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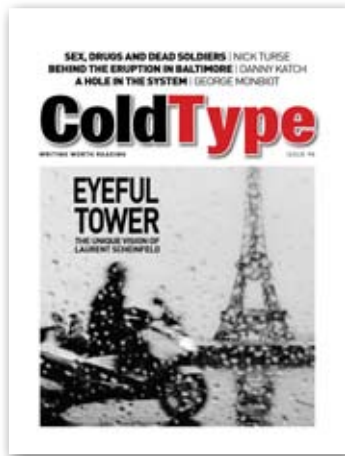
WRITING WORTH READING

ISSUE 98

EYEFUL TOWER

THE UNIQUE VISION OF
LAURENT SCHEINFELD





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Laurent Scheinfeld
– Pages 44-47

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The real lessons of Britain's Tory victory

Jonathan Cook analyses this month's general election defeat of the British Labour Party, and has some thoughts on ways to fight the next one

There's much that could be said about the Conservative Party's victory in Britain's election early in May. Not least David Cameron has emerged stronger: he now has a small but absolute majority in parliament, compared to his last government, in which he had to share power, a little of it anyway, with his minor coalition partners, the Liberal Democrats.

According to the rules of the British system, he has won a mandate to carry out all his party's policies, even though the Tories gained the support of slightly less than 25% of the total electorate, and little more than a third of those who actually voted. That in itself should be enough to discredit the idea that Britain is a democracy in any meaningful sense.

But I want to focus on two issues that this particular election highlighted. Although this refers to the British election, the lessons apply equally to US elections.

The first is a debate that gripped some on the far left after comedian-activist Russell Brand interviewed Labour leader Ed Miliband and subsequently gave Miliband his backing. This was quite a surprise – and disappointment – given that Brand had shaken up British politics over the previous 18 months by arguing that the whole political system was inherently flawed and undemocratic. He had called on people not to vote as a way to show

that the system had no popular legitimacy, and invest their energies instead in a different kind of grassroots politics. Britain's two main parties, Brand and others argued, represented the interests of the big corporations that now dominate Britain and much of the globe.

The labels of Conservative and Labour are the misleading vestiges of a time when there was some sort of class politics in Britain: the Tories representing the unalloyed interests of the capitalist class, and Labour the interests of organised labour. But the Tories under Margaret Thatcher long ago destroyed the power of the trade unions. Labour became a shell of its former self, its finances and ability to organise workers crumbled as the corporations entrenched their power, assisted by the Tories.

Corporate capture

Under a power-hungry Tony Blair, Labour had allowed itself to be captured by those same corporations, famously illustrated by his earlier Faustian pact with media tycoon Rupert Murdoch. Labour sold what was left of its soul, becoming a Tory-lite party, and winning the support of Murdoch and his media empire as a result.

Brand seemed to understand this, arguing that what we needed was to turn our back on sham elections every five years between

The Tories under Margaret Thatcher long ago destroyed the power of the trade unions. Labour became a shell of its former self

SHOCK RESULT



First the election, then the protests: London cops march in formation on one side of the street, while police vehicles zoom down the other, on their way to Downing Street where protesters demanded a quick end to the two-day-old rule of the re-elected Tory government led by David Cameron.

(Photo: NGP 2014 - via flickr.com)

If there is no political cost for committing the ultimate war crime, because the other guys are worse, what real leverage can the electorate ever have on the political system?

two parties representing the interests of the 1%. Instead the people needed to foment a non-violent political revolution, and take back power. How did voting for Miliband, a man who had largely adopted the Blair credo, make sense in the light of Brand's earlier claims?

Brand justified his change of mind using a familiar argument. He admitted Miliband was far from perfect but was still the preferable choice because he was prepared to listen to the people, unlike Cameron's Conservatives. He was the "lesser evil" choice.

The problem with his logic – aside from its faith-based component – was that the same argument could have been used about any recent British election. It was an excuse to avoid engaging in real politics.

Supporters of Tony Blair, even after he committed the supreme war crime by invading Iraq, could have argued quite convincingly that the Tories too would have

invaded Iraq – plus they would have done worse things at home, inflicting greater damage on the health and education systems. Thus, on the lesser-evil argument, it was legitimate to vote for the war criminal Blair. A man like Blair could destroy another nation, cause suffering on a scale unimaginable to most of us, and yet still claim the moral high ground because the alternative would be even worse.

Less nasty party

The faulty logic of the lesser-evil argument is apparent the moment we consider the Blair case. If there is no political cost for committing the ultimate war crime, because the other guys are worse, what real leverage can the electorate ever have on the political system. The "left" vote will always gravitate to the slightly less nasty party of

capital. No change is really possible. In fact, over time the political centre of gravity is likely to shift – as has in fact happened – ever more to the right, as the corporations accrete ever greater power.

Further, where does Brand’s logic take us now that Miliband has lost. If we were supposed to have faith that Miliband would have listened had he achieved power, then why not extend that faith to his successor? If we are satisfied by the lesser-evil argument, why not wait till the next election to see if we can get another slightly less nasty candidate into Downing Street? We can defer the choice to demand real change indefinitely.

The second point is that the programme of extreme austerity at the heart of Cameron’s manifesto has been fully discredited by most economists over the past few years. Not only does it penalise the overwhelming majority of the population by redistributing wealth away from the working and middle classes to the financial elite, but it also inflicts great damage on the long term health of the economy. In other words, British voters look like supreme masochists. They voted to seriously harm their own, and their country’s, interests. Are Britons collectively insane?

Of course, not. So how can we explain their insane May choice? The answer is staring us in the face. In fact, Blair showed us what was required to win a British election. A party hoping to win power needed first to seduce the corporations, and their media divisions. Without most of the media on your side, no party stands a chance of winning because the media subtly controls the narrative of the election: what count as “the issues”, how the leaders and their platforms are presented, what and who is considered credible.

Half-hearted desire

Miliband’s failure was that, unlike Blair, he looked a little half-hearted about his desire to be the 1%’s mouthpiece in parliament and Downing Street. Maybe what seduced Brand

about Miliband was the sliver of humanity that was still just visible below the surface of the corporate employee the Labour party had groomed their leader to become.

The revolution that we need in Britain and the US has to start with a disengagement from the mainstream media’s representation of events. We have to discard their narratives. Even more important than an overhauled electoral system, one that fairly reflects the electorate’s preferences, we need a grassroots media that is free of the control of fabulously wealthy proprietors and major corporations, that does not depend on the massive subsidies of corporations (in the form of advertising), and that does not rely, like the BBC, on funding from government. We need independent journalists, and we need to demand a new funding model for the media. And we need to do all this while the mainstream media entirely control the narrative about what a free media is.

It is a huge challenge – and one that reflects the extent of our own ideological confinement. Just like the political parties, we have been captured by the 1%. We cannot imagine a different world, a different economic system, a different media landscape, because our intellectual horizons have been so totally restricted by the media conglomerates that control our newspapers, our TV and radio stations, the films we watch, the video games we play, the music we listen to. We are so imaginatively confined we cannot even see the narrow walls within which our minds are allowed to wander.

As long as the media represent the span of interests of the 1% – from the psychopathic Murdoch empire to the capitalism with a little heart of the Guardian Media Group – our politicians will range from the Blue Tories of the Conservative party to the Red Tories of the Labour party. And we will remain enslaved. **CT**

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Without most of the media on your side, no party stands a chance of winning because the media subtly controls the narrative of the election

Hanging out with the Dogman

Dell Franklin is invited to a customer's home and finds things he didn't expect

I didn't know anything about Brett, didn't want to. I merely picked him up and dropped him off in his modest house in one of the rural neighborhoods out by the airport

I usually picked up Brett early evenings at one of the few downtown San Luis Obispo bars that was not a college hangout, but a meeting place for locals of all ages – a bar with history and character. He was almost always wobbly and bleary-eyed. He could be quietly downcast or boisterously jubilant when I arrived. Thirtyish, he had an unruly black pompadour, long mutton-chop sideburns, and a long, sad face. He was always very polite.

“Do you mind if I finish this drink, sir?”

“Sure, but try and hurry, pal.”

“I won't be long. If you're in a hurry, you can come back later.”

“Go ahead, finish your drink.”

“I just wanna listen to this tune on the jukebox. Can I buy you something? A coke?”

The song was always bittersweet country western. “I'm okay, Brett. But thanks.”

Sometimes he drank long after the Happy Hour crew left and sat mumbling to the bartender, who was relieved to see me. I didn't know anything about Brett, didn't want to. I merely picked him up and dropped him off in his modest house in one of the rural neighborhoods out by the airport. I didn't think he was married or had kids and I

didn't think he had a girlfriend. He struck me as one of those awkward outsiders who just couldn't connect with the right gal.

There was no mistaking the unhappiness in his face, voice and demeanor, as if he was carrying an awful burden. It was disturbing, almost made me angry to the point where I wanted to shake him and tell him to stop being that way, because it made me realize how brutally desolate and painful and disappointing life could be. Sometimes he staggered behind me to my cab, while other times I steered him to the front seat. He liked to ride shotgun, very quiet with his head lolled back. When I dropped him off he always over-tipped and thanked me for being nice to him, often



expressing such overwrought appreciation I was embarrassed, wanted to give him his money back and talk to him, try and find out what exactly was eating at him to cause him to drink himself into this awful state night after night. I somehow felt guilty as I watched him walk up to his darkened house.

One evening he lingered, gazing at me, his face troubled as always, yet hopeful and innocent as a child's. He was not as drunk as usual and seemed at last to sense my thoughts and was willing to make contact.

“You wanna see somethin’?” he asked.

“Well...”

“Come on, I wanna share somethin’ with you, cuz you been so nice to me.”

I didn’t know what to expect. His look was pleading, like a dog that didn’t want you to leave after petting him. I got out of the cab and followed him toward a high wooden fence. He unlatched a gate, and what seemed like a dozen dogs came at us at once, frenzied, barking, yelping, whining, tails wagging, jumping on us, licking and nuzzling. None of them purebreds, they were large and small and middle-sized mutts. One was up on my chest, pawing and slavering away.

“Down boy, down Red. Get down, boy,” exhorted Brett.

His face had undergone a transformation. He was suddenly serene. Kind and gentle with the dogs, he petted and scratched and roughed the coats of each one, talking to them, reassuring them, calming them down. There were dog houses and pallets and individual dishes and a big tub of water in the yard and lots of toys and balls. He moved among the dogs, found a pup, picked him up, handed him to me. The pup trembled with excitement and lathered my face with his urgent tongue.

“I knew you were an animal person,” Brett said. “I can always tell.” He motioned toward the mob of dogs, jittering around, looking up at us. “They can, too.” He watched the pup continue to lick my face. “You want him? He’s a good boy. I haven’t named him yet.”

“I got this big male cat at home, had him for years. He won’t stand for dogs, won’t stand for anything to get between us.” I noticed a few cats on the fence. “You got some, too, I see.”

He gazed at me. “I work at the humane society for animal control. My job is to put ‘em to sleep. Done it nine years now. I’ve put down thousands of animals. That’s why I got these dogs and cats. Once in a while you get one you can’t put down. Nobody

wants ‘em. They look at you a certain way, and you just can’t do it. Every time I put one away it gets tougher. I don’t know why I do it. Maybe it’s because I can make their poor lives a little more pleasant before they go. They know they’re going, man, they know.” He glanced at the dogs. They had calmed down and stared up at him, an obedient and attentive audience, as if they knew what we were talking about. “If I had enough money I’d buy a chunk of land out in the country and start up my own shelter for homeless animals. I can’t go on much longer the way I am. But if I stop, I’ll know what’s goin’ on.” He sighed. “Maybe I should quit. I’ve never done anything else. I’m not smart enough to go to vet school. You think I should quit . . . because of the drinkin’?”

I don’t know, man.”

Even if I quit, I’ll see them in their cages, all knowin’ they’re gonna die. I know right off the ones nobody wants. There’s only a few got a chance. When somebody comes in, looking for a pet, you should see the show they put on. It’s pitiful.” He shook his head. “I feel better if it’s ME puts ‘em down. I can talk to ‘em and tell ‘em they’re goin’ to a better place, tell ‘em I’m sorry they got a bad deal and wish ‘em luck, at least. They didn’t do anything to deserve the shafting they got. They’re just dogs, man.” He stared at me. “Just dogs.”

He was wound up and began telling me about his life. It was nothing special, just a small, limited life, just a regular guy. Family in town. Homeboy. I don’t think he had a wife or girl. Just the dogs and cats. I didn’t see too many women understanding his situation and wanting to share it with him.

The dogman.

“Well, you got your cat, huh?” He seemed genuinely interested.

“Yeah, good old Popeye.” I was working alone and needed to get back to my cab. But I felt a need to tell him about my cat, explain how he’d always been a free spirit and became a warrior, nearly died a couple of times, had no tail and a half chewed off

Brett was suddenly serene. Kind and gentle with the dogs, he petted and scratched and roughed the coats of each one, talking to them, reassuring them, calming them down

ON THE ROAD

He peered up at me, big yellow eyes glowing, confused, as if he couldn't figure out what the hell was going on

ear to prove it. The ultimate street cat, born to rule, living out the full life that goes with conquest of territory and protecting it. Still going strong at 12, avoiding big trouble and finding small mischief on a daily basis. Following me the four blocks to the liquor store every morning when I picked up my *LA Times*. Neighboring dogs and cats knew enough to steer clear of him – the man.

“Even people stand back and look at him with respect,” I explained. “He’s my best friend, really. He’s getting old. I live alone, and think of myself as nothing without him. I can’t imagine not having him around.”

He was smiling for the first time. “Go home and hug that cat, man. Be thankful for every second you got him, and be proud you gave him a good life. He sure sounds like somebody I’d like to meet.”

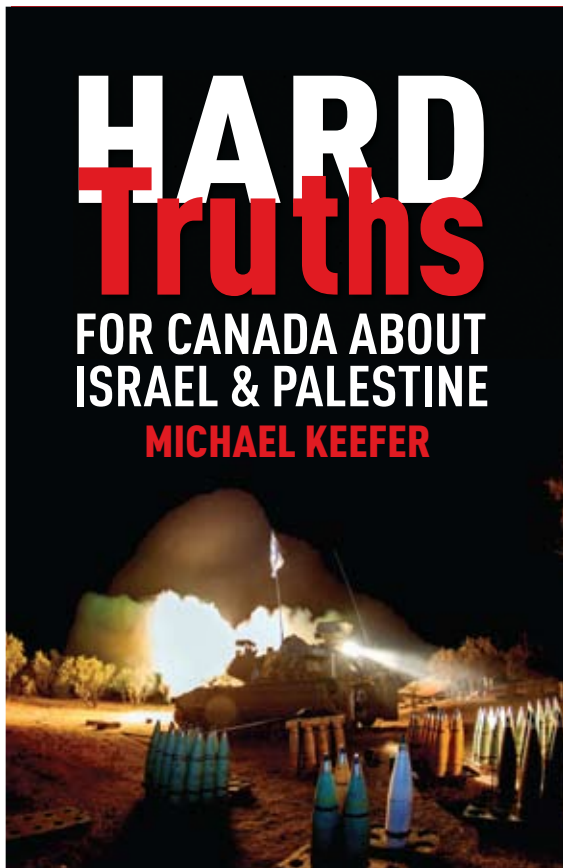
We were petting and scratching the dogs and accepting their licks, their eager eyes,

their quiet adoration and trust, their easy friendship. I hung around a while longer and when we shook hands it turned into a brief hug. When I got home that night I bypassed the corner bar where Popeye often waited for me outside and found him preparing to raid the dumpster behind the local market. I snatched him up and took him home and gave him extra attention, telling him a few things.

He peered up at me, big yellow eyes glowing, confused, as if he couldn't figure out what the hell was going on, especially since we were both hard-boiled and stand-offish and did things on OUR terms only.

The way it should be as he squirmed away and headed back in the direction of the market and I headed to the bar. **CT**

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Dell Franklin is the founding publisher of the Rogue Voice – <http://theroguevoice.com>



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Australia wages war on its own people

John Pilger compares the heroism of those with moral courage to the 'sludge' of fake patriotism

Australia has again declared war on its Indigenous people, reminiscent of the brutality that brought universal condemnation on apartheid South Africa. Aboriginal people are to be driven from homelands where their communities have lived for thousands of years. In Western Australia, where mining companies make billion dollar profits exploiting Aboriginal land, the state government says it can no longer afford to "support" the homelands.

Vulnerable populations, already denied the basic services most Australians take for granted, are on notice of dispossession without consultation, and eviction at gunpoint. Yet again, Aboriginal leaders have warned of "a new generation of displaced people" and "cultural genocide".

Genocide is a word Australians hate to hear. Genocide happens in other countries, not the "lucky" society that per capita is the second richest on earth. When "act of genocide" was used in the 1997 landmark report 'Bringing Them Home', which revealed that thousands of Indigenous children had been stolen from their communities by white institutions and systematically abused, a campaign of denial was launched by a far-right clique around the then prime minister John Howard. It included those who called themselves the Galatians Group, then Quadrant, then the Bennelong Society; the Murdoch press was their voice.

The Stolen Generation was exaggerated,

they said, if it had happened at all. Colonial Australia was a benign place; there were no massacres. The First Australians were victims of their own cultural inferiority, or they were noble savages. Suitable euphemisms were deployed.

The government of the current prime minister, Tony Abbott, a conservative zealot, has revived this assault on a people who represent Australia's singular uniqueness. Soon after coming to office, Abbott's government cut \$534 million in indigenous social programmes, including \$160 million from the indigenous health budget and \$13.4 million from indigenous legal aid.

