

ISRAEL GIVES JEWS A BAD NAME | DANNY SCHECHTER
BERLIN WALL AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES | RAY McGOVERN
THE REAL SHAME OF AMERICAN CULTURE | STACEY WARDE

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 89

BESIDE THE SEA

BLACKPOOL, ENGLAND: A dirty great whorl of debauchery, licentiousness, laughter, vomit, furry handcuffs, fancy dress and drunken oblivion. Marauding packs of brides and grooms, on a mission to consume dangerous, liver-crushing levels of alcohol
– 8-Pages of photographs from a new book by Dougie Wallace



PLUS GEORGE MONBIOT ● PEPE ESCOBAR ● MARK METCALF ● WILLIAM BLUM ● RICHARD PITHOUSE ● NATE ROBERT ● AHRON BREGMAN ● SHIR HEVER ● JP SOTTILE ● LINH DINH



Cover Photo : Dougie Wallace, from his book, "Stags, Hens & Bunnies" – See Page 32

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Energy ballet

Pepe Escobar wonders who'll win the latest 'great game' as Iran, Russia, the US and EU get to grips with the future of 'Pipelineistan'

A fascinating nuclear/energy ballet involving Iran, Russia, the US and the EU is bound to determine much of what happens next in the new great game in Eurasia.

Let's start with what's going on with the Iranian nuclear dossier.

Iranian Foreign Ministry legal adviser Jamshid Momtaz has been forced to clarify that the interim nuclear deal signed by Iran and the P-5+1 nations on November 2013 is not an international treaty – yet.

As we stand, the gap between the US, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany on one side, and Iran on the other side, remains very wide. Essentially, the gap that really matters is between Washington and Tehran. And that, unfortunately, translates as a few more months for the vast sabotage brigade – from US neo-cons and assorted warmongers to Israel and the House of Saud – to force the deal to collapse.

One of Washington's sabotage mantras is "breakout capability"; a dodgy concept which boils down to total centrifuge capacity/capability to produce enough enriched uranium for a single nuclear bomb. This implies an arbitrary limit on Iran's capacity to enrich uranium.

The other sabotage mantra forces Iran to shut down the whole of its uranium enrichment program, and on top of it negotiate on its missiles. That's preposterous; missiles are

part of conventional armed forces. Washington in this instance is changing the subject to missiles that might carry the nuclear warheads that Iran does not have. So they should also be banned.

Moscow and Beijing see "breakout capability" for what it is; a manufactured issue. While Washington says it wants a deal, Moscow and Beijing do want a deal – stressing it can be respected via strict monitoring.

Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini has established his red line on the record, so there should be no misunderstanding; the final nuclear deal must preserve Tehran's legitimate right to enrich uranium – on an industrial scale – as part of a long-term energy policy. This is what Iranian negotiators have been saying from the beginning. So shutting down uranium enrichment is a non-starter.

Sanction me baby one more time

Uranium enrichment, predictably, is the key to the riddle. As it stands, Tehran now has more than 19,000 installed enrichment centrifuges. Washington wants it reduced to a few thousand. Needless to add, Israel – which has over 200 nuclear warheads and the missiles to bomb Iran, the whole thing acquired through espionage and illegal arms deals – presses for zero enrichment.

In parallel undercurrents, we still have the usual US/Israeli "experts" predicting that Iran can produce a bomb in two to three months

As it stands, Tehran now has more than 19,000 installed enrichment centrifuges. Washington wants it reduced to a few thousand

NUCLEAR DIPLOMACY

Washington is faking it full-time that Israel is not a nuclear-armed power, while trying to convince the whole planet it is entitled to amass as many weapons as it wants, while Iran is not allowed to even have conventional means to defend itself

while blasting Tehran for “roadblocks” defending its “illicit” nuclear program. At least US National Security Adviser Susan Rice has momentarily shut up.

Another key contention point is the Arak heavy-water research reactor. Washington wants it scrapped – or converted into a light-water plant. Tehran refuses, arguing the reactor would only produce isotopes for medicine and agriculture.

And then there’s the sanctions hysteria. The UN and the US have been surfing a sanction tidal wave since 2006. Tehran initially wanted those heavy sanctions which amount to economic war lifted as soon as possible; then it settled for a progressive approach. Obama might be able to lift some sanctions – but a US Congress remote-controlled by Tel Aviv will try to keep others for eternity.

Here, with plenty of caveats is a somewhat detailed defense of a good deal compared to what may lead towards an apocalyptic road to war. Assuming there is a deal, a crucial point is how long it will last. Washington wants it to be two decades. Tehran wants five years – and then it should be treated like any other signatory to the 189-nation Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) - which allows non-nuclear weapons states to develop nuclear energy for civilian purposes. For an enlightened Iranian perspective, see here.

It’s a tragicomedy, really. Washington plays The Great Pretender, faking it full-time that Israel is not a nuclear-armed power while trying to convince the whole planet Israel is entitled to amass as many weapons as it wants while Iran is not allowed to even have conventional means to defend itself. Not to mention that nuclear-armed Israel has threatened and invaded virtually all of its neighbors, while Iran has invaded nothing.

Dance to the energy ballet

As harsh as they really are, sanctions did not force Tehran to kneel and submit. Khomeini has repeatedly said he’s not optimistic about a nuclear deal. What he really wants, much more than a deal, is an improved

economy. Now, with the sanctions cracking after the initial Geneva agreement, there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Enter turbo-charged Russia-Iran negotiations. They include a power deal worth up to \$10 billion, including new thermal and hydro-electric plants and a transmission network.

And of course the oil-for-goods swap according to which Russia may buy 500,000 barrels of Iranian oil a day. Details are to be finalized in early September. No wonder Washington is fuming; this deal should propel Iran’s oil exports over one million barrels a day, something that was initially agreed upon in Geneva.

With Russia now also under US and EU sanctions, predictably Tehran had to start openly courting Europe as the ideal alternative source of natural gas. I have been writing about this for years now. Europe is desperate to diversify from Gazprom. Iran has all it takes to sell gas to Europe transiting especially via Turkey. Yet there are so many political and logistical roadblocks – starting with the necessity of a final nuclear deal – which this is an extremely long-term scenario at best.

The energy ballet involving Iran, Russia, the EU and the US is worthy of a geopolitical neo-Stravinsky. Tehran is careful not to antagonize Moscow – the largest supplier of natural gas to Europe. But Tehran also knows that with US-Iran possibly entering a détente, the EU will go for broke to seduce and invest in Iran.

Iranian Deputy Oil Minister for International and Trade Affairs Ali Majedi definitely has seen which way the wind is blowing. He is already talking about three different routes Tehran could use for its energy exports to the West. According to the BP Statistical Review of World Energy, Iran’s proven natural gas reserves are at a whopping 33.6 trillion cubic meters, while Russia’s are at 32.9 trillion cubic meters. Talk about two powerhouses.

The problem is Iran is way behind Russia in investment and production. A few years ago, in Tehran, energy experts measured it for me at \$200 billion needed to upgrade the

industry and invest in domestic transport and export infrastructure.

So, realistically, Russia will remain the key gas supplier to the EU in the foreseeable future, predominating over the strategic value of Iranian and Central Asian gas. And that includes the fact that plenty of EU nations, despite non-stop political shenanigans in Brussels, support the construction of the Russia-favored South Stream pipeline.

Tehran, though, is now in the game - already attracting a host of prospective, powerful foreign investors from Europe and Asia. A recent international oil, gas, refining and petrochemicals exhibition in Tehran attracted no less than 600 foreign companies from 32 countries.

We got it all covered

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht Ravanchi - part of the nuclear negotiating team - has been positively ecstatic lately; "Naturally Iran and Europe could have much better cooperation on the economy, trade, and energy. We believe there is much room for improvement." But it was Iran's Deputy Oil Minister Ali Mejidi who went a colossal step further - resuscitating the moribund Nabucco pipeline; "With Nabucco, Iran can provide Europe with gas. We are the best alternative to Russia."

Nabucco, a "Pipelineistan" saga I have followed in detail, was all about a pipeline to Europe via Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Austria filled with sometimes Azerbaijani, sometimes Iraqi gas, before it spectacularly floundered for lack of investment.

Does that mean Iran is picking an energy war with Russia? Not really. Nabucco is a major, expensive "if", and extremely long-term. South Stream, although momentarily stalled, is ready to go.

What happened in the shadows is that Washington let it be known to Tehran that if the \$10 billion Iran-Iraq-Syria gas pipeline was dropped, the sanctions would be somewhat relaxed, and Iran could have the go-ahead to revive Nabucco, a US-supported European

obsession and formerly fierce rival of South Stream.

Yet talk is cheap. As it stands, there is a larger probability of Iran-Iraq-Syria finding financing within the next two to three years than Nabucco. In parallel, as much as the US and EU sanctions on Russia are strengthening Iran in the nuclear talks, especially towards the Europeans, this does not mean Tehran will overplay the Russia card. As much as Iranian negotiators are relishing the new plot twist, the overall Iranian policy is in fact closer bilateral ties with Moscow to crack those sanctions on Iran for good.

And if Washington decides to keep the sanctions forever, Plan B is at hand: even closer Iranian cooperation with both Russia and China. Not accidentally Iranian President Rouhani has dismissed any alarm about Iran-Russia relations; "Strong political ties in bilateral, regional and international domains, along with vast economic relations between the two countries, set the stage for the promotion of peace and stability." This includes everything from the Bank of China's parallel system to pay for Iranian energy to Iran-Russia barter deals.

In many overlapping ways, the Iranian nuclear dossier now is like a hall of mirrors. It reflects an unstated Washington dream; unfettered access for US corporations to a virgin market of 77 million, including a well-educated young urban population, plus an energy bonanza for US Big Oil. But in the hall of mirrors there's also the Iranian projection - as in fulfilling its destiny as the top geopolitical power in Southwest Asia, the ultimate crossroads between East and West.

So in a sense the Supreme Leader has it all covered. If Rouhani shines and there is a final nuclear deal, the economic scenario will vastly improve, especially via massive European investment. If Washington scotches the deal over pressure from the usual lobbies, Tehran can always say it exercised all of its "heroic flexibility," and move on - as in closer and closer integration with both Russia and China.

Washington let it be known to Tehran that if the \$10 billion Iran-Iraq-Syria gas pipeline was dropped, the sanctions would be somewhat relaxed

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CT

The Berlin Wall and missed opportunities

Ray McGovern looks back to a time when the credibility of the US military and media was higher than it is today

For skeptics who saw little difference between East and West, John Kennedy famously advised, "Let them come to Berlin"

Which President to believe on Ukraine: Obama or Putin? Which top diplomat: Kerry or Lavrov? Which country is more to be trusted: USA or Russia?

For the first half of my adult life, "USA" was the instinctive answer – one that seemed undergirded by real-life evidence, not simply blind patriotism. Now, white hats and black hats have merged into a drab gray; in fact, at times the hats seem to have switched heads, as inconvenient reality shatters instincts and preconceptions. And, as Aldous Huxley once put it, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you mad."

To cite a small but telling example, is it really being "sanctimonious," as President Barack Obama would have us believe, to think that those who ordered and implemented torture in our name should be held accountable? It was not always thus.

I have lived through a lot of war and not enough peace in my 75 years. I was born on the day that Stalin and Hitler formally agreed to carve up Poland, a week before German tanks invaded that country. Yet, by far the saddest sequence of events during the second half of my adult life began 25 years ago, when the fall of the Berlin Wall brought with it a genuine opportunity for peace in a Europe "whole and free."

That is how then-President George H. W.

Bush foresaw the implications of that epochal event. But, as has now become abundantly clear, that opportunity was squandered by those preferring a divided Europe and the perceived advantages of continuing to marginalize Russia as a preternatural, perpetual *bête noire*.

The current hysteria around Official Washington over Russia's reaction to hostile developments in neighboring Ukraine simply does not measure up to genuine concerns that existed during the Cold War.

On Aug. 13, 1961, the East Germans, with Moscow's blessing, began to build a wall separating Communist-controlled East Berlin from West Berlin, and sealing off the well-worn "escape route" from the East to West Berlin and ultimately freedom somewhere in the West.

What a graphic demonstration of the bankruptcy of Communism, that millions living in East Germany and other East European "satellites" of the USSR had already chosen to leave home for an uncertain but hopeful future in the West via Berlin. For skeptics who saw little difference between East and West, John Kennedy famously advised, "Let them come to Berlin."

The Communist leaders running East Germany were so desperate to stem the flow of emigrants that they gave orders to shoot those attempting to climb over or chisel through the Wall. And how alarming was



The Berlin Wall at Potsdamer Platz in November, 1975

Photo: Wikipedia

the weeklong standoff between American and Soviet tanks just 100 meters apart at the Wall's Checkpoint Charlie in late October 1961.

In the fall of 1961, I had just completed a stint as “adjunct instructor” of Russian at Fordham University in a New York State-designed program to equip high school teachers to teach Russian. I was a year away from an MA in Russian Studies.

The building of the Berlin Wall was the second clear affirmation given me that I had chosen a field of study that enabled me easily to respond to Kennedy’s inaugural challenge, fresh in my ears, to “ask what you can do for your country.” The first affirmation had come on Oct. 4, 1957, when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the world’s first artificial satellite, just three weeks af-

ter I had chosen, as a college freshman, to study Russian.

The strategic danger from Russia took ominous shape when, in the fall of 1962, the Soviets emplaced medium-range nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles in Cuba. (We learned only later that some of them were actually armed and ready to fire.)

Through a tough but flexible combination of public and private diplomacy seldom seen in Washington before or since, President John F. Kennedy got the Soviets to back down. A pivotal moment came when US Ambassador to the United Nations Adlai Stevenson unveiled high-altitude reconnaissance photos of the Soviet missile base in Cuba, top-secret information that convinced the world that the United States was telling the truth.

The strategic danger from Russia took ominous shape when, in the fall of 1962, the Soviets emplaced medium-range nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles in Cuba

MISSED CHANCES

It was the US that bears primary responsibility for sabotaging that unique opportunity for peace

Soviet President Nikita Khrushchev eventually removed the missiles (as part of a negotiated arrangement with Kennedy), but Moscow's brazen attempt to steal a strategic march on the US had brought the world very close to a nuclear exchange and left deep traumatic scars.

How close we came to war over Cuba became clear to me in a very personal way when I reported on active duty at Fort Benning, Georgia, on Nov. 3, 1962. The Infantry Officer Orientation Course in which I was enrolled had virtually no weapons for us to train with. Most had been swept up a few weeks earlier by an Army division headed south to Key West – less than 100 miles from Cuba.

Later, while posted in West Germany I was not far from the border with Czechoslovakia when, on Aug. 21, 1968, the Soviets sent in tanks to crush the experiment in democracy called the “Prague Spring.” A subsequent assignment as chief of CIA's Soviet Foreign Policy Branch left me in little doubt as to which country was America's “main enemy” – or “glavniy vrag,” the term used by the Soviets for the US.

There was widespread feeling that this Cold War could not basically change in any near future. But just two decades later, the Berlin Wall fell amid widespread unrest in the rest of Eastern Europe. And there was a real chance for lasting peace in a Europe “whole and free” – from Portugal to the Urals.

Blowing a unique opportunity

The unwelcome truth is that it was the US that bears primary responsibility for sabotaging that unique opportunity; Washington decided to expand rather than disband NATO to match the disbanding of the Warsaw Pact. To those who cared about the US relationship with Russia, this was a profound disappointment.

Regarding US assurances that NATO would not be expanded, former Ambassador to the USSR Jack Matlock took copious

notes at the summit between US President George H. W. Bush and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in Malta just three weeks after the Berlin Wall fell. Matlock was there again two months later (early February 1990) in Moscow when promises were made during the visit of then-Secretary of State James Baker, who told Gorbachev that if Russia would acquiesce to the peaceful reunification of Germany, NATO would not move “one inch” eastward.

Some of the brightest thinkers about East-West relations have lamented the US failure to live up to those assurances. Former Democratic Sen. (and Rhodes scholar) Bill Bradley called NATO's expansion eastward, renegeing on Washington's explicit promise not to do so, a fundamental blunder of monumental proportions.” In a speech on March 4, 2008, Sen. Bradley bemoaned what happened as a “terribly sad thing.”

A month before Bradley's speech, US Ambassador to Russia William Burns (now Deputy Secretary of State) was warned by Sergey Lavrov, Russian foreign minister then as now, that Moscow was unalterably opposed to NATO's plan to make Ukraine a member of the military alliance, regarding that as a dire strategic threat to Russia.

We have unique insight into this critical warning, courtesy of Pvt. Chelsea (formerly Bradley) Manning and WikiLeaks, who made available the text of a State Department cable dated Feb. 1, 2008, from the US Embassy in Moscow bearing the unusual title: “NYET MEANS NYET: RUSSIA'S NATO ENLARGEMENT REDLINES.”

The IMMEDIATE precedence that the cable bears shows that Ambassador Burns was addressing a priority issue under active consideration in Washington. Here is Burns's introduction to the message that he sent to Washington after his lecture from Lavrov:

“Summary. Following a muted first reaction to Ukraine's intent to seek a NATO membership action plan at the [upcoming] Bucharest summit, Foreign Minister Lavrov

and other senior officials have reiterated strong opposition, stressing that Russia would view further eastward expansion as a potential military threat. NATO enlargement, particularly to Ukraine, remains ‘an emotional and neuralgic’ issue for Russia, but strategic policy considerations also underlie strong opposition to NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia.

“In Ukraine, these include fears that the issue could potentially split the country in two, leading to violence or even, some claim, civil war, which would force Russia to decide whether to intervene.”

Ambassador Burns continued: “Russia has made it clear that it would have to ‘seriously review’ its entire relationship with Ukraine and Georgia in the event of NATO inviting them to join. This could include major impacts on energy, economic, and political-military engagement, with possible repercussions throughout the region and into Central and Western Europe.”

In his closing comment Burns wrote: “Russia’s opposition to NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia is both emotional and based on perceived strategic concerns about the impact on Russia’s interest in the region. ... While Russian opposition to the first round of NATO enlargement in the mid-1990s was strong, Russia now feels itself able to respond more forcefully to what it perceives as actions contrary to its national interests.”

But the Lavrov/Burns warning fell on deaf ears. On April 3, 2008, a NATO summit in Bucharest formally announced: “NATO welcomes Ukraine’s and Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO.”

This past spring, with real trouble brewing in Ukraine, Lavrov returned to the subject in an interview with Bloomberg News on May 14, 2014. He said Russia remains “categorically against” Ukraine joining NATO, recounting Moscow’s longstanding concerns about NATO’s eastward expansion. He thus explained Moscow’s position

to a large English-speaking international listeners, many of whom were learning about this history for the first time.

Ukraine’s NATO membership

Even earlier, in a Memorandum for the President dated May 4, 2014, the Steering Group of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity called on President Obama to ask NATO to rescind the part of the April 3, 2008 Bucharest summit declaration that states: “We agreed today that these countries [Georgia and Ukraine] will become members of NATO.”

The memo added: “Once that intention is disavowed, you, [Russian President Vladimir] Putin, and Ukrainian leaders should be able to work toward a Ukraine with considerable regional autonomy domestically and neutrality in foreign policy. Finland is a good model. It lives in Russia’s shadow but, since it shuns membership in NATO, it is not seen as a threat to Russian national security and is left alone to prosper.”

The Memorandum, which called for an early Obama-Putin summit, got considerable coverage in Russian print and electronic media, both controlled and independent. It got none in US media; and we are still awaiting a response from the White House.

Meanwhile, the steady flow of anti-Russian propaganda coming from the US State Department and the simplistic good guy/bad guy narrative favored by the US media (with Putin as the ultimate villain) have done a huge disservice to Americans trying to understand the actual background to the Ukraine crisis and the role played by the US and NATO.

It is certainly no longer easy to say which side in this and other global controversies is more trustworthy.

Ray McGovern works with *Tell the Word*, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He served as an Army infantry and intelligence officer and then as a CIA analyst for the next 27 years

“Russia now feels itself able to respond more forcefully to what it perceives as actions contrary to its national interests”

The real shame of American culture

Stacey Warde is not offended at being mistaken for homeless, but he is offended by the greed that has put so many people on the streets

I'm not offended if someone wants to think I'm homeless. The church lady was only trying to be helpful

A woman at the thrift shop recently asked me if I was homeless. I had just pulled a pair of Levi's jeans off the rack, and a book on writing I'd discovered and placed them before her.

"Do you take credit or debit cards?" I asked.

"No, I'm sorry," she said, "we only take cash. We've just had too many problems with cards. That'll be four dollars."

I didn't have any cash on me. I thought my card would do the trick.

Then, she asked: "Are you homeless?"

"Um, no," I replied. I wore a uniform T-shirt with the company logo of the landscape outfit I work for and sported a pair of pruners in a holster on my belt. I'm a laborer but I'm not homeless, I said.

"We just made a quick stop between jobs so that I could find a cheap pair of work pants."

"Oh, I'm sorry," she responded. "I thought you might be homeless. We sometimes can give items free to customers who are homeless."

This is a church-run outfit in Los Osos, Calif., one that provides income for the church and opportunities to serve the poor.

"Well, I'm not homeless," I said, "but thanks for asking."

"I'd be offended if someone had asked me if I was homeless," she said apologetically.

"Really?" I said quickly, incredulous. "Why be offended? Especially in this economy." I surmised that taking offense to being called homeless had something to do with the shame we associate with a failure to support ourselves and our families.

"There's no need to feel ashamed, not for being homeless" I said, the fires burning, "the people who need to feel ashamed are the Wall Street bankers who've robbed this country blind for the last ten years."

She wouldn't look at me, refused to engage further in my fulmination against the real shame and offense of American culture: it isn't homelessness but greed, and the ever-widening gap between rich and poor in the U.S.

I'm not offended if someone wants to think I'm homeless. The church lady was only trying to be helpful. I am offended at the tremendous wealth being hoarded by the nation's mightiest rich, who command massive resources, and do all to fill their coffers with even more goods while people like me, who live from paycheck to paycheck, must go to thrift stores to buy 'new' clothes and eat the crumbs off their tables.

By most accounts, wealth inequality in the US has reached historic proportions, with one percent of the nation's wealthiest controlling 40 percent of its resources, portending, as venture capitalist Nick Hanauer warned, a day when the ragged hordes of

America's poor will, as in revolutions past, set themselves upon the rich with their pitchforks.

"I have a message for my fellow filthy rich, for all of us who live in our gated bubble worlds: Wake up, people. It won't last," Hanauer wrote in a column for Politico.

