government has, in effect, liberated itself from its contractual agreement to

respect our constitutional rights while resetting the calendar back to a time when we had no Bill of Rights to protect us from the long arm of the government.

12. Private property means nothing if the government can take your home, car or money under the flimsiest of pretexts, whether it be asset forfeiture schemes, eminent domain or overdue property taxes. Likewise, private property means little at a time when SWAT teams and other government agents can invade your home, break down your doors, kill your dog, wound or kill you, damage your furnishings and terrorise your family.

13. If there is an absolute maxim by which the federal government seems to operate, it is that the American taxpayer always gets ripped off.

14. Americans are powerless in the face of militarised police.

15. Our freedoms – especially the Fourth Amendment – continue to be choked out by a prevailing view among government bureaucrats that they have the right to search, seize, strip, scan, spy on, probe, pat down, taser, and arrest any individual at any time and for the slightest provocation.

16. The US is following the Nazi blueprint to a “T”, whether through its storm trooper-like police in the form of heavily armed government agents to its erection of an electronic concentration camp that not only threatens to engulf America but the rest of the world as well.

17. The United States of America has become the new battlefield. In fact, the only real war being fought by the US government today is the war on the American people, and it is being waged with deadly weapons, militarised police, surveillance technology, laws that criminalise otherwise lawful behaviour, private prisons that operate on quota systems, and government officials who are no longer accountable to the rule of law.

18. And finally, as Lennon shared in a 1968 interview: “I think all our society is run by insane people for insane objectives... I think we’re being run by maniacs for maniacal means. If anybody can put on paper what our government and the American government and the Russian... Chinese... what they are actually trying to do,

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and what they think they're doing, I'd be very pleased to know what they think they're doing. I think they're all insane. But I'm liable to be put away as insane for expressing that. That's what's insane about it".

These are truths about looming problems that cannot be glibly dismissed by political spin.

These problems will continue to plague our nation unless and until Americans wake up to the fact that we're the only ones who can change things for the better and then do something about it.

After all, the Constitution opens with those three vital words, "We the people".

What this means is there is no government without us – our sheer numbers, our muscle, our economy, our physical presence in this land. There can also be no police state – no tyranny – no routine violations of our rights without our complicity and collusion – without our turning a blind eye, shrugging our shoulders, allowing ourselves to be distracted and our civic awareness diluted.

While Lennon believed in the power of the people, he also understood the danger of a power-hungry government. "The trouble with government as it is, is that it doesn't represent the people", observed Lennon. "It controls them".

Stop being controlled.

For the moment, the power, as Lennon recognised, is still in our hands.

"The people have the power, all we have to do is awaken that power in the people", concluded Lennon. "The people are unaware. They're not educated to realise that they have power. The system is so geared that everyone believes the government will fix everything. We are the government".

For the moment, the choice is still ours: slavery or freedom, war or peace, death or life. **CT**

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

HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt

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JOHN PILGER

Demystifying the power of the media

Hold the front page! The reporters are missing

In his foreword to Propaganda Blitz, a powerful new book by David Edwards and David Cromwell, the founders and editors of Media Lens, John Pilger asks what happened to an age of eyewitness reporting and to journalism that relied on evidence.

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THE death of Robert Parry earlier this year felt like a farewell to the age of the reporter. Parry was “a trailblazer for independent journalism”, wrote Seymour Hersh, with whom he shared much in common.

Hersh revealed the My Lai massacre in Vietnam and the secret bombing of Cambodia, Parry exposed Iran-Contra, a drugs and gun-running conspiracy that led to the White House. In 2016, they separately produced compelling evidence that the Assad government in Syria had not used chemical weapons. They were not forgiven.

Driven from the “mainstream”, Hersh must publish his work outside the United States. Parry set up his own independent news

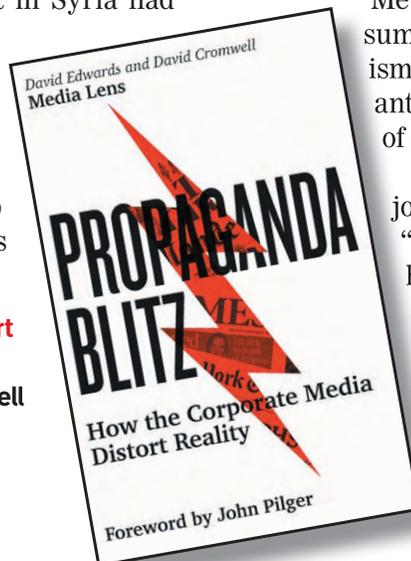
PROPAGANDA BLITZ

How the Corporate Media Distort Reality

David Edwards & David Cromwell

Published by Pluto Press
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website *Consortium News*, where, in a final piece following a stroke, he referred to journalism’s veneration of “approved opinions” while “unapproved evidence is brushed aside or disparaged regardless of its quality.”

Although journalism was always a loose extension of establishment power, something has changed in recent years. Dissent tolerated when I joined a national newspaper in Britain in the 1960s has regressed to a metaphoric underground as liberal capitalism moves towards a form of corporate dictatorship. This is a seismic shift, with journalists policing the new “group-think”, as Parry called it, dispensing its myths and distractions, pursuing its enemies.

Witness the witch-hunts against refugees and immigrants, the wilful abandonment by the “MeToo” zealots of our oldest freedom, presumption of innocence, the anti-Russia racism and anti-Brexit hysteria, the growing anti-China campaign and the suppression of a warning of world war.

With many if not most independent journalists barred or ejected from the “mainstream”, a corner of the Internet has become a vital source of disclosure and evidence-based analysis: true journalism. Sites such as wikileaks.org, consortiumnews.com, ZNet zcomm.org, wsws.org, truthdig.com, global-research.org, counterpunch.org and informationclearinghouse.com are required reading for those trying

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Illustration: 123RF Stock Photo

to make sense of a world in which science and technology advance wondrously while political and economic life in the fearful “democracies” regress behind a media facade of narcissistic spectacle.

