

THE BATTLE UK LEADERS WANT TO FORGET | Trevor Grundy
QUIETLY HIJACKING THE 2020 US ELECTION | Lee Camp
IN A BOAT, DASHING TOWARDS GAZA | Kevin Neish

ISSUE 187

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING ■ PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

JULY 2019

"I saw Julian Assange in Belmarsh prison and I got a vivid sense of what he has had to endure.

I saw the resilience and courage that I've known for many years; but now he is unwell. The pressure on him is unimaginable; most of us would have bent beneath it.

So, there is an issue here of justice for this man and what he has had to take; not only the lies that were told about him in the embassy and the lies that sought a full-scale character assassination of him" - John Pilger (Pages 12-18)



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Issue 187
July 2019

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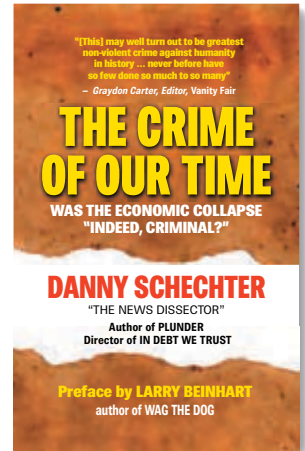
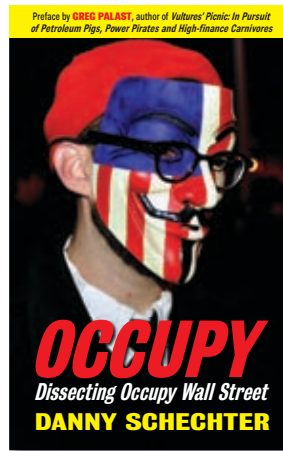
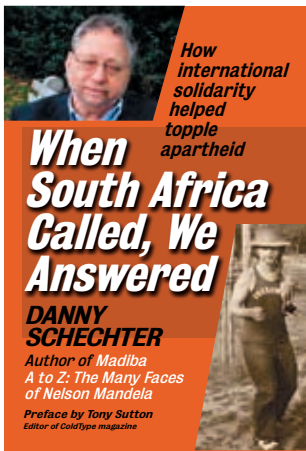
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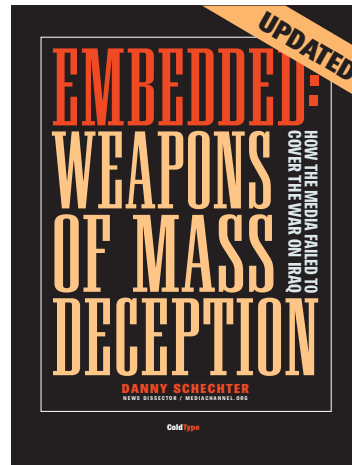
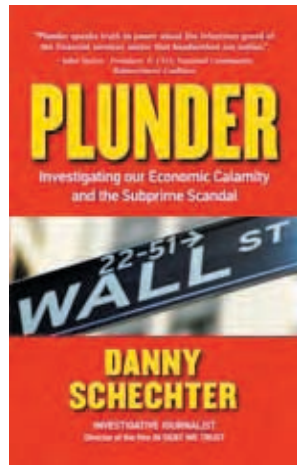
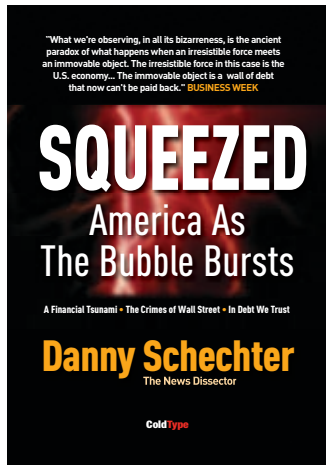
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REMEMBERING **Danny SCHECHTER** 1942 - 2015



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

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Insights

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Captain Pia Klemp: Targeted for humanitarian missions.

Sea captain faces 20 years in jail for saving refugees

By Eoin Higgins

A GERMAN boat captain faces a long and costly trial in Italy for charges targeting her humanitarian efforts on behalf of refugees.

Captain Pia Klemp, 35, told Swiss newspaper *Basler Zeitung* on June 7 that her upcoming trial in Italy for years of efforts with the civilian lifeboat

Iuventa that saved at least 1,000 lives will take years and hundreds of thousands of dollars. Klemp faces up to 20 years in prison, but, she said, whether or not she ends up in jail – she would challenge any conviction in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France if necessary – the dam-

age has been done.

“The worst has already come to pass”, said Klemp. “Sea rescue missions have been criminalised”.

Along with helping refugees, Klemp works with ocean conservation group Sea Watch.

The Italian charges against Klemp come as part of an anti-immigration crackdown by far-right Interior Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, who ran on imposing harsh penalties on refugees.

“Italy’s fascists are using this case as a showcase to deter others from aiding migrants,” journalist Rula Jebreal said on Twitter. “They would prefer to let people drown in the Mediterranean”.

Klemp is banned from sailing along the Italian coast due to her activism in favour of refugees. In her comments to *Basler Zeitung*, Klemp addressed the notion that sea rescues like the ones she did are in any way motivating for refugees to come to Europe.

“People come because unfortunately there are so many reasons for flight”, said Klemp. “And they come over the Mediterranean, because there are no legal entry routes”.

Commentators on social media noted that Klemp’s actions in the Mediterranean were in line with the UN’s policies on rescues at sea and the

humanitarian duties of a ship captain.

Klemp would have been in violation of the UN Law of the Sea if she didn't help migrants, pointed out Twitter user [lifelearner47](#).

Klemp agreed. "We have only followed international law, especially the law of the sea, where the highest priority is to save people from distress," she told *Basler Zeitung*.

Her activism was put into historical context by Peter Scott Smith, son of famed World War II vet Harry Leslie Smith. "In another era, Pia

Klemp would have saved Jews from extermination", tweeted Smith. "That she faces 20 years in jail in 2019 for saving refugees lost at sea, indicts the EU for hypocrisy and abetting crimes against humanity for allowing Italy to conduct a show trial".

A petition on [Change.org](#) calling for the charges to be dropped has already received over 77,000 signatures. **CT**

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*Eoin Higgins is a staff writer
[www.commondreams.org](#) –
where this article was first
published*

The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Case in point: on June 17, the same day President Trump announced that the government would be making mass arrests in order to round up and forcibly remove millions of illegal immigrants – including families and children – from the country, the US Supreme Court handed down a ruling in *Gamble v United States* that placed the sovereignty (ie, the supreme power or authority) of federal and state governments over that of the citizenry, specifically as it relates to the government's ability to disregard the Constitution's Double Jeopardy Clause.

At first glance, the two incidents – one relating to illegal immigration and the other to the government's prosecutorial powers – don't have much to do with each other, and yet there is a common thread that binds them together.

That common thread speaks to the nature of the government beast we have been saddled with and how it views the rights and sovereignty of "we the people".

You don't hear a lot about sovereignty anymore. It is a dusty, antiquated term that harkens back to an age when kings and emperors ruled with absolute power over a populace that had no rights. Americans turned the idea of sovereignty on its head when they declared

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The jackboots are coming to your home town

By **John W Whitehead**

HOW do you persuade a populace to embrace totalitarianism, that goose-stepping form of tyranny in which the government has all of the power and "we the people" have none?

You persuade the people that the menace they face (imaginary or not) is so sinister, so overwhelming, so fearsome that the only way to surmount the danger is by empowering the government to take all necessary steps to quash it, even if that means allowing government jack-

boots to trample all over the Constitution.

This is how you use the politics of fear to persuade a freedom-loving people to shackle themselves to a dictatorship.

It works the same way every time.

The US government's overblown, extended wars on terrorism, drugs, violence and illegal immigration have been convenient ruses used to terrorise the populace into relinquishing more of their freedoms in exchange for elusive promises of security.

their independence from Great Britain and rejected the absolute authority of King George III. In doing so, Americans claimed for themselves the right to self-government and established themselves as the ultimate authority and power.

In other words, in America, “we the people” – sovereign citizens – call the shots. So when the government acts, it is supposed to do so at our bidding and on our behalf, because we are the rulers.

That’s not exactly how it turned out, though, is it? In the 200-plus years since we boldly embarked on this experiment in self-government, we have been steadily losing ground to the government’s brazen power grabs, foisted upon us in the so-called name of national security.

The government has knocked us off our rightful throne. It has usurped our rightful authority. It has staged the ultimate coup. Its agents no longer even pretend that they answer to “we the people”.

We are fast approaching a moment of reckoning where we will be forced to choose between the vision of what America was intended to be (a model for self-governance where power is vested in the people) and the reality of what she has become (a police state where power is vested in the government).

These mass arrests of anyone suspected of being an

illegal immigrant may well be the shot across the bow.

You see, it’s a short hop, skip and a jump from allowing government agents to lock large swaths of the population up in detention centres unless or until they can prove that they are not only legally in the country to empowering government agents to subject anyone – citizen and non-citizen alike – to similar treatment unless or until they can prove that they are in compliance with every statute and regulation on the books, and not guilty of having committed some crime or other.

It’s no longer a matter of if, but when. You may be innocent of wrongdoing now, but when the standard for innocence is set by the government, no one is safe. Everyone is a suspect, and anyone can be a criminal when it’s the government determining what is a crime.

Remember, the police state does not discriminate. Whatever dangerous practices you allow the government to carry out now – whether it’s in the name of national security or protecting America’s borders or making America great again – rest assured, these same practices can and will be used against you when the government decides to set its sights on you.

Finally, if anyone suggests that the government’s mass immigration round-ups and

arrests are just the government doing its job to fight illegal immigration, don’t buy it.

This is not about illegal immigration. It’s about power and control.

It’s about testing the waters to see how far the American people will allow the government to go in re-shaping the country in the image of a totalitarian police state.

It’s about the rise of an “emergency state” that justifies all manner of government misconduct and power grabs in the so-called name of national security.

It’s about how far we will allow the government to go in its efforts to distract and divide us and turn us into a fearful, easily controlled populace.

Ultimately, it’s about whether we believe – as the Founders did – that our freedoms are inherently ours and that the government’s appointed purpose is not to threaten or undermine our freedoms, but to safeguard them.

We must get back to this way of thinking if we are to ever stand our ground in the face of threats to those freedoms.

As I make clear in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People*, it’s time to draw that line in the sand. The treatment being meted out to anyone that looks like an illegal immigrant is only the beginning. Eventually we will all be in the government’s cross-hairs for one reason or another.

This is the start of the slippery slope.

Martin Niemöller understood this. A Lutheran minister who was imprisoned and executed for opposing Hitler's regime, Niemöller warned:

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out – Because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out – Because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then

they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out – Because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me.

John W Whitehead is founder and president of the Rutherford Institute. His new book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* is available at www.amazon.com. Whitehead can be contacted at johnw@rutherford.org.

How Mafia and corruption rocked Italian football

By Anna Sergi

FOOTBALL could be considered Italy's most popular sport, with world-class teams worth billions attracting a dedicated following across the country. But more than that, football shapes the nation's collective identity, bringing people from the smallest village to the biggest city together in their love for "the beautiful game".

But over the past decade, media investigations and research have uncovered an unseemly lack of virtue within the industry. Mafia infiltration and corruption have come to characterise Italian football to the point that malpractice, deviance and criminal behav-

our might seem to be the norm.

For example, fans of one of Italy's most successful teams, Juventus Football Club (also known as "Juve"), have been dismayed by a series of corruption allegations. In April 2019, the Italian Supreme Court ruled that Juventus managers had supplied match tickets that were touted for profit by groups of hard-core fans, known



as ultras, under the control of individuals linked to the Calabrian mafia, known as the 'ndrangheta.

In an earlier case, concluded in October 2018, former Juventus player and 2006 World Cup winner Vincenzo Iaquinta was sentenced to two years in prison for firearms offences, in part of a larger trial concerning the infiltration of 'ndrangheta clans in northern Italy. The footballer's father was also sentenced to 19 years on mafia-related charges.

These incidents are not confined to one club – organised crime groups have interests at all levels of the sport. In 2018, football generated €2.397-billion in Italy alone – the bulk of which came from audiences, not even counting TV, sponsorship and advertising contracts. It's obvious that an industry attracting such enormous amounts of money would make an appealing target for criminal groups that seek to accumulate profits and conceal the proceeds of crime.

But mafia-type groups are also driven by power, with the aim of gaining influence through intimidation or protection and ultimately governing through violence or corruption. Criminal groups such as 'ndrangheta clans use football as a platform to boost their reputation and prestige through more or less legal activities.

Some clans will interfere

with youth soccer associations, for example by sponsoring young players, buying or establishing teams or even “saving” them if they are in financial difficulties. A special committee of the Italian parliamentary Antimafia Commission explored these occurrences throughout Italy in 2017.

Groups may use the leverage gained in local environments to exploit business opportunities or gain power at higher levels, too. In the case of Juventus, ticket touting offered clans control over a profitable market, as well as a means to exercise power over the sometimes violent ultras. This boosts the reputation of the clans by demonstrating their capacity to influence and control over people and territories using money and violence, if needed.

Mafia groups also use personal networks and contacts to fix match results and benefit from illegal betting networks. A famous case involving a Serie A footballer, Giuseppe Sculli – the grandson of a very prominent ‘ndrangheta boss – showed how mafia interests can be pursued through players or referees for criminal purposes.

In Italian football, match-fixing can occur at alarming scales. The Calciopoli scandal in 2004 eventually led to Juventus being relegated to the lower league in 2006. During this case, it was alleged that different football players, referees and managers had created a system of corruption and sleaze

which favoured the victories of certain teams, including in the Serie A.

Italians’ faith in fairness in football after the Calciopoli scandal has dropped drastically. But money laundering and fraud allegations continue to be made against those the highest level, as seen in the 2019 case concerning the former president of the Palermo FC, Massimo Zamparini.

While the state of Italian football seems especially bleak, allegations of corruption in this industry happen everywhere. In October 2018, Belgian authorities charged five people in relation to a massive police inquiry into financial fraud and match-fixing. In May 2019, Spanish police forces arrested a number of La Liga and second division players and club executives as part of an investigation into match-fixing. Most recently, in June 2019, former UEFA president and Juventus football star Michel Platini was arrested on suspicion of corruption over the decision to name Qatar as host nation of the 2022 World Cup – even as he serves a four-year ban from football for receiving a “disloyal payment”.