"If we don't do something to fix the glaring inequities in this economy, the pitchforks are going to come for us," he continued. "No society can sustain this kind of rising inequality. In fact, there is no example in human history where wealth accumulated like this and the pitchforks didn't eventually come out. You show me a highly unequal society, and I will show you a police state. Or an uprising. There are no counterexamples. None. It's not if, it's when."

So says a man who is himself a peer with the one percent who control nearly half the nation's wealth. It may not be pitchforks, but the inequity of wealth in the US will eventually bring down the high and mighty. History bears witness to the fact that huge disparities of any kind will lead to unrest among the common folk, and to the inevitable regime change.

The commoners will only allow so much abuse from those who live off the backs of the poor.

The only reason I can think to be offended for being called a homeless person is that it's below me, that US citizens who live in poverty have only themselves to blame for their condition. The myth of homelessness is that I can't take care of myself, that I'm irresponsible and can't hold down a steady job, and as a consequence, I should feel ashamed, and less likely to attack the real causes of poverty and homelessness in America.

More likely, homelessness today comes by way of greedy business and banking practices, the selling of fraudulent loans by predatory lenders, the shipping of jobs overseas to cut costs, the lack of imagination from government and industry to power the economy.

And the shame of it comes from a government beholden to lobbyists representing the few who can afford to pay for their services, and from wealthy industrialists who, through their political cronies and exploits, wave the flag and sing "God Bless America" while shipping jobs overseas.

I've heard enough stories from the homeless to know that, for many, their hardships began with the economic meltdown of 2008, the worst US downturn since the Great Depression, an event for which they were not responsible. Jobs were eliminated by the busload, bills started piling up and the goddamn banks, bailed out with taxpayer money, everywhere threatened evictions.

Millions of Americans lost their homes not through any fault of their own but as a consequence of someone else's greed. That's what offends me, and that's where the real shame belongs.

I've been close to homelessness often enough. I know what it feels like to be dressed in clothes that don't fit right, to drive a beater that sputters and smokes, to feel dead weary from struggling to make ends meet while sleeping on a friend's couch until I could find a place to live.

But I wouldn't be offended if someone thought I was homeless. I'd be more offended, I guess, if someone thought I was living large, like the bankers and financiers of Wall Street who, like their historic counterparts in, say, revolutionary France, eat caviar while mocking the Occupy protesters who they believe would be better off looking for jobs, even ones that don't pay a living wage, instead of smoking dope and playing drums.

What offends me is the fact that the US ranks highest in childhood poverty in the developed world and continues to plummet in global rankings for the quality of its education and healthcare, yet will continue to spend countless billions to feed its war machine.

I'm also offended by the sheer waste of resources, some \$2trillion, four-thousand

Millions of Americans lost their homes not through any fault of their own but as a consequence of someone else's greed. That's what offends me

ON BEING POOR

Every day is a struggle, as it is for millions of other Americans whose spending power and opportunities for advancement continue to diminish as wealth explodes for the very few rich

American lives, hundreds of thousands of casualties, on a campaign to liberate Iraq, which netted absolutely nothing – zero – favorable for the US, except perhaps for the gun runners and arms traders. Iraq is lost, so are the trillions that we paid to save it as our own ship took on water and began to sink.

Could we not have saved some of that money and those human lives to grow our businesses here at home, aid homeless children, improve education, build a universal healthcare system? Create new infrastructure for water and food transport, storage, and interstate commerce? Instead, we literally blew it all up in smoke, gave billions in aid and support to a bunch of jackals, who in turn, lost it to even worse jackals.

None of what we spent there has helped us here. Yet, we continue to feed the war machine while millions of children in the US go hungry every day.

That offends me.

I know well the shame of not having enough, of driving a car or truck with late registration or no auto insurance or in need of repair, of asking for advances on my paycheck to cover food or gas, and the gratitude of accepting gifts from family and friends for things I can't afford, like a new car or computer.

I'm not financially independent and, thankfully, I'm not homeless. Yet, every day is a struggle, as it is for millions of other Americans whose spending power and opportunities for advancement continue to diminish as wealth explodes for the very few rich, those 400 Americans, for example, whose combined wealth equals that of 150 million people, half the nation's population.

For years, I've been told that people in America who can't support themselves or their families, who live in hovels, or motels, in cars and trucks and dilapidated squeaky campers, who sleep in fields and under freeway overpasses, who scratch for every scrap of food they can find, are losers, lacking dis-

cipline, drug addicts looking for a fix, slackers who don't want to work, lazy bums who only want to drink beer and watch TV.

I don't believe that, not any more. When I see homelessness and poverty in the US, I think of the greed on Wall Street, the graft and corruption in government, and the indifference of global corporations to create jobs at home.

Sure, there are plenty individuals who would be on hard times no matter what condition the economy, or the potential and opportunities to improve their lives.

We'd likely be stuck on the ropes, fighting for our lives, no matter how many openings to get the upper hand. Some of us simply don't get it. We are among the hapless poor who need compassion, guidance, coaching, a friend or mentor to show us the way out, who from their vantage point outside the ring can shout encouragement and cheer us on. But we don't live in such a world.

This culture of capital-driven incentives, which breeds more greed, exalts the mean and nasty, the money-hungry, the war mongers and wealthy peddlers of cheap goods and services, where compassion for the lowly doesn't exist, which explains why we can spend billions of dollars on war craft but are at a loss how to aid the disadvantaged in the U.S.

The shame associated with poverty belongs more to those who rob the poor and blame them for all that's wrong. The more homelessness and child poverty, the more shame to those who hoard their wealth.

All that comes to mind, when I think of it, are the French Revolution and peasants who tear down the ramparts and bring to ruin the elite, the effete aristocracy, who would let the poor eat cake rather than deign to show compassion; and the biblical lament, "Woe to you who hoard your riches and refuse to hear the cry of the poor!" **CT**

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Stacey Warde is publisher of The Rogue Voice. Warde blogs at <http://theroguevoice.com>

Turning America into a war zone

Recent events in Ferguson, Missouri, show how easily it is for a democracy to slip from freedom to tyranny, writes **John W. Whitehead**

“If you don’t want to get shot, tased, pepper-sprayed, struck with a baton or thrown to the ground, just do what I tell you. Don’t argue with me, don’t call me names, don’t tell me that I can’t stop you, don’t say I’m a racist pig, don’t threaten that you’ll sue me and take away my badge. Don’t scream at me that you pay my salary, and don’t even think of aggressively walking towards me. Most field stops are complete in minutes. How difficult is it to cooperate for that long?”
– Sunil Dutta, an officer with the Los Angeles Police Department for 17 years

Life in the American police state is an endless series of don’ts delivered at the end of a loaded gun: don’t talk back to police officers, don’t even think about defending yourself against a SWAT team raid (of which there are 80,000 every year), don’t run when a cop is nearby lest you be mistaken for a fleeing criminal, don’t carry a cane lest it be mistaken for a gun, don’t expect privacy in public, don’t let your kids walk to the playground alone, don’t engage in nonviolent protest near where a government official might pass, don’t try to grow vegetables in your front yard, don’t play music for tips in a metro station, don’t feed whales, and on and on.

For those who resist, who dare to act independently, think for themselves, march to the beat of a different drummer, the consequenc-

es are invariably a one-way trip to the local jail or death. What Americans have chosen to ignore, what we have fearfully turned a blind eye to lest the reality prove too jarring is the fact that we no longer live in the “city on the hill,” a beacon of freedom for all the world.

Far from being a shining example of democracy at work, we have become a lesson for the world in how freedom turns to tyranny, how slippery the slope by which a once-freedom-loving people can be branded, shackled and fooled into believing their prisons walls are, in fact, for their own protection.

Having spent more than half a century exporting war to foreign lands, profiting from war, and creating a national economy seemingly dependent on the spoils of war, we failed to protest when the war hawks turned their profit-driven appetites on us, bringing home the spoils of war – the military tanks, grenade launchers, Kevlar helmets, assault rifles, gas masks, ammunition, battering rams, night vision binoculars – to be distributed for free to local police agencies and used to secure the homeland against “we the people.”

It’s not just the Defense Department that is passing out free military equipment to local police. Since the early 1990s, the Justice Department has worked with the Pentagon to fund military technology for police departments. And then there are the billions of dollars’ worth of federal grants distributed by the Department of Homeland Security, enabling

Far from being a shining example of democracy at work, America has become a lesson for the world in how freedom turns to tyranny

OUR POLICE STATES / 1

When you are staring down the end of a police rifle, there can be no free speech. When you're being held at bay by a militarized, weaponized mine-resistant tank, there can be no freedom of assembly

police departments to go on a veritable buying spree for highly questionable military-grade supplies better suited to the battlefield.

Is it any wonder that we now find ourselves in the midst of a war zone?

We live in a state of undeclared martial law. We have become the enemy.

In a war zone, there are no police – only soldiers. Thus, there is no more Posse Comitatus prohibiting the government from using the military in a law enforcement capacity. Not when the local police have, for all intents and purposes, already become the military.

In a war zone, the soldiers shoot to kill, as American police have now been trained to do. Whether the perceived “threat” is armed or unarmed no longer matters when police are authorized to shoot first and ask questions later. In a war zone, even the youngest members of the community learn at an early age to accept and fear the soldier in their midst. Thanks to funding from the Obama administration, more schools are hiring armed police officers – some equipped with semi-automatic AR-15 rifles – to “secure” their campuses.

In a war zone, you have no rights. When you are staring down the end of a police rifle, there can be no free speech. When you're being held at bay by a militarized, weaponized mine-resistant tank, there can be no freedom of assembly. When you're being surveilled with thermal imaging devices, facial recognition software and full-body scanners and the like, there can be no privacy. When you're charged with disorderly conduct simply for daring to question or photograph or document the injustices you see, with the blessing of the courts, there can be no freedom to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

And when you're a prisoner in your own town, unable to move freely, kept off the streets, issued a curfew at night, there can be no mistaking the prison walls closing in.

This is not just happening in Ferguson, Missouri. As I show in my book, “A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State”, it's happening and will happen anywhere and everywhere else in this coun-

try where law enforcement officials are given carte blanche to do what they like, when they like, how they like, with immunity from their superiors, the legislatures, and the courts.

You see, what Americans have failed to comprehend, living as they do in a TV-induced, drug-like haze of fabricated realities, narcissistic denial, and partisan politics, is that we've not only brought the military equipment used in Iraq and Afghanistan home to be used against the American people. We've also brought the very spirit of the war home. This is what it feels like to be a conquered people. This is what it feels like to be an occupied nation. This is what it feels like to live in fear of armed men crashing through your door in the middle of the night, or to be accused of doing something you never even knew was a crime, or to be watched all the time, your movements tracked, your motives questioned. This is what it's like to be a citizen of the American police state. This is what it's like to be an enemy combatant in your own country.

So if you don't want to get shot, tased, pepper-sprayed, struck with a baton or thrown to the ground, by all means, stand down. Cower in the face of the police, turn your eyes away from injustice, find any excuse to suggest that the so-called victims of the police state deserved what they got.

But remember, when that rifle finally gets pointed in your direction – and it will – when there's no one left to stand up for you or speak up for you, remember that you were warned. It works the same in every age. Martin Niemoller understood this. A German pastor who openly opposed Hitler and spent the last seven years of Nazi rule in a concentration camp, Niemoller warned:

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out – Because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out – Because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out – Because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me. **CT**

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'You should think of them always as armed'

Recent events in the United States, South Africa and Gaza show that the State sees the people as its enemies, writes **Richard Pithouse**

In colonial wars the occupying power invariably reaches a point where it has to acknowledge that its true enemy is not a minority - devil worshippers, communists, fanatics or terrorists - subject to external and evil manipulation, but the people as a whole. Once this point is reached every colonised person is taken as a potential combatant and the neighbourhood and the home are legitimate sites of combat. This is the moment when liberal paternalism breaks down.

From its first stirrings, liberalism has often managed the contradiction between this reality and its affirmation of liberty by limiting its reach in both spatial and racial terms. The rules that were understood to apply in England or France were not applied on the slave plantations of America or the Caribbean or, more recently, during the colonial wars in Kenya or Algeria. The same is true in Gaza today.

But as Aimé Césaire argued in 1955, in an essay first published in Paris, colonialism has a 'boomerang effect' - what is done over there will eventually be done at home, usually to a group of people that has been raced out of the count of who is taken as an authentic citizen with full rights to presence. On the 17th of October 1961, as the Algerian war against French colonialism was coming to an end, thousands of Algerians, between thirty and forty thousand men, women and children, dressed in their best clothes,

marched in Paris in protest at a curfew on Algerians. Before the march Maurice Papon, the chief of police who had been a collaborator with the Nazis during the Second World War, informed his officers that "Even if the Algerians are not armed, you should think of them always as armed."

The marchers were met with a savage police attack. People were thrown into the Seine, some dead, others bloodied but still alive. Some were taken to the police headquarters and beaten to the death in the courtyard. Others were taken to sport stadiums and left to die without medical attention. For years there was simply no discussion of this in France. One result of this long silence is that the exact number of people murdered by the police on that day is not clear. Credible estimates range up to 200.

Colonial powers have always shared what they have learnt about oppression. Some of the people that tortured for apartheid in South Africa learnt their skills from the French who had made torture a routine feature of their attempt to contain resistance to colonialism in Algeria. Colonised people have also always shared their knowledge about how to resist oppression. In 1962 Nelson Mandela went to newly independent Algeria to be trained as a soldier.

From the eighteenth century it was, perhaps more than anyone else, sailors who spread revolt from port to port. In 1804 Af-

Colonialism has a 'boomerang effect' - what is done over there will eventually be done at home

OUR POLICE STATES / 2

The person who is always treated as if they are armed, whose life counts for nothing, whose home has no sanctity, is a terrorist in Gaza, a gangster or a criminal in Port-au-Prince, Ferguson, Rio or Durban

rican slaves won their freedom in Haiti. For years later slaves, ripped from around the world and thrown together in Cape Town, unfurled the banner of revolt in Cape Town. The docks in Cape Town would remain a site of subversive exchange until at least the early twentieth century when sailors bought anarchist, communist and Garveyist ideas into dialogue with more local experiences and ideas sparking the emergence of the Industrial and Commercial workers' Union, which, as it spread from Cape Town, through the Eastern Cape to Durban and as far as what are now the independent states of Namibia, Zimbabwe and Zambia, became at various points, a trade union, a peasant movement and a shack dwellers' movement.

New mods of oppression

Today the zones where enduring colonial power relations take their most extreme forms, places like Palestine and Haiti, are not solely sites of egregious oppression. They are also laboratories where new modes of oppression are tested. The Brazilian soldiers that were part of the United Nations occupation of Haiti and played a part in crushing the movement for democracy and justice in the shack settlements of Port-au-Prince returned home to occupy the favelas in Rio. The Israeli state sells the technologies it has tested in Palestine, and it and consultants linked to it train police officers, soldiers and private security companies from other countries. The lessons learnt in Gaza will be shared with the security apparatus from Johannesburg to Paris and New York as old forms of domination are modernised.

When the overwhelmingly white police department in Ferguson, Missouri, some of whom are Israeli trained, responded to protest at their murder of Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager, they brought in equipment first used in the Iraq war. The images that rushed around the world showed what can only be understood as a mode of policing rooted in contemporary forms of imperial and colonial power in the Middle East,

as well as the long history of state violence against black people in the United States. Unsurprisingly people in Gaza started sending advice to people in Ferguson via twitter about how to deal with stun grenades, tear gas and all the rest. Messages of support were sent from Gaza to Ferguson.

In South Africa, my own country, it cannot be denied that our police, equipped in part from Israel, approach some of our fellow citizens as if they were the enemy in a colonial war. Nobody who has seen the footage of the Marikana massacre, or an eviction at the Marikana Land Occupation in Durban, can have any doubt about this. And as in Gaza, or Ferguson, the evident coloniality of some forms of contemporary state power is not simply a matter of the subordination of social questions to a military logic. Just as the same water cannons are used in Gaza, Port-au-Prince and Ferguson, as well as the shack lands of Brazil and South Africa, so too the same ideological operations are repeated, albeit with different key words, around the world. The person who is always treated as if they are armed, whose life counts for nothing, whose home has no sanctity, is a terrorist in Gaza, a gangster or a criminal in Port-au-Prince, Ferguson, Rio or Durban. In Gaza the people are conflated with Hamas, in Port-au-Prince it's Aristide and Lavalas. Here it's the third force.

The impunity of the Israeli state, like the impunity of the American state, like the impunity with which our own state increasingly uses murder, and legitimates the use of murder as a tool of social control, must be smashed. The militarization of social questions must be smashed everywhere. If not, what is done in Haiti will continue to boomerang into Brazil. It will continue to become part of the standard mechanisms to police the urban poor from Bombay to Johannesburg. What is done in Palestine will boomerang into the suburbs of Paris, the ghettos of the United States and the places where striking workers gather, and the dispossessed occupy land, in our own country. **CT**

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Sick of this market-driven world? Me, too

The self-serving con of neoliberalism is that it has eroded the human values the market was supposed to emancipate, writes **George Monbiot**

To be at peace with a troubled world: this is not a reasonable aim. It can be achieved only through a disavowal of what surrounds you. To be at peace with yourself within a troubled world: that, by contrast, is an honourable aspiration. This essay is for those who feel at odds with life. It calls on you not to be ashamed.

I was prompted to write it by a remarkable book, just published in English, by a Belgian professor of psychoanalysis, Paul Verhaeghe. “What About Me? The Struggle for Identity in a Market-Based Society” is one of those books that, by making connections between apparently distinct phenomena, permits sudden new insights into what is happening to us and why.

We are social animals, Verhaeghe argues, and our identities are shaped by the norms and values we absorb from other people. Every society defines and shapes its own normality – and its own abnormality – according to dominant narratives, and seeks either to make people comply or to exclude them if they don’t.

Today, the dominant narrative is that of market fundamentalism, widely known in Europe as neoliberalism. The story it tells is that the market can resolve almost all social, economic and political problems. The less the state regulates and taxes us, the better off we will be. Public services should be privatised, public spending should be cut,

and business should be freed from social control. In countries such as the UK and the US, this story has shaped our norms and values for around 35 years: since Thatcher and Reagan came to power. It is rapidly colonising the rest of the world.

Verhaeghe points out that neoliberalism draws on the ancient Greek idea that our ethics are innate (and governed by a state of nature it calls the market) and on the Christian idea that humankind is inherently selfish and acquisitive. Rather than seeking to suppress these characteristics, neoliberalism celebrates them: it claims that unrestricted competition, driven by self-interest, leads to innovation and economic growth, enhancing the welfare of all.

At the heart of this story is the notion of merit. Untrammelled competition rewards people who have talent, work hard, and innovate. It breaks down hierarchies and creates a world of opportunity and mobility.

The reality is rather different. Even at the beginning of the process, when markets are first deregulated, we do not start with equal opportunities. Some people are a long way down the track before the starting gun is fired. This is how the Russian oligarchs managed to acquire such wealth when the Soviet Union broke up. They weren’t, on the whole, the most talented, hardworking or innovative people, but those with the fewest scruples, the most thugs, and the best

At the heart of this story is the notion of merit. Untrammelled competition rewards people who have talent, work hard, and innovate

TWO REALITIES

The market was meant to emancipate us, offering autonomy and freedom. Instead it has delivered atomisation and loneliness

contacts – often in the KGB.

Even when outcomes are based on talent and hard work, they don't stay that way for long. Once the first generation of liberated entrepreneurs has made its money, the initial meritocracy is replaced by a new elite, which insulates its children from competition by inheritance and the best education money can buy. Where market fundamentalism has been most fiercely applied – in countries like the US and UK – social mobility has greatly declined.

If neoliberalism was anything other than a self-serving con, whose gurus and think-tanks were financed from the beginning by some of the world's richest people (the US multimillionaires Coors, Olin, Scaife, Pew and others), its apostles would have demanded, as a precondition for a society based on merit, that no one should start life with the unfair advantage of inherited wealth or economically determined education. But they never believed in their own doctrine. Enterprise, as a result, quickly gave way to rent.

All this is ignored, and success or failure in the market economy are ascribed solely to the efforts of the individual. The rich are the new righteous; the poor are the new deviants, who have failed both economically and morally and are now classified as social parasites.

The market was meant to emancipate us, offering autonomy and freedom. Instead it has delivered atomisation and loneliness.

The workplace has been overwhelmed by a mad, Kafkaesque infrastructure of assessments, monitoring, measuring, surveillance and audits, centrally directed and rigidly planned, whose purpose is to reward the winners and punish the losers. It destroys autonomy, enterprise, innovation and loyalty, and breeds frustration, envy and fear. Through a magnificent paradox, it has led to the revival of a grand old Soviet tradition known in Russian as tufta. It means falsification of statistics to meet the diktats of unaccountable power.

The same forces afflict those who can't find work. They must now contend, alongside the other humiliations of unemployment, with a whole new level of snooping and monitoring. All this, Verhaeghe points out, is fundamental to the neoliberal model, which everywhere insists on comparison, evaluation and quantification. We find ourselves technically free but powerless. Whether in work or out of work, we must live by the same rules or perish. All the major political parties promote them, so we have no political power either. In the name of autonomy and freedom we have ended up controlled by a grinding, faceless bureaucracy.

These shifts have been accompanied, Verhaeghe writes, by a spectacular rise in certain psychiatric conditions: self-harm, eating disorders, depression and personality disorders.

Of the personality disorders, the most common are performance anxiety and social phobia: both of which reflect a fear of other people, who are perceived as both evaluators and competitors – the only roles for society that market fundamentalism admits. Depression and loneliness plague us.

The infantilising diktats of the workplace destroy our self-respect. Those who end up at the bottom of the pile are assailed by guilt and shame. The self-attribution fallacy cuts both ways: just as we congratulate ourselves for our success, we blame ourselves for our failure, even if we have little to do with it.

So, if you don't fit in, if you feel at odds with the world, if your identity is troubled and frayed, if you feel lost and ashamed – it could be because you have retained the human values you were supposed to have discarded. You are a deviant. Be proud. **CT**

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George Monbiot's book "Feral" was recently released in paperback format. This article was originally published in the Guardian newspaper

The neocons' grim victory in Iraq

Their belated 'victory' could be their success in inflicting endless chaos in the Middle East, writes **J.P. Sottile**

Neocons do like to declare victory, especially regarding the Iraq War. So it came as no surprise that Paul Wolfowitz, apparently unimpressed by Iraq's mounting crisis, regaled a recent panel discussion at the US-Africa Summit with the blunt proclamation, "We have won it – in 2009." Unsurprisingly, that's when Team Bush left the White House – and approximately 150,000 troops behind in Iraq.