In Britain, just one website offers consistently independent media criticism. This is the remarkable *Media Lens* – remarkable partly because its founders and editors as well as its only writers, David Edwards and David Cromwell, since 2001 have concentrated their gaze not on the usual suspects, the Tory press, but the paragons of reputable liberal journalism: the BBC, the *Guardian*, Channel 4 News.

Their method is simple. Meticulous in their research, they are respectful and polite when they ask why a journalist why he or she produced such a one-sided report, or failed to disclose essential facts or promoted discredited myths.

The replies they receive are often defensive, at times abusive; some are hysterical, as if they have pushed back a screen on a protected species.

I would say *Media Lens* has shattered a si-

lence about corporate journalism. Like Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman in *Manufacturing Consent*, they represent a Fifth Estate that deconstructs and demystifies the media’s power.

What is especially interesting about them is that neither is a journalist. David Edwards is a former teacher, David Cromwell is an oceanographer. Yet, their understanding of the morality of journalism – a term rarely used; let’s call it true objectivity – is a bracing quality of their online *Media Lens* dispatches.

I think their work is heroic and I would place a copy of their just published book, *Propaganda Blitz*, in every journalism school that services the corporate system, as they all do.

Take the chapter, *Dismantling the National Health Service*, in which Edwards and Cromwell describe the critical part played by journalists in the crisis facing Britain’s pioneering health service.

The NHS crisis is the product of a political and media construct known as “austerity”, with its deceitful, weasel language of “efficiency savings” (the BBC term for slashing public expenditure) and “hard choices” (the wilful destruction of the premises of civilised life in modern Britain).

“Austerity” is an invention. Britain is a rich country with a debt owed by its crooked banks, not its people. The resources that would comfortably fund the National Health Service have been stolen in broad daylight by the few allowed to avoid and evade billions in taxes.

Using a vocabulary of corporate euphemisms, the publicly-funded Health Service is being deliberately run down by free market fanatics, to justify its selling-off. The Labour Party of Jeremy Corbyn may appear to oppose this, but is it? The answer is very likely no. Little of any of this is alluded to in the media, let alone explained.

Edwards and Cromwell have dissected the 2012 Health and Social Care Act, whose innocuous title belies its dire consequences. Unknown to most of the population, the Act ends the legal obligation of British governments to provide universal free health care: the bedrock on which the NHS was set up following the Second World War. Private companies can now insinuate themselves into the NHS, piece by piece.

Where, asks Edwards and Cromwell, was the BBC while this momentous Bill was making its way through Parliament? With a statutory commitment to “providing a breadth of view” and to properly inform the public of “matters of public policy”, the BBC never spelt out the threat posed to one of the nation’s most cherished institutions. A BBC headline said: “Bill which gives power to GPs passes.” This was pure state propaganda.

There is a striking similarity with the BBC’s coverage of Prime Minister Tony Blair’s lawless invasion of Iraq in 2003, which left a million dead and many more dispossessed. A study by the University of Wales, Cardiff, found that the BBC reflected the government line “overwhelmingly” while relegating reports of civilian suffering. A Media Tenor study placed the BBC at the bottom of a league of western broadcasters in the time they gave to opponents of the invasion. The corporation’s much-vaunted “principle” of impartiality was never a consideration.

One of the most telling chapters in Propaganda Blitz describes the smear campaigns mounted by journalists against dissenters, political

mavericks and whistleblowers. The *Guardian*’s campaign against the WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is the most disturbing.

Assange, whose epic WikiLeaks disclosures brought fame, journalism prizes and largesse to the *Guardian*, was abandoned when he was no longer useful. He was then subjected to a vituperative – and cowardly – onslaught of a kind I have rarely known.

With not a penny going to WikiLeaks, a hyped *Guardian* book led to a lucrative Hollywood movie deal. The book’s authors, Luke Harding and David Leigh, gratuitously described Assange as a “damaged personality” and “callous”. They also disclosed the secret password he had given the paper in confidence, which was designed to protect a digital file containing the US embassy cables.

With Assange now trapped in the Ecuadorean embassy, Harding, standing among the police outside, gloated on his blog that “Scotland Yard may get the last laugh”.

The *Guardian* columnist Suzanne Moore wrote, “I bet Assange is stuffing himself full of flattened guinea pigs. He really is the most massive turd.”

Moore, who describes herself as a feminist, later complained that, after attacking Assange, she had suffered “vile abuse”. Edwards and Cromwell wrote to her: “That’s a real shame, sorry to hear that. But how would you describe calling someone ‘the most massive turd’? Vile abuse?”

Moore replied that no, she would not, adding, “I would advise you to stop being so bloody patronising.”

Her former *Guardian* colleague James Ball wrote, “It’s difficult to imagine what Ecuador’s London embassy smells like more than five and a half years after Julian Assange moved in.”

Such slow-witted viciousness appeared in a newspaper described by its editor, Katharine Viner, as “thoughtful and progressive”. What is the root of this vindictiveness? Is it jealousy, a perverse recognition that Assange has achieved more journalistic firsts than his snipers can claim in a lifetime? Is it that he refuses to be “one of us” and shames those who have long sold out

the independence of journalism?

Journalism students should study this to understand that the source of “fake news” is not only trollism, or the likes of Fox news, or Donald Trump, but a journalism self-anointed with a false respectability: a liberal journalism that claims to challenge corrupt state power but, in reality, courts and protects it, and colludes with it. The amorality of the years of Tony Blair, whom the **Guardian** has failed to rehabilitate, is its echo.

“[It is] an age in which people yearn for new ideas and fresh alternatives,” wrote Katharine Viner. Her political writer Jonathan Freedland dismissed the yearning of young people who supported the modest policies of Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn as “a form of narcissism”.

“How did this man...”, brayed the *Guardian*’s Zoe Williams, “get on the ballot in the first place?” A choir of the paper’s precocious windbags joined in, thereafter queuing to fall on their blunt swords when Corbyn came close to winning the 2017 general election in spite of the media.

Complex stories are reported to a cult-like formula of bias, hearsay and omission: Brexit, Venezuela, Russia, Syria. On Syria, only the investigations of a group of independent journalists have countered this, revealing the network of Anglo-American backing of jihadists in Syria, including those related to ISIS.