There is no doubt that boosting public confidence in the fairness of football requires improved systems of governance, from the local levels to the national arenas. So it’s good news that international

governing body FIFA is set to restore the offence of corruption to its ethics code, having it removed the previous year.

There also needs to be better care and transparency around the enormous amount of money that the industry attracts. FIFA and national bodies – such as the FIGC in Italy, for example – need to oversee the transactions for buying and selling teams and players, make arrangements for legal betting and ensure accountability in sponsorship systems.

But there also needs to be an awareness that the industry offers social and symbolic capital to mafia organisations and organised crime groups, as well as economic opportunities to ‘dirty’ entrepreneurs. In response, bodies such as FIFA need to develop specialist knowledge and build in antidotes to corruption, while maintaining oversight and disciplinary power over the industry.

The football field is a meeting place for different interests and different people. It’s a space for business, but also for entertainment and competition. Leadership of such fields requires integrity, dedication and the will to work for the many – not to enrich the few. **CT**

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Anna Sergi is Senior Lecturer in Criminology, University of Essex. This article was first published at www.theconversation.com

Just how wealthy have the super-rich become?

By **Sam Pizzigati**

WE have a great deal of statistical data, in America today, about the economic circumstances of Americans who live in poverty. We know far less, by contrast, about Americans who live amid great wealth. And much of what we do know, suggests a revealing new study, turns out to be wrong.

America's wealthiest, this new study details, almost certainly hold substantially greater personal fortunes than our standard analyses of the nation's distribution of wealth indicate. What are these conventional analyses not taking into account? A simple reality of our deeply unequal age: extravagantly wealthy people cheat on their taxes. Regularly. Extravagantly, too. Our super rich are stashing vast chunks of their personal fortunes in offshore tax havens, generating billions annually in new income that – to their governments – goes unseen and untaxed.

Just how enormous has this tax evasion by the super rich become? University of California-Berkeley economist Gabriel Zucman and his Scandinavian colleagues

Annette Alstadsæter and Niels Johannesen calculate – in a just-published *American Economic Review* paper – that offshore tax havens are enabling our world's richest 0.01 percent to evade 25 percent of the income taxes they ought to be paying.

The holdings of this wealthiest one-hundredth of 1 percent, the three researchers relate, make up about 50 percent of the overall assets parked in tax havens. The super rich are using these havens, add Zucman and his colleagues, to conceal about 40 percent of their total personal fortunes.

The most recent Federal Reserve Board figures on US inequality, released this past March, put the top 1 percent's share of American personal wealth at 32 percent, up from 23 percent in 1989. Other estimates place the top 1 percent share closer to 40 percent. But with the new calculations from Zucman and his colleagues, the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy's Matthew Gardner reflects, even this 40 percent estimate could well be a distinctly "low-ball number".

But can we trust the numbers from the Zucman team? After all, how could a mere trio of

researchers unearth hidden fortunes that the super rich spend big bucks to keep hidden? These three particular researchers had some unconventional assistance.

Over recent years, whistleblowers at some of the private banks and legal firms that cater to wealthy tax evaders – remember the "Panama Papers"? – have exposed vast stores of financial records that document the daily nitty-gritty of tax-evading transactions. The Zucman team tapped these records.

Additional tax-evasion records have come from the "tax amnesties" that a number of governments extended to tax cheats during the 2008-2009 financial crisis. To qualify for the amnesties, evaders had to fess up to the tax-time games they were playing.

Zucman and his colleagues also enlisted some indispensable cooperation from tax officials in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. This help enabled them, as one admirer notes, to match up the whistleblower data they had collected with tax records "to map out the frequency of tax avoidance, by income level, among residents of Scandinavian countries".

Super-rich households in Scandinavia, all this scholarly sleuthing revealed, are evading five times more of the taxes they owe than all the rest of Scandinavians.

“Do our findings apply to other countries?” the Zucman team asks in its new paper. “We certainly do not claim that our estimates of evasion by wealth group in Scandinavia hold everywhere as a universal law. We note, however, that there is nothing unique to Scandinavia that could explain the high evasion rates we find at the top”.

In fact, given powerful cultural norms in Scandinavia that encourage respect for the rule of law, the researchers believe that levels of tax evasion by the wealthy “may be even higher elsewhere” in the world.

How deep could that evading run among America’s super rich? US tax officials have made some attempts in the past to estimate evasion rates. The latest IRS stats on tax evasion – from a 2016 report – covered the tax years from 2008 through 2010. They showed a \$406-billion ‘tax gap’ between what taxpayers owed Uncle Sam and what they

But the IRS ‘tax gap’ stats, the federal Government Accountability Office points out, do not figure in the federal government’s ‘revenue loss due to offshore noncompliance’. In other words, the official IRS stats simply ignore an entire tax-evasion universe.

The IRS does have an excuse for this analytical failure. Chronic budget underfunding has left the agency woefully understaffed, with not enough resources to adequately investigate – or crack down on

– wealthy tax evaders. In 2018, the IRS acknowledged last month, America’s millionaires ended up 80 percent less likely to be audited than they had been in 2011.

Indeed, instead of cracking down on tax evasion, federal tax policy is now rewarding it. The IRS tax-gap research identifies ‘underreported business income’ as the single largest domestic source of that gap. Most of this flows to partnerships, sole proprietorships, and other business entities that ‘pass through’ all the income they generate to their owners. The 2017 Trump tax cut lowers the tax rate on ‘pass-through’ income, in effect “solving” the problem of the rich evading taxes by slashing the taxes the rich by law need to pay.

What do we need to be doing to turn things around? We need to ‘go bold’ on fighting income and wealth concentration. How could we do that? Analysts Alexandra Thornton and Galen Hendricks at the Centre for American Progress have just released a valuable new study, *Ending Special Tax Treatment for the Very Wealthy*, that examines a variety of attractive options.

Front and centre among these choices: an annual wealth tax on the assets of the super rich. A mere 2 percent annual levy, the study notes, “would gradually address the enormous amounts of untaxed wealth accumulated – especially by the top 0.1 percent – over

the past few decades.”

But moves like a wealth tax, the authors stress, will only succeed if we also take on the challenge of stopping the super rich from shifting assets offshore to evade their US tax liability. And we can certainly do that, maintain Berkeley’s Zucman and his fellow researchers. The key to tax-enforcement success: enacting ‘sanctions against the suppliers of tax evasion services’.

“If policymakers were willing to systematically put out of business the financial institutions found facilitating evasion”, the three researchers write, “then the supply of evasion services would shrink, and tax evasion at the top could be reduced dramatically”.

Don’t hold your breath waiting for the Trump administration to take any serious step down that road. Veteran tax journalist David Cay Johnston has just broken the news that a promising IRS investigation into a massive tax dodge that benefited the only Koch family billionaire who backed Donald Trump’s presidential campaign shut down soon after Trump became president. **CT**

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Sam Pizzigati edits *Too Much*, the Institute for Policy Studies online monthly on excess and inequality. His latest book: *The Rich Don’t Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class, 1900-1970* (Seven Stories Press).

A democracy that sends its police against journalists because they have revealed what governments have not wanted people to know is not a democracy, **John Pilger** tells **Dennis J. Bernstein** and **Randy Credico**

Assange case highlights a global war on journalism

Award-winning filmmaker John Pilger recently spoke out about the continuing harassment of Wikileaks founder Julian Assange in a radio interview with Dennis J Bernstein and Randy Credico for Flashpoints, an award winning investigative programme at the KPFA station in Berkeley, California. This is the transcript of the interview.

Bernstein: *Good to speak with you again, John. Thanks for talking with us. What's happening – not only with Julian Assange – but the future of journalism is extremely disturbing. Now we have seen high-profile arrests of journalists in Australia, France, and here in the US in San Francisco, where police put a reporter in handcuffs, while they searched his house and seized his hard drive. We know Julian Assange is in maximum security and Chelsea Manning is also locked down. These are*

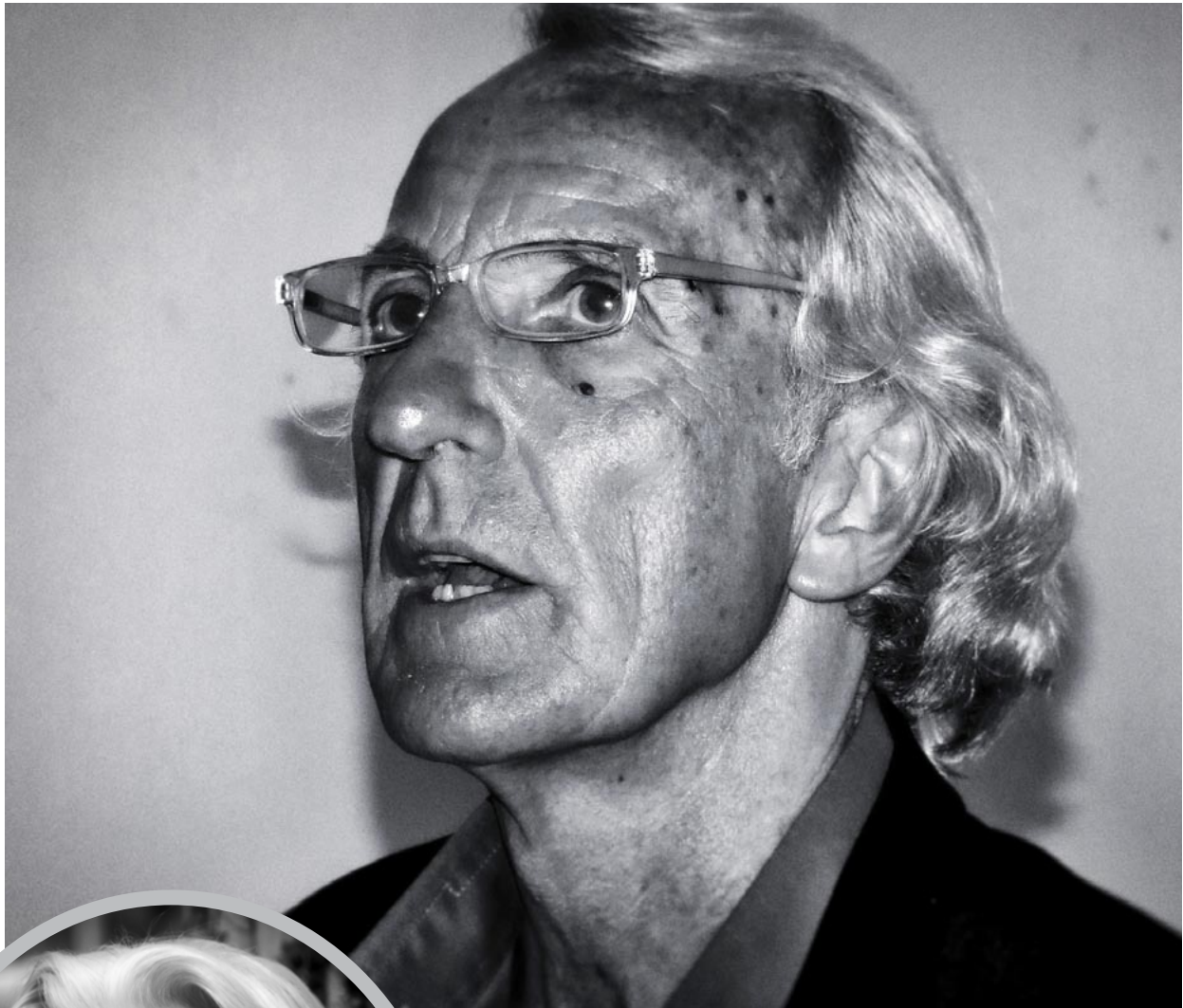
terrible times for the open flow of information.

Pilger: Well, it's happening all over the world now and certainly all over that part of the world that regards itself as the enlightened. We are seeing the victimisation of whistleblowers and journalists who tell the truth. There is a global war on journalism. More than that, there's a global war on dissent. The speed with which these events has happened is quite remarkable since April 11 when Julian Assange was dragged out of the Ecuadorian embassy in London by police. Since then, police have moved against journalists in the United States, in Australia, spectacularly, in Latin America. It's as if somebody has waved a green flag.

Credico: *I was thinking by now that Assange would be out. Didn't you think at this point that he would be out of the dire situation that he was in when I last saw him two years ago?*

Pilger: I'm reluctant to be a futurist. I did think a political deal might have been done. Now looking back, that was naive in the extreme because the very opposite was planned for Julian Assange. There is an 'Assange Precedent' at work all over the world. In Australia there was a raid on the public broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, where the federal police marched in with warrants, one of which gave them the authority to delete, change and appropriate the material of journalists. It was one of the most blatant attacks on journalistic freedom and indeed on freedom of speech that I can remember. We saw even Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation attacked.

The political editor of one of Murdoch's papers, the *Sunday Telegraph*, watched as her house was ransacked and her personal belongings, intimate belongings, rifled. She had reported on the extent of official spying on Australians by the Australian



John Pilger - Photo: Walnut Whippet / Flickr.com.

government. Something similar has happened in France where [President Emmanuel] Macron's police have moved against journalists on the magazine, *Disclose*.

Assange predicted this while he was being smeared and abused. He was saying that the world was changing and that so-called liberal democracies were becoming autocracies. A democracy that sends its police against journalists and carries

away their notes and hard drives simply because those journalists have revealed what governments have not wanted people to know is not a democracy.

Credico: *You know, John, some of the mainstream media here in the US and I guess in the UK, now that their ox is possibly being gored, have suddenly come out in defence of Assange particularly on the use of the Espionage Act and the gathering of information.*



Julian Assange - Photo: Cancillería del Ecuador / Wikimedia.org

I don't want to denounce them for waiting so long but why did they wait so long and what kind of help can they offer at this point and what should they do since they are in the crosshairs, as well?

Pilger: Let's look at who is actually in the crosshairs. WikiLeaks co-published the Afghanistan and Iraq War Logs in 2010, in collaboration with a range of media organizations: *Der Spiegel* in Germany, the *New York Times*, the *Guardian* and *Espresso*. The co-publishers of the Iraq material were also *Al Jazeera*, *Le Monde*, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism in London, Channel 4's *Dispatches* in London, the Iraq Body Count project in the UK, RUV (Iceland), SVT (Sweden) and so it goes on.