Perhaps also not surprisingly, war-weary Americans didn't pay much attention to Paul's pronouncement. No doubt they are as tired of Wolfowitz as they are of the war he helped to start. It probably rang as hollow as the faint echo of his earlier pitch for a quick, all-expenses-paid war against 2003's Hitler of the Moment – Saddam Hussein.

But it's not quite as simple as that.

The issue got more complicated shortly after the Africa summit when President Barack Obama – who had pinned his legacy on extricating the United States from Iraq – suddenly found himself at a podium to announce limited, but open-ended military action to halt the dreaded march of The Islamic State (often called ISIS or ISIL) through the repeatedly rocked Cradle of Civilization.

Many have explained the organization's plan for creating a fundamentalist caliph-

ate and its reliance on shockingly brutal tactics that make ISIS something that even al-Qaeda could never be, nor perhaps ever wanted to be. Many others have prodded the dying corpse of Iraq to assign blame here, there and everywhere. But the most basic reason for more bombing is found right there in the self-aggrandizing quip by Paul Wolfowitz.

The simple fact is that the Iraq War was a smashing success – at least for the neocons – because it smashed the keystone in the arch of the region's stability. By removing Saddam Hussein, his government and the Republican Guard, neocons removed a bulwark against the very jihadism that has policymakers and pundits forever wringing their hands raw, military contractors ringing their cash registers, and the denizens of the national security state resting assured under a blanket of secrecy.

Considering the persistent ubiquity of US forces in the Persian Gulf, their growing presence around the Horn of Africa and extension into Sub-Saharan Africa, Wolfowitz's declaration of victory may not be ironic or delusional; it may have some measure of truth – at least from his perspective – but for a reason most would not consider victorious.

That "victory" achieved something the neocons could only dream of during a fitful slumber brought on by counting the

Wolfowitz's declaration of victory may not be ironic or delusional; it may have some measure of truth – at least from his perspective

WAR GAMES

Although Team Obama was content to let ISIS grow in war-torn Syria's radicalized incubator, ISIS's unimpeded advance onto the doorstep of Erbil could not be tolerated

media's sheep, i.e. a permanent war in the Middle East.

The Iraq War made it functionally impossible for the United States to ever fully walk away from Iraq, the Persian Gulf or anywhere Muslims and oil mix. And for Wolfowitz, Don Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney and William Kristol, it's a dream come true. Regime change in Iraq created a power vacuum that was and is too strong to resist.

In fact, that vacuum allowed a wandering Jordanian jihadist named Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and his group of international also-rans to run amok in the chaos of post-Saddam Iraq. After a series of suicide attacks and a pledge to al-Qaeda, the anti-Shi'ite, anti-American, anti-almost-everything group became "al-Qaeda in Iraq," and, as Bobby Ghosh explains, eventually metastasized into ISIS.

ISIS's regional road show took off after Zarqawi was killed in June 2006 and a tenuous stability was literally bought by the US during the Sunni Awakening and the much-ballyhooed Surge. The Sunni Awakening was a cash-incentivized purchase of cooperation from just enough angry Iraqis to force interlopers and internecine adversaries to retreat, retool or retire. And that cash made it safe to hang the trappings of democracy over a vacuum that would eventually suck America back in again. And did it ever suck.

Although Team Obama was content to let ISIS grow in war-torn Syria's radicalized incubator, ISIS's unimpeded advance onto the doorstep of Erbil – the shining oil metropolis at the heart of the Kurdish semi-state – could not be tolerated.

While Chevron and ExxonMobil evacuated employees, Obama sent in tactical assistance for the Yazidi religious minority trapped on a mountain. While the humanitarian crisis and looming "genocide" came and went quickly – perhaps a little too quickly for credulity's sake – the all-too-predictable chaos unleashed by the legacy

of regime change and left behind by a legacy-minded Obama made this latest action almost inevitable.

Hillary Clinton's protests

Alas, the policy of regime change has been replicated – with many thanks to the "stupid stuff" both Obama and Hillary Clinton have done in Libya and Syria. After having wrung the traditional idea of diplomacy out of the State Department – i.e. advancing your country's interests without warfare – Hillary has climbed atop a growing stack of her unsold books so everyone can hear some classic Clintonian "triangulation" and pre-election posturing. It's still early. Maybe she can create distance between herself, her former boss and her rumored, if perpetually disproved, ideals.

Since Obama didn't go as far as Hillary now says she wanted to go in smashing Syria, it's even more likely that she played a significant role sucking two more secular regimes down the jihadist rabbit hole, Muammar Gaddafi's Libya and Bashar al-Assad's Syria (although "regime change" has come up a little short in Damascus). True enough, some Syrian rebels were only helped covertly through her State Department's Conflict Bureau (and the CIA) and, although never officially linked to the US, through Libyan weapons transferred to the fight against Assad, another Hitler du jour, reportedly via a little-known port at a place called Benghazi.

But now there is little doubt Clinton was present at the creation of yet more reasons for Muslim radicals to organize and arm themselves against US aims, allies and proxies – from drone strikes in Yemen and Pakistan to Muslim persecution after the "foreign policy success" of Myanmar.

However, the Mother of All Sucking Sounds is still the powerful vacuum created by destroying an entire country under false pretenses. That Iraq vacuum sucked trillions of dollars out of the US Treasury, sucked hundreds of thousands of Ameri-

cans into a vortex of deployments and re-deployments, and created the impetus for millions of Muslims around the world to quite rightly think that they were being targeted by America.

As if decades of dances with dictators and America's oil-slicked machinations weren't enough evidence, the neocon agenda for Rebuilding America's Defenses established once and for all through facts on their sandy ground, through pictures from Abu Ghraib and with extrajudicial imprisonment at Gitmo that Muslims make easy targets (in more ways than one).

Perhaps by taking out a contract on Saddam's uncooperative regime, they were, in effect, taking out a "bridge loan" for their corporate sponsors until another wave of neocon-men and con-women could breathe life into the long-since dead Cold War with their chess moves in Ukraine. But the real action was and is still at the "other" Ground Zero – in Iraq and around the oil-enriched Persian Gulf.

The bait-and-switch of 9/11 for Saddam, of Colin Powell's show-stopping vial of fake anthrax for actual evidence of chemical weapons, of aluminum tubes as proof for non-existent nuclear centrifuges – it all set a trap that, in the final analysis, America cannot really free itself from, no matter how rabidly Uncle Sam gnaws at the exposed bone of his blood-soaked leg.

Unbloodied and unbowed

And somehow, the planners of the Great Remaking of the Middle East have been surprisingly unbowed in spite of the colossal failures and the supposed "blunder" of a strategy gone wrong. Their lack of penance has made them the butt of jokes, but the joke may be on us.

These were not stupid men. They knew that the only way to keep their version of "the peace" was to keep America trapped in Middle East wars in perpetuity. They planned on it. Sure, Obama's pull-out provided momentary relief from the trap, but

with each passing month the death and destruction and body count mounted in a "free" and "democratic" Iraq until it predictably collapsed upon itself, unable to make whole what American indifference to facts, law and human life tore asunder.

Now that vacuum has sucked in the detritus of his Obama administration's own failed policy of regime changes. In Syria and in Libya and, somewhere outside the news media's bubble, in Yemen, a supposedly feckless Obama has played the same damnable game with the targeted "smashing" of drones, airstrikes and anti-terrorism initiatives.

Meanwhile, the result of illegally smashing Iraq still speaks for itself. So maybe, just maybe, Wolfowitz is, technically speaking, correct when he said "we won." The problem is that the "we" is not America or even most Americans.

The "we" is the quirky cabal of desk jockeys, chicken-hawks and Sunday showmen who, through their interconnected web of think tanks and political appointments and corporate connections, ensnared the United States into a conflagration that is beginning its second act.

And if the US somehow avoids getting sucked into a long-term battle against disaffected, dislocated and disenfranchised Muslims? Cold War 2.0 ensures that the perpetual machine designed to continually "rebuild" America's defenses has a never-ending supply of financial fuel and antagonistic grist for its multi-generational mill.

Either way, the neocon mission has truly been accomplished. **CT**

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These were not stupid men. They knew that the only way to keep their version of "the peace" was to keep America trapped in Middle East wars in perpetuity

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Welcome to **Orwell's World**

WAR IS PEACE

LIES ARE TRUTH

JOHN PILGER: Where truth and lies are indivisible
 DAVID MICHAEL GREEN: Imploding political consciousness
 KEVIN CARSON: The lies I learned at school

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 BREYTEN BREYTENBACH: NOTES FROM THE MIDDLE WORLD

DAVID MICHAEL GREEN | DISPATCHES FROM THE END OF EMPIRE
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AGENT OF THE PEOPLE
 Why Julian Assange won top journalism award

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ON THE BEACH
 Smith of the TV camera. Bring the reporters home. The Gulf oil crisis is officially over. But is it, really?

JOE BAGEANT
 1946-2011

Tribute to the Redneck Revolutionary by Fred Reed
 Marc Campbell, Tony Sutton

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**STOP ARMING DICTATORS,
 STOP KILLING INNOCENT CIVILIANS.**

Essays by:
 MEDEA BENJAMIN &
 CHARLES DAVIS
 DAVID SWANSON
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BIG BROTHER MEETS BIG BUSINESS
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LOST IN AMERICA: ESSAYS BY LINH DINH & PETER VAN BUREN

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Israel gives Jews a bad name

Danny Schechter was called as a self-hating Jew when he wrote the following article. His responses to his attackers follow in Parts 2 and 3

PART 1

When I was growing up in a Jewish community in New York in the late fifties, there was a predictable collective response to news events that expressed itself in one question:

“Is it good for the Jews?”

Many persecuted minorities made up largely of immigrants operate in an inward looking culture characterized by a fear of persecution, and a desire to keep a low profile for fear of stirring up anti-semitism or just “trouble.”

Jews who have been victimized throughout history tend to look at the world through the prism of that victimization, even when their own community is being viewed by others as victimizers. Their fears are easily manipulated with appeals to a collective memory.

Back in my youth, every time some big crook’s picture was splashed in the tabloids, I was reassured by being told, “At least he isn’t Jewish.” Although later, I learned about Jewish gangsters like Meyer Lansky who practically ran the Mafia. Later, I learned from YIVO, The Institute for Jewish Research, there had been as many Jewish criminals in our community as in others. Learning about this helped me contextualize what I came to see as a perversion of Jewish values into a dominant Zionist narrative that embraced or

ignored crimes from the earliest days of the conquest of Palestine up through the current war on the people of Gaza.

Jewish writers have not downplayed this history, reports the YIVO Encyclopedia that even speaks of Jews from Latin America:

“Literary stereotypes, exemplified by the refined Jewish pimp in Sholem Aleichem’s short story “A mentsh fun Buenos-Ayres” (“A Man from Buenos Aires”; 1909) created the image of white slavery as a quintessentially Jewish occupation. Scholars remain divided as to the extent to which Jews were disproportionately represented in the trade. The association of Jews with international prostitution prompted energetic communal initiatives in Europe and in the Americas against gangs of Jewish procurers.”

Once Israel was established after a war of terror against the British, the new government began to eradicate all vestiges of Jewish institutions, replacing thousands of years of Yiddish – language culture – which they saw as a culture of weakness --- with Hebrew and the cult of the macho sabra and military heroism.

This attitude infests the whole society despite formal equality for woman. In a recent interview, Joanne Zack-Pakes, director of Open Door Counseling Centers, the flagship project of the Israel Family Planning Association, speaks of an Israeli Culture “that is very sexual, but specifically a culture shaped by

Back in my youth, every time some big crook’s picture was splashed in the tabloids, I was reassured by being told, ‘At least he isn’t Jewish’

A JEWISH DILEMMA

The extremist Jewish right-wing encourages us to be even tougher, to forget about standing up for justice and identifying with oppressed people

macho sexuality and male power.”

No wonder, soon, the Kibbutzim that relied on Jewish labor to avoid exploiting Arabs were gone. The labor movement was gone. The right became ascendant. The seeds of hatred and contempt towards Palestinians were planted and nurtured as their communities were displaced from the own lands by a settler-run almost colonial society. It based itself on occupied lands all in the name of a questionable biblical mythology. Noam Chomsky says it is not like South Africa’s apartheid. It’s worse.

Now, let’s fast-forward into the present, in the era of Wall Street with a disproportionate number of leading Jewish bankers and lawyers, including, until recently, Bernard Madoff who typified the hypocrisy of being a prominent philanthropist while at the same time a skillful and serial financial gangster, not above ripping off Jewish charities and rich and poor alike. He even took money from Eli Wiesel, the pro-Israeli author of prize-winning books on the holocaust and a backer of the Israeli firsters.

I cite all this not to feed the racist and fabricated conspiracy theorists that have been blaming “the Jews” for everything from time immoral, from the fraudulent “protocols of Zion” conspiracy through the ravings of Nazis then and now.

My concern is more internal. What has our community done to reinforce our own stereotypes, and actively, if not aggressively, cultivated a reputation for “toughness” as an antidote to the well known but misleading image of a people who passively went to the gas chambers? In some circles, Jews blame themselves while vowing “Never Again” and supporting or rationalizing extreme militarism, and systematic human rights abuses in the name of Israel and Jewish survival.

The extremist Jewish right-wing encourages us to be even tougher, to forget about standing up for justice and identifying with oppressed people. An article on leftist turned rightist, David Horowitz’s website, Front-Page, features a prominent US PR expert,

Ronn Torrossian, singing the praises of “the top Ten Living Tough Jews.”

“The list of the Top 10 Living Tough Jews it is not only about brute physical strength,” he writes, “it is about a people who are smart, strong, resilient, rugged, bold and fearless.”

This is a reflection of good, tough Jews who are positive representations of the Jewish people, (no gangsters here) – don’t let a yarmulke fool you.”

And, yet, who tops his toughness list of role models, the people he wants us to emulate?

1. “Israel Defense Forces: All of the men and women of the Israel Defense Forces – the holy Jewish army are the toughest (and holiest) Jews one can ever imagine. They protect the people of Israel against tremendous odds, and with Israel’s survival threatened daily these Jews are consummate warriors, fighting not only for a country but for an important ideal.”

Weighing in at number 8 is none other the number one funder of America’s right-wing politicians, the man every GOP hopeful sucks up to: Sheldon Adelson. “The richest Jew in the world, Adelson, is famously resilient, stubborn and focused on winning. The son of Jewish immigrants, Adelson grew up lower-class, dropped out of the City College of New York – and has built one of the largest casino empires in the world?”

You get the idea. Be tough. Become a zillionaire. And run a country that now has the fourth largest military in the world (US funded of course) that can target an overcrowded ghetto like Gaza – not unlike those many Jews were once forced to live in – turning it into a shooting gallery for the most sophisticated weaponry, all justified as necessary for their country’s survival.

Writer and former *New York Times* correspondent Chris Hedges, who reported from Gaza, calls Israel’s tough guy but very slick PR campaign, “the Big Lie.”

“The Big Lie makes it clear to the Palestinians that Israel will continue to wage a campaign of state terror and will never admit its

atrocities or its intentions," he writes.

"The vast disparity between what Israel says and what Israel does tells the Palestinians that there is no hope. Israel will do and say whatever it wants. International law, like the truth, will always be irrelevant. There will never, the Palestinians understand from the Big Lie, be an acknowledgement of reality by the Israeli leadership.

Hedges adds, "Israel's ambassador to the United States, Ron Dermer, in a Big Lie of his own, said last month at a conference of Christians United for Israel that the Israeli army should be given the "Nobel Peace Prize ... a Nobel Peace Prize for fighting with unimaginable restraint.... The Big Lie destroys any possibility of history and therefore any hope for a dialogue between antagonistic parties that can be grounded in truth and reality."

To Jewish rabbis like Michael Lerner, it's not just the truth that is being trashed. It is Judaism itself.

He writes on Salon: "...it is the brutality of that assault which finally has broken me into tears and heartbreak. While claiming that it is only interested in uprooting tunnels that could be used to attack Israel, the IDF has engaged in the same criminal (emphasis mine) behavior that the world condemns in other struggles around the world: the intentional targeting of civilians (the same crime that Hamas has been engaged in over the years in its bombing of Sdeyrot and its current targeting of Israeli population centers, thankfully unsuccessfully, which correctly has earned it the label as a terrorist organization).

Using the excuse that Hamas is using civilians as "human shields" and placing its war material in civilian apartments, a claim that a UN human rights investigatory commission found groundless when it was used the last time Israel invaded Gaza in 2008-2009 and engaged in similar levels of killing civilians), Israel has managed to kill over 1,500 Palestinians and has wounded over 8,000 more."

On and on he goes, as someone who has

backed Israel for years, excoriating the way Israel's needs and Zionist ideology as defined by a harsh right-wing government, dominated by a military dominated "security cabinet," "has come to speak for and define the needs of Jews in the world.

He realizes that Israel, by use of military power, political lobbying and media manipulation now defines the narrative of what being Jewish is supposed to be.

Critics, especially Jews like myself, are dismissed, and marginalized if not attacked violently in Israel and labeled as "self-haters" for not embracing this redefinition of Judaism as militarism, idealism as authoritarianism, and a new fascism with a Hebrew face.

Rabbi Lerner of *Tikkun* magazine adds, "I'm heartbroken to see the Judaism of love and compassion being dismissed as "unrealistic" by so many of my fellow Jews and rabbis. Wasn't the central message of Torah that the world was ruled by a force that made possible the transformation from "that which is" to "that which can and should be"? And wasn't our task to teach the world that nothing is fixed, that even the mountains can skip like young rams and the seas can flee before the triumph of God's justice in the world?

"Instead of preaching this hopeful message, too many rabbis and rabbinical institutions are preaching a Judaism that places more hope in the might of the Israeli army than in the capacity of human beings (including Palestinians) to transform their perception of "the other" and overcome their fears."

So whatever Israel is "winning," the Jewish people are losing. The key lesson of the holocaust was that human rights of all peoples need protection. That is not a lesson that the droning on robots of Israel's Sparta-like PR Army has any use for.

The rest of the world is judging us. Jews have to judge us well.

Let me close with the words of Ahmad Kathrada who spent 26 years in prison in South Africa alongside Nelson Mandela, and

The key lesson of the holocaust was human rights of all peoples need protection. That is not a lesson that the droning on robots of Israel's Sparta-like Israeli PR Army has any use for

A JEWISH DILEMMA

'Has apartheid Israel so quickly forgotten the millions of Jews, communists and gypsies who were exterminated by the Nazis, that they now commit the same crimes?'

was considered his closest comrade, He recently visited Palestine and said it felt all too familiar. He wrote recently:

“What worries me is the sheer impunity with which Israel acts. It reminds me of the many years that apartheid was allowed to flourish in South Africa with little constructive action on the part of the major powers such as the US, France, Germany and the UK, including some of the leading Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

“While writing this, my thoughts go back to August-September of 1951, when I visited the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. I find myself asking: ‘Has apartheid Israel so quickly forgotten the millions of Jews, communists and gypsies who were exterminated by the Nazis, that they now commit the same crimes?’ ”

Can his observation also be applied to Israel, and all the countries like our own, that fall over each other endorsing what Israel says and then ignoring what it does

Among the other more immediate crimes against Palestinians, international law and history, Israel gives Jews a bad name. **CT**

PART 2

It's all my fault!

I am now officially the REASON, in the eyes and through the slogan-limited mentality of a prominent defender of Israel, why Hamas is winning. Some of my pro-Palestinian friends may be impressed about how influential I have become.

My self-appointed nemesis is technologist and super-Zionist Avi Perry. He is determined to win an argument with me by drowning me in selective facts and twisted talking points, before, showering me with predictable put-downs and invective.

In response to the preceding essay on why Israel is bad for the Jews, he responded that it is I who is bad, and worse than that, a self-hating Jew Hater of the highest order.

I responded with a call for less inflammatory language and more tolerance for other views.

His latest response: “You are the reason these terrorists keep their terror machines up and running.

“You are the reason they perceive victory in the face of defeat and devastation.

“You are the reason Hamas will never seek peace.

“You are the proof that Hamas wins the battle for world opinion. They are making strides in their effort to de-legitimize Israel with your help.

“And your help is the fuel that lights the fire behind their irrational terror engine.”

Gee, Avi, is it all me? Are my views that important?

I don't think so, but I wish they were.

Here you are again, blasting me for suggesting any comparison between Israel and apartheid South Africa, the country that Israel armed with nuclear weapons.

Somehow you missed my quoting that anti-Christ, Noam Chomsky, who shares your view that there is no parallel between the two counties. Only he goes on to say that Israel was and is worse.

Here's what he thinks: “In the Occupied Territories, what Israel is doing is much worse than apartheid,” he said. “To call it apartheid is a gift to Israel, at least if by ‘apartheid’ you mean South African-style apartheid. What's happening in the Occupied Territories is much worse.”

Chomsky said South African Nationalists needed black people, which was about 85 percent of the population, to fill its workforce and sustain the economy.

“The Israeli relationship to the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories is totally different,” he said. “They just don't want them. They want them out, or at least in prison. And they're acting that way. That's a very

striking difference, which means that the apartheid analogy, South African apartheid, to the Occupied Territories is just a gift to Israeli violence. It's much worse than that."

Avi, How would you explain this recent development as reported to me from South Africa about a huge march against Israel's war in Gaza?

Have I brainwashed all these people.

"South Africans from various political parties and of all ages, races and religions (including members of Jewish Voices For a Just Peace) came from across the country - from PE to Nelspruit, Kwa Dukuza, Durban, Port Shepstone, Newcastle, Polokwane, Moko-pane and various other towns and cities. The protest drew over a hundred thousand people (with many analysts even suggesting that the protest reached the 200 thousand mark). This march was the largest and most diverse protest march to ever take place in South Africa - not just in post Apartheid South Africa. The largest protest gathering in South African history is said to be the 1990 release of Nelson Mandela."

The grandson of anti-apartheid struggle icons, Walter and Albertina Sisulu, as well as ANC Youth League NTT member, Shaka Sisulu, delivered a moving "Do You Remember" speech."

Now, I assume had these people only read your views on this issue, they would have realized how wrong they are in seeing any connection between their experience and the Gazans, and wouldn't have marched.

Happily, yours is not the only letter I received. Here's just one from someone else I don't know, Miriam Knight:

Hi Danny,

I lived in Israel for 13 years. I have three children and five grandchildren there, including two now in the army, and one just out. I couldn't agree with you more.

Those who are shouting to silence you are really trying to silence their own consciences. They know in their hearts that what we are doing to the Palestinians is inhuman, but to justify it they need to see them - and you by

extension - as less than human.

My heart breaks for the loss of the country I grew up loving, but it is no longer the Israel of high moral and social principle that inspired me to make aliyah. When I moved to Israel, my son was five years old. I was sure that by the time he went into the army there would be peace. Now the next generation is serving, and peace seems so much farther away.