Supported by a “psyops” campaign funded by the British Foreign Office and the US Agency of International Aid, the aim is to hoodwink the Western public and speed the overthrow the government in Damascus, regardless of the medial alternative and the risk of war with Russia.

The Syria Campaign, set up by a New York PR agency, Purpose, funds a group known as the White Helmets, who claim falsely to be “Syria Civil Defence” and are seen uncritically on TV news and social media, apparently rescuing the victims of bombing, which they film and edit themselves, though viewers are unlikely to be told this. George Clooney is a fan.

The White Helmets are appendages to the jihadists with whom they share addresses. Their

media-smart uniforms and equipment are supplied by their Western paymasters. That their exploits are not questioned by major news organisations is an indication of how deep the influence of state-backed PR now runs in the media. As Robert Fisk noted recently, no “mainstream” reporter reports Syria, from Syria.

In what is known as a hatchet job, a *Guardian* reporter based in San Francisco, Olivia Solon, who has never visited Syria, was allowed to smear the substantiated investigative work of journalists Vanessa Beeley and Eva Bartlett on the White Helmets as “propagated online by a network of anti-imperialist activists, conspiracy theorists and trolls with the support of the Russian government”.

This abuse was published without permitting a single correction, let alone a right-of-reply. The *Guardian* Comment page was blocked, as Edwards and Cromwell document. I saw the list of questions Solon sent to Beeley, which reads like a McCarthyite charge sheet – “Have you ever been invited to North Korea?”

So much of the mainstream has descended to this level. Subjectivism is all; slogans and outrage are proof enough. What matters is the “perception”.

When he was US commander in Afghanistan, General David Petraeus declared what he called “a war of perception ... conducted continuously using the news media”. What really mattered was not the facts but the way the story played in the United States. The undeclared enemy was, as always, an informed and critical public at home.

Nothing has changed. In the 1970s, I met Leni Riefenstahl, Hitler’s film-maker, whose propaganda mesmerised the German public.

She told me the “messages” of her films were dependent not on “orders from above”, but on the “submissive void” of an uninformed public.

“Did that include the liberal, educated bourgeoisie?” I asked.

“Everyone,” she said. “Propaganda always wins, if you allow it.” **CT**

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John Pilger is one Britain’s best-known and most respected journalists and filmmakers. His web site is www.johnpilger.com

CHRIS HEDGES

Homeless in America

These men and women, and increasingly children, are the collateral damage of the corporate state, their dignity and lives destroyed by the massive transference of wealth upward

It is 8 a.m. I am in the small offices of *Street Roots*, a weekly newspaper in Portland, Oregon, that prints 10,000 copies per edition. Those who sell the newspaper on the streets – all of them victims of extreme poverty and half of them homeless – have gathered before heading out with their bundles to spend hours in the cold and rain.

“There is foot care on Mondays starting at 8 a.m. with the nurses”, Cole Merkel, the director of the vendor programme, shouts above the chatter. “If you need to get your feet taken care of, come in for the nurses’ foot care. Just a really quick shout-out and thank you to Leo and Nettie Johnson, who called up to City Hall this week to testify about the criminalisation of homelessness to City Council and the mayor. Super awesome”.

The men and women, most middle-aged or elderly, sit on folding chairs that hug the walls. They are wrapped in layers of worn and tattered clothing. Some cradle small dogs. Others cup their hands around disposable coffee cups and take small sips. The weekly newspaper was founded in 1998, and focuses on issues surrounding social and environmental justice as well as homelessness. It also reprints poems and artwork by the 180 vendors, who buy the paper for 25 cents a copy and sell it for a dollar.

On the walls there are poignant reminders of the lives these people lead, including posters of missing men and women, notices about where to find free food or clothing, and scattered one-page obituaries of those who died recently, many

discovered in parks or on sidewalks. The average age at death for a man is 51 and for a woman 43. Nearly half succumb to alcohol or drugs, 28 percent are hit by vehicles and 9 percent commit suicide. Life expectancy plummets once you become homeless. From 50 to 80 homeless people die on the streets of Portland every year, and many more in its hospitals.

“Monica needs a kidney”, reads one handwritten sign.

“Missing: Robert Gary Maricelli, not seen since Feb. 10, 11:00 pm”, reads another. Maricelli, 22, was last sighted near the Steel Bridge in Portland.

These men and women, and increasingly children, are the collateral damage of the corporate state, their dignity and lives destroyed by the massive transference of wealth upward, deindustrialisation and the slashing of federal investment in affordable housing begun during the Reagan administration. The lack of stable jobs that pay a living wage in the gig and temp economy, the collapse of mental health and medical services for the poor, and gentrification are turning America into a living hell for hundreds of thousands of its citizens. And this is just the start.

Though federal estimates put the nation’s homeless number at 554,000, most cities – including Portland, which officially has about 4,000 people without shelter – estimate the homeless, notoriously hard to count, to be at least three



STREET LIFE: Estimates of the homeless in America, notoriously hard to count, are thought to be at least three times higher than official estimates.

Photo: Pixabay.com

times higher. Portland schools, like most public schools throughout the country, are seeing growing homelessness among their students – 1,522 children in the Beaverton School District, or four percent of the total enrollment, and 1,509 in the Portland Public Schools, or three percent of total enrollment. The problem extends to many of Oregon's smallest towns. In Butte Falls (population 429 in 2010) in Jackson County, there are 56 homeless students, or 30 percent of the district's total enrollment. Many homeless students, because they often drift from one temporary space to another, never appear in the official statistics.

Half the country is probably only a few pay cheques away from being on the streets.

As we barrel toward another economic collapse, the suffering endured by those on the streets will become ever more familiar, especially with the corporate state intent on further reducing or eliminating social services in the name of austerity. Nothing will halt the down-

ward spiral other than sustained civil disobedience. The two ruling political parties are wedded to an economic system that serves the corporate rich and punishes and criminalises the poor and the working poor. Over half the country is probably only a few paycheques away from being on the streets.