There's a list of individual journalists who reported this and worked with Assange. They echoed his work; they were collaborators in the literal sense. I'm looking at a list right now: On the *New York Times* there is Mark Mazzetti, Jane Perlez, Eric Schmitt, Andrew W. Lehren, CJ Chivers, Carlotta Gall, Jacob Harris, Alan McLean. On the *Guardian* there is Nick Davies, David Leigh, Declan Walsh, Simon Tisdall ... and so it goes on. All these journalists are in the crosshairs. I don't believe that many will find themselves in the dire straits in which Julian Assange finds himself because they don't present a danger to the system that has reacted against Assange and



“There’s a list of individual journalists who reported this and worked with Assange. They echoed his work; they were collaborators in the literal sense all these journalists are in the crosshairs”

Chelsea Manning; but they have, prima facie, committed the same ‘crime’, that is, publishing documents that the US government did not want made public. In other words, they are as ‘guilty as Assange of journalism.

That applies to hundreds, if not thousands, of journalists all over the world. The WikiLeaks disclosures were, if not co-published, picked up by newspapers and journals and investigative programmes on television all over the world. That makes all the journalists involved, all the producers, all the presenters, all of them complicit. And, of course, the hounding of Assange and the intimidation of others make a mockery of

the First Amendment of the US Constitution, which says that you have every right to publish; you have every right to ‘publish and be damned’. It’s one of the demonstrably noble principles of the US Constitution that has been thrown away completely. And what’s ironic is that the journalists who looked down on Assange, even maintained he was not a journalist, are now running for cover because not only is he a journalist of the highest order he is a far more conscientious journalist than most of them. He – and they in his shadow – were doing a basic job of journalism. That’s why I call it a global war on journalism and the precedent of Julian Assange is unlike anything we have seen.

Bernstein: *John, I want to sort of pick up where you left off with Randy and I want to unpack more and deepen peoples’ understanding of exactly who Julian Assange is and the, if you will, the beat that he chose for his work. How would you describe Julian Assange’s beat and the people he chose to work with?*

Pilger: *When I first met Julian Assange, I asked him, “What’s WikiLeaks all about, what are you doing here?”. He described very clearly the principle of transparency. In fact, he was describing the principle of free speech: that we have a right to know. We have a right to know what our governments are doing in our name. He wasn’t saying that there is a right to endanger*

people. He was saying that in the normal business of liberal democracies, we have a right to know what our governments are doing for us, at times conspiring against us, in our name. We have the right to know the truth that they tell in private which are so often translated into untruths in public. That transparency, he said, was a moral principle. That is the 'why' of WikiLeaks. He believes it passionately and, of course, that should strike a chord with every authentic journalist, because that's what we all should believe.

What the Assange case has shown us is that this war on journalism, this war on dissent, has yet to enter the political bloodstream. None of the candidates now running for the presidency of the United States has mentioned it. None of the Democrats have uttered it. We don't expect the Trump gang to talk about principles like this but there is some naive hope that maybe some of the Democrats might. None of them has.

Bernstein: [What does it say when] Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning; a publisher and one of the most significant military whistleblowers of our time, are in jail and locked down?

Pilger: They want to get their hands on Julian Assange because he protected his source and they want to get their hands on Chelsea Manning because she, being the source, has refused to lie about Julian Assange. She refused to impli-

cate him. She refuses to say there is a conspiracy between them. These two exemplify the very best of truth telling in the modern era. We've been bereft of the likes of Assange and Chelsea Manning.

Yes, there's been some fine investigative reporting and disclosures but we have to reach back to the caliber of Daniel Ellsberg to appreciate what Chelsea and Julian, these two heroic figures, what they've given us and why they're being persecuted.

If we allow their persecution, so much is lost. The intimidation and suppression will work on all our lives. In the media that once abused Assange, I detect fear. You read some of these editorials by those who once attacked Julian Assange and smeared him, such as in the *Guardian*, and you see their fear that they may be next. You read famous columnists like Katie Benner in the *New York Times*, who attacked Assange and now sees a threat from his tormentors to all journalists. The same is true of David Corn [at *Mother Jones*] who now sees a threat to all of journalism. They are justified in being frightened.

Credico: What was the fear of Assange? That he would have continued to work on new avenues of exposure? Why are they so afraid of Assange?

Pilger: Well, I think they were worried – are worried – that among the 2 million people in the US who have a national security clearance are those whom Assange has called

'conscientious objectors'. I once asked him to characterise the people who were using Wiki-Leaks to release important information. He likened them to the conscientious objectors in wartime, people of principle and peace, and I think that's quite an apt description. The authorities are worried that there are quite a few Chelseas out there. Perhaps not quite as brave or as bold as Chelsea, but who may start releasing information that undermines the whole war-making system.

Credico: Yeah I was speak to Julian about this about a year and a half ago when I was in London, about trying to make a comparison to mid-19th-century Antebellum South and journalists like Elijah Lovejoy and David Walker who were murdered for exposing the brutality and destinism of slavery and I said, "You know, we gotta' start packaging you in that kind of light". and he's says, "You know, there's a big difference, Randy." He said that, "See those guys only had one, one side to deal with, that's it; the people in the South and some of the collaborators in New York that were part of the cotton shipping business. But the rest of the North pretty much was on the side of the abolitionists. I exposed the war crimes and got the conservatives upset with me. And then I exposed misbehaviour, malfeasance by the Democratic Party. So, I target everybody, I don't exempt anybody so it doesn't apply to me".

And that's what's happened here. [You see it in the small size of the protests on his behalf.] I was at a demonstration the other day, a small little protest for Assange in front of the British embassy, and only half a dozen people were there, a few more the previous week. He's not generating that kind of interest thus far. And you had people walking by saying, "Assange is a traitor". I mean, they are so disinformed and I want to go to this quote that you quoted, Vandana Shiva, in your book *Freedom Next Time*, she talked about the "insurrection of subjugated knowledge". Can you talk about that?

Pilger: Vandana Shiva is the great Indian environmentalist and political activist whose books on the threat of monoculture are landmarks, especially the threat of the multinational agri-power companies that impose themselves on vulnerable, rural societies like India. She described an 'insurrection' of subjugated knowledge. It is a fine truism. I have long believed that the truth resides in a metaphorically subterranean world and above that is all the noise: the noise of the accredited politicians, the noise of the accredited media, those who appear to be speaking for those below. Now and then, truth tellers emerge from below. Take the Australian war correspondent, Wilfred Burchett, who was the first to reach Hiroshima after the atomic bombing. His report appeared on the front of his newspaper the *Daily Express*



"When you look at the likes of Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning, it's as if the full force of the American national security state backed by its so-called allies has been imposed on them"

in London which said, "I write this as a warning to the world". He was warning about nuclear weapons. Everything was thrown at Burchett to smear and discredit him. The *New York Times* correspondent was leading this: the same *New York Times* correspondent who denied that people were suffering effects of radioactivity: that people had died only from the blast. He was later found to be in bed with the US authorities. Wilfred Burchett suffered smears over most of his career. As all whistleblowers do – those who are affronted by the indecency of something they discovered perhaps in a corporation they work for, or within a government – they believe that

the public has a right to know the truth.

The *Guardian*, which turned on Julian Assange with such viciousness having been one of WikiLeaks's media partners, back in the '80s published the disclosures of a Foreign Office official who had sent them the plans of the US to install medium-range Cruise missiles throughout Europe. The *Guardian* published this and was duly praised as a paper of disclosure and principle. But when the government went to the courts and a judge demanded the paper hand over the documents that would reveal who the whistleblower was – instead of the editor doing as editors are meant to do, standing up for principle and saying, "No, I will not reveal my source" – the paper betrayed its source. Her name is Sarah Tisdall and she went to prison as a result. So, whistleblowers have to be extraordinarily brave, heroic people. When you look at the likes of Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning, it's as if the full force of the American national security state backed by its so-called allies has been imposed on them. Julian represents an example that they must make because if they don't make an example of Julian Assange, journalists might even be encouraged to do their job and that job means telling the public what they have a right to know.

Credico: *Very well said. In your preface or introduction in your book, Freedom Next Time, you also quote Harold Pinter and*

his Nobel Prize speech in which he talked about the vast tapestry of lies that we feed on and he goes on and says that American crimes were superficially recorded, let alone documented, let alone acknowledged. This is something that Julian Assange has broken out of that mode, big time, and he has exposed war crimes by the US and whatever kind of shenanigans the State Department has perpetrated. You talk about Harold Pinter, what a great influence he's been.

Pilger: Yes, I recommend to your listeners Harold Pinter's Nobel Prize acceptance speech – I believe it was 2005. It was a superb and eloquent testament of how and why the truth should be told and why we should no longer tolerate political double standards.

Harold Pinter was comparing our view of the Soviet Union and of Stalin's crimes with America's crimes; he was saying the main difference was that we know about the scale of Stalin's crimes and know little about Washington's. He was saying that the vast silence that enveloped our crimes – when I say, 'our crimes', I mean those of the United State – meant, as he said, memorably, "These crimes didn't happen, they didn't even happen when they were happening, they were of no interest, they didn't matter".

We have to rid ourselves of these double standards, surely. We have just had a unctuous celebration of June 6, D-Day. That was an extraordinary invasion in which many soldiers took

part and laid down their lives but it didn't win the war. The Soviet Union actually won the war but the Russians weren't even represented, weren't even invited or spoken of. It didn't happen, as Pinter would say. It didn't matter. But Donald Trump was there, lecturing the world on war and peace. It is truly gruesome satire. This silence, these omissions, run right across our newspaper – right across the BBC – as if it's even a semblance of the truth, and it's not.

Bernstein: *I want to pick it up with Wilfred Burchett and the implications, and the enormous responsibility that these big-time journalists have for allowing terrible things to go on unnoticed, based on issues of patriotism and claims of national security. I'm thinking, they had to shut down Wilfred Burchett because that could have opened the whole door about how dangerous nuclear weapons and nuclear power is, exploding the myth of the peaceful atom.*

Pilger: That's very true, Dennis, and it also undermined the moral plans of the 'Good War', the Second World War which ended with these two great crimes – the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki after Japan posed no threat. Credible historians now don't tell us the fairy tales that these atomic bombs were needed to end the war. So, it's destroyed in many respects the great moral mission of the war.

It not only did that, it declared,

the atomic bombing, that a new war was beginning, a 'Cold War', although it could very well have turned very quickly into a 'hot war' with the Soviet Union. And it was saying 'we' – that is the United States and its allies like Britain – had nuclear weapons and we're prepared to use them. That's the key: We're prepared to use them. And the United States is the only country that has ever used them against another country.

Of course it then went on to test them throughout the United Nations' Trust Territory, which was meant to be held in trust by the United Nations in the Marshall Islands, setting off many Hiroshimas over a period of 12 years. We didn't know anything about that at the time. And how much do we know about the development of nuclear warheads that President Obama got underway and committed something like a trillion dollars that President Trump has certainly carried on.

And those treaties that offered some fragile defence against a nuclear holocaust, treaties with the Soviet Union such as the intermediate-range weapons treaty torn up by this administration. One thing leads to another. This is truth telling.

Bernstein: *I want to come back to remind people of the kind of structure that Julian Assange created at WikiLeaks to protect whistleblowers. This is crucial because we've seen now other journalists being a little more careless and we see sources being tracked down, arrested,*

and facing major jail time. And I think this is the way that Julian Assange honoured whistleblowers by protecting them is a crucial part of who he is and what he did.

Pilger: He invented a system whereby it was impossible to tell who the source was and it allowed people to use a letterbox drop to leak material without their identity being disclosed. The WikiLeaks system gives them that protection. It's probably that that has so enraged those who are pursuing him. It means that people of conscience within governments, within systems, who are troubled like Chelsea Manning who was deeply troubled by what she saw, have the opportunity to tell the world without fearing that their identity will be exposed. Unfortunately, Chelsea revealed her identity to somebody who betrayed her. It is an unprecedented means of getting the truth out.

Bernstein: *John, please tell us about your recent visit with Assange at Belmarsh maximum security prison in Great Britain. How is he holding up?*

Pilger: I would like to say one thing about Julian personally. I saw Julian in Belmarsh prison and I got a vivid sense of what he has had to endure. I saw the resilience and courage that I've known for many years; but now he is unwell. The pressure on him is unimaginable; most of us would have bent beneath it. So, there is an issue here of



“Julian, as a person, what’s always struck me he’s the diametric opposite portrayed by so many of his detractors. He has a sharp intellect so he’s clever, of course. He’s also gracious and he’s very funny”

justice for this man and what he has had to take; not only the lies that were told about him in the embassy and the lies that sought a full-scale character assassination of him. The so-called respectable media from the *New York Times* to the *Guardian*, all of them have reached into the mud and thrown it at him; and today he is a very vulnerable, and I would say to your listeners: He needs your support and solidarity. More than that, he deserves it.

Bernstein: *Say a little more about the conditions there and why it’s so significant that they would treat him to a year in this kind of prison.*

Pilger: Well, I suppose

because of what a threat he is. Even with Julian locked away, WikiLeaks carries on. This is a maximum-security prison. Anyone in for just bail infringement – first of all, they wouldn't have been sentenced to 50 weeks as he was. They might have been given a fine and at best a month but of course this has now morphed into an extradition, a case with all these ludicrous charges coming from the indictment in Virginia.

But Julian, as a person, what's always struck me he's the diametric opposite portrayed by so many of his detractors. He has a sharp intellect so he's clever, of course. He's also gracious and he's very funny. He and I often laugh. We even managed to laugh the last time I saw him at the embassy when there were cameras all over the room, you could tell as we swapped notes and we had to cover up what we were actually writing on the pad. He managed to laugh about this. So, there's a dry, almost black humour and he's a very passionate person but his resilience has always astonished me. I

I've tried to put myself in his position and I couldn't imagine it. And when I saw him in prison and we had to sit across from each other, I was with a couple of other people, when one of us went around the table just to be close to him she was told to go back by one of the guards. This is what somebody who has committed no crime, yes, he's committed the crime of journalism, and this is what he has to endure. **CT**

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Julian Assange was mocked by the media for his ragged beard when he was arrested in London. But, writes **David Edwards**, the journalists didn't bother to explain that his shaving kit had been taken away three months earlier

Manufacturing the Julian Assange witch-hunt

In June, UK Home Secretary Sajid Javid signed the US extradition request to hand over Julian Assange, who is charged with 18 counts of violating the US Espionage Act. Assange's immediate fate now lies in the hands of the British justice system.