In the 2014 report 'Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators', the devastation is clear. The number of Aboriginal people hospitalised for self-harm has leapt, as have suicides among those as young as eleven. The indicators show a people impoverished, traumatised and abandoned. Read the classic expose of apartheid South Africa, "The Discarded People," by Cosmas Desmond, who told me he could write a similar account of Australia.

Having insulted indigenous Australians by declaring (at a G20 breakfast for David Cameron) that there was "nothing but bush" before the white man, Abbott announced that his government would no longer honour the longstanding commitment to Aboriginal homelands. He sneered, "It's not the job of the taxpayers to subsidise lifestyle choices."

Genocide is a word Australians hate to hear. Genocide happens in other countries, not the "lucky" society that per capita is the second richest on earth

AUSTRALIA'S SHAME

Kicking the blackfella is deemed popular, although grabbing minerals-rich land by stealth serves a more prosaic purpose. Driving people into the fringe slums of "economic hub towns" satisfies the social engineering urges of racists

The weapon used by Abbott and his red-neck state and territorial counterparts is dispossession by abuse and propaganda, coercion and blackmail, such as his demand for a 99-year leasehold of Indigenous land in the Northern Territory in return for basic services: a land grab in all but name. The Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Nigel Scullion, refutes this, claiming "this is about communities and what communities want". In fact, there has been no real consultation, only the co-option of a few.

Both conservative and Labor governments have already withdrawn the national jobs programme, CDEP, from the homelands, ending opportunities for employment, and prohibited investment in infrastructure: housing, generators, sanitation. The saving is peanuts.

The reason is an extreme doctrine that evokes the punitive campaigns of the early 20th century "chief protector of Aborigines", such as the fanatic A.O. Neville who decreed that the first Australians "assimilate" to extinction. Influenced by the same eugenics movement that inspired the Nazis, Queensland's "protection acts" were a model for South African apartheid. Today, the same dogma and racism are threaded through anthropology, politics, the bureaucracy and the media. "We are civilised, they are not," wrote the acclaimed Australian historian Russel Ward two generations ago. The spirit is unchanged.

Having reported on Aboriginal communities since the 1960s, I have watched a seasonal routine whereby the Australian elite interrupts its "normal" mistreatment and neglect of the people of the First Nations, and attacks them outright. This happens when an election approaches, or a prime minister's ratings are low. Kicking the blackfella is deemed popular, although grabbing minerals-rich land by stealth serves a more prosaic purpose. Driving people into the fringe slums of "economic hub towns" satisfies the social engineering urges of racists.

The last frontal attack was in 2007 when Prime Minister Howard sent the army into

Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory to "rescue children" who, said his minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mal Brough, were being abused by paedophile gangs in "unthinkable numbers".

Known as "the intervention", the media played a vital role. In 2006, the national TV current affairs programme, the ABC's 'Late-line', broadcast a sensational interview with a man whose face was concealed. Described as a "youth worker" who had lived in the Aboriginal community of Mutitjulu, he made a series of lurid allegations. Subsequently exposed as a senior government official who reported directly to the minister, his claims were discredited by the Australian Crime Commission, the Northern Territory Police and a damning report by child medical specialists. The community received no apology.

The 2007 "intervention" allowed the federal government to destroy many of the vestiges of self-determination in the Northern Territory, the only part of Australia where Aboriginal people had won federally-legislated land rights. Here, they had administered their homelands in ways with the dignity of self-determination and connection to land and culture and, as Amnesty reported, a 40 per cent lower mortality rate.

It is this "traditional life" that is anathema to a parasitic white industry of civil servants, contractors, lawyers and consultants that controls and often profits from Aboriginal Australia, if indirectly through the corporate structures imposed on Indigenous organisations. The homelands are seen as a threat, for they express a communalism at odds with the neo-conservatism that rules Australia. It is as if the enduring existence of a people who have survived and resisted more than two colonial centuries of massacre and theft remains a spectre on white Australia: a reminder of whose land this really is.

The current political attack was launched in the richest state, Western Australia. Last October, the state premier, Colin Barnett, announced that his government could not afford the \$90 million budget for basic mu-

nicipal services to 282 homelands: water, power, sanitation, schools, road maintenance, rubbish collection. It was the equivalent of informing the white suburbs of Perth that their lawn sprinklers would no longer sprinkle and their toilets no longer flush; and they had to move; and if they refused, the police would evict them.

Where would the dispossessed go? Where would they live? In six years, Barnett's government has built few houses for Indigenous people in remote areas. In the Kimberley region, Indigenous homelessness – aside from natural disaster and civil strife – is one of the highest anywhere, in a state renowned for its conspicuous wealth, golf courses and prisons overflowing with impoverished black people. Western Australia jails Aboriginal males at more than eight times the rate of apartheid South Africa. It has one of the highest incarceration rates of juveniles in the world, almost all of them indigenous, including children kept in solitary confinement in adult prisons, with their mothers keeping vigil outside.

In 2013, the former prisons minister, Margaret Quirk, told me that the state was “racking and stacking” Aboriginal prisoners. When I asked what she meant, she said, “It’s warehousing.”

In March, Barnett changed his story. There was “emerging evidence”, he said, “of appalling mistreatment of little kids” in the homelands. What evidence? Barnett claimed that gonorrhoea had been found in children younger than 14, then conceded he did not know if these were in the homelands. His police commissioner, Karl O’Callaghan, chimed in that child sexual abuse was “rife”. He quoted a 15-year-old study by the Australian Institute of Family Studies. What he failed to say was that the report highlighted poverty as the overwhelming cause of “neglect” and that sexual abuse accounted for less than 10 per cent.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, a federal agency, recently released a report on what it calls the “Fatal Burden” of Third World disease and trauma borne by In-

igenous people “resulting in almost 100,000 years of life lost due to premature death”. This “fatal burden” is the product of extreme poverty imposed in Western Australia, as in the rest of Australia, by the denial of human rights.

In Barnett’s vast rich Western Australia, barely a fraction of mining, oil and gas revenue has benefited communities for which his government has a duty of care. In the town of Roeburne, in the midst of the booming minerals-rich Pilbara, 80 per cent of the indigenous children suffer from an ear infection called otitis media that causes deafness.

In 2011, the Barnett government displayed a brutality in the community of Oombulgurri the other homelands can expect. “First, the government closed the services,” wrote Tammy Solonec of Amnesty International, “It closed the shop, so people could not buy food and essentials. It closed the clinic, so the sick and the elderly had to move, and the school, so families with children had to leave, or face having their children taken away from them. The police station was the last service to close, then eventually the electricity and water were turned off. Finally, the ten residents who resolutely stayed to the end were forcibly evicted [leaving behind] personal possessions. [Then] the bulldozers rolled into Oombulgurri. The WA government has literally dug a hole and in it buried the rubble of people’s homes and personal belongings.”

In South Australia, the state and federal governments launched a similar attack on the 60 remote Indigenous communities. South Australia has a long-established Aboriginal Lands Trust, so people were able to defend their rights – up to a point. On 12 April, the federal government offered \$15 million over five years. That such a miserly sum is considered enough to fund proper services in the great expanse of the state’s homelands is a measure of the value placed on Indigenous lives by white politicians who unhesitatingly spend \$28 billion annually on armaments and the military. Haydn Bromley, chair of the Aboriginal Lands Trust told me, “The \$15 million

Western Australia jails Aboriginal males at more than eight times the rate of apartheid South Africa

AUSTRALIA'S SHAME

In a country littered with Anzac memorials, not one official memorial stands for the thousands of native Australians who fought and fell defending their homeland

doesn't include most of the homelands, and it will only cover bare essentials – power, water. Community development? Infrastructure? Forget it.”

The current distraction from these national dirty secrets was the recent “celebrations” of the centenary of an Edwardian military disaster at Gallipoli in 1915 when 8,709 Australian and 2,779 New Zealand troops – the Anzacs – were sent to their death in a futile assault on a beach in Turkey. In recent years, governments in Canberra have promoted this imperial waste of life as an historical deity to mask the militarism that underpins Australia's role as America's “deputy sheriff” in the Pacific.

In bookshops, “Australian non-fiction” shelves are full of opportunistic tomes about wartime derring-do, heroes and jingoism. Suddenly, Aboriginal people who fought for the white man are fashionable, whereas those who fought against the white man in defence of their own country, Australia, are unfashionable. Indeed, they are officially non-people. The Australian War Memorial refuses to recognise their remarkable resistance to the British invasion. In a country littered with Anzac memorials, not one official memorial stands for the thousands of native Australians who fought and fell defending their homeland.

This is part of the “great Australian silence”, as W.E.H. Stanner in 1968 called his lecture in which he described a “cult of forgetfulness on a national scale”. He was referring to the Indigenous people. Today, the silence is ubiquitous. In Sydney, the Art Gallery of New South Wales currently has an exhibition, ‘The Photograph and Australia’, in which the timeline of this ancient country begins, incredibly, with Captain Cook.

The same silence covers another enduring, epic resistance. Extraordinary demonstrations of Indigenous women protesting the removal of their children and grandchildren by the state, some of them at gunpoint, are ignored by journalists and patronised by politicians. More Indigenous children are being wrenched from their homes and communi-

ties today than during the worst years of the Stolen Generation. A record 15,000 are presently detained “in care”; many are given to white families and will never return to their communities.

Last year, the West Australian Police Minister, Liza Harvey, attended a screening in Perth of my film, ‘Utopia’, which documented the racism and thuggery of police towards black Australians, and the multiple deaths of young Aboriginal men in custody. The minister cried.

On her watch, 50 City of Perth armed police raided an Indigenous homeless camp at Matarup, and drove off mostly elderly women and young mothers with children. The people in the camp described themselves as “refugees . . . seeking safety in our own country”. They called for the help of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees.

Australian politicians are nervous of the United Nations. Abbott's response has been abuse. When Professor James Anaya, the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous People, described the racism of the “intervention”, Abbott told him to, “get a life” and “not listen to the old victim brigade”.

The planned closure of Indigenous homelands breaches Article 5 of the International Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP). Australia is committed to “provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for... any action which has the aim of dispossession [Indigenous people] of their lands, territories or resources”. The Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is blunt. “Forced evictions” are against the law.

An international momentum is building. In 2013, Pope Francis urged the world to act against racism and on behalf of “indigenous people who are increasingly isolated and abandoned”. It was South Africa's defiance of such a basic principle of human rights that ignited the international opprobrium and campaign that brought down apartheid. Australia beware. **CT**

John Pilger is now 'crowd funding' his latest movie, "The Coming War", at <http://indiegogo.com/projects/john-pilger-the-coming-war-documentary>

Vietnam: The war that won't go away

The Pentagon has retreated from a campaign to rewrite the history of the Vietnam War, a victory for truth, writes war correspondent **Don North**



A US Marine is pinned down by sniper fire from North Vietnamese troops occupying The Citadel in Hue during Tet 1968

Wars are fought twice, once on the battlefield and later in the remembering. In that way, the Vietnam War – though it ended on the battlefield four decades ago – continues as a battle of memory, history and truth. And the stakes are still high. Honest narratives about important past events can shape our destinies, helping to determine whether there will be more wars or maybe peace.

A few years ago, I was pleased to hear that the Pentagon would be funding a committee for the commemoration of the Vietnam War. I thought maybe, finally, we'll get the record straight. But I didn't have to read further than the keynote quote at the top of the new website to realize it was not to be.

Quoting President Richard Nixon, it read: "No event in history is more misunderstood than the Vietnam war. It was misrepresented

Honest narratives about important past events can shape our destinies, helping to determine whether there will be more wars or maybe peace

LESSONS NOT LEARNED

Four decades ago the United States suffered defeat in an unwinnable war, fighting against a country about which they knew virtually nothing and in which they had no vital interest

then and is misunderstood now.”

I belong to the dwindling ranks of journalists who covered the war. We call ourselves “the Vietnam Old Hacks” and we got pretty exercised about this quote since it perpetuates the myth that the war would have worked out just fine if not for the discouraging words of some reporters. I wrote a letter to the chief of the commemoration committee, retired Lieutenant General Claude Kicklighter, protesting this slur on the thousands of journalists who tried to honestly cover the war, a slur coming from a US president who was one of the most responsible for misleading the public about the war.

I badgered the committee for months but they were reluctant to take the quote down. I enlisted friends at the US Army Center for History who strongly suggested to the committee that the quote was inappropriate. After six months through clenched teeth, they finally took it down. But many of the myths



ABC News Vietnam correspondent Don North holds his tape recorder above water as he fords a stream in the Mekong Delta with US Army 9th Division in 1967.

and falsehoods of the Vietnam War remain on the website.

Four decades ago the United States suffered defeat in an unwinnable war, fighting against a country about which they knew virtually nothing and in which they had no vital interests. And although Vietnam was hopeless enough, to repeat the same arrogant folly years later in Afghanistan and Iraq is unforgivable. One lesson the US military did learn in Vietnam is that images and the written word can inform with devastating effect and lead to demands for accountability. It's unlikely that war correspondents will ever again find themselves getting the unfettered access to war that we had in Vietnam.

So what went wrong? One of the prevailing and persistent myths is that the United States was betrayed by disloyal journalists. Even the US Army commander in Vietnam, General William Westmoreland, subscribed to that old saw.

It doesn't seem to matter how many times historians – even Army historians – challenge this myth, noting that the US Press, on balance, did a pretty good job covering a complex and dangerous conflict. The myth of the disloyal journalists who supposedly sabotaged what would have otherwise been an American victory just keeps coming back.

My life in Vietnam

I landed in Vietnam in May of 1965, an eager and enterprising young reporter from Canada. I was like hundreds of other would-be-journalists going into the field to report the war as freelancers, arriving as this counter-insurgency conflict grew into a full-blown Asian war. And like so many of us, at first I bought Washington's rationale for the war – to save this little democracy from a Communist takeover and the start of falling dominoes in Asia.

The truth, however, didn't take long to learn. At that time, the United States had the benefit of some brilliant journalists who took their craft seriously – and many were on the



The US strategy in Vietnam didn't work. Not then, not ever. But the price for the folly was staggeringly high

A Viet Cong sapper tried to crawl through the wire defending a Vietnamese army base in Pleiku and was blown up, only his hands and a golden ring left hanging from the barbed wire.

front lines, reporting about the gaps between the glowing PR and the grim reality.

For example, my late friend David Halberstam of the *New York Times* told me about an historic battle down in the Mekong Delta in late 1962 when the reality of the conflict was becoming evident. Hundreds of American helicopters had arrived in Vietnam promising great new technological advantages to defeat the Viet Cong.

On the first day of the battle, a few Viet Cong were killed. On the second day, an enormous helicopter assault was launched but nothing happened. On the third day, the same thing happened, no enemy, no battle.

On the way back to Saigon, Neil Sheehan, then with UPI, muttered about the waste of his time. Homer Bigart, an experienced World War II reporter for the *New York Times*, said,

“What’s the matter, Mister Sheehan?” Sheehan grumbled about three days spent tramping the paddy fields and no story to write.

“No story,” remarked Bigart, slightly surprised. “But there is a story. It doesn’t work. That’s your story, Mr. Sheehan.”

Indeed, the US strategy in Vietnam didn’t work. Not then, not ever. But the price for the folly was staggeringly high. The Vietnamese suffered two million civilian dead, many killed by the heaviest aerial bombing in history. In many ways, the young American soldiers, who were dropped into Vietnam, were victims, too, as they found themselves woefully ill-prepared for the rigors and cruelty of counter-insurgency warfare, often fought in villages packed with women and children. 58,000 US soldiers died in the conflict and many more were scarred either physically or

LESSONS NOT LEARNED

In a war full of surprises, there was no greater surprise for us than the Tet offensive attack on the US Embassy on January 31, 1968

psychologically.

And Vietnam is not all old history. Unexploded ordnance and cancer-causing chemicals and the residue of Agent Orange left behind continue to kill, maim and deform

Nick Turse, who wrote the book “Kill Anything that Moves,” recently noted: “Civilian suffering in Vietnam was the essence of a war caused by America’s callous use of power. I question whether the Henry Kissingers of today, Washington’s latest coterie of war managers, are any more willing to consider this than Kissinger was.”

I have just returned from a three-week tour of Vietnam and Cambodia and found that there are those in Vietnam as well as in America who are still unwilling to hear honest voices about the war.

In a war full of surprises, there was no greater surprise than the Tet offensive attack on the US Embassy on Jan. 31, 1968. Military analysts say one way to achieve decisive surprise in warfare is to do something truly stupid and the 15 Viet Cong sappers who carried out the daring embassy attack were poorly trained and unprepared, but its effects marked a turning point in the war and earned a curious entry in the annals of military history.

Today the imposing US Embassy that withstood the attack has been torn down and replaced by a modest US Consulate. A small marker stone in a garden, closed to the public, records the names of the seven American marines and military police who died there. Outside the consulate gates on the sidewalk is a brick monument engraved with names of the Viet Cong sappers and agents who also died.

I couldn’t help imagining the scene if somehow US Army PFC Bill Sebast and Viet Cong sapper Nguyen Van Sau, two soldiers who died on opposite sides of the Embassy wall, could return today to marvel at Saigon’s economic progress, with Vietnam and the US having put aside old animosities to become valuable trading partners.

For the first time, the Vietnam Foreign Ministry treated us old hacks like people worth knowing, interested in our knowledge about the bloody war that we once covered. The truth is Vietnam is more concerned these days about its giant neighbor to the north, China, and even looks to the United States as a possible counterweight to China’s tendency to throw its significant weight around.