This gritty section of Portland was once known as Nihonmachi or Japantown. The *Street Roots* newspaper is housed in the former Chitose Laundry. Across the street is the old *Oshu Nippo News*, the Japanese-language daily newspaper that was raided by the FBI on Dec. 7, 1941, when Pearl Harbor was attacked. It was shut down and its staff arrested. The neighbourhood's Japanese population was rounded up, stripped of all possessions and placed in concentration camps, part of the 120,000 Japanese-Americans, most from California and the Northwest, who were interned during the war. People who were only one-sixteenth Japanese were arrested. Sixty-two percent of those displaced by the internment

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order were US citizens. There were no credible reports of them being a security risk. It was a policy grounded in racism.

The Japanese community in Portland never resurrected itself after the war. The past crimes of the state merge, in the eyes of Kaia Sand, the executive director of Street Roots, with the present ones.

“Those families were rendered homeless and incarcerated by order of the federal government”, she says. “Their possessions were reduced to what fit in suitcases. Now, on these same streets, people also carry their bags and their sorrows without a home”.

Charles McPherson, 34, stands looking at the collection of recent obituaries posted on the wall near the front door. He was about two when his father died. In his senior year in high school he was taken hostage by an escaped convict and held for 12 hours during a standoff with police. He never went back to school.

“PTSD”, he says of his dropping out of school. “I could not be in crowds”.

He drifted from one short-term job to another. He lived for two years in an RV. He filed countless requests for housing but was turned down. By 2014 he was homeless.

I ask him what he finds hardest about being homeless.

“Not being able to get ahead”, he says. “Just barely keeping from losing everything we’ve got”.

Throughout the day I hear a lot about “losing everything”. Small piles of possessions, along with tents or tarps, precious to the homeless and very hard to procure, are confiscated during police sweeps. The victims find themselves standing in the rain in the middle of the night with nothing. The confiscated possessions are supposed to be stored by two subcontractors, Pacific Patrol Services and Rapid Response Bio Clean, for 30 days, but many on the streets say they never see their belongings again.

Leo Rhodes, 53, a Pima Indian, grew up in poverty on the Gila River Indian reservation south of Phoenix. He joined the Army when he was 19. When he returned from the Army after three years he started abusing drugs and alcohol. He

has been homeless, on and off, for 30 years. He has also been one of the most effective advocates for the homeless in Seattle and Portland. He helped found and organise the governance of two tent cities and a rest area in Portland where the homeless can sleep in 12-hour shifts in a safe environment called Right to Dream Too. He keeps notebooks full of his poetry. He divides the world into the “homeless and the non-homeless”.

He hands me one of his poems, published in *Street Roots*, titled “Being Human?” It reads:

*I am the voice you never hear
If I spoke would you listen?
I am the ugly duckling
Visible in your pretty little world
I am the criminal when I sleep
I am the nuisance
Trying to keep dry out of the rain
I am the homeless person
Looking for dignity and a safe secure place*

“The problem is that when you get a job and they find out you are homeless they fire you”, he says. “It does not matter if you are sober and a hard worker. As soon as your co-workers know you are homeless or formerly homeless they put this stigma on you. They think you are a drunk, a druggie, a criminal or mentally ill and can’t be trusted”.

The stress of living on the streets takes a toll on mental health and often pushes those who already have mental health issues over the edge.

“When you’re outside, any little noise, it is a real threat”, says Dan Newth, an Army veteran who says he tried to commit suicide in January 2015 by overdosing on prescription pills. “I’ve been kicked in the head when I was asleep. I’ve woken up to a beating from people I didn’t know. They’re just doing it because they see a homeless person there on the sidewalk. We try to hide when we sleep, get out of the way. I got my tent, sleeping bag, air mattress, and a pillow. It’s critical. When I don’t sleep for two days, I see things that aren’t there. I hear things that nobody said. And they’re negative. My hallucinations become very negative. Anybody who doesn’t sleep for a number of days is going to hallucinate. When you

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see someone on the street and they're going off for no reason, they're not getting enough sleep. They've dealt with so much negativity. It can be a look. Saying hello to somebody and you're ignored. All this stuff adds up. You blame yourself. Subconsciously, you start hating yourself. Even though you are trying to think, you start blaming things in every direction. You will react to people who aren't necessarily there to hurt you. But you feel everybody is. It's overwhelming".

"You jump all these hoops", he says of the city's social services. "And then they exclude you and you don't know why. They don't let you get into housing. You never know why. You just get frustrated. Portland needs another MSW [master of social work] like they need another panhandler. The money goes to the salaried people. They keep making their money. And they will use up a homeless person's energy, jumping through the hoops, going to meetings with this person, going to that meeting, all this stuff. We're exhausted most of the time. At the end, you're still homeless. In some ways, MSWs are like vampires. I don't like the way the system is set up. I avoid it. I sleep outside. I sell *Street Roots*. I meet my needs the best I can".

Jasmine Rosado, 39, works periodically as a stripper. She is currently in subsidised housing, where she pays \$530 a month for a studio apartment. Her only child, a 24-year-old son, Darius, is in the Army in Syria. She has not seen him in over four years. When she mentions his name her eyes well up.

"It's been very hard on me", she admits. "I love him a lot. There's nothing we can do. He's in God's hands".

She studied music and dance at the University of Oregon and plays the violin and cello. Her instruments are in storage.

"The strip club owners are very tight knit", she said of her employers. "If they have a problem with a girl, they will call around and you won't get a job anywhere".

Art Garcia, 71, sits holding his five-pound dog on his lap.

"Migo", he says when I ask the dog's name. "Like Amigo without the A. It's a Chihuahua. I've

had Migo for four years. I got him when he was a little over 9 months old from the shelter. My best friend. This guy has really helped me a lot. I have anxiety disorder. Around a lot of people I can't breathe. He calms me down a lot. He helps a lot. Sometimes he'll wake me up at night if I have an attack or something. In my sleep, my breathing changes".

*"All these people shooting at you.
You didn't know if you were
going to live or die"*

Garcia was raised in an abusive home and later an orphanage. When he graduated from high school in 1966 he joined the Marine Corps and was sent to Vietnam. He was 19. He fought at Da Nang during the Tet Offensive.