Javid consistently voted for use of UK military forces in combat operations overseas, including war on Afghanistan, Syria and the catastrophic 2011 assault on Libya. In other words, he is a key figure in precisely the US-UK Republican - Democratic - Conservative - Labour war machine exposed by WikiLeaks. John Pilger described Assange's extradition hearing to The Real News Network: "I don't think these initial extradition hearings will be fair at all, no... He's not allowed to defend himself. He's not given access to a computer so that he can access the documents and files that he needs.

"I think where it will change is if the lower court – the mag-

istrate's court that is dealing with it now and will deal with it over the next almost nine, ten months – if they decide to extradite Julian Assange, his lawyers will appeal. And it will go up to the High Court. And I think it's there in the High Court where he may well – I say 'may' – get justice. That's a cautiously optimistic view. But I think he's most likely to get it there. He certainly won't get it the United States. There's no indication of that."

The groundwork for the persecution of Assange has been laid by a demonising state-corporate propaganda campaign. Nils Melzer, the UN special rapporteur on torture, who is also Professor of International Law at the University of Glasgow, has turned the accepted 'mainstream' view of Assange completely on its head: "First of all, we have to realize that we have all been deliberately misled about Mr Assange. The predominant image of the

shady 'hacker', 'sex offender' and selfish 'narcissist' has been carefully constructed, disseminated and recycled in order to divert attention from the extremely powerful truths he exposed, including serious crimes and corruption on the part of multiple governments and corporations.

"By making Mr Assange 'unlikeable' and ridiculous in public opinion, an environment was created in which no one would feel empathy with him, very similar to the historic witch-hunts, or to modern situations of mobbing at the workplace or in school."

These are very significant, credible comments and Melzer recently provided a stunning example on Twitter of how this 'carefully constructed, disseminated and recycled' image of Assange has been faked.

Melzer's revelation concerns Assange's long, dishevelled beard, which was a source of much 'mainstream' hilarity when Assange was arrested and dragged from the Ecuado-



FREE ASSANGE: Wall poster in a London street.

rian embassy on April 11. First, let's remind ourselves of some of the grim highlights of this media coverage. In the *Daily Mail*, Amanda Platell wrote: "How humiliating that as the alleged sexual predator Julian Assange emerged from Ecuador's embassy, flourishing a wild beard, Australian scientists revealed a primordial link between 'flamboyant accoutrements such as beards' and titchy testicles".

In the *New Statesman*, the *Guardian's* Suzanne Moore celebrated: "O frabjous day! We are all bored out of our minds with Brexit when a demented looking gnome is pulled out of the Ecuadorian embassy by the secret police of the deep state. Or 'the met' as normal people

**"Julian Assange ...
looked like a sort
of mad Lord of the Rings
extra as he was
hailed away from
the Ecuadorian embassy
last week""**

call them".

In the *Evening Standard*, William Moore commented: "Julian Assange... looked like a sort of mad Lord of the Rings extra as he was hailed away from the Ecuadorian embassy last week".

Charlotte Edwardes wrote in the *Evening Standard*: "Julian Assange's removal from the

Ecuadorian embassy brought his straggly beard into the light. The Beard Liberation Front gets in touch to say he will not be considered for its annual shortlist of the best facial hair. 'It is impossible to unequivocally state that his beard presents a positive public image,' it says." (Edwardes, 'Julian Assange's removal'.

David Aaronovitch of the *Times* tweeted: "I see Tolstoy has just been arrested in central London".

Like so many journalists, Derek Momodu, the *Daily Mirror's* Associate Picture Editor, made a joke about a bearded character from the BBC comedy series *Only Fools And Horses*: "Unconfirmed reports that Wikileaks boss Julian Assange tried to pass as Uncle Albert to avoid arrest – but no-one was fooled".

The *Daily Star* devoted an entire article to the mockery: "Bearded Julian Assange compared to Uncle Albert as Twitter reacts to arrest

"Pamela Anderson's favourite fella has got a surprising new look".

Embedded in the piece was a *Daily Star* reader survey that attracted 234 votes:

"Would you describe Julian Assange as...

"A hero [36%]

"A weirdo' [64%]"

Unsurprising results, given the context and the wider political-media campaign.

The *Daily Express* also devoted an article to comedy takes of this kind: "Hilarious Julian Assange memes have

swept Twitter in the wake of the Wikileaks founder's arrest including one he tried to pass himself off as Uncle Albert from *Only Fools and Horses* – here are the best ones”.

In the *Times*, Ben Macintyre wrote a piece titled, “Julian Assange belongs with crackpots and despots”, observing that Assange had been “hauled out of the Ecuadorian embassy, wearing the same beard and outraged expression as Saddam Hussein on removal from his foxhole”. The caption accompanying the photos said it all: “Julian Assange revelled in holding court at the Ecuadorian embassy in London. Right, the Panamanian [dictator] General Manuel Noriega took refuge in the Vatican embassy in 1989”.

There are clear Stalinist and Big Brother echoes when one of the most important political dissidents of our time generates this headline (subsequently edited) in the *Daily Mail*: “A soaring ego. Vile personal habits. And after years in his squalid den, hardly a friend left: DOWNFALL OF A NARCISSIST”.

The title of a *Guardian* press review also headlined completely fake, Ecuadorian government claims that Assange had smeared the walls of the embassy with his own excrement as highlighted in the *Sun*: “ ‘Whiffyleaks’: what the papers say about Julian Assange’s arrest”. The assumption behind all these comments, of course, was that Assange’s beard was further confirmation that he was “a definite

“On 11 April, Julian Assange was mocked for his beard throughout the world. During my visit, he explained to us that his shaving kit had been deliberately taken away three months earlier”

creep, a probable rapist, a conspiracist whackjob”, as ‘leftist’ media favourite Ash Sarkar, of Novara Media, tweeted. Or, as the *Guardian*’s George Monbiot wrote in opposing Assange’s extradition: “Whether or not you like Assange’s politics (I don’t), or his character (ditto)...”

As discussed, Nils Melzer argues that Assange has become ‘unlikeable’ and ridiculous in public opinion, not because of who he is, but because of a state-sponsored propaganda campaign – the journalists listed above are either complicit or dupes. This media charade was exposed with great clarity by Melzer’s revelation on Twitter:

“How public humiliation works: On 11 April, Julian Assange was mocked for his beard throughout the world. During my visit, he explained to us that his shaving kit had been deliberately taken away three months earlier”.

It had simply never occurred to the great herd of journalists – which understood that Assange was someone to be smeared, mocked and abused –

that his appearance might have something to do with Ecuador’s brutal treatment cutting off his communications, his visitors and even his medical care. Fidel Narvaez, former consul at the Ecuadorian embassy from the first day Assange arrived, on June 19 2012, until July 15 2018, said the Ecuadorian regime under president Lenin Moreno had tried to make life ‘unbearable’ for Assange.

As part of a Swedish project in support of Assange, a message containing an offer from Melzer to be interviewed was emailed to around 500 individuals, primarily Swedish journalists. Recipients were able to reply with a single click on an embedded link in the message. Not a single journalist did so. In an email copied to *Media Lens*, Melzer commented: “My impression is that, after my initial press release, most of the mainstream media have gone into something like a shock paralysis leaving them unable to process the enormous contradiction between their own misguided portraits of Assange and the terrifying truth of what has been going on in reality. The problem, of course, is that mainstream media bear a significant share of the responsibility for enabling this disgraceful witch-hunt and now have to muster up the strength to face their tragic failure to objectively inform and empower the people in this case.

“One of my own nationalities being Swedish, I am quite familiar with what a certain

obsession with political correctness can do to one's capacity for critical thinking. But the fact that, of more than 500 solicited Swedish journalists, not a single one was interested in an in-depth interview with a Swiss-Swedish UN expert publicly accusing Sweden of judicial persecution and psychological torture, speaks to a level of denial and self-censorship that can hardly be reconciled with objective and informative reporting".

It is indeed a dramatic example of denial and self-censorship. But alas, there is no 'shock paralysis', for corporate media have been treating the best-informed, most courageous and most honest truth-tellers this way for years and decades.

When Denis Halliday, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, resigned in protest in September 1998, describing the UN sanctions regime he had set up and run as 'genocidal', his comments were mentioned in passing, then forgotten. The same treatment was afforded his successor as UN Humanitarian Coordinator, Hans von Sponeck, who resigned in protest at the sanctions in February 2000. Since its publication in 2006, von Sponeck's forensic, deeply rational and deeply damning account of his experiences, *A Different Kind Of War – The UN Sanctions Regime In*

When Denis Halliday, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, resigned, describing the UN sanctions regime as 'genocidal', his comments were mentioned in passing, then forgotten

Iraq (Berghahn Books, 2006), has been mentioned once across the entire US-UK press, in a single paragraph of 139 words in an article by Robert Fisk in the *Independent*, and never reviewed. At a time of maximum global media coverage of Iraq, Halliday was mentioned in two of the 12,366 *Guardian* and *Observer* articles mentioning Iraq in 2003; von Sponeck was mentioned five times. Halliday was mentioned in two of the 8,827 articles mentioning Iraq in 2004; von Sponeck was mentioned five times.

In 2002, Scott Ritter, former UN chief weapons inspector in Iraq from 1991-1998 declared that Iraq had been 'fundamentally disarmed' of 90-95 percent of its weapons of mass destruction by December 1998, signifying that the case for war was an audacious fraud. (Ritter and William Rivers Pitt, *War On*

Iraq, Profile Books, 2002, p.23). In the 12,366 articles mentioning Iraq in 2003, the *Guardian* and *Observer* mentioned Ritter a total of 17 times.

In February, we described how Alfred de Zayas, the first UN rapporteur to visit Venezuela for 21 years, had commented that US sanctions were illegal and could amount to 'crimes against humanity' under international law. Our ProQuest UK media database search for the last six months for corporate newspaper articles containing: 'de Zayas' and 'Venezuela' = two hits

One of these, bitterly critical, in the *Times*, was titled: 'Radical Chic – The UN's system of human rights reporting is a politicised travesty'.

There have been a couple of other mentions in the *Independent* online, but, once again, we find ourselves reaching for the same comment from Noam Chomsky that sums it up so well: "The basic principle, rarely violated, is that what conflicts with the requirements of power and privilege does not exist". (Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy*, Hill and Wang, page 79). **CT**

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David Edwards is co-editor of Medialens, the UK media watchdog at whose website – www.medialens.org – this article was first published.

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“The chief commando roared, gnashed his teeth and waved his pistol. One of our leaders asked if I could give control of the ship back to the commandos, as a tug was heading our way to tow us to a military base”, writes **Kevin Neish**

Dashing towards Gaza with the coastguard at our heels

In the summer of 2011 I went to the port of Agio Nicolaos in Crete to join a flotilla of aid ships, sailing to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza. Our group, *Canadian Boat to Gaza*, had bought a small Greek passenger ship to join the flotilla and christened it *Tahrir*, Arabic for liberation, in honour of the Arab Spring demonstrations in Egypt.

There were seven ships in our flotilla, sponsored by various countries, were spread out in supposedly secret locations across Greece. Of course something so big isn't a secret for long to the US or Israeli authorities, and the Israelis soon demanded that the Greek government by the Israelis stop our ships from sailing to Gaza.

Greece was in terrible financial trouble at the time, so deals were offered to get the usually progressive Greeks to stop us. For many weeks the country's inspectors and port authorities delayed routine approvals and repeatedly demanded documents and made extremely

RADICAL VIGNETTES

thorough safety inspections of the *Tahrir*. They even said that our ship could not sail because our benches were too narrow. The US flotilla ship was sabotaged by divers before being seized and confiscated, and the other five ships were blocked from leaving.

At this point, we knew that it didn't matter what we did, they would never let us sail. So we made plans to make a run for it

Team Trump is trying to illegally change Venezuela's regime. The US blames Cuba for its own failed attempts to overthrow the Nicolás Maduro government in Venezuela

and see if we could make it six miles to international waters. There must have been spies in the works, as a squad of a dozen Greek commandos suddenly took up residence in a building on our pier, and a Greek coastguard cutter tied up near us, so it would only have to move ahead a few feet to cut us off from the marina entrance.

Then, as the final coup de grace, or at least they thought so, the Greek government decreed that any Greek sailor who sailed with us, would lose their professional licence.

We held what we thought would be our last meeting on the deck of the *Tahrir* to discuss our situation. An older women, “Well let's sail her to Gaza ourselves”. The leaders looked at each other and asked, does anyone have a captain's ticket?

“As a matter of fact, I do”, said a Danish fellow. “And I am a ticketed Bosun”, stated a grizzled Belgian gentleman. A former East German policeman said, “And I have my navigator's qualifications”. Then I told the



Our valiant kayaktivists stall the infuriated Greek coastguard.



The Greek coast guard and commandos, under Israeli orders, in hot pursuit of us.

group I was a certified marine engineer. “Well then”, the leaders said “I guess we have a new crew”. It was risky and possibly illegal, but all 25 passengers agreed to sail with us to Gaza.

But first we had to get out of the marina, and that Greek

coastguard ship would easily block our escape route. Years before, at home in Victoria, I had been a part of a blockade of a US ferry using kayaks, canoes and small sailboats to protest the first Iraq war.

Our Danish captain con-

firmed that maritime law dictated that powered ships must give way to unpowered vessels. So two valiant volunteers rented a couple of tourist kayaks and paddled around to our ship. Meanwhile, a squad of friends then made a noisy diversionary march up the pier, waving placards and shouting slogans around the commandos’ office, while we quietly slipped our lines.

The moment I fired up the two huge 12-cylinder diesel engines, the jig was up, and the whole town knew we were trying to “get out of Dodge”. The commandos came charging down the pier and the coastguard ship roared into life. But it didn’t move, as there were two little red kayaks floating directly under their bow.