Judging the journalists

So what about the recent Pentagon suggestion that we journalists “misreported the war?” Am I satisfied with my own coverage of the Vietnam war? No, I’m not. I think ignorance of Vietnam history and culture at first and the limitations of TV news sometimes made the truth suffer. A minute and a half was about max for an evening news report. Not nearly enough time to describe the complex events of the Vietnam War.

I also found my ABC News editors in New York reluctant to sound negative about the war. Critical stories were brutally edited or mysteriously disappeared before air time.

The only censorship that I experienced was from my own news company. At the US Embassy when the last Vietcong sapper was killed or captured, I quickly filmed a “stand-upper.” To conclude my report, I said, “Since the Lunar New Year, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese have proved they are capable of bold and impressive military moves that Americans never dreamed could be achieved. Whether they can sustain this onslaught for long remains to be seen.

“But whatever turn the war now takes, the capture of the US embassy here for seven hours is a psychological victory that will rally and inspire the Viet Cong. Don North ABC News Saigon.”

My instant analysis never made it to the air on ABC News. I was accused of “editorializing” and the standupper was killed by some producer on the evening news. Ironically, however, the standupper with other outtakes ended up in the “ABC Simon Grinberg Library” where it was later found by producer



The lessons of Vietnam – fruitlessly discussed over the past half century – have taught Washington so little that today’s war hawks replicated many of the same Vietnam mistakes in Afghanistan and Iraq

Vietnamese civilian refugees flee their homes in Saigon during the Tet offensive of 1968.

Peter Davis and used in his Academy Award winning film, “Hearts and Minds.”

So it’s true that the truth about the Vietnam War often suffered, but not in the way Nixon’s quote suggested. Much of the US media reporting put the war in too rosy – not too harsh – a light. More accurate journalism would have more consistently challenged what Neil Sheehan later called “A Bright Shining Lie,” the upbeat PR for a misguided war.

Nothing learned

And the lessons of Vietnam – fruitlessly discussed over the past half century – have taught Washington so little that today’s war hawks replicated many of the same Vietnam mistakes in Afghanistan and Iraq – the same hubris, the same over-reliance on technology and propaganda, the same ignorance of complicated foreign cultures.

So what were the real lessons learned about journalism in the Vietnam War? In spite of difficulties, censorship and the fog of

war, I believe much of our Vietnam reporting was accurate and has withstood the scrutiny of time. However, has US war reporting today improved any more than American foreign policies?

Mark Twain once wrote of what I think is a major dilemma of our age. He said, “If you don’t read the newspapers you are uninformed. If you do read the newspapers you are misinformed.”

The great reporter A.J. Liebling of the *Baltimore Sun* once observed, “The Press is the weak slat under the bed of democracy.”

Bill Moyers, while at PBS, picked up on Liebling’s observations when he wrote: “After the invasion of Iraq, the slat in the bed broke and some strange bedfellows fell to the floor ... the establishment journalists, neo-con polemicists, beltway pundits, right-wing warmongers flying the skull and crossbones of the ‘balanced and fair brigade.’ And administration flaks whose classified leaks were manufactured lies ... all romping on the same mattress in the foreplay to disaster.

LESSONS NOT LEARNED

Now it's easier to talk tough and wave the flag, while squandering the nation's tax dollars on military hardware and military adventures

Thousands of casualties and billions of dollars later, most of the media co-conspirators caught in 'flagrante delicto' are still prominent, still celebrated, and still holding forth with no more contrition than a weathercaster who made the wrong prediction as to the next day's temperature."

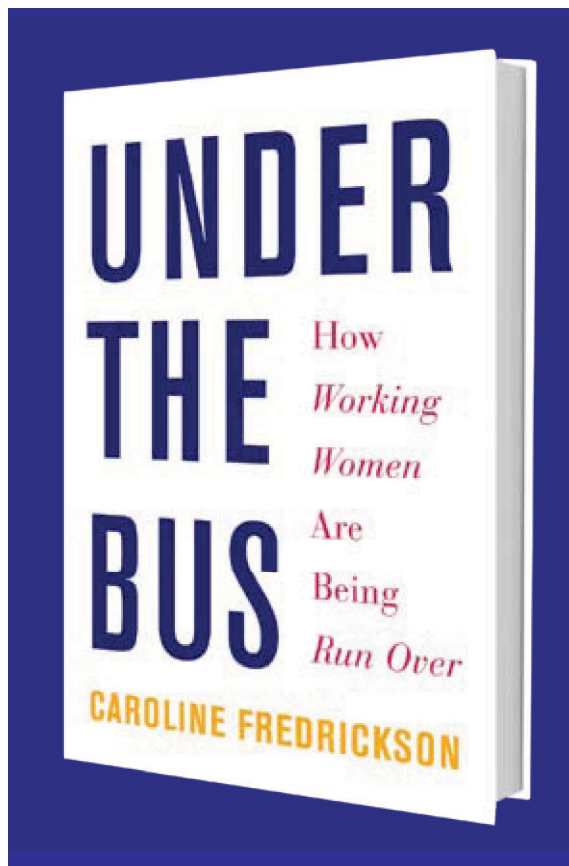
And the same sort of "group think" and hostility to dissent that proved so disastrous in Vietnam a half century ago and Iraq a decade ago is ascendant again in Washington today. The *New York Times* and *Washington Post* land on my doorstep every day and I'm appalled to read how neocon ideology appears to have seized control of the editorial pages, a development that should concern every American. Inevitably military power is recommended as a first, not last resort.

Suggestions about seeing a conflict from the other side's perspective is dismissed as soft-headed and un-American. Instead, it's

easier to talk tough and wave the flag, while squandering the nation's tax dollars on military hardware and military adventures, even as millions of American families slip beneath the poverty line.

At West Point last May, President Obama observed, "Some of our most costly mistakes come from, not our restraint, but from our willingness to rush into military adventures without thinking through the consequences. Just because we have the best hammer, does not mean that every problem is a nail." **CT**

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Don North is a veteran war correspondent who covered the Vietnam War and many other conflicts around the world. He is the author of a new book, "Inappropriate Conduct," the story of a Canadian World War II correspondent whose career was crushed by the intrigue he uncovered.



"Unpacks the history of the racism and sexism that has left so many working women and people of color without adequate protections." —*Mother Jones*

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Obama Does Cuba

A poem by **Philip Kraske**

Mr. Obama deserves some high merit,
For not repeating that same balding parrot:
The one saying Cuba's an island of creeps,
Who shout dumb slogans and drive 50s heaps.

And then that second illumination:
Havana capitals no terror nation.
'Twas none too shabby, if slightly low-rent,
Since mainly medics was what Cuba sent.

And to call it flat-out a policy wrong,
Which just didn't work and ran way too long,
Is no mean feat for any state leader,
And often ends as steady poll bleeder.

Yet there's a few words the prez left unsaid,
And these now trouble my sensitive head.
He said neither "Sorry" nor "Cubans, well-done,"
Since fifty-odd years's a pretty good run.

But let's not niggle: that'd be to rub salt,
In wounds that yesterday did high exalt,
The triumph of capital, the fall of K. Marx,
And lemonade stands of kids in the parks.

For in the States there's a whole generation,
Of Cold War touts who swear black tarnation,

Hearing their efforts have ended in vain,
That old Fidel got away with the game.

Yet O. in coda should someday declare:
"Our methods were cruel and not just an err'.
To make folks suffer so long for their 'ism,
Is pure un-American and skank cynicism."

And then should apologize, frank with full-stop,
Admit we've been neighbors who run others' shop.
And make some amends with bucks and close ties,
That all earth might know we can eat humble pies.

And admit the Cubans have done some fine things,
Like health-care for all, and paid on shoestrings,
And cutting the corporate presence by half:

Come the next meltdown, they'll have the last laugh.
Once that's done, then we can take stock,
Of the sad list of Latins whose lives we did rock.
This business of running the earth as we like,
Would better have ended with Jack or Prez Ike.

For it's not that our policies just didn't work,
They bled our neighbors with grisly black dirk.
The difference with Cuba is they stuck it out,
Not losing their cool, their pride winning out.

Philip Kraske is from Minneapolis but has lived for the past 30 years in Madrid, Spain, where he teaches English on a freelance basis and does some translation. His four novels, of varied plots but centering on American politics and society, began to appear in 2009

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Baltimore and the language of the unheard

People who denounce protesters in Baltimore and call for “nonviolence” ignore the far greater violence that the system inflicts every day on Black communities, writes **Danny Katch**

Photos by **Arash Azzizada**

Ever since the African American residents of Ferguson, Missouri, took to the streets for weeks and months of defiance, the question hasn't been whether their resistance would spread, but when it would, and where it would appear.

Ferguson cast a spotlight on the epidemic of racist police violence, committed with impunity, that plagues communities across the United States. But the response from government officials in charge of keeping people safe – particularly from the women and men who are supposed to “serve and protect” – has been, at best, all talk and no action.

At worst, the response from the political and media elite has been scapegoating and demonization of the very people suffering the brunt of the abuse and violence.

There has been some talk in Congress about the absurd militarization of police

departments that now deploy state-of-the-art military technology distributed from the Pentagon's massive arsenal – but no action to take the tanks away. Barack Obama's Justice Department issued a strongly worded report criticizing the Ferguson Police Department for its bias – but it couldn't be bothered to press charges against the cop who murdered Mike Brown.

Thus, the only action to come from officials of the state has been the police – and we know what that has produced. Since the beginning of 2015, law enforcement officers have killed 381 people as of April 28 – a horrifying rate of more than one murder every eight hours. One of these murders was bound to produce the next social explosion – which, of course, was presented in the media as senseless “rioting.”

There were signs in Madison, Wisconsin, where anti-racists responded within hours to the March killing of unarmed 19-year-old Tony Robinson in his friend's apartment – followed by days of demonstrations, often

The response from the political and media elite has been scapegoating and demonization of the very people suffering the brunt of the abuse and violence

Previous page: Looks like a soldier ready to fight in a foreign war. But it's not, it's a cop facing protesters on the streets of Baltimore.



Double vision: Watching the clashes on cellphone video as the trouble unfolds on the street.

The cops showed up in full Robocop riot gear, closed the local transit station so the students couldn't get home, and then confronting the youth with mace and Tasers

led by high school students after a walkout from classes. The pot continued to simmer a month later when the entire country watched a South Carolina officer fire eight bullets into the back of a fleeing Walter Scott.

And then the lid blew off in Baltimore after police chased and tackled Freddie Gray for a 21st century version of a Black Code violation: making eye contact with a cop and then running. Gray was “folded up like origami,” in the gruesome words of one eyewitness, and by the time he emerged from a police van, he had a nearly severed spinal chord and crushed voice box.

Thousands of mostly Black people in Baltimore took to the streets during the week after Gray died. But it was the provocations of the Baltimore police that prodded protesters into physical confrontations that reportedly caused injuries to 15 police officers. (As for how many people the cops “reportedly”

injured, we can't say because there is no “reporting” on that.)

The first major clashes started at Mondawmin Mall, the gathering point for a social media call for high school students to protest. The cops showed up in full Robocop riot gear, closed the local transit station so the students couldn't get home, and then confronting the youth with mace and Tasers. No surprise that rocks got thrown.

Now there is frantic talk in the national media about “violence” in Baltimore. That was missing for the past five years as Baltimore police killed 109 people, according to the ACLU.

In the last four years, the Baltimore Police Department paid out \$5.7 million in brutality and civil rights settlements. Victims include a 15-year-old boy riding a dirt bike, a 26-year-old pregnant accountant who had witnessed an assault, a 50-year-old woman selling church raffle tickets, a 65-year-old



Battlefield Baltimore: Heavily armored police vehicle heads for another trouble spot.

church deacon rolling a cigarette and an 87-year-old grandmother aiding her wounded grandson. In this context, the media's frantic depictions of rock-throwing as an "outbreak of violence" in Baltimore can only be described as obscene. As *Atlantic* correspondent Ta-Nehisi Coates put it:

"When nonviolence is preached as an attempt to evade the repercussions of political brutality, it betrays itself. When nonviolence begins halfway through the war with the aggressor calling time out, it exposes itself as a ruse. When nonviolence is preached by the representatives of the state, while the state doles out heaps of violence to its citizens, it reveals itself to be a con.

"And yet Barack Obama, the first African American president in a country founded on slavery, presented himself as the con artist-in-chief when he denounced protesters as "criminals and thugs." "They're not making a statement. They are stealing," the presi-

dent chided. "One burning building will be looped on television over and over and over again, and the thousands of demonstrators who did it the right way have been lost in the discussion."

For Obama to join the sanctimonious chorus condemning those who took to the streets in Baltimore is another slap in the face for a community facing the "heaps of violence." The president's words ignore the anger of thousands of people who demonstrate in the supposed "right way" – yet still see unaccountable police unleashing violence against Black communities on a daily basis.

The eruption in Baltimore is not a repeat of the resistance in Ferguson. It represents an expansion of the struggle, and its evolution onto new terrain.

Baltimore is similar to Ferguson in that both have a majority Black population that suffers abuse and violence at the hands of

The eruption in Baltimore is not a repeat of the resistance in Ferguson. It represents an expansion of the struggle, and its evolution onto new terrain



Where's the war?: Shields at the ready, Baltimore cops get ready to crack skulls.

Thanks to shows like “The Wire,” Baltimore is probably second only to Detroit in its infamy as a city whose Black working class has been decimated by de-industrialization

police, while enduring increasing inequality. The Baltimore metropolitan area has the 19th largest economic output in the US, but a Johns Hopkins study found that youth in poor neighborhoods face conditions similar to their counterparts in Nigeria and India. As Dan Diamond wrote for *Forbes*:

“Black infants in Baltimore are almost nine times more likely to die before age 1 than white infants. AIDS cases are nearly five times more common in the African American community . . . ‘Only six miles separate the Baltimore neighborhoods of Roland Park and Hollins Market,’ interim Hopkins provost Jonathan Bagger said last year. ‘[B]ut there is a 20-year difference in the average life expectancy.’ “

“That’s how Baltimore is like Ferguson. It is unlike Ferguson in that it is a major urban center in the heart of the Northeast Corridor and an hour’s drive from the nation’s capital. It is run by a Black political establishment

and is, as one *SocialistWorker.org* contributor wrote on social media, “fully integrated into the post-civil rights landscape – a landscape that includes massive levels of segregation, intense concentrations of poverty and astounding brutality alongside a new Black middle class and political class.”

Finally, thanks to shows like “The Wire,” Baltimore is probably second only to Detroit in its infamy as a city whose Black working class has been decimated by de-industrialization.

When *Jacobin* associate editor Shawn Gude described the scene in West Baltimore after a riot, he wrote: “[T]he most salient thing wasn’t the destruction wrought by protesters – the cop car demolished, the payday loan store smashed up – but by capital: the decrepit, boarded-up row houses, hovels and vacants in a city full of them.”

These conditions that form the backdrop to Freddie Gray’s murder will force many ac-



Fighting back: Protesters hurl rocks into the teargas as media crews keep their distance.

tivists in the Black Lives Matter movement to confront – as Martin Luther King and Malcolm X both did in another era – the intersections of racism and capitalism.

As King said in a speech less than a month before he was assassinated in 1968 – words that were repeated many times on social media during the Baltimore troubles:

“I must say tonight that a riot is the language of the unheard. And what is it America has failed to hear? It has failed to hear that the plight of the [Black] poor has worsened over the last 12 or 15 years. It has failed to hear that the promises of freedom and justice have not been met. And it has failed to hear that large segments of white society are more concerned about tranquility and the status quo than about justice and humanity.”

Opponents of injustice today face the task of building on the bitter anger and the desire to fight for change demonstrated by the eruptions in Ferguson, Baltimore and beyond.

We need to challenge the hypocrisy and lies about what happened on the streets of Baltimore, to organize toward some measure of justice in the here and now – starting with the indictment of the cops who murdered Freddie Gray, just as surely as if they pulled a trigger – and to put forward the vision of a different world worth fighting for, built on solidarity, democracy and justice.

CT

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Opponents of injustice today face the task of building on the bitter anger and the desire to fight for change demonstrated by the eruptions in Ferguson, Baltimore and beyond



Baltimore protesters demand an end to police violence and equal rights for all.

(Photo: Arish Azzizada)

Ten disturbing facts about Baltimore

A quarter of the city lives in abject poverty, writes **Bill Quigley**

Police brutality has cost the city \$5.7million since 2011

Were you shocked at the disruption in Baltimore? What is more shocking is daily life in Baltimore, a city of 622,000 that is 63 percent African American. Here are 10 numbers that tell some of the story.

5: Blacks in Baltimore are more than 5.6 times more likely to be arrested for possession of marijuana than whites even though

marijuana use among the races is similar. Baltimore county has the fifth highest arrest rate for marijuana possessions in the USA.

5.7: Over \$5.7 million has been paid out by Baltimore since 2011 in over 100 police brutality lawsuits. Victims of severe police brutality were mostly people of color and included a pregnant woman, a 65-year-old



Hated in the USA: Protester holds up a sign that says much about the state of her nation.

(Photo: Arish Azzizada)

church deacon and an 87-year-old grandmother.

6: White babies born in Baltimore have six more years of life expectancy than African American babies in the city.

8: African Americans in Baltimore are eight times more likely to die from complications of HIV/AIDS than whites and twice as likely to die from diabetes related causes as whites.

8.4: Unemployment is 8.4 percent city wide. Most estimates place the unemployment in the African American community at double that of the white community. The national rate of unemployment for whites is 4.7 percent, for blacks it is 10.1.