"People were dying all around us", he says. "It was like a movie. Getting blown up. Killed our own man in the bathroom who was hiding in there. We didn't know who it was. The lieutenant yelled, 'If you're an American come out.' He was scared. He took his chances and hid in there. We just levelled it. Shot. Killed our own man".

"I was as scared as I'd ever been", he says of the war. "All these people shooting at you. That's when I started my drug habit. You didn't know if you were going to live or die. Heroin. At first, I was taking speed. We worked seven days a week. Got no days off. Couldn't stay awake. Got some liquid speed, the guy said, 'Here take this, it will keep you awake.' It got us all wired to stay awake. But then you couldn't go to sleep. So, I got heroin to go to sleep. But after you use that you get all strung out".

He returned from the war a heroin addict with no home. He slipped in and out of homelessness and was often in prison. He worked odd jobs in construction. He has been clean for a decade and is on methadone. He self-published two books. The one about the war is called "Sitting on the Edge". The one about returning home as an addict is called "Falling Off the Edge".

"I missed 10 Christmases in a row for going to prison", he says. "Going for three years, getting out for a month, going back. Being out for a couple of weeks, going back. Selling drugs. Robbing

people for drugs. All drug-related. I spent a lot of years in there. I was on parole for a lot of years. I went to fire camp in California. During a fire, we'd make \$1 an hour. That was really good".

In 2012 Garcia received a monetary settlement from a class-action lawsuit stemming from the military's use of Agent Orange, which damaged his heart and mobility. He gave *Street Roots* a \$10,000 check and used the rest of the money to find a place to live and help out relatives.

*"We would walk the streets
in our wet clothes carrying
our wet things"*

Rhodes takes me around the city. He laconically remembers being beaten in parks, forced off street corners and wakened in the middle of the night by police and told to move.

"You want to know what it is like to be homeless?" he asks. "Set your alarm clock to go off every two hours, pick up everything around you and walk for a few blocks to find another place to sleep".

"We used to sleep on that loading dock", he says, pointing to a warehouse. "Then the owners started turning on the sprinklers at 3 a.m. We got soaked. We would walk the streets in our wet clothes carrying our wet things".

Rhodes said that even when homeless people find a place to live inside it is often difficult to sever themselves from the community of other homeless people.

"I have voluntarily gone back out on the street a few times", he says. "I missed my friends, the good times, the bad times. You feel guilty for leaving them behind. And I am a homeless advocate. These are my people".

He is carrying a child's umbrella with a wooden handle shaped like a duck's head. In 2009 he was in the rain trying to sell *Street Roots* outside a Panera Bread restaurant when a passerby handed it to him. He calls it Ducky.

"It's like my security blanket", he says. "Ducky has been everywhere with me, in the heat, the rain, the freezing cold. He's been with me when the rent-a-cops threw us out of doorways where we were sleeping. I say to Ducky, 'Don't worry,

one day we will have a place. One day we'll be inside.' When you are homeless, when you are abandoned, you need something like Ducky. It is why you will see homeless people with dolls or pets. And it's why they talk to them. It helps us deal with the negativity, all those in society who shun us".

Rhodes, affable and articulate, regales me with tales of life on the street, the repeated and exhausting efforts to create small communities and the sudden "sweeps" by the police that shatter them.

"I was in a tent city, it was our second move", he says. "It was right next to a freeway. Traffic was always going by. People honking their horn even at nighttime. Diesels going by. It took us literally three days to acclimate ourselves to that loud noise. You know who was sleeping there because they all had big puffy eyes. Couldn't sleep because of the noise. But after three days we started sleeping really well. The next place we went to, it was quiet. The only noise there was just a rooster or crow. Every two hours. When we went to the first place, people said, 'Man, I can't sleep here, it's too noisy.' Then they settle down. At the next place they said, 'Man, I can't sleep here, it's too quiet. I gotta have some noise!'"

He laughs.

In his poem "Excuse Me if I Don't Cry" he writes:

*Excuse me if I don't cry
I'm putting on my game face
The world is big
And they don't understand
So, I will fight till the world understands
Or till I'm too tired to fight
Until then
Excuse me if I don't cry
I'm putting on my game face
Rest in Peace
My brothers and sisters*

CT

Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, a New York Times best-selling author, a professor in the college degree programme offered to New Jersey state prisoners by Rutgers University, and an ordained. This article first appeared at www.newsdig.com

ColdType Insights

- STACY BANNERMAN
- RICK SALUTIN
- SAM PIZZIGATI
- CLAUDINE VAN HENBERGEN
- MICHAEL PARENTI



TRIBUTE: Folded American flag is held by a marine at a military funeral.

Photo: Gunnery Sgt. Mark Oliva

Enough folded flags, say military families

A nation that doesn't remember the people sent to fight has no business sending more, writes **Stacy Bannerman**

YOU'D hardly know it from the news, but the US has been continuously at war in Afghanistan since 2001. The war quietly turned 17 on October 7.

Unfortunately, America's amnesia didn't prevent Command Sergeant Major Tim Bolyard from being killed in Afghanistan in early September during his eighth combat tour and 13th deployment. Eight combat tours – which should be illegal – sent

Bolyard down-range repeatedly in a war President Obama purportedly ended over three years ago; a war this country forgot long before that.

A nation that doesn't remember the men and women sent to fight on its behalf has no business whatsoever sending more. And a democracy that spends more time debating kneeling before the flag than the justification for issuing folded ones desperately needs to get re-

acquainted with the Constitution – and its moral compass.

Our loved ones didn't sign up to serve a president. They signed up to serve the American people, most of whom have no idea what they're fighting for. I don't know, either. Nor do any of the other 4,000-plus members of Military Families Speak Out (MFSO).

We all have spouses, parents, partners, siblings, and children who've served in the post-9/11 era. Founded in 2002 by two military families to oppose the invasion of Iraq, our loved ones are still serving there and in Afghanistan.

We've spent more than a decade-and-a-half burying children, grieving parents, mourning spouses and siblings, and caring for wounded warriors. We have no more loved ones left to give.