The crew and commandos screamed and shouted at the two *touristas*, who of course couldn’t understand a word they said, and carried on calmly paddling in circles. Commandos tried to kick at our brave kayaktivists and then threw huge ship bumpers at them, but they held their ground (water?) for five wonderful minutes, which was enough time for us to back out of the marina and charge off at full speed for Gaza.

The coastguard ship finally manoeuvred around our friends and gave chase, and at the four-mile mark (so close to freedom!), they landed a squad of heavily armed commandos on our rear deck.

Nonviolent obstruction was

offered by our passengers, and some were violently knocked to the deck as the brutish commando leader stormed onto now-empty bridge.

Our whole group filled the bow of the ship and faced the commando chief as he waved his pistol in the air and demanded, “Who is the captain?”, so he could arrest him. A frail elderly woman shouted “I am the captain!”, which brought a quizzical look to the commando’s face, and then like the movie *Spartacus*, everyone shouted, “No I am the captain!”.

The commando retreated to the bridge and took the wheel of the ship and pushed the throttle to full speed to return us to port and arrest. Strangely the throttle magically returned to neutral. He pushed it forward again, but again it returned to neutral. It appeared to him that the ship didn’t want to go back.

The Greek people supported Palestine and it was only their government who helped the Israelis stop us, but only after great political pressure with dire financial threats

I was below in the engine room thwarting his plans by manually controlling the engines. For a few minutes we had a tug of war with the engine controls, until I disconnected one of the transmissions and put one propeller in permanent reverse, so we went around in circles. At this point I decided it was best if I left before that commando, with his pistol, came looking for me.

Mayhem ensued as the chief commando roared, gnashed his teeth and waved his pistol. Finally, one of our leaders

politely asked if I could give control of the ship back to the commandos, as a tugboat was heading our way to tow us to a military base, instead of the much friendlier and safer Agio Nicolaos port.

After we docked, some of the young commandos came on deck, and quietly apologised to the activists they had knocked down, saying they were just following orders, and that they actually supported what we were doing.

Local Greek citizens soon filled the dock, offering us solidarity, protection and free food and drink. Our two kayaktivists were arrested, as well as the official Canadian owner of the *Tahrir*, and marched in front of a judge, who scolded them and then kindly ordered them out of the country.

It was obvious that the Greek people supported Palestine and it was only their government who helped the Israelis stop us, but only after great political pressure with dire financial threats. But in years to come, we came back to sail to Gaza again and again. And we are returning in May 2020, to sail a new flotilla to Gaza in honour of the tenth anniversary of the Israeli attack on the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla in 2010, when 10 activists were murdered. For more information go to www.freedomflotilla.org **CT**

Kevin Neish is a very serious international activist, who also appreciates the power of humour. His web site is www.kevinneish.ca

Remembering the Mavi Marmara attack



Read Kevin Neish’s gripping eye witness account – with exclusive photos – of the Israeli 2010 attack on the Mavi Marmara at <http://coldtype.net/Assets19/pdf/MaviMarmara.pdf>

Shafted

The Media, the Miners' Strike and the Aftermath

New Edition | Edited by Granville Williams

The first edition of *Shafted* was published for the 25th anniversary of the miners' strike, just after lax regulation and the financial excesses of the banks led to a government bailout of billions of pounds.

So much has happened in the decade since that the second edition is a completely new book. The revelations in the government archives on the miners' strike, the establishment of the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign, the cruel austerity policies of the LibDem and Tory governments, and the new interest in the pit camps set up in the wake of the announcement in October 1992 to close 31 pits with the loss of 31,000 jobs are all covered in the new edition.



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You can buy *Shafted* direct from the publisher, Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (North). The book costs £9.99 and is available in the UK for £11.00 inc P&P. Send cheques made out to CPBF(North) to 24 Tower Avenue, Upton, near Pontefract, West Yorks, WF9 1EE



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Land Rover's proposals that we use its SUVs for urban safaris shows how cars have been licensed to damage our lives, writes **George Monbiot**

Urban Jungle

WHAT is the best way of wrecking a city? Pour cars into it. Heavy traffic, 50 years of research shows, breaks up community, disrupts social life and crushes local cultures. Noise drowns out conversation and drives people indoors. Pollution makes streets inhospitable. Cars take up the space that might have been used for children to play, adults to meet and local projects to grow.

Street life is treated as an impediment to traffic. In cities all over the world, it has been cleared for cars. Stalls, hawkers, football and cricket games, old people playing dominoes, chess or petanque: all must make way for the car.

So much land is required for driving and parking that there is little left for human life. In cities like Barcelona, that curb traffic, cars use about 25 percent of the urban area. In cities like Houston, which don't, they use 60 percent. The car eats the public

space that could otherwise become parks, cycle lanes, markets and playgrounds.

Land Rover's new advertisements for its Range Rover Evoque create the opposite impression: that this ridiculous gas guzzler contributes to urban culture. The Evoque is marketed as "the Range Rover for the city", which sounds like a contradiction: SUVs like this were originally designed for dirt roads in the countryside. But now, according to the agency behind this revolting campaign, we are invited to use it to "explore your city" and create your own "urban adventures".

One of the ads features the supermodel Adwoa Aboah driving through Brixton, staring at the interesting street life as if on a human safari, and talking about its "amazing soul and rhythm ... People here are real". It gives the impression that the car is passing through market streets where traffic is prohibited. Why? Because these are the places with the most "amazing soul and rhythm".

She also drives down Brixton Road, one of the most polluted streets in London. All the Range Rover Evoque models have higher nitrogen oxide emissions than the average for new cars (and much higher CO2 emissions). The Evoque's sole contribution to Brixton's street life is likely to consist of accelerating the deaths of some of the "real" people it passes.

Air pollution is now believed to kill more people than smoking. Across Europe, it's estimated to cause the premature deaths of 800,000 people a year. Every week, cars here kill far more people than the full toll of the Chernobyl disaster.

Air pollution damages hearts and lungs, causes a wide range of cancers and damages the health of unborn children. It can radically reduce intelligence, as a result of oxidative stress and neurodegeneration. So along comes Land Rover, not only promoting a polluting SUV as a city car, but suggest-

ing it should be used for fun: to kerb-crawl through congested streets gawping at the human zoo.

SUVs are killing machines: because they are higher and heavier, you are more likely to die if you are hit by one than if you are struck by an ordinary car. The fashion for SUVs is one of the two main reasons for rising road deaths among pedestrians (the other is drivers using mobile phones). They are likely to be especially dangerous if you use them for human game drives, rather than watching the road.

Another of the ads urges drivers to “Set off on an adventure. Discover Edinburgh, one of the UK’s most forward-thinking cities”. A forward-looking city should ban such cars from its streets. Land Rover’s ad agency promises to roll out this campaign across the world, naming cities in South Africa, China and Columbia. Wherever interesting urban cultures persist, a Range Rover will plough through them. Land Rover, get your filthy wares out of our cities.

These ads are horribly reminiscent of the commercial Jeep tours through Rio’s favelas. Residents say the tours make them feel humiliated and objectified. The tourists sit behind the car windows, safely removed from the natives, filming exotic poverty as they are driven past people’s homes.

They also remind me of Volkswagen’s disgusting advertising last year, which asked: “Looking to boost your school

gate credibility? Our Tiguan has been voted one of the coolest cars for dads on the school run.” Poisoning children by driving a monster SUV to the school gate is, in my view, about the least cool thing a parent could do.

These ads help to normalise antisocial – even pathological – behaviour. Just as we need radically to reduce the use of cars, for the sake of both human health and planetary survival (the mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has just announced a car free day in September to highlight this need), the manufacturers seek to drag us back into the 20th-century.

In his book *Unlocking Sustainable Cities*, Professor Paul Chatterton argues that controlling the car is the first and most important step towards creating friendly and vibrant cities. He points to the work of architects like Jan Gehl, who seek to reclaim the space now captured by cars, to allow “life between buildings” to flourish.

Neither electric cars nor driverless cars will solve our problems. They take up as much space as fossil-powered vehicles. Electric cars are already triggering a series of environmental disasters, due to the rush for lithium, cobalt and nickel required to make their batteries. Driverless cars are likely to exacerbate congestion and accelerate climate breakdown, because of the energy demands of the data centres required to control them.

It makes far more sense to build electrified mass transit. But those whose profits depend on urban carnage go to great lengths to thwart it. In the United States, Americans for Prosperity, a group founded and funded by the Koch Brothers, has set up campaigns to fight new bus and light rail schemes. It has managed to stop public transport systems in several states. The Kochs have made much of their vast fortune from oil refining and asphalt production.

Another planned advertisement for the Evoque, this time in Chicago, crudely defines the conflict. In Land Rover’s words, “the Evoque will literally climb on top of the covered entrance to a busy transit station”. The safari theme continues: the new Range Rover poses on top of the public transport system like a hunter with his foot on a slaughtered lion.

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens writes of “the fierce patrician custom of hard driving”. As aristocrats raced heedlessly through the streets of Paris in their carriages, everyone else had to jump out of the way or perish. Dickens hints that this barbaric practice was among the many atrocities that helped catalyse the French Revolution. Today, as cars clear a path through our lives, we need a new revolt against hard driving. It is time to reclaim the streets for the people. **CT**

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George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist. His website is www.monbiot.com

DAYS NUMBERED? Cruise ship, the Norwegian Sky, in Havana.



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Marjorie Cohn calls out the hypocrisy of the US hitting Cuba with new travel restrictions in reprisal for ‘destabilising the region’

Extending the US embargo on Cuba hurts the people

ESCALATING his policy to economically strangle Cuba, President Donald Trump has imposed new restrictions on travel to Cuba by US citizens. The Office of Foreign Assets Control will no longer allow the popular “people-to-people” educational travel and they will deny licens-

es to cruise ships, the most common way people visit Cuba.

“While this further escalation of the Trump administration’s economic war on Cuba is very harmful to the people of Cuba and its private sector, it also directly impacts US people”. Art Heitzer, chairperson of the National Lawyers Guild

Cuba Subcommittee, said. “It will limit their freedom to travel, disrupting the lives and jobs of many Cuban-Americans in south Florida”.

Ironically, it is the voters in south Florida – many of them expatriated Cubans – whom Trump seeks to please with his shameful Cuba policy. Sen



Photo: Gage Skidmore / Flickr.com



Marco Rubio: At the heart of Trump’s Cuba strategy.

Marco Rubio (R-Florida) has long been angling for regime change in Cuba. The *New York Times* called Rubio “a virtual secretary of state for Latin America”. Early in his presidency, Trump told administra-

tion officials that his strategy on Cuba was to “Make Rubio happy”.

In an unprecedented move, Trump, egged on by Rubio, decided to allow potentially thousands of lawsuits that

will depress tourism and investment in Cuba.

When announcing the administration’s new restrictions on travel to Cuba, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said, “This administration has made a strategic decision to reverse the loosening of sanctions and other restrictions on the Cuban regime. These actions will help to keep US dollars out of the hands of Cuban military, intelligence, and security services”.

But it is the Cuban people who will suffer from restrictions on tourism, which is critical to Cuba’s economy. This is an extension of the economic embargo the United States has maintained against Cuba since the Cuban revolution. A secret State Department

memo written in 1960 proposed making life so miserable for the Cuban people, they would overthrow the new Castro government. The memo advocated “a line of action which, while as adroit and inconspicuous as possible, makes the greatest inroads in denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government”. The economic blockade continues to hurt the Cuban people although it has failed in its goal to overthrow the Cuban government.

Mnuchin also claimed, “Cuba continues to play a destabilising role in the Western Hemisphere, providing a communist foothold in the region and propping up US adversaries in places like Venezuela and Nicaragua by fomenting instability, undermining the rule of law, and suppressing democratic processes”.

In fact, it is the US government that is fomenting instability in Latin America. Team Trump is trying to illegally change Venezuela’s regime. The US blames Cuba for its own failed attempts to overthrow the Nicolás Maduro government in Venezuela.

Trump threatened Cuba with “a full and complete” embargo if it didn’t “immediately” stop supporting the Maduro government. But Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez stated at a news conference, “This is vulgar calumny. Cuba does



Havana, 2017.

not have troops nor military forces nor does it participate in military or security operations of the sister Republic of Venezuela”. Rodríguez’s denial was confirmed by the CIA, which concluded that Cuba’s assistance is much less critical to Venezuela than US officials had claimed, according to the *New York Times*.

Nevertheless, the Trump administration continues to escalate its economic warfare against Cuba. Now it has eliminated the people-to-people trav-

Team Trump is trying to illegally change Venezuela’s regime. The US blames Cuba for its own failed attempts to overthrow the Nicolás Maduro government in Venezuela

el license, and prohibited cruise ships and private aircraft from travelling to Cuba, effective June 5, 2019.

Congress has established 12 categories of people who can lawfully travel to Cuba under a general license. They include the following:

- Family visits;
- Official US business, foreign governments and certain inter-governmental organisations;
- Journalistic activity;
- Professional research and professional meetings;
- Educational activities;
- Religious activities;
- Public performances, clinics, workshops, athletic and other competitions, and exhibitions;
- Support for the Cuban people;
- Humanitarian projects;
- Activities of private foundations or research or educational institutes;
- Exportation, importation, or

transmission of information or information materials;

- Certain authorised export transactions.

Only Congress can omit or add to any of these 12 categories. But different presidential administrations redefine what is permitted under each category. Trump’s newly announced policy narrows the purview of one of these categories. Now ‘people-to-people’ travel will not be licensed under the category of ‘educational activities’.

General licenses had been allowed for travel that facilitated ‘people-to-people’ contact. The Treasury Department defines a ‘people-to-people’ license as “an authorisation, subject to conditions, for persons subject to US jurisdiction to engage in certain educational exchanges in Cuba on an individual basis or under the auspices of an organisation that is a person subject to US jurisdiction and sponsors such exchanges to promote people-to-people contact”.

Trump’s new policy “kills the people-to-people category, which is the most common way for the average American to travel to Cuba”, according to Collin Laverty, head of Cuba Educational Travel, one of the biggest companies in the United States that handles travel to Cuba.

Under the new rules, passenger and recreational vessels



Fidel Castro visits DC in 1959 as Cuba’s new premier.

(including cruises ships, fishing boats, sailboats and yachts) and private and corporate aircraft will no longer be licensed to visit Cuba. Most people who travel to Cuba arrive on cruise ships.