9: African American babies in Baltimore are nine times more likely to die before age one than white infants in the city.

20: There is a 20-year difference in life

expectancy between those who live in the most affluent neighborhood in Baltimore versus those who live six miles away in the most impoverished.

23.8: 148,000 people, or 23.8 percent of the people in Baltimore, live below the official poverty level.

56: 56.4 percent of Baltimore students graduate from high school. The national rate is about 80 percent.

92: 92 percent of marijuana possession arrests in Baltimore were of African Americans, one of the highest racial disparities in the US.

CT

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Bill Quigley is a human rights lawyer and professor at Loyola University New Orleans College of Law. He is also a member of the legal collective of School of Americas Watch, and can be reached at quigley77@gmail.com

African American babies are nine times more likely to die than white ones

The triple victimisation of Omar Khadr

Michael Keefer welcomes the release of a Canadian child soldier who was tortured on Guantanamo and then ignored by his own government

International law recognizes child soldiers as victims, and their recruitment as a crime: but Ahmed Said Khadr was willing to see his own sons become child soldiers

Omar Khadr has been the victim of a triple suspension of what ought to have been his by right – as a child, a citizen, and a human being. His father’s political fanaticism led to a suspension of the parental protection that is the normal anchorage of a child’s world, exposing him at age fifteen to the military power of an imperial state that had cast off the constraints of those international laws which define the basic rights accruing to us as human beings – and exposing him, as well, to the betrayal of his rights as a citizen by a Canadian government that, first through cowardice and then through harsh conviction, shaped its own notions of legality to the prevailing wind.

International law recognizes child soldiers as victims, and their recruitment as a crime: but Ahmed Said Khadr was willing to see his own sons become child soldiers. In 1994 he sent Omar’s two older brothers, then aged thirteen and twelve, to a guerilla training camp in Afghanistan, at that time still riven by civil war. In July 2002, after the fall of the Taliban regime, he allowed Omar, aged fifteen, to serve as Pashto translator for a group of guerillas moving from Pakistan into the Khost region of Afghanistan on a mission that ended on July 27th with their deaths and Omar’s near-death and capture.

But Omar Khadr’s public significance stems from other more far-reaching forms of

victimization. In the Manichaeic theatrics of its global war of good against evil, the American imperial state imprisoned, tortured and demonized him; and he has been victimized as well by Canadian political leaders who, at first cravenly and then in a deliberate scorn of legality, violated his rights as a Canadian citizen and - until his release at the beginning of May – refused their responsibilities to him under Canadian and international law.

The grotesque injustice of Omar Khadr’s treatment by the United States is widely recognized. Even were it true that he killed an American soldier, his imprisonment and the pressing of charges against him remain a violation of Articles 37, 39, and 40 of the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*,¹ and the torture to which he was subjected at Bagram and at Guantánamo is a criminal matter for which the responsible US officials deserve indictment.

Let us remember some of the details of this treatment.

When the Afghan compound where the guerillas were staying was attacked on July 27, 2002 by US Apache helicopters and A10 ground-attack aircraft, all but two of the group, Khadr and one of the men, were killed. Khadr received multiple splinter wounds during the attack and was partially blinded. A document inadvertently given to reporters during his pre-trial hearing in February 2008 states that a US soldier who entered the shat-



Free at last: Omar Khadr meets the media after his release from prison. His long-time lawyer Dennis Edney (left) said, “I think he’s worth every effort. I met him in a cold, empty cell. And I saw a broken bird, chained to the floor. So, we journeyed together. We have, in some ways, both grown up together. I’m proud of who he is. He’s gone through hell.”

tered compound killed the other survivor with a head shot, and seeing Khadr “sitting up facing away from him leaning against [a pile of] brush,” shot him twice in the back.

Could Khadr have thrown the grenade that killed one of the US soldiers? In March 2008, Khadr’s military lawyer learned that the commander of the American infantry unit wrote in his July 28, 2002 report that the survivor of the aerial bombardment who threw the grenade had then himself been killed – and learned as well that this report was revised months later (though falsely given the same date of July 28) to say that the grenade thrower was merely “engaged” by US troops – thus pointing the finger at Khadr.

A confession was extracted from Omar Khadr while he lay chained to his bed in the prison hospital at Bagram with two gaping exit wounds in his chest, and we know from the testimony of a prison guard and of another prisoner, British citizen Moazzam

Begg, that Khadr was repeatedly and harshly tortured at Bagram, where the guards singled him out “for the worst treatment, payback for allegedly killing one of their own.” Khadr now claims to remember having tossed a grenade backward over his head. But remembering is not a matter of simply recovering something that in its wholeness is filed away somewhere in the mind; it is a process, rather, of reconstruction. That memory, reconstructed for a traumatized, badly wounded, and consequently suggestible adolescent in the course of many hours of unrelenting interrogation, may be no more reliable than Khadr’s confession at Bagram that he had seen Maher Arar in the company of Al Qaeda operatives in Pakistan (at a time when the wholly innocent Arar was under close RCMP surveillance in Canada).

At the Guantánamo Bay prison, to which he was transferred in October, 2002, Khadr was subjected to physical abuse, threats of rape, sleep-deprivation torture, very extend-

A confession was extracted from Omar Khadr while he lay chained to his bed in the prison hospital at Bagram with two gaping exit wounds in his chest . . . he was repeatedly and harshly tortured at Bagram

CHILD SOLDIER

Canadian officials responded to his complaints that he had been tortured into making false statements and was not receiving adequate medical care with a callous contempt

ed solitary confinement, and long periods of being “short-shackled” in stress positions to a concrete floor. When on one such occasion, after hours chained to the floor, he wet himself, the guards drenched him with floor cleanser, used him as a human mop to wipe up his own urine, and left him in his soiled and chemical-stained clothing for the next two days. Khadr was also denied medical treatment for shrapnel injuries to his eyes and his legs. In April 2008, his lawyer Dennis Edney declared that he had by that time been locked in solitary confinement for a total of “more than two years with no relief from the overhead fluorescent lights,” and during the years of his imprisonment had been given “no education, no psychological assessment and no Canadian consular representative.”

In his book “A Question of Torture” (2006), Alfred W. McCoy studied the torture methods developed by the CIA since the 1950s, which focus on sensory deprivation, on ‘self-inflicted’ pain caused by forcing prisoners into stress positions, and on techniques of disorientation involving isolation and sleep-deprivation. The aim is to induce psychological regression from a normal state, in which a prisoner may resist interrogation, into a condition of fear, dependency, and deep (even psychotic) confusion. In the torture manuals analyzed by McCoy, and in the tortures inflicted throughout the US gulag system, these techniques have been combined with older and more obviously brutal methods of inducing terror, mental breakdown, and despair.

Omar Khadr was subjected to all of these forms of torture during the years of his captivity and repeated interrogations at Bagram and Guantánamo – and there is no doubt about the effects of this treatment. The Pentagon refused repeated requests for an independent medical examination. However, when lawyers acting on Khadr’s behalf were at last allowed to meet with him – in November 2004 and the spring of 2005 – they administered two standard psychological tests to him themselves. Experts who assessed the

results concluded that Khadr’s symptoms were those of a torture victim, and that his answers met the “full criteria for a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.” The lawyers’ attempt to secure an injunction against further interrogations was denied.

No less dismaying, from a Canadian perspective, is Omar Khadr’s victimization by his own government. On August 30, 2002, Canada requested consular access to Khadr at Bagram (in conformity with the Geneva Conventions and the Vienna Convention on Consular Access), and asked both that due consideration be given to his age (Canada had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2001), and that he not be transferred to Guantánamo. But when the US denied consular access and bundled Khadr off to Gitmo, Canadian officials followed the advice of Foreign Affairs legal advisor Colleen Swords to “claw back on the fact that [Omar] is a minor.” And when the US permitted access to him only by intelligence officers, on the understanding that they would seek out and share information that could be incriminating, Canada acquiesced.

In February 2003, Khadr was interrogated on three successive days by two intelligence officers from CSIS and the Department of Foreign Affairs. They responded to his complaints that he had been tortured into making false statements and was not receiving adequate medical care with a callous contempt that is the more remarkable for the fact that his wounds, as he showed by raising his shirt, were (in the words of his US military lawyer) “infected, swollen, and still seeping blood.” There were further interrogations in the Fall of 2003 by two CSIS agents, and in March 2004 by a Foreign Affairs intelligence officer who was aware that Khadr had been subjected to three weeks of sleep-deprivation torture to make him “more amenable and willing to talk.”

Khadr’s lawyers brought these facts to the Canadian Federal Court of Appeal, which in 2007 ruled that Canada had violated international law, and ordered the release of all doc-

uments relating to his imprisonment. The Harper government appealed to the Supreme Court, which ruled that Khadr's rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms had likewise been violated. When in April 2009 the Federal Court ordered that a request be made for Khadr's repatriation to Canada as soon as possible, the government again appealed to the Supreme Court, which issued its judgment in January 2010. While strongly critical of the deprivation of Khadr's "right to liberty and security of the person," and judging that Canada's complicity in the American preparation of a prosecution case through the use of sleep deprivation "offends the most basic Canadian standards about the treatment of detained youth suspects," the Supreme Court left it to the government to decide how best to uphold Omar Khadr's violated rights. Given this latitude, the Harper government allowed the American Military Commission in Guantánamo to lurch unopposed toward its preordained guilty verdict.

On October 31, 2010 – Halloween, that is – a military jury arrived at the ghoulish conclusion that Khadr deserved an additional forty years in prison for war crimes, fifteen years more than the prosecution had called for. But this sentence was pre-empted by a plea-bargain agreement, according to which, in return for a full acknowledgment of guilt, Khadr would receive an eight-year sentence, after a year of which the US government "would support his bid to apply to serve the rest of his sentence in a Canadian prison."

At every subsequent stage, from Khadr's repatriation to the bail hearing that has just concluded, the Harper government has taken every available opportunity to express its confidence in a kangaroo-court conviction resting on falsified evidence and on torture, and to resist justice for Omar Khadr by every means at its disposal.

Only following his release on bail have Canadians been able to see and hear Omar Khadr speak for himself. What we saw on May 8 was a soft-spoken young man who smilingly thanked Canadians and the court system

for trusting him and giving him a chance. He calmly said, in response to Stephen Harper's impenitently punitive attitude: "I'm going to have to disappoint him. I'm better than the person he thinks I am."

But we should give the last word to Dennis Edney, the lawyer who has worked tirelessly on Omar's behalf for the past eleven years, and whose affection and support have undoubtedly been a major factor in his rehabilitation:

"I think he's worth every effort. I met him in a cold, empty cell. And I saw a broken bird, chained to the floor. So, we journeyed together. We have, in some ways, both grown up together. I'm proud of who he is. He's gone through hell." **CT**

1. Article 37 provides that "The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort for the shortest appropriate period of time. Every child deprived of his or her liberty shall have the right to prompt access to legal and other appropriate assistance...." Article 39, on Rehabilitative Care, provides that "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child." Article 40 recognizes the right of a child accused of a crime "to be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child's sense of dignity and worth," and provides for "hav[ing] the matter determined without delay by a competent, independent and impartial authority or judicial body in a fair hearing according to law." For the full text, see CRIN: Child Rights Information Network, <http://www.crin.org/docs/resources/treaties/uncrc.asp>. The US has not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but professes to respect it.

At every subsequent stage, from Khadr's repatriation to the bail hearing that has just concluded, the Harper government has taken every available opportunity to express its confidence in a kangaroo-court conviction

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Michael Keefer is Professor Emeritus at the University of Guelph, and the author of "Hard Truths For Canada About Israel & Palestine"

Two days in April

Jeff Nygaard is incredulous after reading the *New York Times*

Since we tend to keep good records of things we care about, the fact that we only have “rough” numbers on the thousands killed by US remote-control violence is quite revealing

Every once in a while a particular issue of the *New York Times* is so bizarre that I have to read it several times in order to convince myself that I’m not hallucinating. April 24th was just such a day.

Readers may recall that it was announced on April 23rd by the Obama administration that US drones had killed two Western aid workers. The killings took place on January 15th when the drones attacked a compound in Pakistan where the two workers were being held as hostages. One of the aid workers was a US citizen named Warren Weinstein, who was kidnaped in 2011. The other was an Italian man named Giovanni Lo Porto, who was seized in 2012.

Drones April 24th, #1: the apology

The President appeared before the press on April 23. Here’s how the *Times* reported it: “Visibly upset, Mr. Obama came to the White House briefing room shortly after his staff issued a written statement announcing the deaths to make a rare personal apology. ‘As president and as commander in chief, I take full responsibility for all our counterterrorism operations,’ the grim-faced president told reporters as television cameras broadcast his words. ‘I profoundly regret what happened,’ he added. ‘On behalf of the United States government, I offer our deepest apologies to the families.’”

It wasn’t mentioned in that article, but in an accompanying article that was also on the front page, the President’s apology was given needed context when the author, Scott Shane (who will soon publish a book about the 2011 drone strike that killed a US citizen named Anwar al-Awlaki) quoted Micah Zenko, a scholar at the Council on Foreign Relations. Zenko “said that an average of separate counts of American drone strikes by three organizations, the New America Foundation, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism and The Long War Journal, finds that 522 strikes have killed 3,852 people, 476 of them civilians. But those counts, based on news accounts and some on-the-ground interviews, are considered very rough estimates.”

Rough, indeed. Since we tend to keep good records of things we care about, the fact that we only have “rough” numbers on the thousands killed by US remote-control violence is quite revealing. The most reliable of the three groups listed above, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, reports these numbers from Pakistan alone in the years 2004-2015: 415 drone strikes, resulting in 2,449-3,949 people killed, including 423-962 civilians, 172-207 of whom were children.

It would seem that the President has several hundred “deep apologies” yet to make. Black and brown lives do matter, after all, and not just in the US

Here's one more odd thing from this article. Actually, the odd thing only appears in the paper copy of the *New York Times*, having been edited out of the online version. That's odd, in itself. But, anyway, in the paper version we read this:

"Mr. Lo Porto studied at London Metropolitan University and worked on aid projects in the Central African Republic and Haiti before traveling to Pakistan to help rebuild an area hit by flooding, according to media reports. Shortly after arriving, he and a German colleague were abducted. American officials said they do not know where the German is now but expressed confidence he was not at the compound where Mr. Lo Porto died."

It's weird that some unnamed "officials" would say that they don't know where someone is, but they do know where he is not. Maybe even weirder is that the reporter for the *Times* appeared to buy this impossible statement. Well, I guess that's what anonymous sources are for. After all, if his or her identity were known, people (not from the *New York Times*) might ask questions.

Drones April 24th, #2: the blunder

On the subject of the "We don't know where he is, but he's not here" way of thinking, there was an even stranger example in the April 24 *Times*. It was found in a second front-page article that day, which was headlined "First Evidence of a Blunder: 2 Extra Bodies." Here are three paragraphs that appeared one right after the other:

1. "In Pakistan, unlike elsewhere in the world, the White House permits the CIA to carry out drone strikes without knowing the identities of the people the agency is trying to kill. These 'signature strikes,' [as they are called] based on patterns of behavior rather than intelligence about specific people, have been criticized in the past as generating a higher number of civilian deaths.

2. "American officials acknowledged that the Jan. 15 attack was a signature strike, but said that the CIA had assessed with 'high

confidence' that the compound in the Shawal Valley was being used by Qaeda operatives. The officials said that before every drone strike, whether in Pakistan or elsewhere, the agency must have 'near certainty' that no civilians will be killed.

3. "The strike was conducted despite Mr. Obama's indication in a speech in 2013 that the CIA would no longer conduct such signature strikes after 2014, when American 'combat operations' in Afghanistan were scheduled to end. Several American officials said Thursday that the deadline had not been enforced."

Really, now. How could any "near certainty" rule be "enforced" – no matter what the deadline – when the killers have permission to kill people whose identities are unknown? The words "unknown" and "certainty" just don't go together. The *Times* could easily find someone to comment on the absurdity of such a claim, which was made by anonymous "officials." Perhaps someone could be found who would suggest that someone here (someone with a name) might not be telling the truth? Apparently that's too much to ask of the corporate media.

Drones April 24, #3: the ghosts

The third article on the front page was the one by Scott Shane that I mentioned earlier. Entitled "Ghosts in the Cross Hairs" the article highlighted the dark side of the New American Way of War – that is, remote-control war that stays off the TV screens – as exemplified by the officially-secret drone program.

Among many remarkable statements by reporter Scott Shane, this one stands out:

"Every independent investigation of the [drone] strikes has found far more civilian casualties than administration officials admit. Gradually, it has become clear that when operators in Nevada fire missiles into remote tribal territories on the other side of the world, they often do not know who they are killing, but are making an imper-

It's weird that some unnamed "officials" would say that they don't know where someone is, but they do know where he is not

DRONING ON

The media will no doubt continue to do its part to preserve the status quo, which amounts to active support or passive acceptance of the criminal and ineffective drone program

fect best guess.”

Shane quotes an expert who notes that “a total of eight Americans have been killed in drone strikes.” Shane then remarks that “Obama administration lawyers have ruled that a special legal review should be conducted before killing Americans suspected of terrorism.”

The Fifth Amendment to the US Constitution says, among other things, that “No person shall be . . . deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.” Thus, as former State Department worker Peter van Buren says, “the president in Post-Constitutional America is now officially judge, jury, and executioner.”

Shane notes that “drone strikes remain persistently popular with the American public, with about two-thirds expressing approval in polls. “And,” he notes, drone strikes “have enjoyed unusual bipartisan support in Congress.” He thus concludes that “even the latest disclosures will not bring [much] scrutiny to the program.”