Shame on a country that continues to take our troops to wars long declared done, squandering their service and absolving the collective conscience with two words: "They volunteered".

The fact that soldiers wear the uniform by choice shouldn't permit "the American people and their elected representatives to be indifferent about the war in Afghanistan", retired Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry told the *New York Times*.

The former commander of US troops in Afghanistan added:

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“We continue to fight simply because we are there”.

That “we” is a miniscule one percent of the population that’s paying the human cost of this country’s check for war – the democratic equivalent of a dine-and-dash. The body count for US troops in Afghanistan is 2,414, plus more than 20,000 injured. Those figures rise into the hundreds of thousands for Afghan soldiers and civilians.

Then there’s the financial cost: Over \$1-trillion, according to TheBalance.com. Even so, Congress has repeatedly cut taxes, especially for the rich, since the wars began. Our fiscal policy is one of kicking the can down the road to future generations, who are paying enough already for fossil-fuelled climate change.

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Sixteen of the 17 hottest years on record have occurred since 2001. The massive carbon footprint generated by armed forces in combat zones, a primary institutional driver of global warming, ensures that these

endless wars will end up costing everyone.

Our troops and families of veterans pay the price every day. Before our loved ones returned from their first tours, we were told “Combat is a one-way door: Once you walk through it, you can never go back”.

“It is time for this war in Afghanistan to end”, said General John W. Nicholson recently, as he was preparing to leave the country for the last time. Nicholson had spent a total of 31 months – four tours – in Afghanistan as the commander in charge of a shape-shifting mission. Support the troops, America: Bring them home now. Enough folded flags. **CT**

Stacy Bannerman is the author of Homefront 911 (2015). She’s leading the Heart2Heart Tour – www.heart2hearttour.org with Military Families Speak Out, which is calling for an end to America’s longest war. This article is distributed by www.OtherWords.org.

States. Zinn says it’s always one step forward, two back.

So does progress happen? For native peoples, it’s been pretty retrograde during the 500 years since Columbus. But as someone else said, they tend to have a less linear notion of time than we newcomers. If you relax the grid, you can go backward and forward simultaneously, or weave around. As Peter Capaldi said in his final episode as Doctor Who, just before regenerating into Jodi Whittaker (which counts as progress in the conventional sense): “Silly old universe. The more I save it the more it needs saving”. The Doctor (in Doctor Who) is of course a non-linear Time Lord.

For most of us the linear model is deeply embedded. We watch history as we watch sports: our team moves ahead or falls back. Drew Brees set an NFL record for passing and the crowd was deeply moved. They weren’t just there to see their team win, they wanted to be part of a historical leap forward.

Today’s regressive feels so depressive partly due to the proud ignorance that accompanies it. Economist Karl Polanyi wrote *The Great Transformation* in 1944 on how policy makers had finally learned that capitalism must be subdued through public action for everyone’s sake. But Ontario Premier Doug Ford says, “We’ve taken Kathleen Wynne’s hand out of your pocket and we’re going to take Justin Trudeau’s” out,

Where do progressives go in regressive times?

How to cope with the feeling that the end is probably nigher than we think? Go into Time Lord mode, writes **Rick Salutin**

WAS thinking, during this month’s fine weather, about the idea of progress, since so much of the past two years has seemed like a regression to

the economics of the 1920s and politics of the 1930s. A neighbour passing the porch said she’d been reading Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United*

too. That amounts to saying we're taking your own hand out of your pocket, since how else could society adequately fund schools, hospitals or food safety, except by pooling (through taxation) everyone's resources?

The encouragement of political thuggery and violence at Trump rallies, etc, also mirrors fascist fashions of the 30s. Saudi Arabia lured a critic into its Turkish embassy recently, where a security team apparently killed and dismembered him, then trundled him off in boxes. Mussolini would've loved it.

The regression of this moment though, has unique wrinkles. Anthony Powell wrote in his multi-volume *A Dance to the Music of Time* about optimism after World War One: "The illusion of universal relief that belonged to that historical period: of war being, surprisingly, at an end: of the imminence of 'a good time'..." Powell (a conservative High Tory) disdained "progress" as a spurious notion that came and went. The dance of time continued. But progress matters even more if potential extinction becomes an alternative, as it has now has.

That's down to the usual suspects. I try to avoid keeping up with the latest climate disaster scientific reports and hasten on to sports news. But once in a while I steel myself. This month's study by the UN's panel on climate change is the direst yet, and our "window" for turnaround – only 12 years

– keeps shrinking.

Then there's our longtime companion, nuclear terror. By sheer dumb luck humankind made it through the Cold War without a catastrophe. The odds were heavily opposed. This month, as past nuclear treaties head toward expiration and new, uncovered types of missiles start coming online, Russia's deputy foreign minister said, "We have a situation that is much worse than even during the most heated moments, or rather the coldest, of the past". The US's NATO ambassador said they'd "take out" any new missiles if Russia doesn't back off.

That's why an old term, nihilism, has new currency, as Matt Taibbi writes in *Rolling Stone*.

Leaders like Trump, Ford and Brazil's imminent Bolsanaro are blithely demolishing institutions like governments and treaties which held the line not just on chaos or destitution, but at this point on human survival itself.

A friend who's nearing the end of his own life cycle recently told me he's certain our species won't survive. Yet he's spent much of his life fighting for a better, progressive world. He sounded like the Doctor, who's never reluctant to contradict him/her/itself. Maybe the trick is to go into Time Lord mode. **CT**

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Rick Salutin is a freelance columnist and commentator based in Toronto. This article was first published in the Toronto Star.

Nostalgia for NAFTA? Rich will have plenty

Over the last 25 years, NAFTA has created an incredibly rich-people-friendly economic order, writes **Sam Pizzigati**

NAFTA will soon be no more. The Trump administration has a new trade deal with Canada and Mexico – and a new name for the North American trade order.

Trade union and other fair-trade experts are now parsing the details of the new Trump agreement, and we don't yet have a full sense of exactly how this new "USMCA" – the plod-

ding shorthand for "United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement" – will play out politically over the next few months.