From January to April of 2019, 142,000 Americans stopped in Cuba while on cruises, compared to 114,000 who travelled by airplane. The ban on cruises will be “devastating to the travel industry and the Cuban people”, said Tom Popper, president of the travel company insightCuba. Cruise Lines International Association, a cruise industry group, estimates that the new prohibition will affect approximately 800,000 passenger bookings.

Private and corporate air-

craft will not be permitted to travel from the US to Cuba. But commercial flights will still be allowed.

The Trump regime has threatened more sanctions against Cuba. It is not clear whether they will impose additional travel restrictions. **CT**

Marjorie Cohn is professor emerita at Thomas Jefferson School of Law, former president of the National Lawyers Guild, deputy secretary general of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers and a member of the advisory board of Veterans for Peace. Her most recent book is Drones and Targeted Killing: Legal, Moral, and Geopolitical Issues. Copyright, Truthout.org. Reprinted with permission

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Britain's mining communities had a long-standing trust in the police force until Margaret Thatcher sent in the cops to wage a violent year-long 'war' on striking miners. **Trevor Grundy** reviews *Shafted*, a book that looks at the miners' epic struggle against a government that was intent on smashing Britain's unions

Remembering a battle the UK's leaders want to forget



SHAFTED

The Media, the Miners' Strike and the Aftermath

Edited by **Granville Williams**

Published by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom/North

£9.99

(See advert on Page 27 for purchasing information)

ON June 18, the BBC's Radio Four flagship programme *Today* reminded us that it was the 204th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo.

Sadly, for those not born in the 19th-century, the state broadcaster forgot, or failed, to mention a more recent battle, the aftermath of which had such a devastating impact on the lives of hundreds of thousands of people who were once the backbone of the British coal industry.

That day was the 35th anniversary of the battle at Orgreave which took place on a hot summer's day in South Yorkshire in 1984.

The collective memory has faded but not where it hurts the most – in the hearts and minds of those who were there and the daughters and sons of families now economically and socially disenfranchised.

So three cheers for Granville Williams who has edited the second edition of his bril-

liant book *Shafted*, the up-dated version featuring a wealth of new material that enhances our collective understanding of the UK miners' epic struggle in 1984-1985. Many readers under the age of 50 will ask, What happened and why?

In a chapter entitled *When the long arm of the law overreaches*, the film-maker Morag Livingstone says: "Books have been written and films made about the miners who once though they had a job for life in the coal industry, but a few months after Orgreave many found themselves facing a life sentence. While the case of riot against 13 of them men at Orgreave collapsed in 1985 and some compensation was paid for their troubles in 1991, the injustice lingers on. The feelings of communities who once trusted the police were summed up by one of the miners following his acquittal: 'I can't forgive the police for those things. I had respect for them before the strike, but none now'".



it's shorts and sandals in the sunshine as members of the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign march in support of a demand for a public inquiry into at Durham Miners' Gala on July 8, 2017.

Calls for a public inquiry into police brutality and the government's support for their actions have been made time and time again.

The 'tawdry reasons' for rejecting an inquiry were, explains Williams in an article published in the communist newspaper *Morning Star* (October 27, 2018), "were that any review would be hampered by the passage of time, that some of those involved had died and that, in terms of accountability, most officers whose conduct might be examined were no longer employed by the police".

He adds: "Indeed, the decision to block an inquiry galvanised the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign (OTJC) and it has sustained an incredible level of activity and a high public profile since then".

So the struggle continues.

Basically, the miners wanted to stop lorry loads of coke from leaving a local pit for the nearby Scunthorpe steelworks. They thought that would help win their strike, protect pits throughout the UK, and secure their jobs.

The police, with the full

backing of the government of the day, were determined to hold them back and pictures of the fighting between the two sides shocked the nation and strengthened belief in mainly Conservative circles that the power of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) had to be smashed once and for all.

The number of police involved was without precedent. The use of dogs, horses and riot gear in an industrial dispute was almost unheard of, and some of their tactics were learned from the police in Northern Ireland.

During the subsequent court

case, a police manual was uncovered which set out the Thatcher government's plans to deal with pickets and protests long before the 1984 strike took place.

A BBC reporter wrote in 2015: "Police vans and Range Rovers were fitted with armour so they could withstand the stones being thrown by some of the crowd. The miners suspected the whole operation was being run under government control".

It was, in short, the moment police strategy switched from defensive – protecting collieries, coking plants and working miners (branded by strikers as 'scabs') – to offensive, actively breaking up crowds and making large numbers of arrests and at the end of the day, closing remaining pits and destroying in mining communities.

In the foreword to this well written, finely edited and timely book, Francis O'Grady, General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) declares, "It exposes how powerful forces conspired against the National Union of Miners (NUM) and the working-class communities is sought to defend".

Much has changed since the first edition of *Shafted*.

Following the release of Cabinet papers, we are at long last in a position to understand the lengths to which the Thatcher government went to defeat the NUM and its members.

O'Grady writes: "The involvement of the intelligence

Thatcher prepared meticulously for the confrontation which came soon after the Falklands War which turned her from a national pariah into Winston Churchill without the cigar

services, police brutality, and the collusion of shadowy business groups – every instrument of state power was deployed to crush the miners as 'the enemy within'".

And since the first edition was published, we've also seen the establishment of the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign which demands a public inquiry into what Granville Williams calls 'the most violent assault by police during an industrial dispute'.

Thatcher's biographer Charles Moore (a former editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, who was dubbed Lord Snooty by the satirical magazine *Private Eye*) records in volume one of her authorised biography, *Not For Turning*, how on taking office in 1979 she told Willie White-law, one of her closest advisers: "The last Conservative government (Edward Heath's in 1974) was destroyed by the miners' strike. We'll have another and we'll win".

Thatcher prepared meticulously for the confrontation which came soon after the Falklands War which turned her from a national pariah –

arguably the most unpopular British prime minister of the 20th-century – into Winston Churchill without the cigar.

This new version of *Shafted*, is divided into 18 quite short, well edited and easy-to-read sections written by a variety of authors, most of whom were closely involved in the strike.

Tony Garnett, the TV dramatist, writes about the way the media handled the news.

Ray Goodspeed, a founder member of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners in 1984, tells the fascinating story about the way the community supported the miners.

There is also a fact-packed and moving chapter written by Caroline Poland, Debbie Matthews, Flis Callow and Marilyn Haddington titled *You can't Kill the Spirit, Sheffield Women against Pit Closures*. It emphasises the chilling (for Thatcher) fact that the strike had nationwide trade union support.

The sub-title to this vital book, one that should be on the shelves of schools, colleges and public libraries, speaks about the *Media and the Aftermath of the Strike*. The aftermath is now. Says the film-maker, writer and photographer Morag Livingstone, "When the strike was over (in March 1985) the government implemented the mass closure of the mines and in turn devastated many of the UK's industrial communities. What is worse is that the government planned the closures but had no plan to rebuild. They

left communities without industry or good jobs. Communities that had worked to fuel the nation found their government turned against them”.

Tony Sutton, the editor of *Coldtype*, moved to South Shields in the north of England in the 1970s and saw a town with 75,000 people in high-paying jobs in shipbuilding and coal mining. When he returned from Canada in 2016, he was shocked by the way the town had deteriorated, saying, “The once bustling thoroughfare that furnished the dreams of an affluent society is now a nightmare of auster-

ity. The businesses that remain are mainly charity outlets, betting shops and pound stores for cash-strapped customers, while those who cater for the wealthier have decamped to big-box citadels elsewhere”.

The media coverage of the strike and the public crucifixion of Arthur Scargill, the miners’ leader, needs greater examination and even more publicity.

Nicholas Jones, the former industrial correspondent for the BBC writes: “Never before in my experience had the popular press been so partisan for



Orgreave March and Rally, June 18 2016, near the site of the infamous police assault on striking miners.

so long. Their demolition job on the character and reputation of Scargill was unparalleled in its unrelenting ferocity. And on most of the media: They were in effect the mouthpiece for the government and the NCB (National Coal Board). Their journalists – unlike a labour and industrial correspondent such as myself reporting for the BBC – had a hotline to influential sources of information such as Tim Bell (Margaret Thatcher’s favourite PR person), Bernard Ingham (her press officer at Downing Street) and David Hart, who was an adviser to both Thatcher and the NCB chief executive

Ian MacGregor who went on to assist working miners to fund legal actions against the NUM and then to form a rival union – the Union of Democratic Mineworkers.

The book’s worth is well summed up by Frances O’Grady who writes, “Over three decades on, we are still living with the consequences of this unprecedented assault. With inequality rocketing and living standards stagnating, we have austerity for the many and untold riches for the few.

“But the campaign for justice goes on and the spirit of the miners lives on in our campaigns to end zero hours contracts, fight for de-cent jobs in places that need them, defend the right to

strike and organise a new generation of workers. The power lies in our hands”.

And a large part of that power is knowing what happened, why it happened and what can be learned from a confrontation that has put so many lives on hold. Hence, the value of this politically charged, most important book. **CT**

***Trevor Grundy** is a Kent-based journalist, researcher and author who lived and worked in central, eastern and southern Africa from 1966-1996. He is the author of *Memoir of a Fascist Childhood*.*

The last thing the global ruling classes need is Jeremy Corbyn trying to remake their nascent neoliberal marketplace into a society where healthcare is guaranteed to all, you don't need a mortgage to buy a train ticket, and people don't have to eat out of trash bin, writes **CJ Hopkins**

The Hitlerisation of Jeremy Corbyn (and others)

EVERY time you think the corporatocracy's manufactured antisemitism hysteria cannot possibly get more absurd, they somehow manage to outdo themselves. OK, stay with me now, because this is a weird one.

Apparently, American Hitler and his cronies are conspiring with some secret group of 'Jewish leaders' to stop British Hitler from becoming prime minister and wiping out all the Jews in Great Britain. Weird, right? But that's not the weird part, because maybe American Hitler wants to wipe out all the Jews in Great Britain himself, rather than leaving it to British Hitler ... Hitlers being notoriously jealous regarding their genocidal accomplishments.

No, the weird part is that everyone knows that American Hitler does not make a move without the approval of Russian Hitler, who is also obsessed with wiping out the Jews, and with destroying the fabric of Western democracy.

So why would Russian Hitler want to let American Hitler and his goons thwart the ascendancy of British Hitler, who, in addition to wanting to wipe out all the Jews, also wants to destroy democracy by fascistically refunding the NHS, renationalising the rail system, and so on?

It doesn't make a whole lot of sense, does it? In any event, here's the official story.

In "a recording leaked to the *Washington Post*," and then flogged by the rest of the corporate media, Reichsminister des Auswärtigen, Mike Pompeo, told a group of unnamed 'Jewish leaders' that American Hitler (ie, Donald Trump) will 'push back' (ie intervene) against British Hitler (ie Jeremy Corbyn) to protect the lives of Jews in Great Britain if British Hitler becomes prime minister (and is possibly already doing so now). The identities of these 'Jewish leaders' have not been disclosed by the cor-

porate media, presumably in order to protect them from being murdered by Corbyn's Nazi hit squad. Whoever they were, they wanted to know whether American Hitler and his fascist cabinet were "willing to work with [them] to take on actions if life becomes very difficult for Jews" after Jeremy Corbyn seizes power, declares himself Führer of Communist Britannia, and orders the immediate invasion of France.

To anyone who has been closely following the corporate media's relentless coverage of Jeremy Corbyn's Nazi Death Cult (ie the UK Labour Party) and the global Antisemitism Pandemic, it comes as no real surprise that this group of 'Jewish leaders' (whoever they are) would want to stop him from becoming prime minister. I doubt that their motives have much to do with fighting antisemitism, or anything else specifically 'Jewish', but ... well, I'm kind of old-fashioned that way. I still believe there's a fundamental difference between



‘the Jews’ and the global capitalist ruling classes.

I realise that both the neo-liberal establishment and the neo-fascist fringe disagree with me, and that both are determined (for different reasons) to conflate the two in the public’s

mind, but that’s my take, and I’m sticking to it. I don’t think the world is controlled by ‘the Jews’. I think it’s controlled by global capitalism.

Go ahead, call me a conspiracy theorist. Here’s how the antisemitism panic in the

United Kingdom looks to me.

After nearly 40 years of privatisation and restructuring, British society is on the brink of being permanently transformed into the type of savage, neo-feudal, corporatist nightmare that the USA already is. The global capitalist ruling classes are extremely pleased about this state of affairs. They would now like to finish up privatising Britain, so they can get on with privatising the rest of Europe. The last thing they need at this critical juncture is Jeremy Corbyn to become prime minister and start attempting to remake their nascent neoliberal marketplace into a society ... you know, where healthcare is guaranteed to all, you don’t need a mortgage to buy a train ticket, and people don’t have to eat out of trash bins.

Unlike in the USA, where there is no functional political Left, and where the non-parliamentary ‘two-party system’ is almost totally controlled by the corporatocracy, in the UK, there are still a few old-fashioned socialists, and they have taken back the Labour Party from the neoliberal Blairite stooges that had been managing the transformation of Britain into the aforementioned neo-feudal nightmare. Jeremy Corbyn is the leader of these socialists. So the corporatocracy needs to destroy him, take back control of the Labour Party, and turn it back into a fake left party, like the Democratic Party in the USA, so they can

concentrate on crushing the right-wing populists. Thus, they need to Hitlerise Corbyn, so they can fold him into their official narrative, Democracy vs. The Putin-Nazis.

And, see, this is what makes the corporatocracy's War on Populism so seemingly psychotic ... at least to anyone paying attention.

In the USA, the populist insurgency is primarily a right-wing phenomenon (because, again, there is no Left to speak of). Thus, the neoliberal ruling classes are focused on Hitlerising Donald Trump, and stigmatising the millions of Americans who voted for him as a bunch of Nazis. Hitlerising Trump has been ridiculously easy (he almost Hitlerises himself), but the ultimate goal is to delegitimise the populist sentiment that put him into office. That sentiment is primarily neo-nationalist. So it's a one-front counter-insurgency op (ie neoliberalism versus neo-nationalism).