Shane’s efforts notwithstanding, the media will no doubt continue to do its part to preserve the status quo, which amounts to active support or passive acceptance of the criminal and ineffective drone program. Indeed, the day after reporting on the President’s apology, the *Times* ran a front-page

article headlined “Despite Errors, Drones Decimate Weakened Qaeda.” And the following day the headline was “Deep Support in Washington for CIA’s Drone Missions.” Then, the also-influential *Washington Post* in their Sunday, May 3rd edition, ran an editorial called “In Praise of Drones.” Really!

So there you have April 24, all in all a remarkable day in the nation’s most influential newspaper. First the report that the President offered “our deepest apologies to the families” of one-half of one percent of the innocent civilians who have been killed by US drones. Then the *Times* reported that “the White House permits the CIA to carry out drone strikes without knowing the identities of the people the agency is trying to kill,” while telling us that the CIA somehow cannot conduct strikes unless they have “near certainty” that no civilians will be killed. Finally, the April 24 *Times* tells us that the Obama administration “has ruled that a special legal review should be conducted” before violating the Fifth Amendment, and that this flagrant violation of the Constitution has broad support in the Congress and among the US public. **CT**

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Jeff Nygaard is the editor of Nygaard Notes at <http://nygaardnotes.org> where this article was originally published.

**Read all back issues of ColdType & The Reader
at www.coldtype.net/reader.html
and www.issuu.com/coldtype/docs**

A hole in the system

George Monbiot tells the outrageous, untold story of how big business dumps its costs on taxpayers

Wrapped up in this story is everything that's wrong with the way our economy works. Corporations ream the land with giant holes, extract a stack of money, then clear out, leaving other people with the costs. There's a briefer description: legalised theft.

This is an account, scarcely mentioned in the national media, of the massive unfunded liabilities emerging from coalfields throughout Britain, that opencast mining companies have been allowed to walk away from. It's comparable in terms of irresponsibility to the failure by the nuclear industry to fund its decommissioning costs. And it offers a solid argument, even to those who continue to reject climate science, for keeping fossil fuels in the ground.

As I write, Neath-Port Talbot Council in South Wales is considering a new application for an opencast coal mine. The mine is unpopular, but its proponents argue that it's necessary.

Why? Because only by digging a new pit, they say, can the money be made to fill in an old one. How could this be true, when millions of tonnes of coal have been extracted? Where did the money go? You think you are inured to the worst of British politics?

Read on.

When British Coal was privatised by John Major's Tory government in 1994, the com-

pany that took over in South Wales, Celtic Energy, was granted a 10-year exemption from paying a restoration bond, in return for offering a slightly higher price for the assets. That higher price disappeared into national accounts, doubtless in the form of one of Mr Major's tax cuts for the rich.

After 10 years, the exemption expired, and Celtic Energy had to start putting up a decommissioning fund. At East Pit, where the application for new mining is now being considered, the bond now stands at around £4m, while the restoration is likely to cost about £115m. At another vast pit, Margam, near Bridgend, there is £5.7m in the kitty – against an estimated restoration cost of £56m.

In 2010 Celtic Energy sold the land rights, and the liabilities, at East Pit, Margam and two other mines, to a company in the British Virgin Islands called Oak Regeneration, for £1 per mine. Oak Regeneration then passed the liabilities to Pine Regeneration, Beech Regeneration and Ash Regeneration, none of which appear to have the assets required for restoration. Five senior executives at Celtic Energy walked away with benefits worth more than £10m.

The people involved in this transfer, including two directors of Celtic Energy and the former chief executive of Cardiff City Council, were charged with fraud. But last year the judge threw out the case, saying

Celtic Energy sold the land rights, and the liabilities, at East Pit, Margam and two other mines, to a company in the British Virgin Islands called Oak Regeneration, for £1 per mine

BUSINESS TRICKS

Villages and towns find themselves perched on the edge of sheer drops, overlooking running black sores sometimes hundreds of metres wide

that, while some might regard their actions as “dishonest” or “reprehensible”, they were not illegal. So all that is left, the opencasters argue, is to dig more holes. It’s like the old woman who swallowed a fly.

In a paper commissioned by the Welsh government, I was struck by the mention of the Ffos-y-fran opencast coal mine, on which I reported in 2007. This pit was justified as a “restoration scheme”, which would remove the old entrances, shafts and spoil heaps left behind by deep mining. Local people were sceptical: one of them told me “you don’t go down 600ft and blast 5 days a week to reclaim an area.”

But the report finds that the bond laid down by Ffos-y-fran’s operators, £15m, “falls well short of a worst case restoration cost which could be in excess of £50m”. The “restoration scheme”, this suggests, cannot fund its own restoration.

Sheer drops

In some cases, villages and towns find themselves perched on the edge of sheer drops, overlooking running black sores sometimes hundreds of metres wide. At Margam, for example, the pit is some 2km across and, according to the latest estimate I’ve seen, the water gathering there is 88m deep. In East Ayrshire, in Scotland, 22 giant voids have been abandoned by their operators.

Restoration work there would cost £161m, but just £28m has been set aside. As the local MP explained, “they are so large they cannot be effectively secured from trespass... unstable head walls and extremely deep water bodies with vertical drop-offs make for dangerous playgrounds.”

An independent report found that the collection of restoration bonds by East Ayrshire Council officials was “wholly deficient and defective”, while the failure to appoint independent assessors was “completely inexplicable”. While officials took their eye off the ball, East Ayrshire councillors took gifts and hospitality from the coal operators, including a trip to watch Celtic play Barcelona

in Spain, premier football league tickets, lavish meals, food hampers and nights in hotels. When the two companies running the pits went bust, the council was left in a gigantic hole.

Nationwide, the unfunded liabilities counted so far amount to £469m. That’s likely to be just the beginning.

This is a price we pay for limited liability. Why should the people who own and run these companies be allowed to walk away with millions, while shrugging off the costs they leave behind? Limited liability is one of our social silences: a giant gift to corporations that we won’t even discuss.

And why are we digging coal anyway, when we cannot afford to burn it? Climate breakdown is the greatest unfunded liability of all, for which future generations will have to pay.

Yet in 2013, the latest year for which figures are available, the amount of coal for which companies in Britain have permission to dig rose from 12m tonnes to 24m. Eight new opencast pits were approved in that year, and only three rejected. In which parallel universe is this compatible with the commitment to limit climate change?

Last month, lost in the election turmoil, the Welsh Senedd did something remarkable. It voted, by 30 votes to zero, for a moratorium on opencast coal mining. With the Welsh ban on fracking, this could have meant that Wales was the first nation on earth to keep its fossil fuels in the ground. But the Welsh government refused to accept the decision, using the restoration argument. Past crimes are used to justify new ones.

Fire and forget: that’s the psychopathic business model we confront, and the forgetting is assisted by the press and political leaders. To them, the victims are non-people, the ruined landscapes non-places. All that counts is the money. **CT**

*George Monbiot’s latest book is “Feral.”
His website is <http://monbiot.com>*

Sex, drugs, and dead soldiers

Nick Turse reveals some things that the US Africa Command would prefer the public didn't know

Six people lay lifeless in the filthy brown water.

It was 5:09 a.m. when their Toyota Land Cruiser plunged off a bridge in the West African country of Mali. For about two seconds, the SUV sailed through the air, pirouetting 180 degrees as it plunged 70 feet, crashing into the Niger River.

Three of the dead were American commandos. The driver, a captain nicknamed “Whiskey Dan,” was the leader of a shadowy team of operatives never profiled in the media and rarely mentioned even in government publications. One of the passengers was from an even more secretive unit whose work is often integral to Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), which conducts clandestine kill-and-capture missions overseas. Three of the others weren't military personnel at all or even Americans. They were Moroccan women alternately described as barmaids or “prostitutes.”

The six deaths followed an April 2012 all-night bar crawl through Mali's capital, Bamako, according to a formerly classified report by US Army criminal investigators. From dinner and drinks at a restaurant called Blah-Blah's to more drinks at La Terrasse to yet more at Club XS and nightcaps at Club Plaza, it was a rollicking swim through free-flowing vodka. And vodka and Red Bull. And vodka and orange juice. And vanilla pomegranate vodka. And Chivas

Regal. And Jack Daniels. And Corona beer. And Castel beer. And don't forget B-52s, a drink generally made with Kahlúa, Grand Marnier, and Bailey's Irish Cream. The bar tab at Club Plaza alone was the equivalent of \$350 in US dollars.

At about 5 a.m. on April 20th, the six piled into that Land Cruiser, with Captain Dan Utley behind the wheel, to head for another hotspot: Bamako By Night. About eight minutes later, Utley called a woman on his cell phone to ask if she was angry. He said he'd circle back and pick her up, but she told him not to bother. Utley then handed the phone to Maria Laol, one of the Moroccan women. “Don't be upset. We'll come back and get you,” she said. The woman on the other end of the call then heard screaming before the line went dead.

Something to hide

In the years since, US Africa Command or AFRICOM, which is responsible for military operations on that continent, has remained remarkably silent about this shadowy incident in a country that had recently seen its democratically elected president deposed in a coup led by an American-trained officer, a country with which the US had suspended military relations a month earlier. It was, to say the least, strange. But it wasn't the first time US military personnel died under murky circumstances in Africa, nor the

From dinner and drinks at a restaurant called Blah-Blah's to more drinks at La Terrasse to yet more at Club XS and nightcaps at Club Plaza, it was a rollicking swim through free-flowing vodka

AFRICAN ADVENTURES

At one point, I called AFRICOM media chief Benjamin Benson 32 times on a single business day from a phone that identified me by name. It rang and rang. He never picked up

first (or last) time the specter of untoward behavior led to a criminal investigation. In fact, as American military operations have ramped up across Africa, reaching a record 674 missions in 2014, reports of excessive drinking, sex with prostitutes, drug use, sexual assaults, and other forms of violence by AFRICOM personnel have escalated, even though many of them have been kept under wraps for weeks or months, sometimes even for years.

“Our military is built on a reputation of enduring core values that are at the heart of our character,” Major (then Brigadier) General Wayne Grigsby Jr., the former chief of AFRICOM’s subordinate command, Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), wrote in an address to troops last year. “Part of belonging to this elite team is living by our core values and professionalism every day. Incorporating those values into everything we do is called our profession of arms.”

But legal documents, Pentagon reports, and criminal investigation files, many of them obtained by *TomDispatch* through dozens of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and never before revealed, demonstrate that AFRICOM personnel have all too regularly behaved in ways at odds with those “core values.” The squeaky clean image the command projects through news releases, official testimony before Congress, and mainstream media articles – often by cherry-picked journalists who are granted access to otherwise unavailable personnel and locales – doesn’t hold up to inspection.

“As a citizen and soldier, I appreciate how important it is to have an informed public that helps to provide accountable governance and is also important in the preservation of the trust between a military and a society and nation it serves,” AFRICOM Commander General David Rodriguez said at a press conference last year. Checking out these revelations of misdeeds with AFRICOM’S media office to determine just

how representative they are, however, has proven impossible.

I made several hundred attempts to contact the command for comment and clarification while this article was being researched and written, but was consistently rebuffed. Dozens of phone calls to public affairs personnel went unanswered and scores of email requests were ignored. At one point, I called AFRICOM media chief Benjamin Benson 32 times on a single business day from a phone that identified me by name. It rang and rang. He never picked up. I then placed a call from a different number so my identity would not be apparent. He answered on the second ring. After I identified myself, he claimed the connection was bad and the line went dead. Follow-up calls from the second number followed the same pattern – a behavior repeated day after day for weeks on end.

This strategy, of course, mirrored the command’s consistent efforts to keep embarrassing incidents quiet, concealing many of them and acknowledging others only with the sparest of reports. The command, for example, issued a five-sentence press release regarding those deaths in Bamako. They provided neither the names of the Americans nor the identities of the “three civilians” who perished with them. They failed to mention that the men were with the Special Operations forces, noting only that the deceased were “US military members.” For months after the crash, the Pentagon kept secret the name of Master Sergeant Trevor Bast, a communications technician with the Intelligence and Security Command (whose personnel often work closely with JSOC) – until the information was pried out by the *Washington Post’s* Craig Whitlock.

“It must be noted that the activities of US military forces in Mali have been very public,” Colonel Tom Davis of AFRICOM told *TomDispatch* in the wake of the deaths, without explaining why the commandos were still in the country a month after the United States had suspended military rela-

tions with Mali's government. In the years since, the command has released no additional information about the episode.

True to form, AFRICOM's Benjamin Benson failed to respond to requests for comment and clarification, but according to the final report on the incident by Army criminal investigators (obtained by *TomDispatch* through a FOIA request), the deaths of Utley, Bast, Sergeant First Class Marciano Myrthil, and the three women "were accidental, however [Captain] Utley's actions were negligent resulting in the passengers' deaths." A final review by a staff judge advocate from Special Operations Command Africa found that there was probable cause to conclude Utley was guilty of negligent homicide.

The criminal investigation of the incident in Mali touched upon relationships between US military personnel and African "females." Indeed, the US military has many regulations regarding romantic attachments and sexual activity. AFRICOM personnel have not always adhered to such strictures and, in the course of my reporting, I asked Benson if the command has had a problem with sexual misconduct. He never responded.

In recent years, allegations of widespread sex crimes have dogged the US military. A Pentagon survey estimated that 26,000 members of the armed forces were sexually assaulted in 2012, though just one in 10 of those victims reported the assaults. In 2013, the number of personnel reporting such incidents jumped by 50% to 5,518 and last year reached nearly 6,000. Given the gross underreporting of sexual assaults, it's impossible to know how many of these crimes involved AFRICOM personnel, but documents examined by *TomDispatch* suggests a problem does indeed exist.

In August 2011, for example, a Marine with Joint Enabling Capabilities Command assigned to AFRICOM was staying at a hotel in Germany, the site of the command's

headquarters. He began making random room-to-room calls that were eventually traced. According to court martial documents examined by *TomDispatch*, the recipient of one of them said the "subject matter of the phone call essentially dealt with a solicitation for a sexual tryst."

About a week after he began making the calls, the marine, who had previously been a consultant for the CIA, began chatting up a boy in the hotel lounge. After learning that the youngster was 14 years old, "the conversation turned to oral sex with men and the appellant asked [the teen] if he had ever been interested in oral sex with men. He also told [the teen] that if the appellant or any of his male friends were aroused, they would have oral sex with one another," according to legal documents. The boy attempted to change the subject, but the marine moved closer to him, began "rubbing his [own] crotch area through his shorts," and continued to talk to him "in graphic detail about sexual matters and techniques" before the youngster left the lounge. The Marine was later court-martialed for his actions and convicted of making a false official statement, as well as "engaging in indecent liberty with a child" – that is, engaging in an act meant to arouse or gratify sexual desire while in a child's presence.

That same year, according to a Pentagon report, a noncommissioned officer committed a sexual assault on a female subordinate at an unnamed US base in Djibouti (presumably Camp Lemonnier, the headquarters of Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa). "Subject grabbed victim's head and forced her to continue having sexual intercourse with him," the report says. He received a nonjudicial punishment including a reduction in rank, a fine of half-pay for two months, 45 days of restriction, and 45 days of extra duty. The latter two punishments were later suspended and the perpetrator was, at the time the report was prepared, "being processed for administrative separation."

A Pentagon survey estimated that 26,000 members of the armed forces were sexually assaulted in 2012, though just one in 10 of those victims reported the assaults

AFRICAN ADVENTURES

Allegations also surfaced concerning an assault with intent to commit rape in Morocco, a forcible sodomy in Ethiopia, and possession of child pornography in Djibouti, all in 2012

At an “unknown location” in Djibouti in 2011, an enlisted woman reported being raped by a fellow service member “while on watch.” According to a synopsis prepared by the Department of Defense, that man “was not charged with any criminal violations in reference to the rape allegation against him. Victim pled guilty to failure to obey a lawful order and false official statement.”

In a third case in Djibouti, an enlisted woman reported opening the door to her quarters only to be attacked. An unknown assailant “placed his left hand over her mouth and placed his right hand under her shirt and began to slide it up the side of her body.” All leads were later deemed exhausted and no suspect was identified. According to Air Force documents I obtained, allegations also surfaced concerning an assault with intent to commit rape in Morocco, a forcible sodomy in Ethiopia, and possession of child pornography in Djibouti, all in 2012.

On July 22nd of that year, a group of Americans traveled to a private party in Djibouti attended by US Ambassador Geeta Pasi and Major General Ralph Baker, the commander of a counterterrorism force in the Horn of Africa. Baker drank heavily, according to an AFRICOM senior policy adviser who sat with him in the backseat of a sport utility vehicle on the return trip to Camp Lemonnier. While two military personnel, one of them an agent of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS), sat just a few feet away, Baker “forced his hand between [the adviser’s] legs and attempted to touch her vagina against her will,” according to a classified criminal investigation file obtained through the Freedom of Information Act.

“I grabbed his hand and held it on the seat to try to prevent him from putting his hand deeper between my legs,” she told an investigator. “He responded by smiling at me and saying, ‘Cat got your tongue?’ I was appalled about what he was doing to me and did not know what to say.” She later

reported the offense via the Department of Defense’s Sexual Assault Hotline. According to a report in the Washington Post, “Baker was given an administrative punishment at the time of the incident as well as a letter of reprimand – usually a career-ending punishment.” Demoted in rank to brigadier general, he was allowed to quietly retire in September 2013.