Of course I want my children and grandchildren to be safe, but so do the Palestinian mothers and grandmothers! Until we all stop demonizing each other and start listening respectfully and trying to understand the other's perspective there can be no peace. The Bibiniks have the ghetto mentality, where all is fair in the name of survival. Jews claim to answer to a higher power, but I don't think they are listening to its true message. Hillel would be ashamed of us.

Blessings,

Miriam

Miriam Knight

Here's a related story in *Ha'aretz*, the leading Israeli daily, headed: "**Signs of fascism in Israel reached new peak during Gaza op, says renowned scholar**"

"Israel Prize laureate and renowned scholar Zeev Sternhell fears the collapse of Israeli democracy, and compares the current atmosphere with that of 1940 France. The time we have left to reverse this frightening trend is running out, he warns."

I can assure you Avi, this is not my fault or my doing. Sternhell is describing a new kind of hell that you seem to lack the empathy or sensibility to understand or care about.

"What we've seen here in the past few weeks is absolute conformism on the part of most of Israel's intellectuals. They've just followed the herd. By intellectuals I mean professors and journalists. The intellectual bankruptcy of the mass media in this war is total. It's not easy to go against the herd, you can easily be trampled. But the role of the intellectual and the journalist is not to applaud the government. Democracy crumbles

"Those who are shouting to silence you are really trying to silence their own consciences. They know in their hearts that what we are doing to the Palestinians is inhuman"

A JEWISH DILEMMA

Isn't it sad that when Jewish critics write about Israel, the content of their concerns are dismissed and answered by an endless spew of personal attacks

when the intellectuals, the educated classes, toe the line of the thugs or look at them with a smile. People here say, 'It's not so terrible, it's nothing like fascism – we have free elections and parties and a parliament.' Yet, we reached a crisis in this war, in which, without anyone asking them to do so, all kinds of university bodies are suddenly demanding that the entire academic community roll back its criticism.”

Do you think it's due to fear?

“Fear of the authorities, fear of possible budgetary sanctions and fear of pressure from the street. The personification of shame and disgrace occurred when the dean of the law faculty of Bar-Ilan University threatened sanctions against one of his colleagues because the latter added a couple of sentences to an announcement about exam dates in which he expressed sorrow at the killing and loss of life on both sides. To grieve for the loss of life on both sides is already a subversive act, treason. We are arriving at a situation of purely formal democracy, which keeps sinking to ever lower levels.”

That's a painful and profound insight, Avi and very upsetting in its implications. You can believe I am a self-hater, Avi, if that makes you feel better, but I am not, and nor am I blind. Thanks to my Jewish soul, I see and feel a lot. But what happened to you? **CT**

PART 3

The end of criticism?

would have become a rich man in the “Fiddler in The Roof” sense if each of the insults, putdowns and venomous asides about my article, “Israel Is Bad For The Jews,” had a monetary value.

For so many years, we used to joke, “Five

Jews, Ten Opinions,” as a comment about the perennial, ongoing and never ending arguments and debates that made our culture so rich with its many religious tendencies – Reform, Conservative and Orthodox, and their many spinoffs competing over the best way to serve God.

Politically, we had more organizations and positions than any one Jew has fingers, as conservatives battled liberals, Zionists quarreled with anti-Zionists, and the many factions of the left and the right battled each other. This rich diversity of perspective is what spawned so many passionate writers, and engaged intellectuals to pick over the carcass of our history, and its many interpretations of what Judaism is and what are the right values and beliefs to guide us.

Even in our Passover Seders, in the modern form and ancient traditions, we sang of our differences, with subtlety and irony. There were always moral choices. Never one answer!

Isn't it sad that when Jewish critics write about Israel, the content of their concerns are dismissed and answered by an endless spew of personal attacks. When it comes to this issue, there is only one correct party line, the pro-Netanyahu position masquerading as support for country that is always facing threats, especially when funds are to be raised.

If you think the Stalinists kowtowed to a party line, check out the Zionists. There used to be disputes between many Labor Zionist groups with each other while the settlers had their own differences and fanatics. Now, there is no tolerance for anyone you disagree with. There is little difference between some of the religious autocrats there and the mullahs in Iran. Tehran has its Supreme Ruler and Israel its “Security Cabinet!” Who cares about democracy in the Knesset?

Only one line is allowed – or else. Figure out why 100 members of the 100 member US Senate groveled before embracing Israel in the same resolution, and you will under-

stand the way this game is played.

Dissent, however mild or reasonable, is not permitted. It's always their way or the highway! We are supposed to hail AIPAC the way the Romans hailed Caesar.

Disagree life-long semites become anti-Semites, and people who love justice are blasted as haters, guilty for even invoking the names of people of deep knowledge like that son of a rabbi, Noam Chomsky, a moral conscience and national treasure, now in his 80's. Chomsky has heard it all from all sides, but keeps going!

As a graduate of a Jewish School, albeit not a religious one, who took pride in my culture and identity, I am a pronounced a "Jew hater," an anti-Semite, and, to boot, an ignoramus, even an enemy! Oh, yes, also, as one respondent told me, I am as bad as HAMMAS (misspelled!)

My article appeared on several sites including The JewishReporter.com. I was told that many of the site's supporters demanded I be silenced, and my article be taken down, I guess as heresy. (It's too bad the "Scarlet Letter" is not in vogue anymore even if Jews know all too well the way how our ancestors were forced to wear stars of David and later concentration camp numbers. It didn't matter what you thought, it was who you were,)

Dr, Avi Perry, a technologist who appears on PalTalk shot off a "Dear Danny" letter to me to share his wounded feelings:

"I have known you as a far-leftist who bashes Israel at every opportunity, but your recent article, titled: "Israel Gives Jews A Bad Name" exposed your own ingrained Jew-hating tendencies....

"Your article and your assertions are wrecked with the same blind spots that every antisemite and every Jew-hater embraces inside their souls.

"Calling Israel an apartheid state is an insult to the word – apartheid. Did South Africa afford voting rights to its black residents? Did the true apartheid regime have a black resident on their Supreme Court? Did they have blacks (who preached white genocide)

as members of Parliament? Did white folks in apartheid South Africa work for black supervisors? Did black doctors work in white hospitals, treating white folks as well? There are hundreds more examples of how prejudiced you are. You clearly don't know what you are talking about.

"You quote Noam Chomsky – the most supreme Jew-hater in history. (I noted that he said Israel was not like South Africa, but worse!)

"You provide proof for Meir Lansky's crimes from a movie – a fiction-based novel" Etc. Etc. Now, the closer: "And finally, there is plenty more I could say to you and to those who share your antisemitic views. But it will take a whole book, and I'm not in the mood to write one at this moment."

Never mind that I have written books, articles and produced a TV series about South Africa. And, never mind, that on this past Saturday 100,000 South Africans marched in solidarity with the Palestinians of Gaza, You would think their memory of Apartheid qualified them to make that parallel.

But never mind...

My friend, the distinguished African journalist and editor, Marie-Roger Biloa wrote to me from Paris, when I told her about the nasty response, "That is usual, stupefying that so many Jews, among the best and the brightest, just do not understand and accept that people protest in the streets against Israel's policy. I just listened to a German Jewish writer lashing out at "antisemitism disguised as anti-zionism."

No doubt, the vehemence of my critic's views, and his immediate labeling of me as antisemitic or worse, speaks to how cantankerous the discourse on this subject has become.

It is now verboten to challenge the consensus of the Israel firsters who speak not just in sanctimonious defense of a state dominated by a malicious far right-wing government, but make it appear they are speaking for all Jews everywhere. All that takes to achieve is a couple of hundred million for PR and media

It is now verboten to challenge the consensus of the Israel firsters

A JEWISH DILEMMA

“Wiesel has been a chair of the advisory board of Elad, a group of fanatical religious Israeli settlers actively involved in ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from the eastern sector of occupied Jerusalem”

spin. Sadly, this tendency has become true of a one-time hero of mine, Elie Wiesel, with whom I produced a TV pilot for public television. (I didn't have the heart to tell him that the station, WNET in New York, rejected the series because they thought his accent would limit its appeal. Too Jewish? That smelled like antisemitism to me at the time.)

Wiesel, whose books turned him into the moral Ambassador for World Jewry because of his reputation as a powerful speaker and holocaust survivor, now is Israel's #1 defender without every really disclosing how right wing his politics have become.

According to the Electronic Intifada, “Wiesel has been a chair of the advisory board of Elad, a group of fanatical religious Israeli settlers actively involved in ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from the eastern sector of occupied Jerusalem.”

Now Wiesel is leading a campaign to further demonize Palestinians.

Press Release: “Rabbi Shmuley Boteach has released a stirring advertising campaign that is accusing Hamas of child sacrifice. Along with Nobel Peace Laureate, Elie Wiesel, the ads will run in leading American publications including: The Washington Post, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Chicago Tribune, The Los Angeles Times, The Miami Herald, as well as an extensive social media campaign.

“This World Founder Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, stated, ‘Our purpose is to bring one of the greatest moral voices of our time and one of the most respected human beings alive, who bore witness to the atrocities of genocide and the Holocaust, to respond to the ugly and fraudulent criticisms of Israel and call for an end to the genocidal aspirations of Hamas.’”

These ads have triggered a press controversy with the usually conservative Murdoch owned title, the *Times*, refusing to run it while the usually progressive *Guardian* carrying it in England. Palestinians call it an incitement to genocide and question its accuracy.

The Israeli writer, Gilad Alzmon, blasts

Wiesel, a personality who until now is usually revered as a human rights hero. wrote, “The ad's headline reads: ‘Jews rejected child sacrifice 3,500 years ago. Now it's Hamas' turn.’ Wiesel's statement is a blatant lie and the *London Times* knew it.

“Jews have never stopped sacrificing their children. The Hannibal Protocol is an IDF directive that orders soldiers to take ‘necessary measures’ to prevent their comrades from being captured by enemy forces. ‘Necessary measures’ include risking the life of the Israeli soldier and anyone who happens to be in his vicinity. Similarly, the Kastner Affair shows that at the peak of the Shoah, Ben Gurion and the Zionist establishment were willing to sacrifice many Jewish lives on the altar of the Zionist goal.”

Over 100 Jewish survivors and descendants of Jewish survivors of the Nazi genocide have signed on to a letter condemning the invasion of Gaza and “speak out against the abuse of their histories to promote the dehumanization of Palestinians advanced by Elie Wiesel among others.”

They write, “...we are disgusted and outraged by Elie Wiesel's abuse of our history in these pages to promote blatant falsehoods used to justify the unjustifiable: Israel's wholesale effort to destroy Gaza and the murder of nearly 2,000 Palestinians, including many hundreds of children. Nothing can justify bombing UN shelters, homes, hospitals and universities. Nothing can justify depriving people of electricity and water.

“...We call for the full economic, cultural and academic boycott of Israel. ‘Never again’ must mean NEVER AGAIN FOR ANYONE!”

Another Israeli, Miko Peled, is speaking out, too. He was born in Jerusalem; his grandfather, Avraham Katsnelson, signed Israel's Declaration of Independence; his father, Mattityahu Peled, fought in the 1948 war, and was a general in the war of 1967.

Sadly, his 13-year-old niece Smadar was killed in a suicide attack in Jerusalem. At her funeral, according to an article summarizing Peled's book, Ehud Barak, who had just been

elected to lead the opposition, explained that “in order to win votes he must disguise his real intentions as a ‘peacemaker.’” In reply, Peled said, “Why not tell the truth ... That this and similar tragedies are taking place because we are occupying another nation and that in order to save lives the right thing to do is to end the occupation and negotiate a just peace with our Palestinian partners?”

Peled is among many Israelis who challenge Israeli militarism. But it is the Palestinians who are forced to live with it, with many not making it.

Read this story and weep:

“When Ahmed Owedat returned to his home 18 days after Israeli soldiers took it over in the middle of the night, he was greeted with an overpowering stench.

“He picked through the wreckage of his

possessions thrown from upstairs windows to find that the departing troops had left a number of messages. One came from piles of faeces on his tiled floors and in wastepaper baskets, and a plastic bottle filled with urine.

“If that was not clear enough, the words ‘Hamas’ had been carved into a concrete wall in the staircase. ‘Burn Gaza down’ and ‘Good Arab = dead Arab’ were engraved on a coffee table. The star of David was drawn in blue in a bedroom.”

Why is Israel bad for the Jews? Reflect on that smell as if it was in your home. I reported on a very similar situation involving the IDF’s trashing of a community Media Center in Ramallah years ago.

That is the smell and face of hate, and more than a big o y vey. **CT**

News Dissector

Danny Schechter blogs at Newsdissector.net and works on Mediachannel.org. He has directed a film and written two books on media complicity in the Iraq War. Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org

STAGS, HENS & BUNNIES

A BLACKPOOL STORY



Dogie Wallace

“Like a proper ‘Weedgie,’ Dougie Wallace doesn’t patronise but sees humanity and pathos in the carnage that is Blackpool”

– Irvine Welsh

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See Dougie Wallace’s Blackpool photographs at <http://dougiewallace.com>

Beside the sea

Dougie Wallace's new book is a photographic feast in which brides, bridegrooms, and divorcees-to-be celebrate their couplings and uncouplings in booze-fueled orgies of X-rated excess at Blackpool, Britain's favourite seaside resort, writes **Tony Sutton**

Her parting cry, "Perhaps you should marry HIM; you seem to have christened the bridal suite already!"

Wow! Look what's just arrived in the post: Dougie Wallace's "Stags, Hens & Bunnies," a photobook about stag parties.

Brings back memories of my own Big Night many years ago although, in truth, I recall little more than a jangled blur of pubs, booze, flashing lights, loud music, much shouting and then merciful oblivion.

The real memories begin as I awake the next morning with a cracking headache, raging thirst and a need to be violently sick. My return to life is disturbed by a pitiful moan from the other side of my soon-to-be-marital bed. I turn round to the awful sight of Pete, my best pal, lying near-naked beside me. Disturbed, he rears, leans out of bed, coughs, then throws up all over the carpet before sinking back into stuporland.

After staggering into the bathroom to find the floor awash with piss, the tub choked in vomit, I venture cautiously downstairs. Good news: can't spot any more bodies, half-naked or otherwise, on the floor, in the cupboards or under the stairs. Bad news: alcohol is dripping from the ceilings and down the walls, the floors are littered with debris.

It gets worse: Jools, my bride-to-be,



arrives an hour later, as Pete and I are beginning a half-hearted salvage operation. She surveys the scene, curses our feeble attempts at humour, and stalks away, her parting shot, "Perhaps you should marry HIM; you seem to have christened the bridal suite already!"

Over the years, I've thought my tale hard to beat. That is until I saw photos of pre-wedding (and pre-divorce) partying in Wallace's epic journal that make my celebration seem like bingo night at the temperance society.

Wallace took his shots at Blackpool, the North of England's favourite seaside



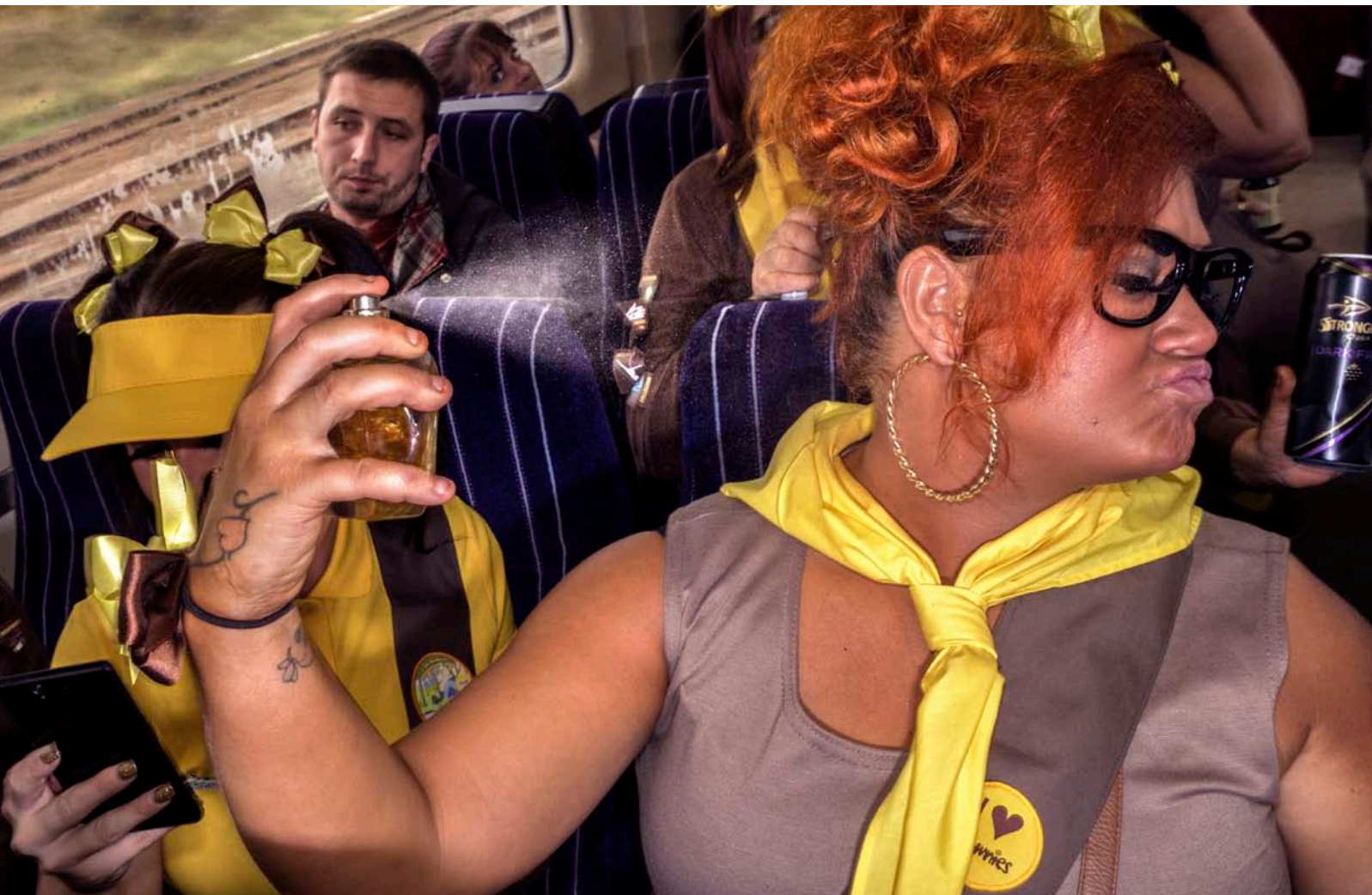
Above: If ya gotta go, ya gotta go. And the fish shop wall seems as good a place as any. Good thing no one is watching . . .

Left: Wide-eyed bride takes off with the spoils of the evening. She'll be disappointed in the morning . . .

All photos © Dougie Wallace, from "Stags, Hens & Bunnies"

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IN THE PICTURE



A bit more perfume and another beer and this reveler will be ready to face the world.



STAGS, HENS & BUNNIES A Blackpool Story

Dougie Wallace

Dewi Lewis Media
www.dewilewispublishing.com
£28

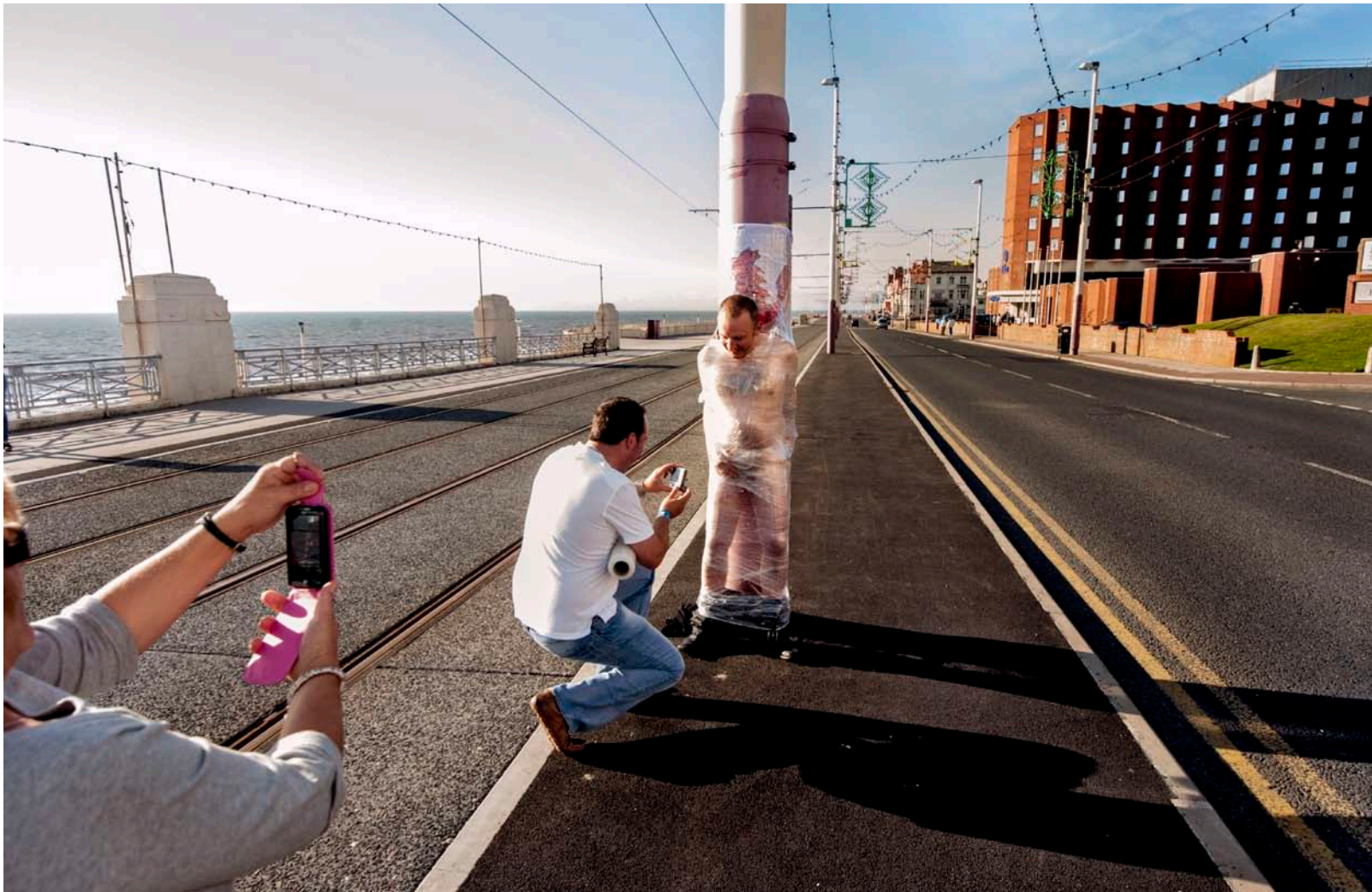
resort, best known for its seven miles of bright lights, big tower and masses of holidaymakers on its beaches. Okay, Blackpool's not as hot as Spain, but it's cheaper, friendlier, and the fish and chips are tastier – especially after a dozen beers.