In the UK, things are not that simple. There, the neoliberal ruling classes are waging a counter-insurgency op against populist forces on two major fronts: (1) the Brexiters (ie nationalism); and (2) the Corbynists (ie socialism). They're getting hit from both the left and right, which is screwing up the official narrative (according to which the 'enemies of democracy' are supposed to be right-wing neo-nationalists). So, as contradictory and absurd as it sounds, they needed to conflate both left and right pop-

The goal of smear campaigns is to force your target and his allies into proclaiming things like, "I am not an antisemite", or "I've never had sex with underage boys", or whatever smear you want to force them to deny

ulism into one big scary Hitlerian enemy. Thus, they needed to Hitlerise Corbyn. Presto ... Labour antisemitism crisis!

Now, anyone who isn't a gibbering idiot knows that Jeremy Corbyn is not an antisemite and the Labour Party is not a hive of Nazis. It's a testament to the power of the corporate media that such a statement even needs to be made ... but, of course, that's the point of the smear campaign the neoliberal corporate media have been waging for the last three years.

Smear campaigns are simple and effective. The goal is to force your target and his allies into proclaiming things like, "I am not an antisemite", or "I've never had sex with underage boys", or whatever smear you want to force them to deny. You don't have to prove your target guilty. You're just trying to conjure up a 'reality' in which every time someone thinks of your target they associate him with the content of your smears.

The corporate media have done just that, to Jeremy Corbyn, to Donald Trump, to Putin, and to assorted lesser fig-

ures. They did it to Sanders in 2016. They are doing it now to Tulsi Gabbard. The goal is not only to smear these targets, but also, and more so, to conjure a 'world' that reifies the narrative of their smears ... a binary 'good versus evil' world, a world in which whatever they want to accuse their targets of being linked to (eg terrorism, fascism, racism, or whatever) is the official enemy of all that is good.

Since the Brexit referendum and the election of Trump, the ruling classes have conjured up a world where 'democracy' is perpetually under attack by a global conspiracy of 'Russians' and 'Nazis' (just as they previously conjured up a world where it was perpetually under attack by 'terrorists'). They have conjured up a post-Orwellian reality in which 'democracy' (ie global capitalism) is the only alternative to 'neo-fascism' (ie anything opposed to global capitalism).

And this is why Corbyn had to be Hitlerised, and why Putin, Trump, Assad, Gabbard, Assange, the 'Yellow Vest' protesters in France, and anyone else opposing global neoliberalism has to be Hitlerised. Socialism, nationalism ... it makes no difference, not to the global capitalist ruling classes. There are always only two sides in these 'worlds' that the ruling classes conjure up for us, and there can be only one official enemy. The official enemy of the moment is 'fascism.' Therefore, all the 'bad guys' are Hitler, or Nazis, or racists, or antisemites, or some other variation of Hitler.

The fact that this ‘reality’ they have conjured up for us is completely psychotic makes it no less real. And it is only going to get more insane until the corporatocracy restores ‘normality’. So, go ahead, if you consider yourself ‘normal’, and try to force your mind to believe that Jews are no longer safe in Great Britain, or in Germany, or France, or the USA, and that Donald Trump is a Russian asset, and is also literally Adolf Hitler, and an antisemitic white supremacist who is conspiring with Israel and Saudi Arabia in their campaign to destroy Iran and Syria, which are allies of his Russian masters, as is Venezuela, which he is also

menacing, and that Jeremy Corbyn’s secret plan is to turn the UK into Nazi Germany, with the support of Trump, who is trying to destroy him, and that the Yellow Vests are Russian-backed fascists, and that Julian Assange is a rapist spy who conspired with Russia to get Trump elected, which is why Trump wants to prosecute him, just as soon as he finishes wiping out the Jews, or protecting them from Jeremy Corbyn, or from Iran, or brainwashing Black Americans into reelecting him in 2020 with a handful of Russian Facebook ads.

Go ahead, try to reconcile all that ... or whatever, don’t. Just take whatever medication you

happen to be on, crank up CNN, MSNBC, or any other corporate media channel, and report me to the Internet Police for posting dangerous ‘extremist’ content. You know, in your heart, I probably deserve it. **CT**

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

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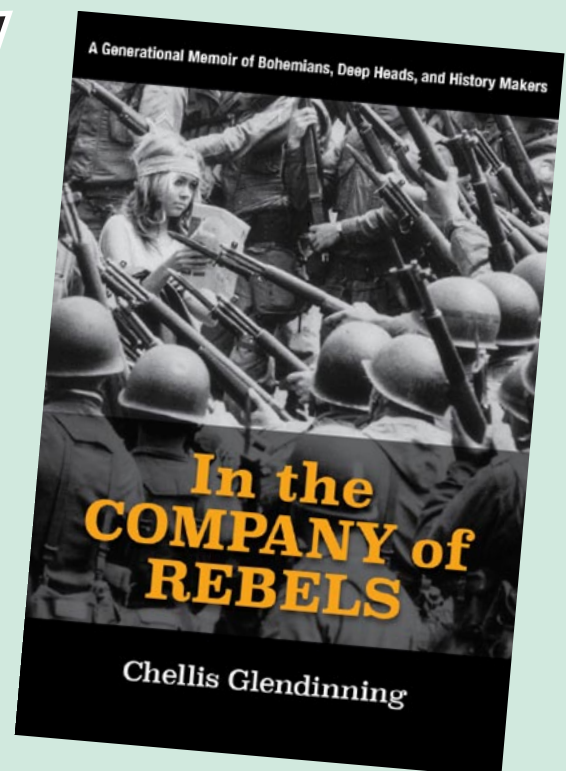
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The man may be down but he is hardly beaten. There are turbulent times ahead for Turkey as Erdogan's party loses Istanbul, writes **Conn Hallinan**

A wounded Ergodan could be dangerous

FOR the second time in a row, Turkish voters have rebuked President Recep Tayyir Erdogan's hand-picked candidate for the mayoralty of Istanbul, Turkey's largest and wealthiest city. The secular Republican People's Party (CHP) candidate, Ekrem Imamoglu, swamped Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) candidate Binali Yildirim in an election that many see as a report card on the President's 17 years of power.

So what does the outcome of the election mean for the future of Turkey, and in particular, its powerful president? For starters, an internal political realignment, but also maybe a dangerous foreign policy adventure.

Erdogan and his party have been weakened politically and financially by the loss of Istanbul, even though the President did his best to steer clear of the campaign over the past several weeks. Since it was Erdogan that pressured the Supreme Election Council into annulling

the results of the March 31 vote, whether he likes it or not, he owns the outcome.

His opponents in the AKP are already smelling blood. Former prime minister Ahmet Dovutoglu, who Erdogan sidelined in 2016, has begun criticising the president's inner circle, including Berat Albayrak, his son-in-law and current finance minister. There are rumours that Dovutoglu and former deputy prime minister Ali Babacan are considering forming a new party on the right.

Up until the March election that saw the AKP and its extreme nationalist alliance partner, the National Movement Party (MHP), lose control of most the major cities in the country, Erdogan had shown an almost instinctive grasp of what the majority of Turks wanted.

But this time out the AKP seemed tone deaf. While Erdogan campaigned on the issue of terrorism, polls showed most Turks were more concerned with the disastrous state of the economy, rising inflation and

growing joblessness.

The "terrorist threat" strategy – short hand for Turkey's Kurdish minority – not only alienated conservative Kurds who reliably voted for the AKP, but forced the opposition into a united front.

Parties ranging from the leftist Kurdish People's Democratic Party and the Communist Party, to more conservative parties like the Good Party, withdrew their candidates from the Istanbul's mayor's race and lined up behind the CHP's Imamoglu.

The AKP – long an electoral steamroller – ran a clumsy and ill-coordinated campaign. While the Yildirim tried to move to the center, Erdogan's inner circle opted for a hard right programme, even accusing Imamoglu of being a Greek (and closet Christian) because he hails from the Black Sea area of Trabzon that was a Greek centre centuries ago.

The charge backfired badly, and an area that in the past was overwhelming supportive of the AKP shifted to backing



TOUGH GUYS: Erdoğan likes to create tensions and then negotiate from strength, a penchant he shares with US President Donald Trump

a native son. Some 2.5-million former residents of the Black Sea live in Istanbul, and it was clear which way they voted.

So what does the election outcome mean for Turkish politics?

Well, for one, when the centre and left unite they can beat Erdoğan. But it also looks like there is going to be re-alignment on the right. In the March election, the extreme right MHP picked up some disgruntled AKP voters, and many AKP voters apparently stayed home, upset at the corruption and the anti-terrorist strategy of their party.

It feels a lot like 2002, when the AKP came out of the political margins and vaulted over the rightwing Motherland and True Path parties to begin its 17 years of domination. How far all this goes and what the final outcome will be is not clear, but Erdoğan has been weakened, and his opponents in the AKP

are already sharpening their knives.

An Erdoğan at bay, however, can be dangerous. When the AKP lost its majority in the 2015 general election, Erdoğan reversed his attempt to peacefully resolve tensions with the Kurds and, instead, launched a war on Kurdish cities in the country's southeast. While the war helped him to win back his majority in an election six months later, it alienated the Kurds and laid the groundwork for the AKP's losses in the March 2019 election and the Istanbul's mayor's race.

The fear is that Erdoğan will look for a crisis that will resonate with Turkish nationalism, a strategy he has used in the past.

He tried to rally Turks behind overthrowing the government of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, but the war was never popular.

Most Turks are not happy with the 3.7-million Syrian refugees currently camped in their country, nor with what increasingly appears to be a quagmire for the Turkish Army in Northern and Eastern Syria.

In general, Turkey's foreign policy is a shambles.

Erdoğan is trying to repair fences with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, because he desperately needs the investment that Gulf monarchs can bring to Turkey. But the price for that is a break with Iran and ending his support for the Muslim Brotherhood. While the Turkish president might be willing to dump the Brotherhood, Erdoğan feels he needs Iran in his ongoing confrontation with the Kurds in Syria, and, at least at this point, he is unwilling to join Saudi Arabia's jihad on Tehran.

In spite of the Turkish President's efforts to normalize ties with Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

recently issued a formal warning to Saudi real estate investors and tourists that Turkey is "inhospitable". Saudi tourism is down 30 percent, and Turkish exports to Saudi Arabia are also off.

Erdogan is also wrangling with the US and NATO over Ankara's purchase of the Russian S-400 anti-aircraft system, a disagreement that threatens further damage to the Turkish economy through US-imposed sanctions. There is even a demand by some Americans to expel Turkey from NATO, echoed by similar calls from the Turkish extreme right.

Talk of leaving NATO, however, is mostly *sturm und drang*. There is no Alliance procedure to expel a member, and current tensions with Moscow means NATO needs Turkey's southern border with Russia, especially its control of the Black Sea's outlet to the Mediterranean.

But a confrontation over Cyprus – and therefore with Greece – is by no means out of the question. This past May, Turkey announced that it was sending a ship to explore for natural gas in the sea off Cyprus, waters that are clearly within the island's economic exploitation zone.

"History suggests that leaders who are losing their grip on power have incentives to organise a show of strength and unite their base behind an imminent foreign threat", writes Greek investigative reporter Yiannis Baboulias in *Foreign Policy*. "Erdogan has every reason to

Erdogan likes to create tensions and then negotiate from strength, a penchant he shares with US President Donald Trump

create hostilities with Greece – Turkey's traditional adversary and Cyprus's ally – to distract from his problems at home".

Turkey has just finished large-scale naval exercises – code name 'Sea Wolf' – in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean and, according to Baboulias, Turkish warplanes have been violating Greek airspace.

Cyprus, along with Israel and Egypt, has been trying to develop Cypriote offshore gas resources for almost a decade, but Turkey has routinely stymied their efforts. The European Union (EU) supports the right of Cyprus to develop the fields, and the EU's foreign policy head, Federica Mogherini, called on Turkey to respect the sovereign rights of Cyprus to its exclusive economic zone and refrain from such illegal actions."

While Mogherini pledged 'full solidarity' with Cyprus, it is hard to see what the big trade organisation could do in the event of a crisis.

Any friction with Cyprus is friction with Greece, and there is a distinct possibility that

two NATO members could find themselves in a face off. Erdogan likes to create tensions and then negotiate from strength, a penchant he shares with US President Donald Trump. While it seems unlikely that it will come to that, in this case Turkish domestic considerations could play a role.

A dustup with Ankara's traditional enemy, Greece, would put Erdogan's opponents in the AKP on the defensive and divert Turks attention from the deepening economic crisis at home. It might also allow Erdogan to use the excuse of a foreign policy crisis to strengthen his already considerable executive powers and to divert to the military budget monies from cities the AKP no longer control.

Budget cuts could stymie efforts by the CHP and left parties to improve conditions in the cities and to pump badly needed funds into education.

The AKP used Istanbul's budget as a piggy bank for programmes that benefited members of Erdogan's family or generated kickbacks for the party from construction firms and private contractors. Erdogan has already warned his opponents that they "won't even be able to pay the salaries of their employees." The man may be down but he is hardly beaten. There are turbulent times ahead for Turkey. **CT**

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Conn Hallinan can be read at [dispatchesfromtheedgeblog.wordpress.com](#) and at [middleempireseries.wordpress.com](#)

Today's viewer society, where a few watch the many, is the other side of the surveillance society described in Orwell's novel, writes **Stephen Groening**

What Orwell's 1984 tells us about today's world

SEVENTY years ago, Eric Blair, writing under the pseudonym George Orwell, published *1984*, now generally considered a classic of dystopian fiction.

The novel tells the story of Winston Smith, a hapless middle-aged bureaucrat who lives in Oceania, where he is governed by constant surveillance. Even though there are no laws, there is a police force, the 'Thought Police', and the constant reminders, on posters, that 'Big Brother Is Watching You'.

Smith works at the Ministry of Truth, and his job is to rewrite the reports in newspapers of the past to conform with the present reality. Smith lives in a constant state of uncertainty; he is not sure the year is in fact 1984.

Although the offi-

cial account is that Oceania has always been at war with Eurasia, Smith is quite sure he remembers that just a few years ago they had been at war with Eastasia, who has now been proclaimed their constant and loyal ally.

The society portrayed in *1984* is one in which social control is exercised through disinforma-

tion and surveillance.

As a scholar of television and screen culture, I argue that the techniques and technologies described in the novel are very much present in today's world.

One of the key technologies of surveillance in the novel is the 'telescreen', a device very much like our own television.