A Pentagon report on sexual assault lists allegations of three incidents in Djibouti in 2013 – one act of “abusive sexual contact” and two reports of “wrongful sexual contact.” The report also details a case in which a member of the US military reported that she and a group of friends had been out eating and drinking at a local establishment. Upon returning to her quarters at the base, one of her male companions asked to enter her room and she gave him permission. He then began to kiss her neck and shoulders. When she resisted, according to the report, “he grabbed her shorts and began to kiss and lick her vagina.” That man was later charged with rape, abusive sexual contact, and wrongful sexual contact. He was tried and acquitted.

The Pentagon has yet to issue its 2014 report on sexual assaults and AFRICOM has failed to release any statistics on its own, but given that military personnel fail to report most sexual crimes, whatever numbers may emerge will undoubtedly be drastic undercounts.

Sex, drugs, and guns

On the morning of April 10, 2010, a Navy investigator walked through the door of room 3092 at the Sarova Whitesands Beach Resort in Mombasa, Kenya. Two empty wine bottles sat in the trash can. Another was on the floor. There were remnants of feminine hygiene products on the bathroom countertop, Axe body spray in an armoire, unopened condoms on a table, and inside a desk drawer, a tan powder that he took to be “an illicit narcotic,” all of this according to an official report by that NCIS agent

obtained by *TomDispatch* through the Freedom of Information Act.

Three days before, on April 7th, Sergeant Roberto Diaz-Boria of the Puerto Rico Army National Guard had been staying in this room. On leave from Manda Bay, Kenya – home of Camp Simba, a hush-hush military outpost in Africa – he had come to Mombasa to kick back. That night, along with a brother-in-arms, he ended up at Causerina, a nearby bar that locals said was a hotspot for drugs and prostitution. Diaz-Boria left Causerina with a “female companion,” according to official documents, paid the requisite fee for such guests at the hotel, and took her to his room. By morning, he was dead.

A news story released soon after by Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa stated that Diaz-Boria had died while “stationed” in Mombasa. The cause of death, the article noted, was “under investigation.” CJTF-HOA failed to respond to a request for additional information about the case, but an Army investigation later determined that the sergeant “accidentally died of multiple drug toxicity after drinking alcohol and using cocaine and heroin.” Where he obtained the drugs was never determined, but according to the summary of an interview with an NCIS agent, a close friend in his infantry unit did say that there were “rumors within the battalion about the easy access to very potent illegal narcotics in Manda Bay, Kenya.”

Kenya is hardly an anomaly. Criminal inquiries regarding illicit drug use also took place in Ethiopia in 2012 and Burkina Faso in 2013, while another investigation into distribution was conducted in Cameroon that same year, according to Air Force records obtained by *TomDispatch*. AFRICOM did not respond to questions concerning any of these investigations.

In late 2012, when I asked what US personnel were up to in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia, AFRICOM spokesman Eric Elliott replied that troops were “supporting humanitarian

activities in the area.” Indeed, official documents and other sources indicate US personnel have been carrying out aid activities in the region for years. But that wasn’t all they were doing.

The *Lonely Planet* guide says that the Samrat Hotel provides the best digs in town, with a “classy lobby” and “a good nightclub and restaurant.” The one drawback: “stiff mattresses.” That apparently didn’t affect the activities of at least nine of 19 US military personnel from the 775th Engineer Detachment of the Tennessee Army National Guard. After an unidentified “local national female” was seen emerging from a “secured communications room” in the hotel, a preliminary investigation was launched and found “military members of the unit allegedly routinely solicited prostitutes in the lobby of the hotel and later brought the prostitutes back to their assigned rooms or to the secured communications room,” according to documents obtained via FOIA request. A later report by Army agents determined that personnel from the 775th Engineer Detachment and the 415th Civil Affairs Battalion “individually engaged in sexual acts in exchange for money” at the hotel between July 1 and July 22, 2013. In the room of a staff sergeant, investigators also found what appeared to be khat, a popular local narcotic that offers a hyperactive high marked by aggressiveness that ultimately leaves the user in a glassy-eyed daze.

A sworn statement by a medic who served in Dire Dawa that month – obtained by *TomDispatch* in a separate FOIA request – paints a picture of a debauched atmosphere of partying, local “girlfriends,” and a variety of sex acts. “Originally, before we departed to Ethiopia, I grabbed around 70 condoms. However, I was told that was not going to be enough,” said the medic, noting that it was his job to carry medical supplies. Instead, he brought 200. He confessed to obtaining a prostitute through the bartender at the Samrat Hotel and admitted to engaging in sex acts with another woman

“Originally, before we departed to Ethiopia, I grabbed around 70 condoms. However, I was told that was not going to be enough,” said the medic, noting that it was his job to carry medical supplies. Instead, he brought 200

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AFRICOM was nonresponsive when it came to criminal inquests into allegations of arson in South Africa, larceny in Burkina Faso, graft in Algeria, and drunk and disorderly conduct in Nigeria

who, he said, later revealed herself to be a prostitute. He paid her the equivalent of \$60. Another service member showed him pictures of a “local national in his bed in his hotel room,” the medic told the NCIS agent. He continued:

“I know this girl is a prostitute because I pulled her from the club previously. The name of the club was ‘The Pom-Pom’... I had hooked up with this girl before [redacted name] so when he showed me the photo I recognized the girl. [Redacted name] stated how she had a nice booty and was good in bed... I want to say that [redacted name] told me he paid about 1,000 Birr (roughly \$30 US dollars), but I can’t recall exactly.”

Army investigation documents obtained by *TomDispatch* also indicate similar extracurricular activities by members of the 607th Air Control Squadron and the 422nd Communications Squadron in neighboring Djibouti. An inquiry by Army criminal investigators determined that there was probable cause to believe three noncommissioned officers “committed the offense of patronizing a prostitute” at an “off-base residence” in June 2013.

AFRICOM failed to respond to repeated requests for comment on or to provide further information about members of the command engaging in illicit sex. It was similarly nonresponsive when it came to criminal inquests into allegations of arson in South Africa, larceny in Burkina Faso, graft in Algeria, and drunk and disorderly conduct in Nigeria, among other alleged crimes. The command has kept quiet about violent incidents as well.

On April 19, 2013, for instance, something went terribly wrong in Manda Bay, Kenya. A specialist with the Kentucky Army National Guard, deployed at Camp Simba and reportedly upset by a posting he saw on Facebook, got drunk on bourbon whiskey – more than a fifth of Jim Beam, according to witnesses – stole a 9mm pistol, and shot a superior officer. He would also point the pistol at a staff sergeant and a master

sergeant and then barricade himself in his barracks room. A member of the Army’s Special Forces serving at the base told an NCIS agent what he saw when the soldier emerged from his quarters:

“He had a gun in his hand and he was waving it around with the barrel level. He was saying something to the effect of ‘Fuck you!’ or something like that. I heard the [redacted] say something like ‘put the gun down!’ a couple of times and then the [redacted] shot at the subject 2-3 times with his handgun.”

The drunken soldier was hit once in the leg and later surrendered. An investigation determined that the specialist had probably committed a host of offenses under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, including wrongful appropriation of government property, failure to obey an order, and aggravated assault, although a charge of attempted murder was deemed “unfounded.” The incident, detailed in previously classified documents, was never made public.

General malfeasance

AFRICOM has certainly had its troubles, starting at the top, since it began overseeing the US military pivot to Africa. Its first chief, General William “Kip” Ward, who led the fledgling command from 2007 until 2011, was demoted after a 2012 investigation by the Department of Defense Inspector General’s office found he had committed a raft of misdeeds, such as using taxpayer-funded military aircraft for personal travel and spending lavishly on hotels.

During an 11-day trip to Washington, for example, he billed the government \$129,000 in expenses for his wife, 13 employees, and himself, but conducted official business on just two of those days. According to the Inspector General’s report, Ward also had AFRICOM personnel ferry his wife around and run errands for the two of them, including shopping for “candy and baby items, picking up flowers and books, delivering snacks, and acquiring tickets to sporting events.”

He even accepted “complimentary meals and Broadway show tickets” from a “prohibited source with multiple [Department of Defense] contracts.”

Ward was ordered to repay the government \$82,000 and busted down from four stars to three, which will cost him about \$30,000 yearly in retirement pay. He’ll now only receive \$208,802 annually. An AFRICOM webpage devoted to the highlights of Ward’s career mentions nothing of his transgressions, demotion, or punishment. The only clue to all of this is his official photo. In it, he’s sporting four stars while his bio states that “Ward retired at the rank of Lieutenant General in November 2012.”

Ward’s wasteful ways became major news, but the story of his malfeasance has been the exception. For every SUV that plunged off a bridge or general who was busted down for misbehavior, how many other AFRICOM sexual assaults, shootings, and prostitution scandals remain unknown?

For years, as US military personnel moved into Africa in ever-increasing numbers, AFRICOM has effectively downplayed, disguised, or covered-up almost every aspect of its operations, from the locations of its troop deployments to those of its expanding string of outposts. Not surprisingly, it’s done the same when it comes to misdeeds

by members of the command and continues to ignore questions surrounding crimes and alleged misconduct by its personnel, refusing even to answer emails or phone calls about them. With taxpayer money covering the salaries of lawbreakers and the men and women who investigate them, with America’s sons dying after drink and drug binges and its daughters assaulted and sexually abused while deployed, the American people deserve answers when it comes to the conduct of US forces in Africa.

Personally, I remain eager to hear AFRICOM’s side of the story, should Benjamin Benson ever be in the mood to return my calls. **CT**

Nick Turse is the managing editor of TomDispatch.com and a fellow at the Nation Institute. A 2014 Izzy Award and American Book Award winner for his book Kill Anything That Moves,” he has reported from the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Africa and his pieces have appeared in the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Nation, and regularly at TomDispatch. His latest book, “Tomorrow’s Battlefield: US Proxy Wars and Secret Ops in Africa”, has just been published.

This essay was originally published at <http://tomdispatch.org>

For every SUV that plunged off a bridge or general who was busted down for misbehavior, how many other AFRICOM sexual assaults, shootings, and prostitution scandals remain unknown?



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IN THE FRAME

Eyeful Tower

Laurent Scheinfeld
finds new ways of looking
at one of the world's most
photographed sights

No prizes for guessing the most photographed of all the tourist attractions in France. It's the Eiffel Tower, of course. Built as a temporary installation at the entrance to the great World Fair of 1889, the wrought iron tower today welcomes more visitors than any other paid monument in the world – an estimated 7-million camera-toting people every year.

Paris-based photographer Laurent Scheinfeld watched those visitors taking snapshots of the structure and decided it was time to take a different look at the tower, presenting it as a signature backdrop to his close-up portraits.

Scheinfeld, 51, spent 25 years as an entrepreneur and investor before becoming a “serious” photographer two years ago when his wife bought him his first Leica. “Photographs can alter the way we look at the world, but **great** photographs can change the world. So I’m working as hard as possible to give myself the chance to take **one** of those, one day,” he says.

Influenced by the work of the Magnum photographic agency, Scheinfeld says he has learned by studying the techniques of great photographers such as Henri Cartier-Bresson, Sergio Larrain, Gueorgui Pinkhassov, and Bruce Gilden. “But, at the end of the day,” he adds, “I want my work to be different – my own style, not someone else’s. So, I’m putting it all together in my own modest special sauce. *Vive la difference.*”

– Tony Sutton





IN THE FRAME

"I want my work to be different – my own style, not someone else's. So, I'm putting it all together in my own modest special sauce"



IN THE FRAME

*"Photographs can alter the way we look at the world, but **GREAT** photographs can change the world"*





Who hacked the White House?

The Russia haters are sure they know the answer, but they're almost certainly wrong, writes **Justin Raimondo**

Not a shred of evidence is given as to the identity or nationality of the hackers except the assertions of anonymous government officials

When the hacking of Sony's computer system produced a brouhaha of ridiculous proportions, the government's pet "experts" were quick to blame North Korea. The rationale: Since Sony was releasing a pretty awful anti-North Korean propaganda film, it was obvious that King Jong-un was personally responsible. Besides that, the attack supposedly originated in a region of cyberspace inhabited by North Korea's pathetic Internet superstructure.

There was just one problem with that oh-so-convenient scenario: it wasn't based on anything but suppositions. Indeed, several computer experts – not connected to the government – hotly disputed this explanation, and instead pointed to the ease with which the hackers penetrated the system to show that it was most likely an inside job, the work of an employee with intimate knowledge of the system and a grudge against Sony.

Indeed, such a person was quickly identified: a former employee who had been fired and had vowed to get even. Yet Washington, for its own reasons, ignored this rather compelling evidence and stuck to its story: so did their pet "experts," who have a vested economic interest in hyping the alleged "threat" posed by hackers in the service of foreign enemies – all the better to ensure that plenty of taxpayer dollars will continue to fill their coffers.

Now we have another hack attack, supposedly coming from the Russians. The *New York Times* reports:

"Some of President Obama's email correspondence was swept up by Russian hackers last year in a breach of the White House's unclassified computer system that was far more intrusive and worrisome than has been publicly acknowledged, according to senior American officials briefed on the investigation."

Not a shred of evidence is given as to the identity or nationality of the hackers except the assertions of anonymous government officials. We have to wait until the seventh paragraph to read that they "are presumed to be linked to the Russian government, if not working for it."

A few paragraphs later, at the very end, we get this:

"This has been one of the most sophisticated actors we've seen," said one senior American official briefed on the investigation.

"Others confirmed that the White House intrusion was viewed as so serious that officials met on a nearly daily basis for several weeks after it was discovered. 'It's the Russian angle to this that's particularly worrisome,' another senior official said.

"While Chinese hacking groups are known for sweeping up vast amounts of commercial and design information, the

best Russian hackers tend to hide their tracks better and focus on specific, often political targets. And the hacking happened at a moment of renewed tension with Russia – over its annexation of Crimea, the presence of its forces in Ukraine and its renewed military patrols in Europe, reminiscent of the Cold War.”

Okay, so let’s summarize the evidence we’re given in this piece pointing to the Russians:

1) The culprits are “sophisticated actors.”

2) It can’t be the Chinese because they only care about money – so it must be the Russians, because the targets were political. Besides, the Russians “hide their tracks better.”

3) The timing: “it happened at a moment of renewed tension with Russia.”

Is it really necessary to debunk this pallid ghost of an argument? To begin with, there are plenty of “sophisticated actors” in the hacking world, not all of whom are acting on behalf of a state. Secondly, if the culprits in this instance hid their tracks well, how is it that we traced them – and how certain can we be it was the Russians? As for the timing question: we’ve been having moments of “tension” with a large number of international adversaries over the past year, any one of which could have been responsible.

Another article over at *Motherboard* is even more laughable.

“Security researchers say they have found actual evidence linking the attack to the Russian government, or at least, Russian hackers.

“The campaign that targeted the White House, nicknamed CozyDuke, appears to have similar code, infrastructure, and political interests as past attacks that were linked to Russian hackers who were possibly working for the government, the researchers say.”

“Past attacks linked to Russian hackers” – with what evidence? If ever there was an

example of confirmation bias, then this is it. “Similar code” and “infrastructure”? Don’t make me laugh: malware code is free-floating and widely available. Anyone could’ve developed the particular phishing malware used to compromise White House and State Department computer systems. As for those “political interests,” this is absolute nonsense: is the Kremlin the only government on earth with a motive for breaking into US government computer systems? And it gets worse:

“CozyDuke was carried out by the same group behind sophisticated cyberespionage campaigns known as MiniDuke and CosmicDuke, according to the security firm Kaspersky Lab, which have been linked to the Russian government in the past.

“MiniDuke and CosmicDuke were launched by ‘a Russian government agency,’ researchers at F-Secure, another security firm concluded in January. That conclusion was based largely on the targets of the operations: Russian drug dealers and governments with interests opposed to those of Russia.”

In other words, it was a totally non-technical analysis, bereft of any real evidence but for the political assumptions and amateur “analysis” of computer “experts” eager to tell the US government what it wants to hear. Here is how those geniuses over at F-Secure came to their brilliant conclusion:

“Considering the victims of the law enforcement use case [sic] seem to be from Russia, and none of the high-profile victims are exactly pro-Russian, we believe that a Russian government agency is behind these operations.”

In spite of the air of certainty projected at the beginning of this piece, toward the end Mikko Hypponen, F-Secure’s chief researcher, says it “could be” Russia. Oh, but maybe not ...

Washington isn’t having any of this ambiguity, however. According to news accounts, during a recent speech at Stanford University, Defense Secretary Ashton Carter

If the culprits in this instance hid their tracks well, how is it that we traced them – and how certain can we be it was the Russians?

BLAME GAME

It's just a coincidence that the Pentagon issued a new "cyber-strategy" paper that pinpoints Russia, along with China, as the Big Culprits To Watch Out For

claimed that "sensors guarding the Pentagon's unclassified networks detected the intrusion by Russian hackers, who discovered an old vulnerability that had not been patched. After learning valuable information about their tactics," Carter said, "we analyzed their network activity, associated it with Russia, and then quickly kicked them off the network, in a way that minimized their chances of returning."

Yeah, sure. It's just a coincidence that the Pentagon issued a new "cyber-strategy" paper that pinpoints Russia, along with China, as the Big Culprits To Watch Out For – looming threats to our cyber-infrastructure that require huge amounts of money and "expertise" to combat.

Another "coincidence": there are no less than three major "cybersecurity" bills in the congressional hopper designed to hand yet more of our private information over to the waiting arms of the National Security Agency and law enforcement agencies, all in the name of "protecting" us from Russian-Chinese bogeymen-hackers. A recent open letter from more than 65 respected cyber-security professionals and academics denounces these bills as unnecessary intrusions on privacy as well as providing a false sense of security – and, they conclude, the bills could also make us more vulnerable to hacking.