Like Skegness and Scarborough, its sister resorts on the east coast, Blackpool is run-down, tacky and seedy, filled with shabby boarding houses and shops full of tatty souvenirs. It's a place where the working class can let down their hair, drink too much and spend far too long in the sun (when it shines) than is good for them. Just the place, in fact, for a group of pals to celebrate up-

coming nuptials or impending divorces. Even more fun if you're dressed as schoolboys and schoolgirls, red devils or Romans in golden togas. Just jump on a train or bus and head for the place where no one knows your name and, more important, where nobody – including the cops – seems to care what you get up to.

Wallace's three-year photo-journey began when he spotted a man fastened to a lamppost with cling-film . . .

"He was pissing himself laughing, bollock-naked and cling-filmed to a lamppost on the promenade. It was broad daylight. People were snapping him with their phones and he



Where it all began. A guy, bollock naked, wrapped in cling-film, his pants down to his ankles . . .

couldn't do anything about it. I ran across the road. It was one of those daft moments: some guy on his stag weekend, wrapped up in see-through plastic, his boots and jeans at his ankles, whilst the Welsh flag hung limply from the pole above his head. I could see he had just started to break out of his cling-film manacles when his friends came back with a fresh roll to reinforce his plastic confinement. 'He should know better,' his pal said, 'He's been married three times before.' When I passed by later, as the light was dying, he was still there. He had stopped laughing.

"So, that's how it all started, with that one photograph. At the time I was trading camper-vans up and down the country with my 'busi-

ness partner,' Camper John. I'd pick them up in Durham and sell them back in London. I'd criss-cross the country to the Lake District and spend a night in Blackpool on the way home. I always felt there was a story there.

"Blackpool... A dirty great whorl of debauchery, licentiousness, laughter, vomit, furry handcuffs, fancy dress and drunken oblivion. Marauding packs of brides and grooms, close friends and family, on a mission to consume dangerous, liver-crushing levels of alcohol. This, their rite of passage acted out on the last night of freedom, before the conventions and responsibilities of marital life, mortgage, children.

"For almost three years I went back and forth from London to Blackpool, compelled

It was one of those daft moments: some guy on his stag weekend, wrapped up in see-through plastic, his boots and jeans at his ankles

All photos
© Dougie Wallace,
from "Stags, Hens
& Bunnies"



Who do you love? Mum or Dad? Don't say too much about the short skirt, though: Just look at the size of those muscles.

'Every town has its idiots. We import them. If they started with any brains, they leave them on the train'

to document this tribe dressed in torn and stained, comic strip uniforms and committing voluntary acts of self-mutilation. A train guard told me once, 'Every town has its idiots. We import them. If they started with any brains, they leave them on the train.' My guess, though, is that their behaviour in Blackpool is not unlike any normal weekend for them – only amplified.

"Every weekend, the place is heaving with everything from bunnygirls to bananamen. Lassies done up in togas, all matching gold handbags and neatly-done hair, giving it the 'when in Rome' treatment, devil girls, pink ladies, Brownies, guys in drag, stuffed into nuns' and nurses' outfits, wearing salacious T-shirts

with 'Johnny's Last Night of Freedom' or 'Up the Anus Ashley' – each group with the same singular objective, to get as 'fucked up' as possible.

"They all have standard gear for the weekend: bridal veils, hen night sashes, L-plates, shot glasses round their necks, straws with penis heads, handcuffs, angel wings, spank-me sticks, blow-up dolls. Poundland must do great business selling them their hen weekend kits, badge sets and stick-on temporary tattoos. Then, in their single act of creativity, they adapt these cheap, mass produced products to 'immortalise' Jenny, Johnny, Sandra or Sam. You don't have to be a fashion expert to work out the elegantly nuanced signifiers of hen's dress



Getting divorced? Don't sit in the dark sobbing . . . Put on your glad rags and go to Blackpool. Take the old man as well . . .

code that the brides dressed with the L-plates and the fairy wings, are not cut from the same cultural cloth as Bert Hardy's stylised Blackpool Tiller Girls of the 1950s.

"I became part of each individual pack's story: the Glaswegian with the flashgun fleshing out a heightened reality to bring out the ridiculous in each situation. Me with the camera, sparring, ducking and weaving to get the angles, to catch their expressions and emotions – right in their faces, trying to break the fourth wall, to get them to speak to the camera.

"Blackpool – once a fun diversion from the industrial heartlands – a bit like Las Vegas with a Victorian twist – is a town that has a palpable and genuine energy of its own. The

promenade offers up its gala of grotesque and carny seediness; a whole Golden Mile of pubs and bars for swollen bodies to crawl through flashing scary, carrot coloured midriff flesh. The unbridled hedonism is magnified by an inter-pack competitiveness that manifests itself in drinking games, fights or sex in the toilets. It's vaudevillian and hard not to laugh.

"Blackpool is reputed to have the highest alcohol-related mortality rate for men in Britain, and the second highest for women. Not surprisingly, it is also said to have more off-licences per capita than any other town in Europe.

"I don't set out to be Hogarth depicting modern urban mayhem, but in Blackpool the visual satire staggers up the street to meet you.

Blackpool is reputed to have the highest alcohol-related mortality rate for men in Britain, and the second highest for women

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© Dougie Wallace,
from "Stags, Hens
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IN THE PICTURE



Girls will be girls . . . so will the guys. Cleaning a drunken, bare-arsed partygoer off the street as the night gets rowdier.

Tony Blair's dream of a continental style Britain, sipping wine with impunity, has mutated into Cameron's binge-blighted Britain, with cheap alcohol available around the clock

It's a snapshot of our times – a graphic nightmare. Tony Blair's dream of a continental style Britain, sipping wine with impunity, has mutated into Cameron's binge-blighted Britain, with cheap alcohol available around the clock and a mainline railway transporting carriages of escapees from the realities of social decline. Although the smutty uncle of all seaside towns is still attracting some thirteen million visitors a year, some of the town's businessmen are unsettled by its source of revenue. But as long as the night-time economy brings millions of pounds to the town, the stag and hen parties will still be welcome. These 'celebratory rites of passage' create employment and have kept Blackpool afloat.

"For the characters in this book local politics are far from their thoughts. It's about getting blown out of your mind on Jägerbombs and pints, and eating fish and chips to soak up what has gone before and what is yet to come. These hens may have spent the day being pampered in a beauty salon, basking in a mud bath, or enjoying hours of massage, but, as the day wears on and they hit the boozier, it certainly doesn't look it. Lost in their own scrambled thoughts, they pick their noses, wiggle their toes and look with astonishment at their cut and bleeding knees as if they belonged to someone else, with no idea where the injuries were picked-up.

"The long since abandoned Blairite scheme



Not sure what the guy/gal on the right is looking for, but the old man is having nothing to do with it.

for a Super Casino in Blackpool was intended to regenerate Blackpool's flagging economy. In reality it wouldn't have drawn suits and Porsches but coach loads of grannies doing damage to slot machines.

"Blackpool deserves to dust itself down and reclaim some of its former dignity. Not stagger off into the Irish Sea with an inflatable cock as life support, its last gasp taken away as it struggles to adapt to the way in which we recklessly spend our leisure time. Right now... I can't see an end to the carnage."

And there it is, in words and pictures: a tale of decadence and delight, a sliver of life that may not see many more summers if Black-

pool's straightlaced political bosses impose a long-threatened ban on the prenuptial fun.

But the working class have a way of laughing at life and shaking off all the shit that is dumped on them. And when the hard blows of life can't easily be obliterated by silly costumes and drunkenness, their 'betters' will likely face the prospect of a sober and angry populace finding other, more violent, ways to relieve the gloom, doom, recession and repression brought about by more than thirty years of heavy-handed political decision-making.

Until that happens, you should buy Wallace's book, pour yourself and your sweetheart a beer or ten, and join the party. **CT**

Blackpool deserves to dust itself down and reclaim some of its former dignity

All photos
© Dougie Wallace,
from "Stags, Hens
& Bunnies"

See more Blackpool
photos at
<http://dougiwallace.com>

Ukraine and regime change

An excerpt by **Michael Parenti** from the new book, *Flashpoint In Ukraine*

We have seen this well-orchestrated chaos and endless disruption in various countries

This essay, written by Michael Parenti, is taken from “Flashpoint Ukraine”, a collection of insights into the West’s biggest geo-political crisis since the end of World War II. Edited by Stephen Lendman, its 22 contributors also include Paul Craig Roberts, Michael Hudson, James Petras, Cynthia McKinney, Rick Rozoff, John Kozy and Edward S. Herman

In early 2014 more than 83 percent of the qualified voters of Crimea, of their own volition, participated in a referendum to rejoin Russia. And of that number, nearly 97 percent voted to separate themselves from Ukraine and once again become a part of Russia, in what was a massively one-sided victory. Returning to Russia meant better wages and better pensions, and somewhat better living conditions. The eagerness to reconnect was not anchored totally in ethnic emotionality; Crimean voters also hoped for a better standard of living.

It should be remembered that Crimea would never have pursued such an action, and Russia would never have been receptive to such a course, were it not that Ukraine was in the

grip of disruptive forces that were driving toward regime change.

Regime change is a form of action designed to make it impossible for the existing government to govern. We have seen this well-orchestrated chaos and endless disruption in various countries. Militantly organized groups are financed and equipped by outside western interests. NGOs (non-governmental organizations) surface in substantial numbers and produce rebellious publications and events designed to

unsettle the besieged government – in Ukraine’s case, a government that was democratically elected not long before. The NGOs handle billions of dollars worth of supplies used to mobilize and sustain the protests. Even though they are supposed to be independent (“nongovernmental”) some NGOs get all their funds from the US government. As Assistant Secretary of State, Victoria Nuland, proudly exclaimed, the United States had poured some \$5 billion into the struggle for regime change.

Ultra-nationalists and mercenaries soon took hold of the



**FLASHPOINT
IN UKRAINE**

Edited by Stephen
Lendman

Clarity Press

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protesting crowds and set the direction and pace of action, secure in the knowledge that they had the powerful reach of the western nations at their backs. This included NATO's military might and the western (corporate and public) mainstream media with a global reach that pretty much shut out any contrary viewpoint. The most retrogressive elements among these operatives in Kiev launched slanderous attacks against Jews, Blacks, Chinese, Muscovites, – of course – Communists

In Ukraine, crypto-fascist groups like Svoboda, the Right Sector, and others secured ample funds to keep thousands of people fed and comfortable on the streets of Kiev for weeks at a time, complete with well-made marching flags, symbols, and signs in various languages (including English). Svoboda henchmen were being financed by someone. They wore insignia that bore a striking resemblance to the swastika. Svoboda's top leaders openly denounced "Russian scum," and the "Muscovite Jewish mafia." Disguised men in unmarked combat fatigues attacked unarmed police and security guards. They moved among the gathered crowd and at times, according to independent sources, delivered sniper shots into the crowd – which could then be readily blamed on the nearly asphyxiated government. Meanwhile the western media reported everything the way the White House wanted, for instance, unfailingly referring to the perpetrators as "protestors."

This manufactured uprising in Kiev is something we have seen in numerous other countries: from Venezuela to Thailand dur-

ing this very same time frame. The scenario is much the same, and the goal of these western-financed attacks has been to make the world safe for the 1%, the global super rich. Ukraine citizens who think they are fighting for democracy will eventually discover that they are really serving the western plutocracy. They will be left with a new government filled with old intentions. Ukrainians will end up with nothing to show for their efforts except a still more depressed and more corrupt economy, an enormous IMF debt, a worsening of social services, and an empty "democracy," led by corrupt neo-Nazis and ultra-nationalists.

Russia has stepped in on behalf of Russian Crimea. And Russia does not seem quite ready to leave Eastern Ukraine to the mercy of the regime changers. So Russia is now maligned by the western plutocrats who seek ways to put Moscow in isolated retreat. Putin is denounced and demonized at every turn. What exactly have been the demonic moves Putin as committed? Specifics are seriously wanting. What we have witnessed is a longstanding ploy of US global aggrandizing. When confronted by a country or a political movement that decides to work out its own problems, a country that does not open its land, labor, natural resources, and capital to the US empire's voracious embrace, US leaders play the heroic rescuers. The leaders of such countries and movements are demonized: Castro, Mossadegh, Allende, Aristide, Noriega, Milosevic, Qaddafi, Hugo Chavez, and others too numerous to mention.

Leaders who serve US interests by killing

**This
manufactured
uprising in Kiev
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numerous other
countries: from
Venezuela to
Thailand during
this very same
time frame**

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BOOK EXCERPT

And what of the wicked Putin? How really wicked is he? Has anyone in the US media ever read Putin's speeches?

off and otherwise repressing the democratic reformers in their countries, are hailed as friends and heroes as, for instance, was Saddam Hussein hailed by Washington until he started asking for a larger oil quota. Those leaders who step out of line, as did Saddam, by committing economic nationalism, refusing to throw open the land, labor, capital, and resources of their countries to the western investors, are demonized and targeted, depicted as purveyors of mass destruction and whatever other terrorist menace. Once a leader is properly demonized, the US empire builders exercise their presumed license to bomb his people.

So with Ukraine. In Kiev, all through January and February of 2014, the ominously dressed and masked squads that threw fire bombs and sniped from windows and roofs were uncritically and ever respectfully described as “protestors” and “demonstrators” by the western mainstream media. The American Confederacy flags and KKK symbols they hung in the parliament building, after they took it over by force, were pictured on the Internet by freelancers but never mentioned or shown in the corporate news. The “protestors” waged a forceful and successful takeover of the democratically elected government – a government that was promising new elections in a few months. This regime-change campaign earned nary a critical utterance from the US mainstream media. But in March 2014, Russian-speaking citizens in eastern Ukraine who engaged in demonstrations and municipal building takeovers were immediately labeled “terrorists” and “militant agitators” bent on making trouble for the Kiev “authorities.”

And what of the wicked Putin? How really wicked is he? Has anyone in the US media ever read Putin's speeches? If so, they are keeping it a secret. Putin's utterances are so much more clear and sane than the twisty pretenses put out by Obama. Take for instance Obama's Brussels speech of March 2014, at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in which

he dared to claim, with a straight face, that the United States has saved and democratized Iraq! In Iraq, the president and his cohorts did not grab control, he reassured his EU audience: “We left Iraq to its people in a fully sovereign state.” No, we left Iraq with a million casualties, hundreds of thousands in destitution, a shattered infrastructure, a breakdown of public safety, and a demoralized population choking on wretched sectarian violence.

In this same speech, Obama asserted that Washington selflessly felt obliged to help Ukraine. He noted that issues in Ukraine did not infringe upon US interests. Still the United States had a commitment to international law and to the humanitarian rights of all nations, even poor little ones, or maybe especially poor little ones. “We cannot turn our backs on smaller nations” (but Russia is obliged to turn its back on Crimea). Obama was unswerving in his claim that the United States was dedicated to fighting “the bully.” And in this instance, the bully was Russia, led by bully-boy Putin. Russia must learn, Obama went on, that it cannot “run roughshod over its neighbors” and it would accomplish nothing “through brute force” (advice not proffered to the Kiev regime changers themselves). Furthermore, Obama reminded us, we Americans “need to defend democracy” (except when we impose regime change on an elected democratic government as in Ukraine).

Moscow's “invasion of Ukraine” was a violation of international law and is deserving of all the sanctions imposed upon Russia – and more to come. Meanwhile, the changed regime that now represented Ukraine was to be bolstered with a \$17.1 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund and an increased US military presence in neighboring Poland. Immediate disbursement by the IMF of \$3.2 billion will allow Ukraine to avoid a potential debt default. In other words, it will protect the rich creditors, not the Ukrainian taxpayers. It will enable

Ukraine to pay its maturing debts by going still deeper into debt

As the weeks went on, Obama was now making it clear that all decent nations had to stand up to Moscow and challenge the way that Russia was behaving. Some day we might have a US president who does not use diplomacy to play the irate schoolmaster, who does not patronize or scold one or another country with complaints about their behavior. The presumption is that US leaders have no questionable motives, no hidden agendas of any kind. Self examination is not in order.

But others have examined things. Putin himself, on 29 April 2014, remarked that Washington was behind Ukrainian events all along, though keeping low. "I think what is happening now shows us who really was mastering the process from the beginning."

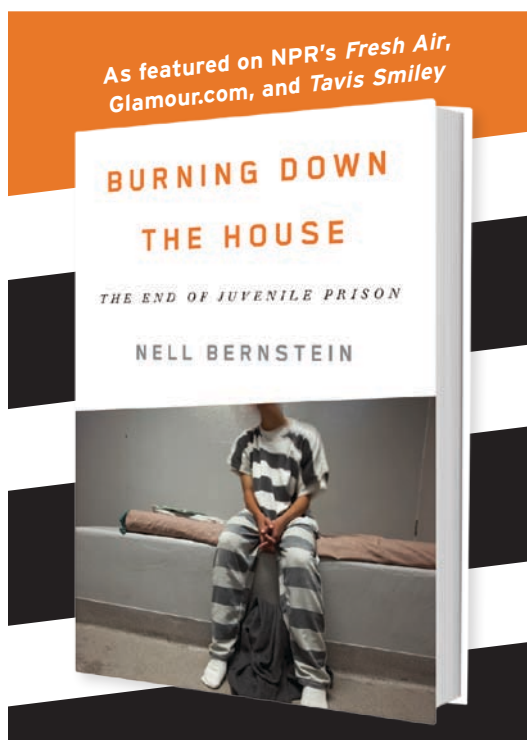
The US empire's ultimate intent is to encircle and reduce Russia to a frightened and discombobulated satellite. But that is much easier said than done. At this time, as I write, Moscow reportedly no longer ac-

cepts telephone calls from the White House. Meanwhile protests against the NATO-supported Ukrainian regime are on the rise. Anti-Kiev activists are seizing administrative buildings and calling for a referendum on federalization. Ukraine's acting President, Aleksandr Turchinov, put the Ukrainian army on full alert due to the "threat of a Russian invasion." Turchinov admitted that the government in Kiev could not control the situation in eastern Ukraine. It did not even seem able to control the situation in Kiev itself.

Obama may have a few tricks and trumps left to play. But he is fishing in troubled waters and might invite more danger and tribulation than he - or we - can handle. As Putin put it: "The situation is serious" and we need "to find serious approaches to the solution." **CT**

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Michael Parenti's two most recent books are *The Face of Imperialism* (2011), and *Waiting for Yesterday: Pages from a Street Kid's Life* (2013)

Ukraine's acting President, Aleksandr Turchinov, put the Ukrainian army on full alert due to the "threat of a Russian invasion"



"Passionate, thoughtful, and well-researched, this is a resounding call to action."
 -Publishers Weekly (starred review)

"An unflinching look at America's unbalanced juvenile justice system."
 -Ebony

"Bernstein reveals a shocking truth: what adults do to children behind the walls of America's juvenile prisons is criminal."
 -Piper Kerman, author of *Orange Is the New Black*

"A skillful integration of firsthand experiences and social science research."
 -San Francisco Chronicle

"A searing indictment of the human cost of breaking connections in children's lives, the book is an urgent drumbeat that warns us of evil done in the name of good."
 -The Philadelphia Inquirer



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Happy for your boss to see your Facebook page?

Think again, urges **Chris James Carter**. Trading your rights to a private life should not be part of anyone's future

There appears to be an important fallacy underlying the notion that providing employers with full access to personal data on social media will somehow boost employability

Will employers in the future watch what their staff get up to on social media? Allowing bosses or would-be employers a snoop around social media pages is a growing trend in the US, and now a new report from PricewaterhouseCoopers and the Said Business School suggests it may well become the norm.

Drawing on a global survey of 10,000 workers and 500 human resources staff, the report predicts that employers' monitoring of workers' lives on social media will increase as they "strive to understand what motivates their workforce, why people might move jobs and to improve employee wellbeing".

More than a third of the young workers surveyed said they were happy for their employer to monitor their status updates and tweets in return for greater job security.

The anticipated thirst of corporations and employers of all sizes for the personal data of their employees is arguably one of the most troubling aspects of the findings, matched only by the apparent willingness of a significant proportion of young people to acquiesce.

The situation is reminiscent of the debate ignited in 2012 over the growing pressure felt by job applicants to hand over their social media passwords to prospective employers. Such investigative subtlety

would have no doubt made Philip Marlowe wince ("I don't mind if you don't like my manners. I don't like 'em myself – they're pretty bad."). David Maass of the Electronic Frontier Foundation) outlined this year why he believes such a practice constitutes a flagrant violation of personal privacy, saying:

"When an employer asks for access to [applicants'] social media, it's essentially the same as if an employer asked for full access to their house ... poking through their mail, looking in their drawers, sitting in on conversations at the dinner table."

However, there appears to be an important fallacy underlying the notion that providing employers with full access to personal data on social media will somehow boost employability. Try the following for yourself: take a moment to think about the long and winding trails of personal data that weave together to form the digital tapestry that you and others create for yourself online. Now, imagine the implications that might arise from allowing your employer to surreptitiously unpick each of these strands in isolation, with little or no knowledge of the context in which they occurred.

Imagine your employer looking over that shared quote from your favourite television show, the photo of you enjoying a refreshing though otherwise unremarkable pint of beer on your summer vacation, or finding that oblique reference you made about a

difficult day at the office last year. Each of them may be relatively innocuous and unexceptional with respect to your intended audience, yet potentially career-defining in the eyes of your employer.

Generation Y-not?

The question we must ask ourselves is, why would young employees be so willing to relinquish their privacy social media lives in exchange for greater job security? It might be that millennials simply care little for matters of privacy. Yet the recent upsurge in the popularity of apps such as Snapchat and WhatsApp seems to run counter to this explanation, with young people seemingly gravitating towards more ephemeral and private means of communicating among their peers, away from the unwanted gaze of older adults. In my own research studying young adults' use of social media, most report using tight privacy settings on Facebook and engaging in strict and often complex approaches to setting personal and professional boundaries on the site as they make the transition from student to early career employee.

On the other hand, a recent Pew Internet survey of teens using social media indicated that while 60% reported making their Facebook profiles private and taking steps to manage to their online reputation, this still leaves a sizable proportion with pub-

licly accessible profiles.