But we do know, no matter what happens with the new deal, that America's most wealthy will always look back fondly at NAFTA's 25-year run. For America's richest – and the most financially favoured of Canada and Mexico as well – NAFTA has been the gift that never

Insights

stopped giving.

The NAFTA quarter-century, simply put, may well go down in history as the most lucrative quarter-century North America's privileged have ever experienced.

Forbes magazine has just delivered the most up-to-date evidence of just how lucrative – for our wealthiest – the last 25 years have been. That evidence comes from the latest *Forbes* annual list of America's 400 richest. Put this new list in a bit of historic perspective, and the picture we see would thrill even the most jaded of deep pockets.

In 1992, the year before Congress gave NAFTA the green light, America's richest had to hold a personal fortune worth at least \$373.7-million to make it into the lofty ranks of the *Forbes* 400.

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To enter the just-announced *Forbes* 400 list for 2018, an American deep pocket needs at least \$2.1-billion.

Back in 1992, the richest American on the *Forbes* list – Bill Gates – had a personal fortune worth \$6.3-billion. The richest single individual on the new *Forbes* list? Amazon's Jeff Bezos. He's sitting on a fortune worth \$160-billion.

Adjust these numbers for inflation, and the results still come across as staggering. Over the past quarter-century, after taking inflation into account, the real net worth of America's richest single individual has tripled and then more than quadrupled,



\$160-MILLION MAN: Jeff Bezos.

rising 13.9 times in all.

The average *Forbes* 400 fortune over that same span, meanwhile, has doubled, then tripled – all at a time when average wages in the United States have generally stagnated.

Could America's rich keep piling up riches at the rate of the last 25 years over the next 25 years? Hard to see how. If the NAFTA-era rate of wealth accumulation did somehow hold, the nation's grandest personal fortune a quarter-century from now would total an unimaginable \$2.2-trillion.

Other factors besides NAFTA, of course, have been concentrating North America's income and wealth since the mid 1990s. But NAFTA has powerfully shaped our overall economic and political environment.

NAFTA, as a *Public Citizen* analysis noted earlier this year, has relentlessly “placed downward pressure on wages for the middle and lower economic classes by forcing decently paid US manufacturing workers to compete with imports made by poorly paid workers abroad”.

NAFTA also let US agribusi-

ness interests dump subsidised corn into Mexico, and small Mexican farmers could not compete. Mexico would haemorrhage 900,000 farming jobs in the deal's first decade alone. Those lost jobs devastated rural Mexican communities – and generated a huge spike of emigration into the United States. US employers took full advantage, depressing wages even more.

We're still feeling the political fallout from that depression. Faux “populists” led by Donald Trump have parlayed frustrations over NAFTA-induced economic insecurity into ballot-box triumphs that have served only to enrich our richest. The wealthy have done just swell since President Trump's inauguration.

In fact, *Forbes* ever so thoughtfully points out, the United States now hosts 204 billionaires not “wealthy enough to crack the club” – the *Forbes* 400 – that has become America's most exclusive.

NAFTA's initial cheerleaders promised us prosperity. For the already prosperous, they delivered. **CT**

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Sam Pizzigati co-edits *Inequality.org*. His latest book, *The Case for a Maximum Wage*, has just been published. Among his other books on maldistributed income and wealth: *The Rich Don't Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class, 1900-1970*

Writing obscenity: Chatterley to Rochester

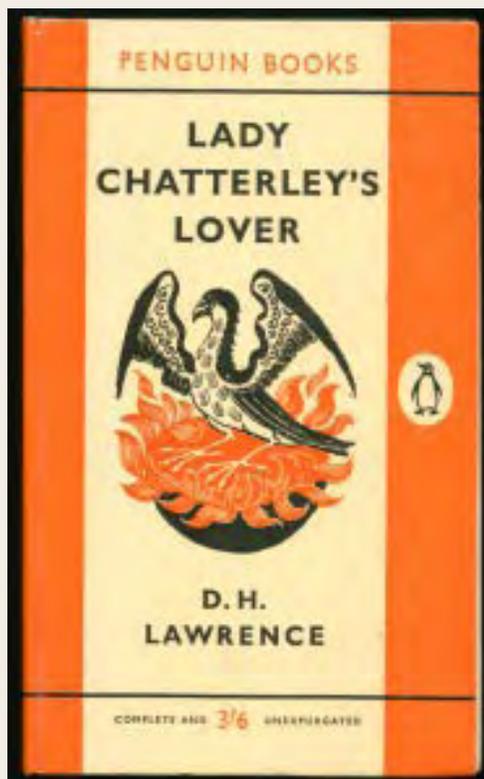
Obscenity might not make for comfortable reading, but that's often its whole point, writes **Claudine van Hensbergen**

THE judge's copy of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* used in the landmark 1960 obscenity trial of DH

Lawrence's famous novel is to be sold at auction this month. The paperback copy will be sold with a fabric bag, hand-stitched by the judge's wife Lady Dorothy Byrne so that her husband could carry the book into court each day while keeping it hidden from reporters. The lot includes the notes on significant passages that Lady Byrne had helpfully marked up on the book for her husband, and a four-page list of references she had compiled on the headed stationery of the Central Criminal Court.

After six days of evidence and only three hours of deliberations, the jury found in the favour of Penguin Books, its verdict allowing the publisher to print copies of the novel for the first time. The trial was seen as a victory for liberal ideas over the old establishment. In literary terms, it signalled the opportunity for authors to write with a new type of language and freedom.

But was Lawrence really the



UNBANNED: First edition of DH Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 1960.

first writer to use obscenity in literature? And were liberal readers of the 1960s the first to appreciate the literary potential of obscene words and sex scenes? In short, the answer is 'no'. The literary world which Lawrence and his fellow modernist writers inherited was that of the Victorian establishment. An establishment that had silenced earlier writers who, like

Lawrence, used obscenity for literary ends.