As Trevor Timm puts it:

"Members of Congress – most of whom can't secure their own websites, and some of whom don't even use email – are trying to force a dangerous "cybersecurity" bill down the public's throat. Everyone's privacy is in the hands of people who, by all indications, have no idea what they're talking about.

The new cold war with Russia is upon us, and the rule is: when in doubt, blame Putin. Our technologically ignorant – and government-subservient – media is all too prone to fall for this nonsense. While I wouldn't rule out anyone – including some of our vaunted "allies" – as being responsible, in this case I'd look at the knee-jerk accusations aimed at the Kremlin with a very jaundiced eye.

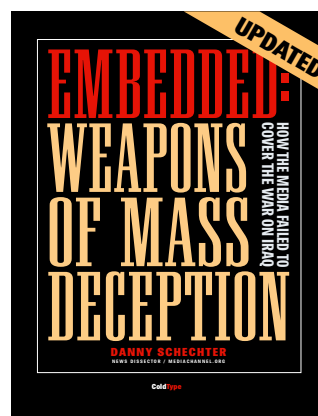
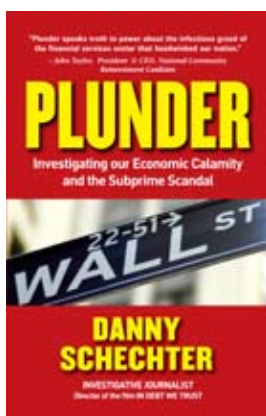
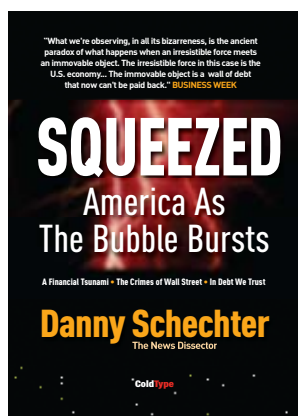
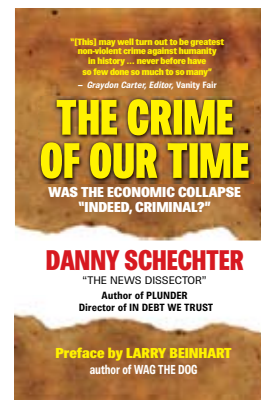
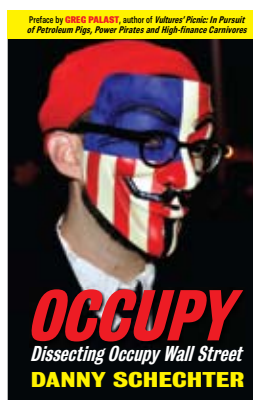
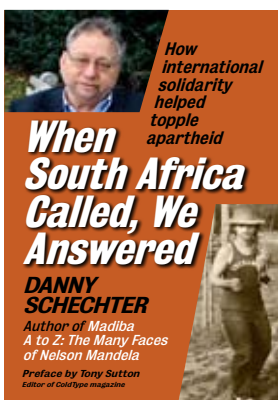
CT

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What's driving the migrant slave drivers?

The West needs to stop treating the problem of refugees drowning in the Mediterranean as if it's a natural disaster. It's not, writes **Rick Salutin**

The upside of natural disasters is you can't do much except feel sad for a few days, maybe take some half-measures to save drowning victims as Europe just did, then move on, conscience fumigated

Would whoever makes these decisions please stop treating refugees who drown in the Mediterranean as if they're another earthquake or tsunami? This isn't a natural disaster, it's a hands-on human one. Anyway, even natural disasters like global warming aren't merely natural now.

Columnist Margaret Wente in Toronto's *Globe and Mail*, heaves a sigh and says "the world is full of far more victims of wars, violence ... political repression than we can ever take in. All we can do is accept a lucky few, and try to discourage the rest." She sounds like she already has donor fatigue. If anyone's responsible it's those bad behaviors over in Africa and, maybe, the mean smugglers.

The upside of natural disasters is you can't do much except feel sad for a few days, maybe take some half-measures to save drowning victims as Europe just did, then move on, conscience fumigated.

A gaggle of retired statesmen and George Soros-type bizfolk also fretted over this "humanitarian crisis" but at least granted something long-term should be done about its "drivers" – a term I vow to substitute for the tedium-inducing "root causes" in future columns.

So who's driving this shipwreck? Start with Libya. For ages it was a harsh but secure place that desperate people from zones

like Iraq and Syria could flee to. It was Africa's nearest jump-off for Europe but mostly they found work and stability there. Then geniuses like Hillary Clinton, Stephen Harper and NATO chose to bomb Moammar Gadhafi out of power and subsequently abandon the place to chaos and Islamism.

Unsupervised Libyan arms flooded the region, leading to further flight but with Libya now unsafe, refugees headed for Europe. It was either fear and misery without hope, or the same on the seas with hope. So if we caused this mess, aren't we obligated to not just rescue them but take them in – instead of just clucking like Wente about it?

And what of Europe, with its irrational, faith-driven austerity policies that are immiserating and depopulating its southern tier: Greece, Italy, Spain? Under previous policies it would be generating jobs that required big migrations from Africa or the Mideast. That would mean dealing with its own millennial racism but it's done that before, if badly.

"We are asking Europe to be Europe, not just when it's time to devise a budget," said Italian leader Matteo Renzi, who, along with the Pope, looks like one of the few good guys in this.

It's not as if large, mobile workforces aren't needed under the free trade and globalization regimes of the last 30 years. But



An Italian coastguard vessel prepares to rescue migrants on board a boat in the Mediterranean.

here's what's crucial: Under those regimes, big money gets to move freely wherever it chooses to invest. Workforces get to move too, but not by their own initiative. They go where they're told, or fester immobile if that serves wealth's interests. When Canada-US free trade deals began, the fear was that jobs would be shipped to China. They were, but now jobs in China are shipped elsewhere and huge lots of Chinese workers get shifted around the globe to wherever wages are lowest. The desperate Mediterranean refugees are just another piece on this chessboard.

Inhuman conditions

By the usual serendipity I happen to have just read Greg Grandin's book, "The Empire of Necessity," on the African slave trade, built around an 1804 slave revolt on a ship off Chile, which Herman Melville novelized for Benito Cereno.

There are superficial echoes: inhuman conditions, people urinating on each other,

falling overboard or jumping to avoid capture; also racism: it appears black Africans were locked in the hold last month and couldn't escape.

But Grandin also notes the paradoxes: that newly free Americans didn't just accept slavery, they were dependent on it. It wasn't a residual moral relic; it was the key driver(!) of their prosperity and expansion. Just as our era of unimpeded commerce seems to require meticulously disciplined workforces. And it can all lead to catastrophes now, as it did to the US Civil War then. He also notes that slavery served as a pretext to raise questions like: who is truly free, even if not a slave? Italy's Renzi, bless his little centrist heart, calls on fellow Europeans to combat these "21st-century slave drivers." There's that useful term again. **CT**

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Rick Salutin's column appears in the Toronto Star each Friday. Contact him at ricksalutin@ca.inter.net

When Canada-US free trade deals began, the fear was that jobs would be shipped to China. They were, but now jobs in China are shipped elsewhere

Nyerere reconsidered

Should Julius Nyerere be the first African political figure to be declared a saint? **Trevor Grundy** thinks not

Nyerere has been turned into a caricature, a selfless African Gandhi sitting at a spinning wheel at a lowly cottage outside Dar es Salaam

African leaders who were not corrupt kleptomaniacs but, instead, fairly ordinary men who lived decent lives and ruled alongside opposition parties and a relatively free press, are in for a bumpy ride.

Alive or dead, there's going to be very little rest for any of them. That's because so many decent, liberal men and women want to turn them into saints.

It won't be hard to name them. There are so few. Nelson Mandela is one. Kenneth Kaunda might be another. Garfield Todd is a possibility. But the leader furthest down the rocky road towards canonisation is the subject of this new and utterly absorbing book by the Edinburgh-based academic Thomas Molony.

"Nyerere: The Early Years" is a well-researched, scholarly, yet highly-readable, work about one of the most remarkable, but least understood, African leaders of the last century.

To date, much of the biographical work on Nyerere tends to lack depth, frequently

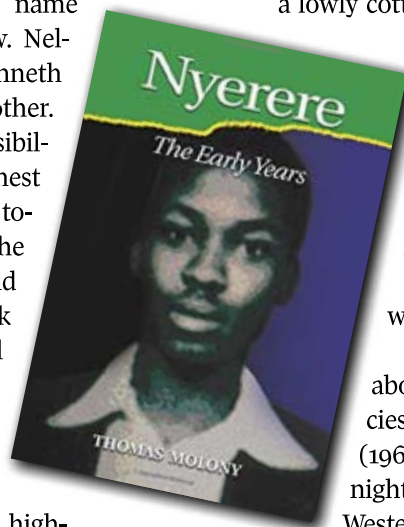
drawing on familiar sources (monitored by Nyerere's gatekeepers) and can best be described as 'hagiographic.' Nauseatingly naive and self-serving Western journalists have helped turn Nyerere into something he certainly wasn't, a saint.

A group of Roman Catholics in Tanzania now wants him canonised. They have helped turn Nyerere into a caricature, a selfless African Gandhi sitting at a spinning wheel at a lowly cottage outside Dar es Salaam, musing about Marx, the meaning of life and socialism, occasionally sipping a glass of red wine while turning the pages of Franz Fanon's "Wretched of the Earth," nodding while making mental notes.

Sycophantic journalists helped with the saint image.

But not many of them wrote about his disastrous economic policies that turned an Independence (1961) dream of self-reliance into a nightmare of total dependency on Western governments, the IMF and World Bank when he stood down as President of Tanzania in 1985.

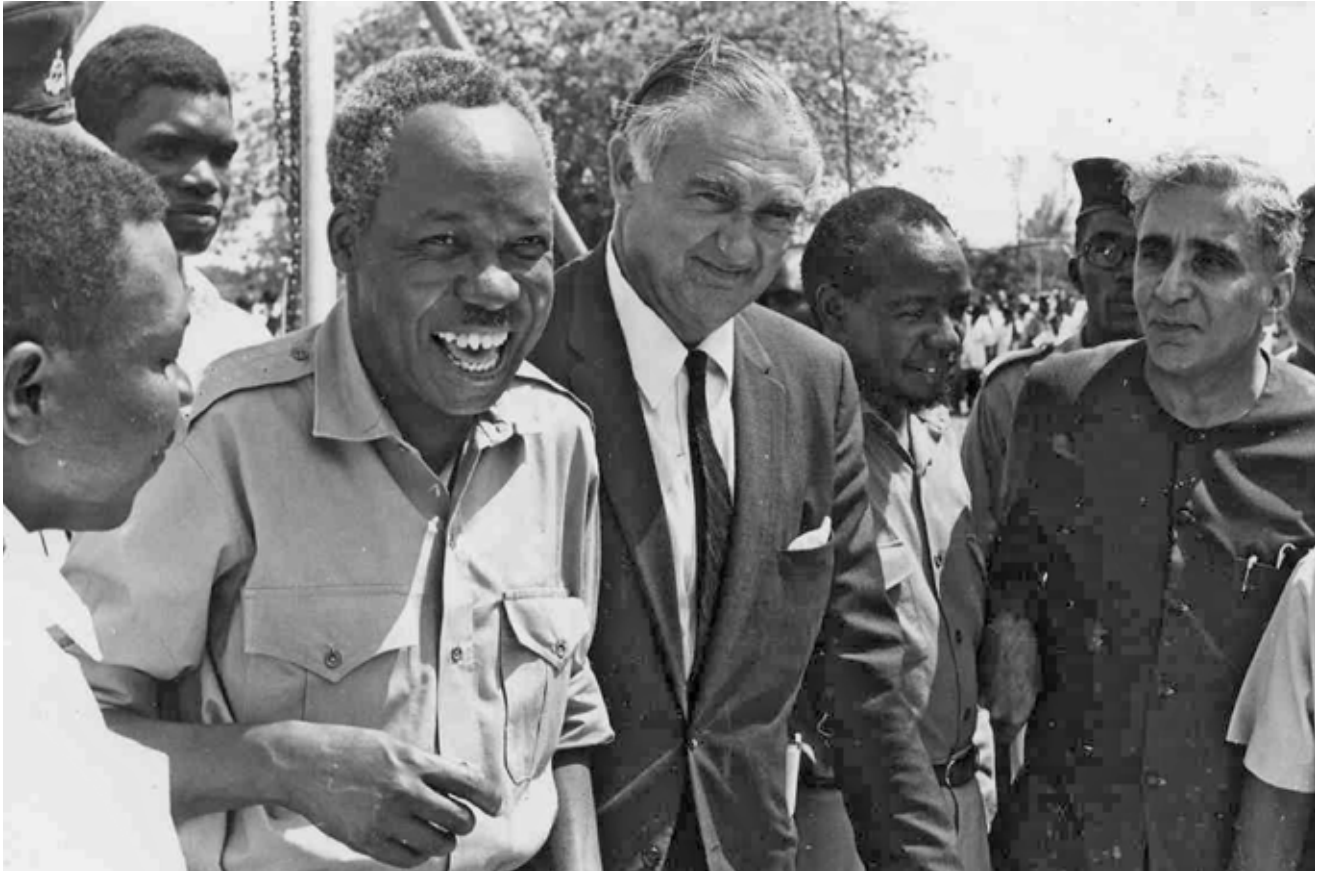
Neither did they mention the number of political prisoners he held in rat-infested gaols, nor his resettlement programme known as Ujamaa (familyhood) which involved the Soviet-style



NYERERE: THE EARLY YEARS

Thomas Molony

Published by James Currey
\$45



Julius Nyerere at a building site near Arusha in 1968 with the West German (Federal) Ambassador, Norbert Heibich. Tanzania's Minister of Finance and an early Indian supporter of Nyerere, Amir Jamal, is on the right. (Photo: Trevor Grundy)

enforced movement of 11 – 14 million unwilling Tanzanians into remote bush villages run on the co-operative principle often designed by American and British expatriates on huge salaries paid in dollars by the Ford Foundation in USA.

If you want to examine the other side of the Nyerere medal, you need to turn to the writing of Africans, not Europeans.

Africans were there. Europeans, on the whole, were visiting firemen reporting on the Nyerere years from five star hotels in the capital and Arusha. Well-heeled tourists of the revolution were delighted to see radical land reform programmes and extreme “socialist” measures implemented in Africa – but not so keen to see similar experiments carried out in their own countries.

I worked in Dar es Salaam (1968-1972) for one of the English papers he nationalized in

1970. When I re-visited Tanzania in 2002, an MP said to me: “We spend most of the day undoing what Nyerere did. The man was a disaster but there’s no one who’ll say that in public.”

As he spoke, a large colour picture of Nyerere looked down on us from the hotel wall. The MP wouldn’t thank me for naming him.

A convert to Rome

Julius Kambarage Nyerere was born in 1922 at Mwitongo, Butiama close to the shores of Lake Victoria. His father Nyerere Burito – who had 22 wives and 27 children – was a chief chosen by the Germans to help them rule.

Between 1933 and World War 11 there was next to no development in Tanganyika. Hitler wanted his colonies back and the various British politicians thought it a good idea to

Well-heeled tourists of the revolution were delighted to see radical land reform programmes and extreme “socialist” measures implemented in Africa

BOOK REVIEW

Despite British-style apartheid, boys educated at English style public schools in Africa knew they were part of chosen elite and acted as such throughout their lives

return them – an act of appeasement to the German leader. So why spend money on something you're sooner or later going to give away?

After 1918, Tanganyika became a mandated territory under the League of Nations.

In African eyes, the British were no more popular than the Germans. The British turned Tanganyika into an undeclared apartheid state that was socially divided between Africans, Europeans and Asians.

The Zanaki tribe into which Kambarage (Julius is the name he took after his conversion to Catholicism) was so small and unremarkable that most inhabitants of Tanganyika did not know of its existence.

But Chief Nyerere Burito was popular with the colonizers. His famous son (I'll call him Julius from now on) told the American journalist Edgett Smith, "The only thing the British had against my father was his 22 wives."

Julius was brought up to think and live a tribal life. His father paid for an elder son to go to secondary school. Julius seemed destined to play a minor role as guardian of the family's sheep and goats. But like King David in the Bible, he impressed Catholic priests who saw in the undersized, studious rather remote young man with enormous potential at a time when the White Fathers were anxious to start localizing the Church throughout East Africa.

Julius's exposure to Christianity occurred as he was entering his teenage years, a time when the adolescent mind is prone to exploring experiences in the wider world.

From primary school at Musoma, Julius went on to the elite Tabora Government School which Professor Julian Huxley described as the Eton of Africa.

Malony says the school's long-serving Director of Education, Stanley Rivers-Smith, saw the importation of the English public school spirit into Tanganyika as a contribution to the British policy of indirect rule. He stated that the schools for the sons of chiefs, using the English "Prefect System," made possible the full realization of the British



Taking a break: Nyerere in relaxed mood. Behind him and looking on is his personal assistant, the Fabian Socialist, Joan Wicken].

(Photo: Adarsh Nayar)

ideal to delegate authority to those who by hereditary ought to possess and exercise it.

Julius's feeling of being a chosen prefect never left him. Neither did a deeply felt belief that as the son of a chief it was essential to play ball with the colonial authorities.

Despite British-style apartheid (their secret was never to give racial segregation a name) boys educated at English style public schools in Africa knew they were part of chosen elite and acted as such throughout their lives.