In a digital society where the prevalence of social recruiting continues to rise and media outlets increasingly succumb to the low-hanging allure of social media to substantiate rumours and infer the psychological states of their subjects, perhaps we are faced with the possibility that some young adults are starting to develop a form of learned helplessness that results from observing the relative futility of using social media privacy settings to successfully keep employers at bay.

It is difficult to accurately gauge what kind of impact growing up in a world that is so digitally oriented and yet suffused with commercial and governmental surveillance will have on the workforce of tomorrow. But PwC's report offers the alarming insight that for some young people, the loss of privacy is a price worth paying for the prospect of employability. With the assertion that giving up one would necessarily lead to the other being so dubious in the first place, it's high time we made the case that relinquishing one's right to a personal and private life should not be part of a future that the most recent digital generation strives for. **CT**

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Chris James Carter is a PhD candidate at the University of Nottingham in England.

This article was originally published at <http://theconversation.com>

For some young people, the loss of privacy is a price worth paying for the prospect of employability





Sarajevo bobsled track, Mount Trebivic. Built for the 1984 Winter Olympics, now abandoned.

Dim the lights, shut the door

Nate Robert explores the war porn of Yugoslavia

With enough abandoned sites to make Detroit blush, this is ruin porn – Yugoslavia style

In January 1994, the monthly inflation rate of Yugoslavia was 313 million percent. Notes with a face value of 500 billion dinar were printed, and then became worthless within two weeks as the financial system continued to spiral out of control. Simultaneously devastated by war and total economic collapse, the 1990s post-Tito era was a devastating time to be in Yugoslavia.

These days, tourists can purchase billions of dollars of old Dinar notes for a couple of Euros. Others choose to collect a different souvenir from the dark times of the former Yugoslavia – photographs of the many

abandoned factories, hotels, petrol stations, houses, and bank towers that litter Serbia, Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Montenegro.

With enough abandoned sites to make Detroit blush, this is ruin porn – Yugoslavia style.

After almost two years of continuous travel, I'm currently based in Belgrade. Largest city in the region, former capital of Yugoslavia, today the "white city" is the capital of Serbia. Using Belgrade as a base, I've travelled extensively around the nations that once made up the old Yugoslavia,



The photo was taken in 2013, in the indoor swimming pool room of the abandoned Hotel Fjord, in Kotor, Montenegro. I returned in June 2014, and the arcade machines and pinball games have now been thrown into the pool.

checking out some of the more impressive abandoned sites on offer.

Many people have normal hobbies that don't involve trespassing through dark and dangerous environments. Chess, soap carving, or building tiny Boehm-Stirling machines, perhaps. But urbex – or urban exploration – is an increasingly popular pastime, all around the world. Why?

The attraction of beautiful decay is an obvious target for rock bands and fashion labels searching for an edgy photoshoot location. Collections of urbex photos are perennial favourites of click-bait web sites the

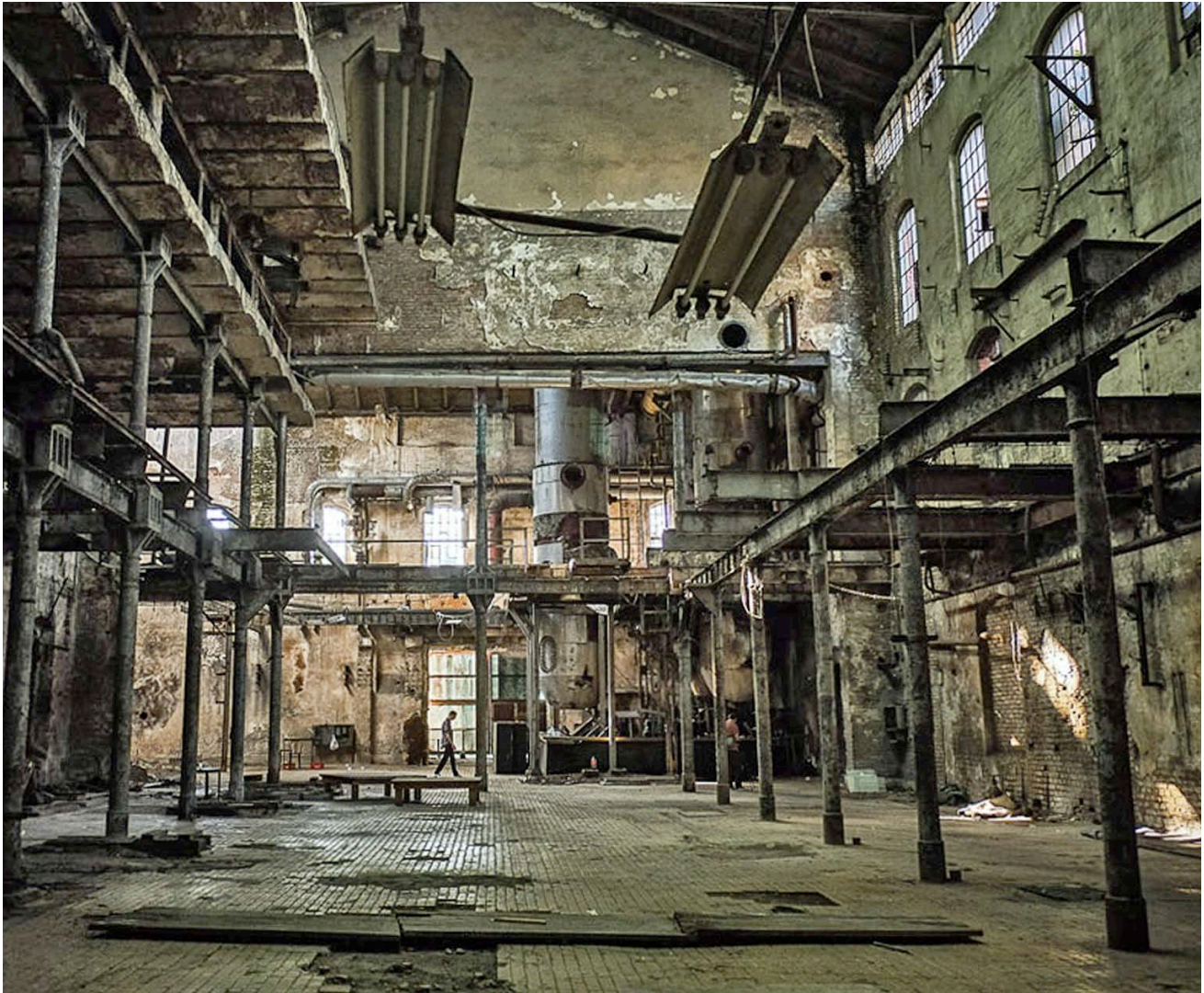
world over, with countless articles designed specifically for Ken down in accounts to kill a few minutes in-between filing TPS reports.

But there's more to the adulation of urbex than just photogenic backdrops. The mysterious appeal of surreal abandoned environments, which in a perfect world wouldn't exist, is a strong drawcard for many reasons.

Personally, being a gen-x'er, I was raised on the exploits of Snake Plisken, Terminator, Mad Max, and video games set in post-apocalyptic cities. But, the phenom-

Many people have normal hobbies that don't involve trespassing through dark and dangerous environments

IN THE PICTURE



Abandoned building in Belgrade, Serbia.

Photos showed an intriguing team of staunch Balkan explorers, donned with vintage gas-masks, posing in various abandoned locations around Serbia

enal popularity of ruin porn goes well beyond generational boundaries, and attracts a wide variety of fans.

Recently, I joined a multi-generational, multi-national gang to explore some of the sites that aren't mentioned in the glossy brochures. Local urbexers "Urbano Istraživanje Beograd", offered their services as tour-guides for a day. On their Facebook page, photos showed an intriguing team of staunch Balkan explorers, donned with vintage gas-masks, posing in various abandoned locations around Serbia. Because of their disguises, I had no idea who to look for when we arranged to meet at a predes-

ignated time and location in the center of Belgrade. So, with my companion and fellow trespasser Darmon Richter, I waited until we were spotted by a fascinating group of guys, one who had near-perfect English.

Our Serbian contact, prepared for a day of toxic environments, was decked out in pristine white shorts, tucked-in tailored shirt, and boat shoes. He was carrying a small leather man-bag, and had an upper class British accent. We soon discovered that apart from being a voracious urban explorer, he's an actor, fashion model, and has spent a decent amount of time in Rhode Island country clubs. This is probably not



Haludovo Palace Hotel, on the island of Krk, Croatia. Founded by Bob Guccione, owner of Penthouse magazine.



A calendar inside an abandoned building, featuring Marshal Josip Broz Tito, former leader of Yugoslavia. His death in 1980 was the catalyst for the Yugoslavian breakup and economic collapse.

the image you had in mind for urban explorers. However, any stereotypes I once held about urbex'ers are long gone. Inside

abandoned buildings across the world, I've spoken with urban explorers who are young, old, male, and female. There's been father and son teams, and whole families, traipsing over rusty floors and traversing dank basements.

Photographers with an excess of expensive camera gear, mix with homeless people looking for a cigarette or a little spare change. There is no "typical" urban explorer.

Most people are searching for a little adventure in their lives, and urban exploration is one way to scratch that itch. In the former Yugoslavia, you will be spoilt for choice. But, if you decide to take part in urbex, remember – it's dangerous, and it's mostly illegal. Don't go alone, bring a flash light, and consider asking for permission before you enter any abandoned building. Bad things can, and do, happen.

Most people are searching for a little adventure in their lives, and urban exploration is one way to scratch that itch

Nate Robert is an Australian photojournalist who specialises in travel photography. Since July 2012, he has been travelling the world full time, traveling through 54 countries. His web site is <http://yomadic.com>

CT

Riding the rails

Linh Dinh hops aboard the Empire Builder, Amtrak's busiest long-distance passenger railway route, and takes a trip across Wisconsin

**Like his face,
everything
he had on was
worn and faded**

Before we start, I must admit that I didn't set foot in Wisconsin this time, but only saw it from the train as I crossed it going West, then East. (I had been to Madison and Milwaukee before.) This, then, is really a train Postcard, but the long distance train is a community in itself. In fact, Americans seldom have such thorough conversations as when they're trapped on a long distance train. If only more of us could be confined that way, we would relate to each other a whole lot better, but such a wish also conjures up citizens being packed into boxcars as they're sent to hard labor, or much worse. How many Americans will cross this country without seeing any of it?

Ah, the ecology of the long distance train! If Lewis and Clark were alive, they would freak out over the outlandish fauna to be discovered on the Empire Builder! Where else will you find a woman trying to eat some very badly-made, meatless fried rice, only to give half of it to a stranger, "The plastic spoon is clean. I wiped it off real good with a paper napkin." Since she couldn't afford the \$7.25 for chicken and rice at the Spokane station, she had asked for just rice, but then it tasted "like popcorn," she discovered with a grimace. The other lady couldn't afford anything at all, however. Hence, the leftover with a used spoon.

Or take a young man from Missoula who was trying to hit on a woman by giving her a cup of instant noodles, "Yes, you can have it! I just ate one myself. It's pretty good! Really, you can have it." Tall and lanky, he wore a gray baseball cap backward, a Marines jacket and charcoal colored, thrift store trousers. Like his face, everything he had on was worn and faded. After spending \$4.50 on those two cups of MSG-flavored ramen, he was left with just \$13.

Sitting in the lounge car, the woman of his fancy was with three friends, two of them male, and though they didn't seem all that interested in his plight, the Missoula man kept sharing, "By the time I get to Fargo, hopefully it'll be night, so I can sleep at the station. After that, I'll find a shelter and stay there a week, maybe a month. It won't be my first time in a shelter. A buddy was supposed to put me up, but after talking me into coming, he stopped answering the phone and even changed his friggin' number, but I figure sooner or later I'll run across him in Fargo. I'll bitch slap him! I had a place in Missoula, but I gave that up, so he definitely has an asskicking coming for leaving me on the friggin' street. I've spent all my money on this train ride, and I won't go back to Missoula, because there's nothing for me in Missoula. In Fargo, I'll take any job I can get, dishwashing, janitorial... I

can't lift anything heavy because I had a car accident. In 2006, I had a seizure behind the wheel and cracked my skull, broke my back and a bunch of other bones.

"I have this bad habit of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, I guess. Funniest thing is, I got married in Lake Tahoe, California, then woke up the next morning on an Indian rez outside Minden, Nevada. How the hell did that happened?! My wife, this Indian woman, must have poisoned me. Twice, I've been on dialysis. I was down to 99 lbs., and I used to weight 200. I was 22, she was 46, and she died at 53. Suddenly, I was living on this Indian reservation. Yeah, I quit drinking when I woke up and married to that!

"You're lucky to have someplace to go after getting off this train. I thought I had a place! I'm all right, though, I have 13 bucks. I'm not worried. That's enough for a pack of smoke and a meal, then I'll check myself into a shelter."

Though train passengers are more affluent than bus riders, for sure, you'd be surprised by how many poor people you'll find on Amtrak, for some towns have no air or bus services, while on some other routes, the fare differences between bus and rail are minor enough that one might as well take the much more comfortable and civil train.

On the train, the top 20% or so go to the dining car for every meal, while the rest of us settle for the café lounge. Some skip eating and drinking altogether for their entire journey. Between Chicago and New York, I sat next to a friendly yet glum man who ingested nothing, not even a drop of water, for 21 hours, and near Clifton Forge, West Virginia, I overheard this dude boast that he had been starving for two days. He couldn't bring himself to cough up \$6.25 for a damn cheeseburger, he said, so he was boycotting it out of principle. Who can blame him? Give me the Dollar Menu or give me death!

Going to your seat on a plane, you pass through the first class compartment, and there you can see, very starkly, the larger,

couch-like seats with no shared armrests, more ample leg room and much better dressed people who have gotten on before you. They will also be the first ones to jump off. On a train, however, the dining car is like a mythical realm to the bad broth slurpers, with what's happening there only wafting downstream as improbable rumors crackling over the intercom: "Today's seafood catch of the day is a mahi-mahi filet, served with two sides, at \$23.75. The Amtrak signature steak is \$25.75..." Yes, yes, I hear you, there are always rich and poor in any society that comes after hunting and gathering, but do mind that gap, eh!

Giving orders

Since they know what it's like to be ordered around, waitresses and bartenders tend to be the best tippers. Conversely, those who have only been waited on can be extremely demanding, if not rude, to the waitstaff. With their multiple requests, they will send a waitress scurrying back and forth to the kitchen, and they'll nonchalantly ask that a menu item be tailored made. So fixated on getting their ways, some won't relent even when they're on a train. A woman from Sharon, Massachusetts complained to me about her dining car experience, "They only had one vegetarian dish, pasta with vegetables, so I ordered that, but I didn't want the pasta, only the vegetables, but when I asked the waitress to withhold the pasta, she gave me all this attitude! She said they were already made, and I could pick out the vegetables myself, but I didn't want to look at the pasta and be tempted to eat it! I've lost a lot of weight, you see, and I didn't want that pasta in front of me. Everything I said drove this psycho waitress nuts! When I asked for skim milk instead of whole milk for my coffee, she just glared at me, and after I had told her I didn't want a bun with my salad, she brought it out anyway! In fact, she brought out two! She was trying to get at me, you see."

When our train stopped in Milwaukee, I thought of Woodland Patterns, the best

"I got married in Lake Tahoe, California, then woke up the next morning on an Indian rez outside Minden, Nevada. How the hell did that happened?! My wife, this Indian woman, must have poisoned me"

POSTCARD FROM THE EDGE

Sitting across from me, Kelly had to strain to speak, and sometimes his eyes would shut, his head would droop forward and he'd nod off for ten seconds or more

poetry bookstore in the entire country, and of Grace, who showed up there when I gave a reading in 2005. I had not held her since 1985. Giving me a tight hug, Grace said, "You haven't changed," then she stole one of the books I had brought for sale, I think. I can't blame her. Like so many of us, Grace had wanted to be an artist. Erasing Grace and Milwaukee, the train chugged and whistled its way to Portage, and that's where Kelly and his daughter got on.

With his body always tilting to the right, Kelly doesn't walk, he staggers, and that's how he entered the lounge car. Sitting across from me, Kelly had to strain to speak, and sometimes his eyes would shut, his head would droop forward and he'd nod off for ten seconds or more, "I was a sheet metal worker. My brother and I had a business. I didn't have insurance for myself since I hardly ever climbed up that ladder. I was trying to save some money, you know..."

"Kelly!" I had to grab his arm to wake the man up.

"It's my pain medicine. It puts me to sleep."

"You were saying you didn't have insurance?"

"Oh, yes, so I fell thirty feet! I've had operations on my right knee, upper right arm and back. I'm always in pain. On top of that, my wife is bipolar. I'm messed up in the body, she's messed up in the head!"

"So where are you going on this train?"

"I'm taking my daughter on a trip. She's 16. I want to clear her head..."

"Kelly! You want to clear her head?"

"Oh yes, I want to remove her from the bad influences. It's impossible to raise a kid these days, because whatever you're teaching them, it's contradicted by the television and internet, so who do you think they're going to listen to? My daughter was fine until she discovered boys a couple of years ago."

"So where are you going?"

"We're going to Portland, hang out for a couple of days, then rent a car and drive down to San Francisco."

Though I could clearly see Kelly dozing off on Interstate 5, I only said, "Your daughter will love San Francisco! She hasn't been there, right?"

"She hasn't been anywhere. My daughter has only visited Chicago and Milwaukee. I thought she would enjoy this trip more, but she's been pretty blasé so far. She's at her seat, texting. I thought I was sitting next to a ghost, and that's why I came up to this lounge car."

"Maybe she'll get into it more after a day or two."

"I can only hope. My daughter needs to see how large this world is. We live in a tiny town where everybody's in everybody's business. People know exactly how much money you have, and so the rich kids hang out with the rich kids. If you're poor and you hang out with the rich kids, people would think you're just sucking up to them."

Dusty enemy

Hit the road and you're likely to learn a whole lot, but this can't happen if you keep your eyes welded to that tablet. From Clifton to La Crosse, the train passed several sand mines, and we also saw idle boxcars loaded with sand. The fracking boom in nearby North Dakota and elsewhere has ramped up considerably sand mining in Wisconsin. Along with jobs and revenues, this mining has also generated silica dust that causes lung cancer and silicosis, and the miles long trains that rumble through cities and towns day and night disrupt traffic and sleep. Mining's economic benefits must also be revised downward, since automation has trimmed the workforce, and mining's boom and bust nature attracts transient, out of state workers who take much of their earnings elsewhere. Finally, since mining is always a tremendous act of violence against the landscape, thousands of acres of verdant Wisconsin are being turned into waste land just so this American joyride can zoom along for a tad longer. Like North Dakota, Wisconsin is also a casualty of fracking, but

don't tell this to Governor Scott Walker, for he's so gung-ho about sand mining, he's publicly thanked "God and the glaciers."

Just to stay chubby, we're eating the country itself, not to mention a good chunk of this earth, but this self-devouring orgy is clearly winding down, and as our world is tapped out, man will slide down the oily pole of modernity. With bombs and drones, then sticks and stones, everyone will fight everyone else for the remaining scraps.

Desire to survive

On the train, I met a man from Racine who gave me a preview of what's coming. A Vietnam vet, George discussed what he had learnt about basic survival, but he only arrived at it via a preamble about a TV documentary, "If a story is passed from generation to generation, sometimes people put yeast in it, inflate it, sometimes it becomes astronomical, but PBS did such an excellent, extraordinary documentation, and that's why I love PBS. I think every American should give them something, because they'd go from nature to biology, oceanography, photography... You name it and PBS covers it."

Before I engaged George, he had been sitting there for maybe an hour, just staring out the window. A thin, black man, he wore a sparse moustache and had on a "WISCONSIN" baseball cap. George started out speaking very softly, but gradually became more animated, "This show was about a Japanese who was living in a cave, and everybody thought, Oh man, this can't be, but the Vietnamese did it! This one gentleman. Cookie... I can't pronounce his name. Kekanaazi? Cookieknaazi? It's so tremendous, his great desire to survive, I could feel it!

"So this man ate raw fish, he ate snails, anything that an American or average person would turn their stomach to or hold their nose and say, 'I can't eat that,' but I've learnt in Vietnam, Don't say what you can't or won't eat, because if you get hungry enough, and if you're cut off from your

supply, and your only means of survival is what God has put here on this earth, and you learn from the tribesmen and villagers of Southeast Asia or wherever... Man, you'll find some of the best eating in the world!

"I've eaten squirrel and water buffalo. I've eaten orangutan. We didn't have to find them, they found us. We'd go into a sector that was really theirs, and they'd be hanging out in the trees and looking at us. They weren't scared. The baby orangutans would be inquisitive, curious, like children, and as we set up our base camp, they'd wait until we had our backs turned to snatch something and run off! They'd steal our food and weapons. They might take an M-16, and as large as their fingers are, if you have the safety off, their finger would get caught in the M-16, and it would go off while they're up in the trees!

"We were invading their territory, so they had to be wondering, What are these strangers doing in my home? I'm not the invader, you are! You're destroying my lifestyle, my habitat, my food supply, and I just want to know what's going on down there? You have to look at it from an animalistic point of view."

To endure Vietnam, George had to adapt to its environment, and to survive in the jungle, he became a neo-primitive, but his quest for assimilation was so fierce, he even learnt to speak Vietnamese and Loatian, "People think the only dimension that exists is what we can see, but I've learnt from the Asians, from the Laotians, that's not true. I speak Vietnamese and Loatian. Something comes natural. Vietnamese is part Chinese, French and Japanese combined. You may be Oriental, but if you go to Spain, you might recognize a word here and there, and you'd be like, How do I know that word? So I listened to the Vietnamese talk, and soon enough, I could also say la le, di di ma, di di ma wa, you know what I'm saying?"

Actually, I had no idea what he had said, but not wanting to interrupt this man's train of thought, I betrayed neither mirth

"The baby orangutans would be inquisitive, curious, like children, and as we set up our base camp, they'd wait until we had our backs turned to snatch something and run off! They'd steal our food and weapons"

POSTCARD FROM THE EDGE

“This is the greatest country on earth, and there’s nothing more beautiful than the sight of that flag flying. Each time I look at it, I just want to choke up”

nor bafflement.

Gorge, “If people keep telling you that you’re going to die, that we’re going to kill you, and if you give up your weapon, we’ll treat you nice. If they repeat that over and over, you’ll pick up the language too.

“I went to Cambodia and Laos. Being there, what I found as the greatest experience, more than the war itself, is talking to the people, and instead of spending my time going to the village to get, you know, I decided I want to get an education, and who’s better to tell you about a situation than the average American, the average Laotian? They told me stories that were absolutely unbelievable.”