One of the most important writers to be wiped from the publishing record during the 19th-century was the poet John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester. Even today, we continue to find the obscene language and images found in Rochester's poetry shocking. Take, for example, his *A Satyr on Charles II* a critique of the monarch as a man governed by his penis:

*'Tis sure the sauciest prick
that e'er did swive,
The proudest, peremptoriest
prick alive.
Though safety, law, religion,
life lay on 't,
'Twould break through all to
make its way to cunt.
Restless he rolls about from
whore to whore,
A merry monarch, scandalous
and poor.*

Following his death in 1680 publishers scrambled to produce editions of Rochester's poems – correctly perceiving the public appetite for his verse. An initial run of pirate editions of Rochester's poetry was quickly supplanted with an authoritative collection, produced in 1691 by the leading literary publisher of the day, Jacob Tonson. Tonson is credited with popularising John Milton's (up to that point, fairly unsuccessful) poem *Paradise Lost* and also producing the first footnoted editions of William Shakespeare's collected plays.

So why did a respectable publisher such as Tonson take the

Insights

gamble of printing Rochester's verse? The answer lies in the recognition of Rochester's poetry as literature rather than obscenity. Just as with *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, we need to read past the obscene language and images of the work to understand what Rochester is really saying.

Rochester is a poet of the human condition. He strips man down to his barest drives and desires to see the animal lurking underneath. In this way, he was much like the contemporary philosopher Thomas Hobbes, who famously pronounced that life was "nasty, brutish and short" and that underneath it all man was a beast like any other.

50 **F**or Rochester, the sexual realm is just another place where we see (and feel) this stark reality. Rochester strips away all sense of love and romance from his depicted sexual encounters. And there are many of them. His images are those of the mechanics of sex, its failures, disappointments and disease. Take his notorious poem, *The Imperfect Enjoyment*, a work that opens with a scene indicating the sexual promise to come:

*Naked she lay, clasped in my
longing arms,
I filled with love, and she all
over charms ...*

*Quickly, this promise is de-
stroyed. The poem's speaker
prematurely ejaculates:*

But whilst her busy hand

*would guide that part
Which should convey my soul
up to her heart,
In liquid raptures I dissolve
all o'er,
Melt into sperm, and spend at
every pore. A touch from any
part of her had done 't: Her
hand, her foot, her very look's
a cunt.*

The speaker's lover encourages him to try again, but to no success:

*Trembling, confused, despair-
ing, limber, dry,
A wishing, weak, unmoving
lump I lie.*

The obscene language Rochester employs in *The Imperfect Enjoyment* – and the sexual act on which it focuses – led generations of readers to view the work as pornographic. But this is to misread the poem. The clue is in the title: the poem portrays the ultimate failure of desire. The emptiness of human experience. And its cold, clinical and obscene language (sperm, spend, pore, cunt) is contrasted throughout the poem with phrases that point to the scene's absent romance (the sexual act "should convey my soul up to her heart", but it doesn't).

Rochester is often seen as a dangerous or obscene writer in the way he glamorised the licentious world of the Restoration court. But when we read his poetry more closely, we find little glamour in the language expressed. His verse exposes human feeling and behaviour,

showing the superficiality of our social world with all its polite manners and codes of behaviour. And the use of obscene language is key to that project. As Rochester succinctly phrased it in his correspondence, "Expressions must descend to the Nature of Things express'd".

The Victorians couldn't cope with Rochester's poetry, and there were no editions of his work published in the 19th century. It wasn't until 1963, in the wake of the Chatterley trial, that American scholar David M. Vieth began work on a modern uncensored edition.

Vieth gave us back the real Rochester and made it possible for readers to access his poems once again.

Obscenity might not make for comfortable reading, but that's often its point. The purpose of literature is to make us feel, and to give us new ways of experiencing and thinking about the world around us. For Lawrence this involved using a new language that cut across class and gender in celebrating the sexual act – for Rochester it involved looking into the mirror and confronting the beast within. **CT**

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This article was first published
at www.theconversation.com

How the commies always got it wrong!

An excerpt from Chapter 3 of **Michael Parenti's** book, *Blackshirts and Reds: Rational Fascism and the Overthrow of Communism* (City Light Books, San Francisco, 1997)

In the United States, for over a hundred years, the ruling interests tirelessly propagated anticommunism among the populace, until it became more like a religious orthodoxy than a political analysis.

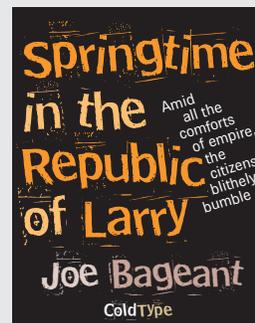
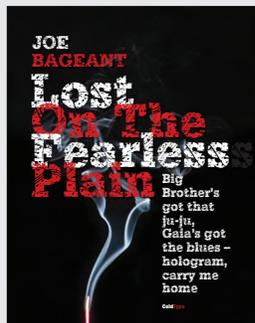
During the Cold War, the anticommunist ideological framework could transform any data about existing communist societies into hostile evidence. If the Soviets refused to negotiate a point, they were intransigent and belligerent; if they appeared willing to make concessions, this was but a skillful ploy to put us off our guard. By

opposing arms limitations, they would have demonstrated their aggressive intent; but when in fact they supported most armament treaties, it was because they were mendacious and manipulative. If the churches in the USSR were empty, this demonstrated that religion was suppressed; but if the churches were full, this meant the people were rejecting the regime's atheistic ideology. If the workers went on strike (as happened on infrequent occasions), this was evidence of their alienation from the collectivist system; if they didn't go on strike, this

was because they were intimidated and lacked freedom. A scarcity of consumer goods demonstrated the failure of the economic system; an improvement in consumer supplies meant only that the leaders were attempting to placate a restive population and so maintain a firmer hold over them.

If communists in the United States played an important role struggling for the rights of workers, the poor, African-Americans, women, and others, this was only their guileful way of gathering support among disfranchised groups and gaining power for themselves. How one gained power by fighting for the rights of powerless groups was never explained. What we are dealing with is a nonfalsifiable orthodoxy, so assiduously marketed by the ruling interests that it affected people across the entire political spectrum. **CT**

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