At Kenya's independence in 1963, ten of the country's 17 ministers, nine of the 14 permanent secretaries along with the posts of Attorney General, Chief Justice and Commissioner of Police, were educated at the Alliance High School, another "Eton" in Africa.

Shortly before his father's death (at the age of 82) Julius converted to Roman Catholicism and his name changed.

He was the first person in Butiama to be baptized a Roman Catholic. From then onwards he was known as Julius Kambarage Nyerere.

In November 1942 he sat the entrance examination for Uganda's Makerere College

(founded in 1922) and obtained a bursary to take a teacher training course the following year. Makerere graduates became, in the words of one contemporary commentator, “a presumptive elite.”

Many a White Father saw this clever young man as a Catholic priest in the making.

At Makerere, Julius showed few signs of wanting to become a priest, though he did spend an inordinate amount of time reading Papal Encyclicals and studying the works of Catholic philosophers.

One of Julius’s student contemporaries and fellow Roman Catholics was Andrew Tibandebage. He tells us that Julius founded a branch of Catholic Action, defined by Pope Pius XI as the participation of the laity in the Hierarchic apostolate for the defence of religious and moral principles, under the guidance of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, outside and above political parties with the intention of restoring Catholic life in the family and in society.

In 1945, Julius graduated from Makerere with a teacher’s diploma. At the time he told a friend that in his opinion, teachers were undoubtedly the mental equal of chiefs. He banned them soon after becoming PM of Tanganyika in 1961. Sigmund Freud, populariser of the Oedipus Complex involving the relationship between fathers and sons, might have had a thing or two to say about that.

Although the word “socialist” crept into articles written by Julius at Makerere for students’ magazines which were sent on to Tanganyika, he was always at pains to distance himself from Communism.

Was it genuine or opportunistic, that dis-

tancing?

Nyerere must have known that Africans applying for admission to British universities were screened for signs of Communist sympathies. Britain’s World War Two love affair with “Uncle Joe (Stalin) in the Kremlin was over and done with. British foreign policy was – on the whole – set with a single purpose and that was to block the advance of the Soviet Union and all the liberation movements sponsored by Moscow throughout Africa.

He also knew he had a good chance of succeeding. He was the son of a chief, he was one of the darlings of the Catholics in East Africa and he was an educated African, precisely the sort of person the British were looking for to take over from them following their decision to end the Empire after 1945. He got into Edinburgh and that city and the people he met there left an indelible mark on his future career.

Thomas Molony has written a wonderful book and one that should be on the shelves of universities and secondary schools not only in Africa but in those countries in the Commonwealth where African studies are underway. This is a book that any serious student of Africa in the 20th century should read in order to better understand how the Roman Catholic Church influenced the life and actions of Julius Nyerere and through him the future of Central and Southern Africa. **CT**

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Trevor Grundy is a British journalist who lived and worked in Tanzania from 1968 to 1972.

Although the word “socialist” crept into articles written by Julius at Makerere for students’ magazines which were sent on to Tanganyika, he was always at pains to distance himself from Communism

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Taking the long way home

Deborah Hurley discusses the human right of privacy in this excerpt from the new book, *Privacy in the Modern Age*

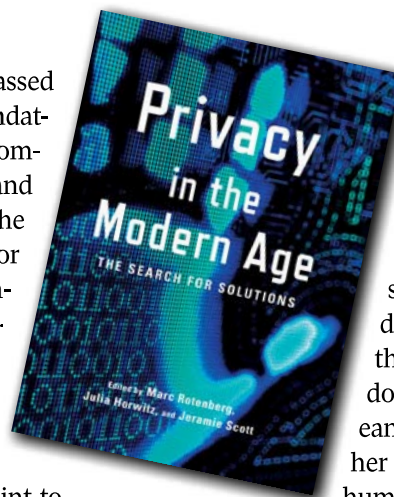
The International Bill of Human Rights is one of the most successful legal regimes in the history of the world. More than 160 countries are parties to these conventions

Queen Elizabeth I passed a law in 1571 mandating that all male commoners in England must wear a woolen cap. The queen had good reason for this early Renaissance industrial policy. It was enacted to protect the English knitting industry and to provide employment for the people.

This rule may seem quaint today, one of the sweeping, imperious edicts from the era of absolute monarchy. Yet, is it not possible to imagine an upcoming regulation, Off with Their Hats!, barring the near-ubiquitous baseball cap and other brimmed hats so that facial recognition technology will not be frustrated in its efforts to capture digital images and measurements of every face?

Another tough leader, Theodore Roosevelt, shouted into the throng at Madison Square Garden a century ago, “Friends, perhaps once in a generation, perhaps not so often, there comes a chance for the people of a country to play their part wisely and fearlessly in some great battle of the age-long warfare for human rights.”

Go suit up. Privacy is a human right.



**PRIVACY IN THE MODERN AGE:
The Search for Solutions**

Edited by Marc Rosenberg, Jeramie Scott, Julia Horowitz

The New Press
\$25.95

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the founding document of the modern human rights era, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 without a single dissenting vote. We do not know the words of wisdom that Theodore Roosevelt gave his niece Eleanor along with his arm to escort her down the aisle. Whether or not human rights were mentioned on her wedding day, Eleanor took up TR’s challenge and played her part wisely and fearlessly when the opportunity arose. Eleanor Roosevelt chaired the UDHR drafting committee.

The UDHR, along with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

both from 1966, are called the International Bill of Human Rights. The International Bill of Human Rights is one of the most successful legal regimes in the history of the world. More than 160 countries are parties to these conventions. The adoption and ratification of the main human rights instruments by so many nations underscore the high degree of international consensus on the principles of

human rights.

Human rights were considered so important that governments extraordinarily agreed to limit their own sovereignty, reallocating some of their power to other nations and international bodies and some to individuals. Human rights conventions limit the range of a country's discretion regarding individuals within their geographic territory. Not only are individuals acknowledged as the basis of governmental authority, but individuals may also reach outside their nation to seek redress for human rights violations by their governments.

Along with rights to life, liberty, equal protection under the law, and presumption of innocence, privacy is a human right. UDHR article twelve proclaimed, and ICCPR article seventeen, almost twenty years later, repeated, "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks." The ICCPR entered into force in 1976 and the United States ratified the treaty in 1992. The United States has since submitted four periodic reports.

Continually over sixty-five years, the human right of privacy has been declared, protected, and affirmed in treaties, national constitutions, regional regulations, and national legislation on every continent. The United States catalyzed modern human rights protection. The human rights instruments and institutions, along with their implementation and enforcement, guarantee human rights.

Privacy and protection of personal information support autonomy, self-determination, and dignity. On the wind these days flies the canard that privacy is an amorphous concept. This gossamer attack, that it is not clear what privacy actually is, generates a miasma of doubt.

On the contrary, the protection of privacy is deeply embedded in the laws and institutions of the modern democratic state.

Moreover, one has a strong visceral sense of privacy and apprehends clearly when it has been abrogated. It would be like saying that an individual does not understand liberty, freedom, and justice. Yet, while passersby on the sidewalk might be hard-pressed to give a textbook definition of privacy, they could easily provide several examples of violations of their privacy, together with severe real-world consequences of job loss, public humiliation, and damage to reputation. Just because privacy is a concept, rather than a wrench, does not render it any less valuable to us. Love is another one of those abstract concepts in which we place deep, abiding value.

Traditionally, US law recognized four invasions of privacy: intrusion on the right to be left alone, public disclosure of private facts, depiction in a false light, and commercial appropriation of personal information. Modern data protection and privacy laws contain core elements, sometimes described as "Fair Information Practices," that set out the rights and responsibilities associated with the collection and use of personal data.

Each individual must own and control her personal information.

A quarter-century after the UDHR, the United States was continuing to set the global pace for protection of personal data and privacy. As the era of mass computerization dawned, the United States recognized the potential to collect and manipulate vast troves of personal data. The United States adopted the 1974 Privacy Act and encouraged the adoption around the world of rules to protect personal data and privacy. So began an impressive roll call, continuing through the succeeding decades to the present, of laws and enforcement institutions. Today, over one hundred countries have data protection and privacy legislation. Not only is protection of privacy and personal data widespread, but also there is broad agreement about the principles that undergird the modern right of privacy.

Yet, the US progenitor became the outlier

Today, over one hundred countries have data protection and privacy legislation

BOOK EXCERPT

In the United States, medical information is the high-value haul of the data brokers. It is bought, sold, and traded among the medical establishment, insurers, employers, companies, and anyone else with the meager means to purchase it

of this forty year-strong global trend. The 1974 Privacy Act covered part of the federal public sector. As information and communication technologies advanced with uptake throughout society, other countries adopted and amended data protection and privacy legislation to include the private sector and the rest of the public sector. The United States did not keep up with these developments, with the result that Americans have less protection for their personal data than people in many other nations. It is ironic that US companies, which operate in countries with broadly based data protection and privacy laws, provide a higher level of personal data protection for residents of those countries than they do for the personal data of Americans. The festive, baton-waving grand marshal of the privacy parade let the band march ahead and fell to the back, trying to look inconspicuous. But its bright red, white, and blue uniform makes it impossible to hide as it brings up the rear in gluttonous isolation, guzzling personal information, increasingly feared and resented. As an example, in the United States, medical information is the high-value haul of the data brokers. It is bought, sold, and traded among the medical establishment, insurers, employers, companies, and anyone else with the meager means to purchase it.

Human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent, interrelated, and inalienable. In this palace with many chambers, one human right is not superior to any other. That being said, for me privacy is a gateway human right, which facilitates other human rights, such as freedom of movement and freedom of association, vital for political discourse and religious worship.

Just as we guard against measures that have a chilling effect on speech, so too should we worry about chilling effects on civic participation, discourse, and association when each individual's every act is exposed to the glare of bright lights and, to compound the agony, the individual has no control over or knowledge of her personal information's

creation, collection, use, or purpose of use, and who else will see it and in what context. What if people hesitate to communicate due to concerns about invasive observation of their movements, relationships, and affiliations, even of personal information outside their own awareness, longitudinally over a lifetime? Now, that is chilling.

To the same degree that liberty and freedom are defended from tyranny and oppression, how best to instantiate protection of personal data and privacy, shelter it from inevitable forces of depredation, and deploy the mutually reinforcing means of laws, technological design, standards, and norms? There already exists a worldwide body of law and institutions. The lag is in implementation and enforcement. This is the easier part of the task, since the legal framework is already in place. As far as additional legislation, clearly the biggest change would come from US adoption of comprehensive federal legislation to protect personal data and privacy, a welcome return to a leadership role. India already has a bill. Its passage would bring over one billion people under the privacy protection umbrella. China presents a harder case, but the prize of another billion people makes it an attractive challenge.

Similarly, privacy-enhancing technologies abound. But, repeatedly, when a technical development team receives functionality criteria, privacy is omitted. Include privacy in specifications and designers will deliver it. Privacy and security standards, such as the ISO 27001 series and many others, provide guidance. There are social and economic norms, a number of which have already been mentioned.

Already breaching the shore comes the next technological tidal wave, the Internet of Things. The ubiquitous information environment will include computing everywhere, inorganic and organic, in solids, liquids, and the air one breathes. Some inhaled devices will stay to reside, others will ride out on the exhale. In the era of ingestibles, implantables, and individual-specific

nutriceuticals, the human aspect will matter more than ever. With the nascent big data already collected, it is evident that it may be surpassingly difficult to maintain anonymity, remain de-identified, and avoid re-identification. It becomes ever more important that the individual have control of her personal data.

Much of this information activity will happen outside the limits of human sensory and temporal awareness. No matter. A patient unconscious in a hospital bed is entitled to the same suite of rights and level of privacy protection as if she were going about her daily life.

And so at the end we come back to where we began and to what we have known all along. Privacy is a human right. Each government, company, and individual, as well as all other non-state actors, has an affirmative duty to safeguard it. The protection exists. The hard work is done. But there are severe lapses in implementation and enforcement. Privacy is important for the individual and, arguably, even more vital for the democratic community and its maintenance of vibrant,

robust civic participation and social and economic discourse. The locus of ownership and control of personal information must lie with the individual. Technology can reinforce and actualize this principle. As personal information proliferates and becomes ubiquitous, the need to adhere to this standard becomes increasingly acute.

*And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

– *Four Quartets*, T.S. Eliot

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Deborah Hurley is the principal of the consulting firm she founded in 1996, which advises governments, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and foundations on advanced science and technology policy.
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Why NATO is terrified of Russia

Forget Ukraine, look what Moscow and Beijing have up their sleeves now, writes **Pepe Escobar**

In Ukraine, the Kremlin has been more than explicit that there are two definitive red lines

The twin-pronged attack – oil price war/raid on the ruble – aimed at destroying the Russian economy and place it into a form of Western natural resource vassalage has failed.

Natural resources were also essentially the reason for reducing Iran to a Western vassalage. That never had anything to do with Tehran developing a nuclear weapon, which was banned by both the leader of the Islamic revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei.

The ‘New Great Game’ in Eurasia was always about control of the Eurasian land mass. Minor setbacks to the American elite project do not mean the game will be restricted to a mere “war of attrition”. Rather the contrary.

In Ukraine, the Kremlin has been more than explicit that there are two definitive red lines: Ukraine won’t join NATO, and Moscow won’t allow the popular republics of Donetsk and Lugansk to be crushed.

We are coming closer to a potentially explosive deadline – when EU sanctions expire in July. An EU in turmoil but still enslaved to NATO – see the pathetic “Dragoon Ride” convoy from the Baltics to Poland or the “Atlantic Resolve” NATO show-off exercise – may decide to expand them, and even try to exclude Russia from SWIFT.

Only fools believe Washington is going to risk American lives over Ukraine or even

Poland. Yet let’s plan a few steps ahead. If it ever comes to the unthinkable – a war between NATO and Russia in Ukraine – Russian defense circles are sure of conventional and nuclear superiority on sea and land. And the Pentagon knows it. Russia would reduce NATO forces to smithereens in a matter of hours. And then would come Washington’s stark choice: accept ignominious defeat or escalate to tactical nuclear weapons.

The Pentagon knows that Russia has the air and missile defense capabilities to counter anything embedded in the US Prompt Global Strike (PGS). Simultaneously though, Moscow is saying it would rather not use these capabilities.

Major General Kirill Makarov, Russia’s Aerospace Defense Forces’ deputy chief, has been very clear about the PGS threat. Moscow’s December 2014 new military doctrine qualifies PGS as well as NATO’s current military buildup as the top two security threats to Russia.

Unlike non-stop Pentagon/NATO bragging/demonizing, what Russian defense circles don’t need to advertise is how they are now a couple of generations ahead of the US in their advanced weaponry.

The bottom line is that while the Pentagon was mired in the Afghanistan and Iraq quagmires, they completely missed Russia’s technological jump ahead. The same applies to China’s ability to hit US satellites

and thus pulverize American ICBM satellite guidance systems.

The current privileged scenario is Russia playing for time until it has totally sealed Russia's air space to American ICBMs, stealth aircraft and cruise missiles – via the S-500 system.

This has not escaped the attention of the British Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) – as it gamed sometime ago whether Washington might launch a first strike against Russia.

According to the JIC, Washington might go rogue if “a) an extreme government were to take over in the United States, b) there was increased lack of confidence by the United States in some if not all of her Western allies owing to political developments in their countries, c) there was some sudden advance in the USA in the sphere of weapons, etc. that the counsels of impatience may get the upper hand.”

US ‘Think Tankland’ spinning that Russian military planners should take advantage of their superiority to launch a first strike nuclear attack against the US is bogus; the Russian doctrine is eminently defensive.

Yet that does not exclude Washington doing the unthinkable the next time the Pentagon thinks of itself to be in the position Russia is now in.

SWIFT changes

The whole game used to be about who ruled the waves – the geopolitical gift the US inherited from Great Britain. Control of the seas meant the US inheriting five empires; Japan, Germany, Great Britain, France, the Netherlands. All those massive US carrier task forces patrolling the oceans to guarantee “free trade” – as the hegemonic propaganda machine goes – could be turned

against China in a flash. It's a mechanism similar to the carefully choreographed “leading from behind” financial op to simultaneously crash the ruble/launch an oil war and thus smash Russia into submission.

Washington's master plan remains deceptively simple; to “neutralize” China by Japan, and Russia by Germany, with the US backing its two anchors, Germany and Japan. Russia is the only BRICS nation blocking the master plan.

This was the case until Beijing launched the New Silk Road(s), which essentially mean the linking of all Eurasia into a “win-win” trade/commerce bonanza on high-speed rail, and in the process diverting freight tonnage overland and away from the seas.

So NATO's non-stop Russia demonizing is in fact quaint. Think about NATO picking a fight against the constantly evolving, complex Russia-China strategic partnership. And in a not so remote future, Germany, Russia and China have what it takes to be the essential pillars of a fully integrated Eurasia.

As it stands, the key shadow play is Moscow and Beijing silently preparing their own SWIFT system while Russia prepares to seal its air space with S-500s. Western Ukraine is doomed; leave it to the austerity-ravaged EU – which, by the way, doesn't want it. And all this while the same EU tries to handicap the US commercially with a rigged euro that still doesn't allow it to penetrate more US markets.

As for an irrelevant NATO, all it can do is cry, cry, cry. **CT**

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Pepe Escobar's new book is “Empire of Chaos: the Roving Eye Collection”. He is roving correspondent for Asia Times Online.

In a not so remote future, Germany, Russia and China have what it takes to be the essential pillars of a fully integrated Eurasia

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