Discourse on sagging pants

Finding an eager listener, George expounded at length on numerous topics, including sagging pants, “Every time I see them I always get into an argument or a fight, even at my age, because I can’t stand these ignoramuses. I’d say to them, ‘Remember you’re a man, and a black man, so pull your goddamn pants up! That’s right, I’m talking to you! We didn’t struggle all those years, didn’t go to demonstrations and marches so you can humiliate all of us like that!’ They’re acting like fools and animals, man, like penguins, because that’s not walking. They’re wobbling! If you’re black and you say anything bad about the black community, they’ll call you an Uncle Tom, but you have to get through to these knuckleheads. Take the knock out game. There ain’t nothing funny about that! Hitting old people from behind... You know that 62-year-old man they hit in Philadelphia? They’re lucky it was him and not me, because I’d have chased them down and pumped lead into their heads, then I’d call the police!”

George on the sad shape of the American Indian, “They’re on everything but a horse.” He spoke of a Cherokee co-worker, “She escaped the rez at 15, ran off with a biker, a nut, and they’re still aren’t married 16 or 17 years later. ‘We’re still getting acquainted,’ she

said. Acquainted! She can’t be older than 31 or 32, but she goes to the doctor more often than I do, She’s having another back surgery this summer. I said to her, ‘You have more pain, you go to more appointments than I do, and I’m 62. I’ve been hit with shrapnel, had a concussion, had my legs messed up from jumping out of airplanes, had my rib broken, but you’re in worse shape than me, and what have you done but ride around in a truck with your boyfriend? It just hurts me to see another suffering American, like you, not knowing what you’re entitled to, so you should reconnect with your tribe to get your share of whatever compensation the tribe is getting from the US government.’ She didn’t appreciate me telling her all this, and even got mad at me, so she said, ‘Mr. Shepherd, I’ve got work to do.’ I explained to her, ‘Not once have I made a pass at you. Not once have I physically or verbally assaulted you, so why are you angry at me?’ And she is a beautiful woman, but as good as she looks now, she must have been a superstar as a teenager!”

George knows something about getting his just compensation, for he had to fight the Department of Veterans Affairs for 10 years to be classified as a victim of Agent Orange. Before this, he was only getting “kibbles and bits” in disability payments. America’s neglect of her veterans is a disgrace, he said, “Why do we continue to spend money on murder and mayhem while our veterans sleep on the streets?” In spite of all this, George’s patriotism is unalloyed, “This is the greatest country on earth, and there’s nothing more beautiful than the sight of that flag flying. Each time I look at it, I just want to choke up. I knew in my heart I was born to be a soldier. I knew in my soul, I was born to be a warrior. I also knew that God did not put me here to be dormant or a fool. When I was a kid, I didn’t like cowboys and indians, I played with a Sherman tank. ”

George signed up for an extra year of fighting in Vietnam, “I did it to save my brother, because I knew he wouldn’t be

able to take it. There's a law that said only one son from each family could be in Vietnam at a time. I had another reason, but it's something civilians will never understand. It's a burning desire called esprit de corps in the military, and in civilian life, it's called compassion. It's a love for those who have made the greatest of sacrifices so you, yourself, can go home.

So you're home and you're walking around and you see the corner store, and you think of a restaurant you'd like to eat at, and everything is so nice, the trees, the vegetation, and you're thankful that God has granted you another day on this earth, and somebody you know waves at you, 'How you doing?' and you go, 'Hey man, what's up!' and everything should be just fine, but it isn't, really, a pretty sight, because no one knows what you've gone through, and no one cares. How many beers can you have before you feel like killing yourself?"

George spoke of a Marine who served five tours, "On this fifth tour, he didn't come back. I went to his funeral, and it was a closed coffin ceremony. You see, people think there must always be a body inside that coffin, but sometimes a coffin is just for show. Lots of time, there's nothing to send back but some bone fragments, half a boot, bit of clothing, a bible or dog tag, so whatever you have, you put inside that coffin. If you have nothing, then it's just an empty coffin that goes into the ground.

"The captain was married to an Eskimo, and each time we came over, she always treated us like she had known us forever. He had such a beautiful, happy, peaceful family, and his kids had so much manners and were so humble. I'm their adopted godfather. I'd kill a brick for one of them kids."

George spoke lovingly of his late wife, whom he was married to for 33 years, and of a grandson who was shot for trying to help a stranger, "He saw this man step on a woman's face, and he just had to do something, because that's the kind of man he was. That's how he was raised."

George's son graduated from Clemson, and he himself went to three colleges and a vocational school. He's also been jailed four times, however, "I didn't hurt anybody. One of my convictions was for writing bad checks." With his emphasis on family, education, discipline and personal improvement, George is typical of many working class Americans, especially of his generation, but his enthusiasm for the military is also all-too-common.

Firmly believing in the dignity and honor of serving his country, he ignores its contradictions and abuses, many of which he has seen firsthand. After shooting the shit with and shooting Southeast Asian villagers, tribesmen and orangutans, George came home as a good American soldier, and the same Communists he risked his life fighting are about to buy weapons from American manufacturers, and why not, since America is an equal opportunity death merchant that has armed just about every country, militia or drug gang. Just call this toll-free number!

Looking for civilization

Though America's ideology will gyrate, twerk or U-turn from moment to moment, her allegiance to war profiteering is unshakable, and as she destroys humanity, she speaks of civilization so constantly that the word itself has become suspect. "Democracy" and "freedom" she has long crapped on beyond recognition. From Portland to Williston, I sat behind a young man who spent all of his waking hours being mesmerized by a computer game. Candy, a gregarious woman with Sioux blood, asked him, "What are you playing?"

Without looking up, he growled, "Civilization Builder."

"So what's the point? Are you building up civilization from scratch?"

"No."

"Are you defending what you already have?"

"Sort of."

From Portland to Williston, I sat behind a young man who spent all of his waking hours being mesmerized by a computer game

POSTCARD FROM THE EDGE

For these people, a rejection of war is not just cowardly and unrealistic, but a refusal to, literally, become a man

“Oh, I get it, you want to get a lot more!”
“Yeah.”

Now, before you laugh at this young man’s naked and childish admission to wanting more, remember that greed and lust for power are fairly universal traits that spread across the political spectrum, though only on the conservative end are they openly admitted to and even touted as virtues. The war instinct is also found in all surviving cultures, with tiny pockets of pacifism remaining thanks to the mercy or tolerance of their larger societies. Again, it is mostly those who self-identify as conservatives or traditionalists who openly embrace war as not only necessary for the survival of society, but as a crucible for the development of each individual’s character. To them, a rejection of war is not just cowardly and unrealistic, but a refusal to, literally, become a man.

Exploiting these convictions, American war profiteers have few problems selling any war to the American public, and that’s why you see the generic “Support our Troops” stickers and signs everywhere, but what these unquestioning war supporters don’t realize is that, in this endless war that’s being waged by their masters, they’re also collateral damage and enemy. Fighting against themselves, they’ll wave the flag until they’re bombed back to the stone age, and perhaps by friendly fire even. **CT**

Linh Dinh was born in Vietnam in 1963, moved to the US in 1975, and has also lived initially in England. He is the author of two collections of stories, “Fake House” and “Blood and Soap”, five books of poems, and a novel, “Love Like Hate”. Read more of his writing at <http://linhdinhphotos.blogspot.com>



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Gazafying dissent

Tithi Bhattacharya and **Bill V. Mullen** show how the Israeli war propaganda machine is being thwarted by social media. Now the fight for attention has moved to the next stage: an assault on international protest

Israel does not want you to talk about the children it kills in Gaza. And neither does your government. Western politicians and media have a long history of ignoring the horrific conditions under which Palestinians live under Israeli occupation while paying universal homage to Israel as the “only democracy in the Middle East.”

This mythology has now exploded. As Paul Mason has pointed out, since Israel began its July 8th attack on Gaza, there has been a “massive change in the balance of power between social media and the old hierarchical media channels we used to rely on to understand wars.”

For the first time, the world has access to real-time images, voices and narratives of the people of Gaza themselves. Deepa Kumar correctly surmised that this has led to a “crumbling” of Israel’s propaganda war, and even Israel stalwarts like the *New York Times* have been forced to report the catastrophic effects on Palestinians produced by Israel’s massacre.

Even on the military front, questions are being asked about the assumed invincibility of Israel’s might. Hamas has proven again that it is not a pushover and is prepared to withstand Israel’s far advanced weaponry and manpower.

Thus, despite the killing and destruction Israel has inflicted in Gaza, the Israeli state is not emerging as the victorious ‘white

knight’ of democracy whose image for many was once invincible.

The question arises, then: what is a state to do in the face of a widening gap between its previous status as an icon of ‘democratic exceptionalism’, and its new role as global bully? What, in short, to do when facing a real crisis of ‘legitimation’?

Fortunately, Israel has friends in high places.

As the death toll rises in Gaza, and anger mounts around the world, Israel and its allies have adopted a new tactic.

They have largely abandoned attempts to recover Israel’s democratic legitimacy. They have resorted instead to the outright criminalization of all dissent. And even to kill for it.

- In the West Bank, Israel shot dead more than ten protesters against the massacre in neighboring Gaza. At a July 12 anti-war rally in Israel, police stood by as fascist thugs attacked non-violent protesters. Palestinian Member of the Israeli Knesset, Haneen Zoabi, has been banned from all parliamentary activity, except for voting, for six months. Netanyahu has called for all pro-Palestine protests to be banned across Europe.

- France has criminalized pro-Palestinian protests. 1,500 French riot police were deployed against a pro-Palestine protest in

Hamas has proven again that it is not a pushover and is prepared to withstand Israel’s far advanced weaponry and manpower

WAR OF WORDS

In Palestine, Palestinians have to abandon all attempts at self-defense and accept gratefully the murderous occupation of their land

Paris on July 26th.

- In Calcutta, India, Special Branch forces (India's equivalent of the FBI) demanded the cell phone number of Kunal Chattopadhyay, a professor, at a public meeting in support of BDS. In New Delhi, pro-Palestine protestors at the Israeli Embassy were viciously attacked by local police.

- In London, Ontario, Canada, protesters wanting to talk to the Tory MP Susan Truppe, were removed by police.

- In Manchester, England, a pro-Palestine protester was hurled to the ground by metropolitan police during an apparent arrest.

- In Los Angeles, prominent Palestinian journalist, activist and the founding editor of Electronic Intifada, Ali Abunimah, was brutally assaulted by the LAPD for filming a pro-Israeli protest.

- In New York, long-time Israel critic Norman Finkelstein was arrested for peaceful disobedience by NYPD, perpetrators of the notorious Stop and Frisk racial profiling program and spying programs against Muslims.

- In Chicago, the authors were part of a protest during which Chicago police put snipers on rooftops. Kirsten, a member of Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace, was injured by police at an action on July 17th. She told us she "was not participating in... civil disobedience" but was "live-tweeting and photographing the arrest of my partner, when an officer pushed me from the curb, causing me to roll and badly injure my ankle."

- Also in Chicago, pro-Palestinian activists Rima Kapitan and Faten Dabis were at a counter-protest at the Israeli Consulate in Chicago on July 22nd. Here is Ms. Dabis's

account of the incident:

"During the protest, we crossed the street and distributed fliers against the Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip....while we were across the street, I participated in a chant with the counter-protesters. Upon hearing me, Sergeant Shoshi (badge #1460), admonished me loudly, telling me to go across the street. In response, Ms. Kapitan asked him what I was doing wrong. He said I was chanting, and she replied that I was...exercising my First Amendment right. Sergeant Shoshi then grabbed Ms. Kapitan's arm, leading her to the side of the building, telling her that she could be fined for distributing fliers illegally."

- In Indianapolis, Siren Zayed, a Palestinian student, was denied entry and escorted out of the Jewish Community Center by security when she peacefully tried to enter to hear a presentation by the Israeli Midwest Ambassador. JCC representatives said Zayed was on "private property" and security forces told her "your kind is not wanted here."

- The International Cricket Council has banned Moeen Ali, the English cricketer, from wearing his 'Free Gaza' wrist band during the test match with India;

It is clear that Israel, and the governments that back it, have a two-pronged strategy:

(a) In Palestine, Palestinians have to abandon all attempts at self-defense and accept gratefully the murderous occupation of their land and the illegal siege of Gaza. This is Israel's idea of "truce".

(b) For the rest of us, we have to lay down our placards, silence our voices and close our eyes as Israel kills children in their sleep. If not, elected democratic governments are prepared to send in the police to attack us or silence us.

Even if we leave aside Israel, which has never been a democratic society for anyone

of non-Jewish descent, why has the butchering of democratic expression in other parts of the world become so commonplace?

Because Israel's crisis of legitimacy is not a crisis for Israel alone, but for the entire edifice of Empire, whose architects live in places like Washington, London and Paris.

There is much at stake for our world leaders if the global protests for Palestine continue to grow. What if they spark a third Intifada in Palestine? What if they spark a new Arab Spring – after all, if you start to withstand truncheons for opposing Benjamin Netanyahu, why not Abdel el-Sisi or Bashar al-Assad? What if the cry of “Free Free Palestine” is echoed in New Delhi as “Free Free Kashmir”? or the voices demanding to pull down the Apartheid Wall in Palestine are joined by the voices wanting to pull down the border fence between US and Mexico? What if gaining confidence by the protests against Boeing and Caterpillar's role in funding Israel, workers at these companies start demanding their rightful wages

and pension?

Palestine today lies at the heart of humanity's universal sense of justice. This is why leaders across the world want to stamp out all talk of Palestine.

And this is precisely why we cannot put down our Free Palestine placards. Instead, we should start taking them everywhere – in to our communities, workplaces and schools. **CT**

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Tithi Bhattacharya is a Professor of South Asian History at Purdue University, a long time activist for Palestinian justice and on the editorial board of the International Socialist Review.

Bill V. Mullen is a Professor of American Studies at Purdue University. He is the author of many books and on the national steering committee for the US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (USACBI).

This article originally appeared at <http://mondoweiss.net>

What if the cry of “Free Free Palestine” is echoed in New Delhi as “Free Free Kashmir”?

BIG MEDIA & INTERNET TITANS

Edited by Granville Williams

Published by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom

Price £9.99 ISBN 978-1-898240-07-5

Media pluralism must be put back on the political agenda. That is what a new book, just published by the media reform group, the UK-based Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, argues.

Big Media & Internet Titans highlights the democratic challenges posed by excessive media power, both in the hands of ‘old media’ but also through the emergence of the four giants of the internet age – Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon.

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The book poses urgent questions about media ownership and throws down the democratic challenge for politicians to embrace policies which will promote diverse, democratic and accountable media.

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The colonel who should face a war crimes court

Israeli army leader uses religion to justify massacre of innocent civilians, writes **Ahron Bregman**

Israel activated the Hannibal Protocol in Rafah, which is one of the most densely populated areas on earth, the results were devastating

While Israel and Hamas are still looking for ways to end their Gaza war, the UN Human Rights Council appointed a three-member panel to investigate allegations that humanitarian law was violated in the Gaza Strip during the fighting, in a manner that could amount to war crimes. Close to 2,000 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, a majority of them civilians, while the Israelis lost 64 soldiers and three civilians.

On past precedent, Israel is highly unlikely to co-operate with any UN investigation. That was Israel's position with the Goldstone inquiry into Operation Cast Lead in 2008-9, in which 1,400 Palestinians were killed.

What the Israelis will do is to conduct their own investigations, insisting that as Israel investigates itself, there is no need for an external body to do the same. But there are serious deficiencies in the Israeli self-investigation practice, as the tendency there is not to take disciplinary or criminal actions against those involved in wrongdoings, and the inquiries are not transparent.

The UN team, no doubt, will look into IDF attacks on schools and hospitals during the Gaza war, but I strongly believe that their first priority, and top on their list of incidents-to-be-investigated should be the events that took place in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Friday, August 1.

On that day, a humanitarian truce was due to start at 8am. Israeli forces, however, continued to search for Hamas tunnels and, on one occasion, troops of the infantry Givati brigade approached a house from where they were fired at. A battle ensued in the course of which two Israeli troops were killed and a third, Hadar Goldin, could not be seen and it was assumed that he was abducted by Hamas.

Hannibal Protocol

In the Israeli psyche, since their Lebanon wars, an abducted soldier is a nightmare, as the captors often manage to use the soldier as a bargaining chip to squeeze major concessions from Israel, mainly the release of many prisoners from Israeli jails. As a result, in Lebanon, in the 1980s, the Israeli army came up with its "Hannibal Protocol", which allowed the army, in the minutes and hours immediately after an abduction of a soldier, to use massive fire to prevent the abductors from disappearing with their captured soldier.

This procedure was fine for Lebanon, as the areas where it was activated in the past were open lands and sparsely populated. But on August 1, when the Israelis wished to thwart Goldin's capture (later it turned out that he was killed) and they activated the Hannibal Protocol in Rafah, which is one of the most densely populated areas on earth,



Invasion of the Green Men: Israeli soldier puts on war paint before joining the attack on Gaza.

Photo: Israel Defence Forces

the results were devastating.

Not issuing the Palestinians of Rafah with any warning which could have enabled them to get out of the way, Israeli forces took extreme measures by embarking on their most aggressive bombardment during the entire Gaza war. Airplanes struck Rafah 40 times, dropping massive bombs on its civilian neighbourhoods, heavy artillery pumped more than 1,000 shells into the area, tanks invaded, firing in all directions and heavy bulldozers moved in to flatten scores of houses on the heads of people who were still inside.

Palestinians who did manage to jump into cars to escape the inferno were shot at, and cars carrying injured civilians trying to approach the Rafah hospital were also attacked. The Israeli blitz which lasted three hours killed more than 150 Palestinian, injured hundreds, many of whom were buried under the rubble.

Holy war

The colonel who orchestrated the assault on Rafah was Ofer Winter, the commander of the Givati Brigade. A religious settler, he dispatched, on the eve of the Gaza war, a letter to his troops, laden with biblical references, which perhaps explains the ferocity

with which they attacked Rafah. What Colonel Winter called on his troops to do was, effectively, to conduct a religious war on Gaza. Here are some quotes from his letter:

“History has chosen us to be the sharp edge of the bayonet of fighting the terrorist enemy from Gaza which curses, defames and abuses the God of Israel’s battles ... We will ... wipe out the enemy ... Using all means at our disposal and with all required force ... I turn my eyes to the sky and call with you ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.’ God, the Lord of Israel, make our path successful, as we are about to fight for Your People, Israel, against an enemy who defames your name.”

Colonel Winter managed to wipe out many Palestinians, but alas they were non-combatant civilians. His actions, and those working with him, must be thoroughly investigated by the UN team to establish whether it amounted to war crimes. **CT**

*Ahron Bregman is a Lecturer in the Department of War Studies at King’s College London. He is the author of *Cursed Victory: A History of Israel and the Occupied Territories* (Allen Lane, 2014). This article was originally published by The Conversation at <http://theconversation.com>*

The Israeli blitz which lasted three hours killed more than 150 Palestinian, injured hundreds, many of whom were buried under the rubble

Gaza is a testing ground for military technology

Commercial considerations of the arms industry play a key role in Israel's policies towards the Gaza Strip, writes **Shir Hever**

Trade fairs for military technology and for homeland security equipment are commonplace in Israel, especially after each round of bombardment and/or invasion of Gaza

Israel may be a relatively small state, but it is the largest per-capita weapons exporter in the world. The Israeli arms companies have the advantage in marketing their products around the world, because they can claim that their products have been tested in actual combat.

Senior officers of the Israeli army often pursue a second career in the arms industry after retiring from service, and as soldiers they already have the opportunity to perform valuable services to their future employers, by testing weapon systems developed by the arms companies, by convincing the Israeli government and public of the necessity of such technologies for military victory, and by offering praise to the companies producing these weapons.

Trade fairs for military technology and for homeland security equipment are commonplace in Israel, especially after each round of bombardment and/or invasion of Gaza. The advertising line repeated by the companies in these trading fairs to promote their wares is that “the IDF already uses that technology.”

The Israeli arms industry operates in close cooperation with its bigger sister in the US. The military aid the US gives to Israel ensures this cooperation, and every conflict in the Middle East contributes more to the profits of US arms giants (such as Boeing, General Dynamics, Lockheed Mar-

tin, and Raytheon) than to the Israeli arms companies.

Wars have a civilian cost and most sectors of the Israeli economy, which are not directly tied to the arms sector, suffer from the constant conflict in which Israel is embroiled. The struggle of the distribution of the limited public resources has intensified over the years, and while the Ministry of Defense continues to demand a growing share of the pie, the general public is frustrated with stagnant or even a decreasing standard of living. This discontent has reached a peak with the social protests of the summers of 2011 and 2012. Yet every call in Israel to cut the defense budget has been silenced with violence, violence against Palestinians or against the Lebanese. When the winds of war blow, all talk about cutting the defense budget falls silent.

After the 2006 war against Lebanon, which was a humiliation for the Israeli army, the Israeli government sought to focus its aggression on the Gaza Strip. Gaza is small, contained and densely populated, and did not have the ability to defend itself in comparison to Hezbollah's ability to defend Lebanon in 2006.

Since then, a clear pattern emerged, according to which the Israeli army launches an attack against Gaza every two years. The army thus successfully avoided budget cuts, arms companies increased their profits, and

by 2012 the Israeli weapons exports have reached a peak of US \$ 7 billion.

In the previous attack of November 2012 “operation Pillar of Defense,” the star of the show was the “Iron Dome” anti-rocket system. The Iron Dome missiles, which cost US \$50-100 thousand each, intercepted the makeshift rockets from Gaza which cost little more than US \$1,000 to make. Nevertheless, the system successfully allowed Israelis to continue in their daily routines while defenseless people in Gaza are killed at a whim, an achievement which seems attractive to many governments and armies around the world. Their demand for Israeli weapons depends on such asymmetrical warfare.

The Hamas party in Gaza understands this fully well and tried to break the cycle. They offered a cease-fire at the very beginning of the Israeli attack, offering a 10-year cessation of attacks against Israel, in exchange for lifting the siege. This seemed to be what the Israeli government wanted. After all, Israeli justified the siege merely as a protective measure against Palestinian attacks, but Hamas knew that Israel would never accept their offer. The Israeli arms industry would lose its edge if it were to go 10 years without testing its weapons.

In the face of widespread destruction in Gaza and almost 2,000 dead, it is easy to overlook the fact that this war of the summer of 2014 has not been easy on the Israeli side either. Not only has the war taken a heavy toll on the Israeli economy, but it has shown that despite Israel’s superior military technology, it cannot defeat Hamas and cannot achieve its strategic objectives. The excessive violence which Israeli soldiers used indicates how the image of “surgical precision” is of little worth when an entire population under occupation has every reason to rise up against Israeli domination, and everyone is a suspect.

Without mechanisms to discipline Israeli soldiers who point their fire at civilians, Israeli soldiers turn increasingly bru-

tal, and the list of atrocities grows longer. Any hopes that advanced weaponry would allow Israel to wage a “clean” war, to avoid political and legal ramifications from mass civilian death were dashed. Already the UK, Spain and even the US have taken steps to distance themselves from Israel’s arms industry and to increase control of arms shipments to Israel.

Nevertheless, the Israeli economic newspapers have published a series of articles on the new contracts won by Israeli arms companies and the finance raised in large-scale bond issue by companies such as Elbit Systems and IAI. Bezahel Machlis, CEO of Elbit Systems, mentioned in an interview that all of Elbit’s products have been used in the current operation in Gaza. But the Israeli military has not tested Israeli-made weapons in a conventional war for over forty years. The Israeli army specializes in asymmetrical warfare, in repression of protest and of guerilla groups. Therefore, the demand for Israeli arms is highest among governments facing high inequality and social unrest. It is no coincidence that the largest customers of Israeli arms are India, Brazil and the US.

In fact, the Gaza Strip becomes more than a laboratory for Israeli explosives. It is a laboratory for a social experiment in which an entire population is incarcerated and isolated, controlled from the land, the sea and the air, and sustained with the assistance of international aid (for which Israel doesn’t have to pay). Arms companies promise that they have the means to contain the Palestinian resistance, and keep the population subjugated. But if they are successful, and keep selling the weapons to other countries, one wonders who the next subjects of this containment policy will be. **CT**

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The Hamas party in Gaza tried to break the cycle. They offered a cease-fire at the very beginning of the Israeli attack, offering a 10-year cessation of attacks against Israel, in exchange for lifting the siege

A time for youth

Mark Metcalf attended the recent Durham Miners' Gala and has some ideas that will help it survive many more years

There are moments when taking in the whole scene throughout Durham City and on the Racecourse by the River Wear almost brings me to tears

It was great to see an article about the Durham Miners' Gala in the last issue of *ColdType*.

Despite the growing numbers for whom this annual event cannot be missed, it constantly fails to attract the attention of the mainstream media and the BBC and, as a result, is little known about overseas. It would be brilliant if more overseas visitors, especially trade union delegations, attended.

In recent years the gala has expanded with a whole series of events that start in the days leading up to the Saturday march and rally.

This year, UNITE the union commissioned the Red Ladder Theatre Company to present a musical play about the 1984/85 miners' strike. "We're Not Going Back" – was well received when it made its debut in the main council chamber of the truly magnificent Durham Miners' Association (DMA) headquarters at Redhills, where the DMA and UNITE last year established a welfare and employment rights advice support centre, which has also been the base for significant campaigning initiatives against government welfare cuts.

The number of new miners' lodge and community banners that are made across County Durham communities throughout the year also demonstrates that the meeting itself is not just one day in the calendar.

For someone like myself who first attended the Big Meeting in the 1960s and has returned on close to forty occasions it is truly uplifting that, despite having no working miners for over two decades, the gala not only exists but also is getting bigger. There are moments when taking in the whole scene throughout Durham City and on the Racecourse by the River Wear almost brings me to tears so deep are the emotions and the connections with my forefathers and their wives, not forgetting my mates who worked down the pits and all those who fought so heroically in 1972, 1974 and 1984 to defend their terms and conditions, and ultimately, the communities I was brought up in.

It is not only the fact that there are no working miners that makes the continued existence of the gala something of a miracle. Despite being left without any membership contributions, the gala organisers, the Durham Miners' Association (DMA) has continued to represent at industrial tribunals those former miners made unwell by harsh working conditions.

But with the DMA having lost a lengthy, highly expensive court case in defence of former miners suffering from osteoarthritis on grounds that the three-year time limit for claims had been exceeded, the bill of £2.2 million naturally placed doubts about the future of the gala, which costs in excess of £60,000 a year. Friends of the Durham



Tyneside workers march behind their banner at the Durham Miners' Gala after winning a three-week pay strike against their employers.

Photo: Mark Harvey, ID8 photography, Sheffield

Miners' Gala was launched last year and asks people to make a minimum donation of £2 a month or £24 a year. Over a thousand people, including myself and some friends I have persuaded, have so far signed up. Meantime, major unions – UNITE particularly – have contributed generously to the costs. All this demonstrates that there is a determination to ensure the future of this important trade union and labour movement event.

Changes needed

However, I feel there are a number of things that need changing and adopting that would make the gala even more important. The first is its appearance and by which I mean at times it no longer appears to be a miners' gala. This is because most of the miners' lodge banners and their accompanying banners are first on the cobbled Durham City streets and they go through in a block. Then

the various individual trade union blocks from such as UNISON, NUT, PCS and the RMT go through separately. I feel it would be much better if these blocks were broken down with the miners' lodge banners intertwined with those of other trade unions. By doing this then anyone turning up would never be able to lose sight of the fact that first and foremost this event is historically connected with the miners' of Durham and Northumberland, something that must never be allowed to be forgotten.

That said there is a clear need for another just as important message to come though on the day and that must be JOIN A TRADE UNION AND GET ORGANISED.

In particular, there are tens of thousands of young people of working age who attend the gala. Speaking to some of them quickly illustrates they know virtually nothing about trade unions. In my day you left school, started work and joined the union

There are tens of thousands of young people of working age who attend the Gala and know virtually nothing about trade unions

FEEDBACK

Only weeks after the Gala there has started in Jarrow a march to London to put pressure on the Government to change the disastrous course it has plotted which is privatising the NHS

but that is not so today although the North East of England remains an area where over 35% of those in work are in a union, a figure significantly above the UK average. "It is something my dad was in." "There isn't one where I work." "No one has mentioned joining to me." "I'd get sacked if I joined one." All these and more were said to me when I spoke to some youngsters at this year's gala.

With trade union density among young workers aged between 16 and 24 down at 8 per cent then it is clear that much work needs to be done, especially when it is known that they are working in workplaces and sectors where there is no union to join. Whilst there are often many references from the speaker's platform as to how terrible things are for young people there is little attempt to engage with those that are there. Certainly the range of speakers themselves is often much, much older and none is a young trade union member who may have unionised and organised a particular workplace at some time in the recent past.

Learning from success

There is nothing so inspiring as learning from success. Just days before this year's gala, the workers at Tyneside Safety Glass in nearby Gateshead had largely won their pay strike and it would have been great to let the crowd know of this important success achieved after three weeks on strike.

Where were the big banners with the slogans JOIN A UNION. Where were the leaflets – again with examples of success and accompanied by information about what a union is and how to join - and where was the drive to speak to young people on the day and encourage them to sign up?

I have already mentioned the need to try to engage with the young people by having a speaker more closely related to their age group. But, in addition, do we really need

4-5 people to more or less say the same thing and represent the same Labour Party constituency. The Labour movement has lost two of its best speakers in Bob Crow and Tony Benn and aside from UNITE's Len McCluskey and Mark Serwotka from the PCS, I am not convinced that the current trade union leaders command much of a presence, they certainly didn't this year as what they had to say was not especially riveting.

There is within the brochure for the gala, and occasionally from the platform, references to new movements and campaigns including UK Uncut and the People's Assembly. Only weeks after the gala, a march was started from Jarrow to London to put pressure on the government to change the disastrous course it has plotted to privatise the National Health Service. This movement was kick-started by local Darlington mums and I wouldn't have minded hearing from them. Interestingly, the largest cheer this year came when the Communications Workers Union speaker Jane Lofts said: "Workers should unite with every refugee and asylum speaker."

A good friend is someone who is unafraid to offer constructive criticism. I am a good friend of the Durham Miners' Gala and while I certainly hope to see the gala running for many years to come I think it needs some changes. I am sure other people just as passionate as me feel the same. **GT**

Dedicated to Joseph Charlton, aged 42, and Robert Noble, aged 45, relatives of mine who perished at the Easington Colliery disaster in 1951.

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Mark Metcalf is the co-author with Martin Jenkinson and Mark Harvey of "Images Of The Past: The Miners' Strike," – <http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk/Images-of-the-Past-The-Miners-Strike-Paperback/> /6436

Friends of the Durham Miners' Gala

<http://www.durhamminers.org/Friends%20of%20the%20Durham%20Miners%20Gala.html>

Cold War Two

William Blum looks at recent statements from American leaders and finds that their views are not shared by the rest of the world

During Cold War One those of us in the American radical left were often placed in the position where we had to defend the Soviet Union because the US government was using that country as a battering ram against us. Now we sometimes have to defend Russia because it may be the last best hope of stopping TETATW (The Empire That Ate The World). Yes, during Cold War One we knew enough about Stalin, the show trials, and the gulags. But we also knew about US foreign policy.

E-mail sent to the Washington Post July 23, 2014 about the destruction of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17:

Dear Editor,

Your July 22 editorial was headed: “Russia’s barbarism. The West needs a strategy to contain the world’s newest rogue state.”

Pretty strong language. Vicious, even. Not one word of hard evidence in the editorial to back it up. Then, the next day, the Associated Press reported:

“Senior US intelligence officials said Tuesday that Russia was responsible for ‘creating the conditions’ that led to the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, but they offered no evidence of direct Russian government involvement. ... the US had no direct evidence that the missile used to shoot down the passenger jet came from Russia.”

Where were these words in the *Post*? You

people are behaving like a rogue newspaper.—
William Blum

I don’t have to tell you whether the *Post* printed my letter. I’ve been reading the paper for 25 years – six years during Vietnam (1964-1970) and the last 19 years (1995-2014) – usually spending about three hours each day reading it very carefully. And I can say that when it comes to US foreign policy the newspaper is worse now than I can remember it ever was during those 25 years. It’s reached the point where, as one example, I don’t take at face value a word the *Post* has to say about Ukraine. Same with the State Department, which makes one accusation after another about Russian military actions in Eastern Ukraine without presenting any kind of satellite imagery or other visual or documentary evidence; or they present something that’s wholly inconclusive and/or unsourced or citing “social media”; what we’re left with is often no more than just an accusation. Do they have something to hide?

The State Department’s Public Affairs spokespersons making these presentations exhibit little regard or respect for the reporters asking challenging questions. It takes my thoughts back to the Vietnam era and Arthur Sylvester, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, the man most responsible for “giving, controlling and managing the war news from Vietnam”. One day in July 1965, Sylvester told American journalists that they

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War**

A published analysis by a retired Lufthansa pilot points out that Flight 17 looked similar in its tricolor design to that of Russian President Putin's plane, whose plane with him on board was at the same time "near" Flight 17

had a patriotic duty to disseminate only information that made the United States look good. When one of the reporters exclaimed: "Surely, Arthur, you don't expect the American press to be handmaidens of government," Sylvester replied: "That's exactly what I expect," adding: "Look, if you think any American official is going to tell you the truth, then you're stupid. Did you hear that? – stupid."

Such frankness might be welcomed today as a breath of fresh air compared to the painful-to-observe double-talk of a State Department spokesperson.

My personal breath of fresh air in recent years has been the television station RT (formerly Russia Today). On a daily basis many progressives from around the world (myself included occasionally) are interviewed and out of their mouths come facts and analyses that are rarely heard on CNN, NBC, ABC, CBS, NPR, PBS, Fox News, BBC, etc. The words of these progressives heard on RT are typically labeled by the mainstream media as "Russian propaganda", whereas I, after a long lifetime of American propaganda, can only think: "Of course. What else are they going to call it?"

As for Russia being responsible for "creating the conditions" that led to the shooting down of Flight 17, we should keep in mind that the current series of events in Ukraine was sparked in February when a US-supported coup overthrew the democratically-elected government and replaced it with one that was more receptive to the market-fundamentalism dictates of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the European Union. Were it not for the coup there would have been no eastern rebellion to put down and no dangerous war zone for Flight 17 to be flying over in the first place.

The new regime has had another charming feature: a number of outspoken neo-Nazis in high and low positions, a circumstance embarrassing enough for the US government and mainstream media to turn it into a virtual non-event. US Senator John McCain met and posed for photos with the leader of the neo-Nazi Svoboda Party, Oleh Tyahnybok (photos

easily found on the Internet). Ukraine – whose ties to Naziism go back to World War Two when their homegrown fascists supported Germany and opposed the Soviet Union – is on track to becoming the newest part of the US-NATO military encirclement of Russia and possibly the home of the region's newest missile base, target Moscow.

It is indeed possible that Flight 17 was shot down by the pro-Russian rebels in Eastern Ukraine in the mistaken belief that it was the Ukrainian air force returning to carry out another attack. But other explanations are suggested in a series of questions posed by Russia to the Secretary-General of the UN General Assembly, accompanied by radar information, satellite images, and other technical displays:

"Why was a military aircraft flying in a civil aviation airway at almost the same time and the same altitude as a civilian passenger aircraft? We would like to have this question answered.

"Earlier, Ukrainian officials stated that on the day of the accident no Ukrainian military aircraft were flying in that area. As you can see, that is not true.

"We also have a question for our American colleagues. According to a statement by American officials, the United States has satellite images which show that the missile aimed at the Malaysian aircraft was launched by the militants. But no one has seen these images."

There is also this intriguing speculation, which ties in to the first Russian question above. A published analysis by a retired Lufthansa pilot points out that Flight 17 looked similar in its tricolor design to that of Russian President Putin's plane, whose plane with him on board was at the same time "near" Flight 17. In aviation circles "near" would be considered to be anywhere between 150 to 200 miles. Could Putin's plane have been the real target?

There is as well other serious and plausible questioning of the official story of Russia and/or Ukrainian anti-Kiev militias being responsible for the shootdown. Is Flight 17 going to become the next JFK Assassination, PanAm

103, or 9-11 conspiracy theory that lingers forever? Will the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and the Syrian chemical weapons be joined by the Russian anti-aircraft missile? Stay tuned.

Will they EVER leave Cuba alone? No.

The latest exposed plot to overthrow the Cuban government ... Oh, pardon me, I mean the latest exposed plot to bring democracy to Cuba ...

Our dear friends at the Agency For International Development (USAID), having done so well with their covert sub-contractor Alan Gross, now in his fifth year in Cuban custody ... and their “Cuban Twitter” project, known as ZunZuneo, exposed in 2012, aimed at increasing the flow of information amongst the supposedly information-starved Cubans, which drew in subscribers unaware that the service was paid for by the US government ... and now, the latest exposure, a project which sent about a dozen Venezuelan, Costa Rican and Peruvian young people to Cuba in hopes of stirring up a rebellion. The travelers worked clandestinely, using the cover of health and civic programs, or posing as tourists, going around the island, on a mission to “identify potential social-change actors” to turn into political activists. Can you believe that? Can you believe the magnitude of naiveté? Was it a conviction that American exceptionalism would somehow work its magic? Do they think the Cuban people are a bunch of children just waiting for a wise adult to come along and show them what to think and how to behave?

One of these latest USAID contracts was signed only days after Gross was detained, thus indicating little concern for the safety of their employees/agents. As part of the preparation of these individuals, USAID informed them: “Although there is never total certainty, trust that the authorities will not try to harm you physically, only frighten you. Remember that the Cuban government prefers to avoid negative media reports abroad, so a beaten foreigner is not convenient for them.”

It's most ironic. The US government could not say as much about most of their allies, who frequently make use of physical abuse. Indeed, the statement could not be made in regard to almost any American police force. But it's this Cuba that doesn't beat or torture detainees that is the enemy to be reformed and punished without mercy ... 55 years and counting.

The United States and torture

Two of the things that governments tend to cover-up or lie about the most are assassinations and torture, both of which are widely looked upon as exceedingly immoral and unlawful, even uncivilized. Since the end of the Second World War the United States has attempted to assassinate more than 50 foreign leaders and has led the world in torture; not only the torture performed directly by Americans upon foreigners, but providing torture equipment, torture manuals, lists of people to be tortured, and in-person guidance and encouragement by American instructors, particularly in Latin America.

Thus it is somewhat to the credit of President Obama that at his August 1 press conference he declared “We did a whole lot of things that were right, but we tortured some folks. We did some things that were contrary to our values.”

And he actually used the word “torture” at that moment, not “enhanced interrogation”, which has been the euphemism of preference the past decade, although two minutes later the president used “extraordinary interrogation techniques”. And “tortured some folks” makes me wince. The man is clearly uncomfortable with the subject.

But all this is minor. Much more important is the fact that for several years Mr. Obama's supporters have credited him with having put an end to the practice of torture. And they simply have no right to make that claim.

Shortly after Obama's first inauguration, both he and Leon Panetta, the new Director of the CIA, explicitly stated that “rendition” was not being ended. As the Los Angeles

The travelers worked clandestinely through Cuba, using the cover of health and civic programs, or posing as tourists, going around the island, on a mission to “identify potential social-change actors” to turn into political activists

The countries chosen to receive rendition prisoners were chosen precisely because they were willing and able to torture them

Times reported at the time: “Under executive orders issued by Obama recently, the CIA still has authority to carry out what are known as renditions, secret abductions and transfers of prisoners to countries that cooperate with the United States.”

The English translation of “cooperate” is “torture”. Rendition is simply outsourcing torture. There was no other reason to take prisoners to Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Egypt, Jordan, Kenya, Somalia, Kosovo, or the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia, to name some of the known torture centers frequented by the United States. Kosovo and Diego Garcia – both of which house large and very secretive American military bases – if not some of the other locations, may well still be open for torture business. The same for the Guantánamo base in Cuba.

Moreover, the Executive Order referred to, number 13491, issued January 22, 2009, “Ensuring Lawful Interrogations”, leaves a major loophole. It states repeatedly that humane treatment, including the absence of torture, is applicable only to prisoners detained in an “armed conflict”. Thus, torture by Americans outside an environment of “armed conflict” is not explicitly prohibited. But what about torture within an environment of “counter-terrorism”?

The Executive Order required the CIA to use only the interrogation methods outlined in a revised Army Field Manual. However, using the Army Field Manual as a guide to prisoner treatment and interrogation still allows solitary confinement, perceptual or sensory deprivation, sensory overload, sleep deprivation, the induction of fear and hopelessness, mind-altering drugs, environmental manipulation such as temperature and noise, and stress positions.

After Panetta was questioned by a Senate panel, the *New York Times* wrote that he had “left open the possibility that the agency could seek permission to use interrogation methods more aggressive than the limited menu that President Obama authorized under new rules ... Mr. Panetta also said the agency would

continue the Bush administration practice of ‘rendition’ – picking terrorism suspects off the street and sending them to a third country. But he said the agency would refuse to deliver a suspect into the hands of a country known for torture or other actions ‘that violate our human values.’”

The last sentence is of course childishly absurd. The countries chosen to receive rendition prisoners were chosen precisely because they were willing and able to torture them.

No official in the Bush and Obama administrations has been punished in any way for torture or other war crimes in Iraq, Afghanistan and the other countries they waged illegal war against. And, it could be added, no American banker has been punished for their indispensable role in the world-wide financial torture they inflicted upon us all beginning in 2008. What a marvelously forgiving land is America. This, however, does not apply to Julian Assange, Edward Snowden, or Chelsea Manning.

In the last days of the Bush White House, Michael Ratner, professor at Columbia Law School and former president of the Center for Constitutional Rights, pointed out:

“The only way to prevent this from happening again is to make sure that those who were responsible for the torture program pay the price for it. I don’t see how we regain our moral stature by allowing those who were intimately involved in the torture programs to simply walk off the stage and lead lives where they are not held accountable.”

I’d like at this point to once again remind my dear readers of the words of the “Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment”, which was drafted by the United Nations in 1984, came into force in 1987, and ratified by the United States in 1994. Article 2, section 2 of the Convention states: “No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture.”

Such marvelously clear, unequivocal, and

principled language, to set a single standard for a world that makes it increasingly difficult for one to feel proud of humanity.

The Convention Against Torture has been and remains the supreme law of the land. It is a cornerstone of international law and a principle on a par with the prohibition against slavery and genocide.

John Brennan, appointed by President Obama in January 2013 to be Director of the CIA, has defended “rendition” as an “absolutely vital tool”; and stated that torture had produced “life saving” intelligence.

Obama had nominated Brennan for the CIA position in 2008, but there was such an outcry in the human-rights community over Brennan’s apparent acceptance of torture, that Brennan withdrew his nomination. Barack Obama evidently learned nothing from this and appointed the man again in 2013.

During Cold War One, a common theme in the rhetoric was that the Soviets tortured people and detained them without cause, extracted phony confessions, and did the unspeakable to detainees who were helpless against the full, heartless weight of the Communist state. As much as any other evil, torture differentiated the bad guys, the Commies, from the good guys, the American people and their government. However imperfect the US system might be – we were all taught – it had civilized standards that the enemy rejected.

Just because you have a right to do something does not make it right.

The city of Detroit in recent months has been shutting off the supply of water to city residents who have not paid their water bills. This action affects more than 40% of the customers of the Detroit Water and Sewage Department, bringing great inconvenience and threats to the health and sanitation of between 200 and 300 thousand residents. Protests have of course sprung up in the city, with “Water is a human right!” as a leading theme.

Who can argue with that? Well, neo-conservatives and other true believers in the capi-

talist system who maintain that if you receive the benefit of a product or service, you pay for it. What could be simpler? What are you, some kind of socialist?

For those of you who have difficulty believing that an American city could be so insensitive, allow me to remind you of some history.

On December 14, 1981 a resolution was proposed in the United Nations General Assembly which declared that “education, work, health care, proper nourishment, national development are human rights”. The resolution was approved by a vote of 135-1. The United States cast the only “No” vote.

A year later, December 18, 1982, an identical resolution was proposed in the General Assembly. It was approved by a vote of 131-1. The United States cast the only “No” vote.

The following year, December 16, 1983, the resolution was again put forth, a common practice at the United Nations. This time it was approved by a vote of 132-1. There’s no need to tell you who cast the sole “No” vote.

These votes took place under the Reagan administration.

Under the Clinton administration, in 1996, a United Nations-sponsored World Food Summit affirmed the “right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food”. The United States took issue with this, insisting that it does not recognize a “right to food”. Washington instead championed free trade as the key to ending the poverty at the root of hunger, and expressed fears that recognition of a “right to food” could lead to lawsuits from poor nations seeking aid and special trade provisions.

The situation, of course, did not improve under the administration of George W. Bush. In 2002, in Rome, world leaders at another UN-sponsored World Food Summit again approved a declaration that everyone had the right to “safe and nutritious food”. The United States continued to oppose the clause, again fearing it would leave them open to future legal claims by famine-stricken countries.

I’m waiting for a UN resolution affirming the right to oxygen.

Under the Clinton administration, in 1996, a United Nations-sponsored World Food Summit affirmed the “right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food”

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