The telescreen displays a single channel of news, propaganda and wellness programming. It differs from our own television in two crucial respects: It is impossible to turn off and the screen also watches its viewers.

The telescreen is television and surveillance camera in one. In the novel, the character Smith is never sure if he is being actively monitored through the telescreen.



Orwell's telescreen was based in the technologies of television pioneered before World War II and could hardly be seen as science fiction. In the 1930s Germany had a working video-phone system in place, and television programs were already being broadcast in parts of the United States, Great Britain and France.

The dominant reading of *1984* has been that it was a dire prediction of what could be. In the words of Italian essayist Umberto Eco, "at least three-quarters of what Orwell narrates is not negative utopia, but history".

Additionally, scholars have also remarked how clearly *1984* describes the present.

In 1949, when the novel was written, Americans watched on average four-and-a-half hours of television a day; in 2009, almost twice that. In 2017, television watching was slightly down, to eight hours, more time than we spent asleep.

In the US, the information transmitted over television screens came to constitute a dominant portion of people's social and psychological lives.

In the year 1984, however, there was much self-congratulatory coverage in the US that the dystopia of the novel had not been realised. But media studies scholar Mark Miller argued how the famous slogan from the book, "Big Brother Is Watching You" had been turned to "Big Brother is you, watching" television.

Miller argued that television in the United States teaches



A publicity photo on the set of the CBS anthology television series 'Studio One' depicts a presentation of George Orwell's '1984.'

a different kind of conformity than that portrayed in the novel. In the novel, the telescreen is used to produce conformity to the Party. In Miller's argument, television produces conformity to a system of rapacious consumption – through advertising as well as a focus on the rich and famous. It also promotes endless productivity, through messages regarding the meaning of success and the virtues of hard work.

Many viewers conform by measuring themselves against what they see on television, such as dress, relationships and conduct. In Miller's words, television has "set the standard of habitual self-scrutiny".

The kind of paranoid worry possessed by Smith in the novel – that any false move or false

thought will bring the thought police – instead manifests in television viewers that Miller describes as an "inert watchfulness". In other words, viewers watch themselves to make sure they conform to those others they see on the screen.

This inert watchfulness can exist because television allows viewers to watch strangers without being seen. Scholar Joshua Meyrowitz has shown that the kinds of programming which dominate US television – news, sitcoms, dramas – have normalised looking into the private lives of others.

Alongside the steady rise of 'reality TV', beginning in the '60s with *Candid Camera*, *An American Family*, *Real People*, *Cops*, and *The Real World*, television has also contributed to the acceptance of a kind of video surveillance.

For example, it might seem just clever marketing that one of the longest-running and most popular reality television shows in the world is entitled *Big Brother*. The show's nod to the novel invokes the kind of benevolent surveillance that "Big Brother" was meant to signify: "We are watching you and we will take care of you".

But *Big Brother*, as a reality show, is also an experiment in controlling and modifying behaviour. By asking participants to put their private lives on display, shows such as *Big Brother* encourage self-scrutiny and behaving according to perceived social norms or roles that challenge those perceived norms. The stress of performing 24/7 on *Big Brother* has led the show to employ a team of psychologists.

Television scholar Anna McCarthy and others have shown that the origins of reality television can be traced back to social psychology and behavioural experiments in the aftermath of World War II, which were designed to better control people.

Yale University psychologist Stanley Milgram, for example, was influenced by *Candid Camera*. In the *Candid Camera* show, cameras were concealed

The origins of reality television can be traced back to social psychology and behavioural experiments in the aftermath of World War II

in places where they could film people in unusual situations. Milgram was fascinated with *Candid Camera*, and used a similar model for his experiments – his participants were not aware that they were being watched or that it was part of an experiment.

Like many others in the aftermath of World War II, Milgram was interested in what could compel large numbers of people to 'follow orders' and participate in genocidal acts. His 'obedience experiments' found that a high proportion of participants obeyed instructions from an established authority figure to harm another person, even if reluctantly.

While contemporary reality TV shows do not order participants to directly harm each other, they are often set up as a small-scale social experiment that often involves intense competition or even cruelty.

And, just like in the novel, ubiquitous video surveillance is already here. Closed-circuit

television exist in virtually every area of American life, from transportation hubs and networks, to schools, supermarkets, hospitals and public sidewalks, not to mention law enforcement officers and their vehicles. Surveillance footage from these cameras is repurposed as the raw material of television, mostly in the news but also in shows like *America's Most Wanted*, *Right This Minute*, and others. Many viewers unquestioningly accept this practice as legitimate.

Reality television is the friendly face of surveillance. It helps viewers think that surveillance happens only to those who choose it or to those who are criminals. In fact, it is part of a culture of widespread television use, which has brought about what Norwegian criminologist Thomas Mathiesen called the 'viewer society' – in which the many watch the few.

For Mathiesen, the viewer society is merely the other side of the surveillance society – described so aptly in Orwell's novel – where a few watch the many. **CT**

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This article first appeared at www.theconversation.com

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The Israeli occupation has left its physical and political mark within the historic walls of the old city of Jerusalem, with most Palestinians barred from visiting the Al-Aqsa Mosque, writes **Jonathan Cook**

Palestine's past is being slowly erased

ISRAEL has controlled East Jerusalem and the walled Old City since the 1967 war in which it also occupied the adjacent West Bank. It has effectively treated them as annexed territory ever since.

To consolidate its grip on the Old City, Israel has demolished homes and expelled Palestinian residents, empowered Jewish settlers, and imposed sweeping restrictions that make it virtually impossible for most Palestinians to pray at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, one of the holiest sites in Islam.

The final status of the Old City has been the subject of various proposals ever since the United Nations' 1947 partition plan, which proposed that it should fall under a special international regime, separate from the division of historic Palestine into Arab and Jewish states because of its shared importance to Muslims, Jews and Christians.

The Palestinians claim East Jerusalem, including the Old City, as the capital of a future

state, while Israeli leaders have claimed Jerusalem as the state's "eternal capital" since 1949.

The Old City has huge historic, economic, religious and now national symbolism for both Palestinians and Israelis, particularly because of the Al-Aqsa compound, known as Haram al-Sharif to Muslims and Temple Mount to Jews. This is the most explosive issue in an already incendiary conflict.

But US President Donald Trump's decision to move the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem in May 2018 appeared to pre-empt negotiations determining Jerusalem's status by implying US recognition of exclusive Israeli sovereignty over the city.

Washington's endorsement for such a move in any proposed peace plan – including Trump's infamous "deal of the century" – would not, however, mark the first time it has suggested that the Palestinian claim to the Old City should be brought to the

negotiating table.

At talks in 2000 between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, hosted by US President Bill Clinton at his Camp David residence, US mediators proposed dividing sovereignty over the Old City.

According to the US proposal, Israel would take the Jewish and Armenian quarters, with the Palestinians getting the Muslim and Christian quarters.

Israel, however, demanded exclusive sovereignty over East Jerusalem, with the Palestinians having merely administrative authority over the Old City's Muslim and Christian Quarters.

Seven years later, at Annapolis, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert evaded the sovereignty issue by proposing instead a temporary international trusteeship administered by Israel, a Palestinian state, the US, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

More than half a century of



HOLY GROUND: The Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount, in the Old City of Jerusalem, is considered to be the third holiest site in Islam after Mecca and Medina.

Israeli occupation has left its physical and political mark on the Old City. Along with East Jerusalem, the Old City is ruled over by a Jerusalem municipality run by Israeli officials.

After occupying the Old City in 1967, Israel quickly sought to secure control of the area immediately next to the Western Wall, demolishing dozens of homes in a Moroccan neighbourhood and expelling many hundreds of Palestinian inhabitants to create a large prayer plaza.

The Jewish Quarter was also re-established, though Israel converted many former homes into synagogues and seminaries for religious Jews.

Palestinians have been unnerved by the number of physical changes around Al-Aqsa and the neighbouring Muslim Quarter that appear

to be designed to strengthen Israel's control not only over the Western Wall but the mosque compound too.

This has included extending tunnels under homes in the Muslim Quarter to make more of the Western Wall accessible. Benjamin Netanyahu's decision to open a Western Wall tunnel exit in 1996 led to clashes that killed dozens of Palestinians and 15 Israel soldiers.

Israel has denied the Old City a master plan, making it all but impossible for Palestinians to expand their homes to cope with population growth.

In fact, rather than growing over the past decade, the Palestinian population has shrunk by 2,000, now down to 32,000 residents. Most have left for other areas of Jerusalem or the

West Bank.

The lack of vacant space in the Muslim and Christian Quarters has prevented Israel from building Jewish settlements there, as it has done elsewhere in East Jerusalem. It has therefore assisted settler organisations in taking over existing Palestinian homes.

There are now about 1,000 Jewish settlers living in the Muslim and Christian Quarters, according to Ir Amim, an Israeli organisation campaigning for equal rights in Jerusalem. These settlers constitute a quarter of the Jews living in the Old City.

Ateret Cohanim, a settler group, has been at the forefront of these incremental takeovers of Palestinian homes, threatening blackmail, using Palestinian collaborators as middlemen to make purchases, and seeking

evictions in the Israeli courts.

Currently, 20 Palestinian families in the Old City face evictions, according to Ir Amim.

Settlers have also been taking over properties in the Christian Quarter owned by the Greek Orthodox church, apparently using each new Patriarch's dependence on Israel's approval of his appointment as leverage to force through the sales.

Every Jerusalem Day, an Israeli holiday celebrating the capture of Jerusalem in 1967, settlers march in force through the Muslim Quarter, chanting "Death to the Arabs" and intimidating local residents.

A rally by Palestinians inside the Al-Aqsa compound this year was broken up by Israeli security forces who entered the site firing rubber bullets and stun grenades. Settlers were able to march through the site.

Aviv Tartasky, of Ir Amim, notes that the expansion of Jews living in the Muslim and Christian Quarters brings more aggressive and invasive policing operations that make life harder for Palestinians, further pressuring them to leave.

Over the years, Israel has made it even harder for Palestinians to access the Old City.

Despite Al-Aqsa's central place in Islamic worship, almost none of the two million Palestinians from Gaza have been able to reach Jerusalem since the mid-1990s, when the coastal enclave was sealed off by Israel with a fence.

Israel's wall and checkpoints have separated Palestinians in

Sweeping restrictions mean only older Palestinians, and a few who receive permits, are now allowed to access Al-Aqsa for Friday prayers

the West Bank from Jerusalem, leaving most struggling to reach the Old City too.

And while Palestinians within Jerusalem have traditionally accessed the Old City via the northern Damascus Gate, Israel has made the gate less appealing by increasing the presence of armed police there, providing them with a guard tower, and conducting regular security checks on Palestinian youths.

After 1967, Israel and Jordan agreed on a so-called "status quo" for Al-Aqsa: the Waqf, a Jordanian-led Islamic trust, would administer the compound while Israel would be responsible for security outside. In addition, only Muslims would be allowed to pray at the site.

In practice, Israel's interpretation of that agreement has strengthened its hand by allowing it to control who has access to the compound. Sweeping restrictions mean only older Palestinians, and a few who receive permits, are now allowed to access Al-Aqsa for

Friday prayers.

Israel has regularly operated inside the compound too. It shuttered a prayer room, Bab al-Rahmeh, in 2003 after it was renovated by a popular Palestinian religious leader in Israel, Sheikh Raed Salah. Despite holding Israeli citizenship, Salah has been banned from entering the Al-Aqsa compound for more than a decade.

Israel blocked Waqf-led efforts to reopen Bab al-Rahmeh in February, leading to clashes with Israeli security forces and a temporary bar on Waqf leaders entering Al-Aqsa.

In 2015, Israel also banned volunteer male and female civil guards, the Mourabitoun, from the compound after confrontations with Jewish visitors to the site. But Israel had to climb down in 2017 after it installed surveillance cameras and tried to force Palestinian worshippers to pass through metal detectors.

Meanwhile, Israelis have been staking ever stronger claims to control of the compound. In 2000, Ariel Sharon, then opposition leader, marched into the site backed by hundreds of armed guards, triggering the Second Intifada.

And since the ban on the Mourabitoun, Israeli police have failed to enforce rules banning Jews from praying in the compound, according to watchdog groups.

Israeli politicians, including government ministers, have become increasingly sympathetic to settler demands to divide the site to allow for Jew-

ish prayer.

Even more hardline groups wishing to destroy Al-Aqsa and build a new Jewish temple in its place have become more mainstream in Israeli society in recent years.

In the two years from 2016 to 2018, the number of Jews reported entering the compound more than doubled, from 14,000 to 30,000.

Christian residents suffer similar problems to Muslims, including planning restrictions and efforts by settlers to take over properties.

But Christians also face specific pressures. As a very small community, they have been severely isolated by Israel's policy cutting off Jerusalem from West Bank Christians in Bethlehem and the Ramallah area.

Israel's denial of the right of Jerusalemites to live with a West Bank spouse in the city, or register their children, has hit the Christian community particularly hard, forcing many to move into the West Bank.

Also, a dramatic downturn in tourism for many years after the eruption of the Second Intifada in 2000 left many Christian families in the Old City in financial trouble because they depend on income from souvenir shops and work as tour guides.

A move last year by Israel to tax Church property in Jerusalem was reversed after the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was shuttered in protest.

But it was seen by Christians as a further sign that their community is under assault and

Israeli access to the Old City, traditionally via the Jaffa Gate on the western side between the Christian and Armenian quarters, has been facilitated by the new luxury Mamilla shopping mall

that Israel views them as an obstacle to its efforts to "Judaise" the Old City, said Yousef Daher, of the Jerusalem Interchurch Centre, located in the Old City.

Daher noted that rather than growing, as would be expected, Jerusalem's wider Christian population has declined from 12,000 in 1967 to a total of 9,000 today.

Although there are no official figures, he estimated that no more than 2,400 Christians remained in the Old City. He added that Palestinian Christians find it easier to leave the region because of their connections to overseas churches and the fact that they often have relatives abroad.

Israeli access to the Old City, traditionally via the Jaffa Gate on the western side between the Christian and Armenian quarters, has been facilitated by the new luxury Mamilla shopping mall, which effectively serves as a bridge from West Jerusalem's city centre.

Israel is now seeking to turn Dung Gate, on the south-east-

ern side and leading into the Jewish Quarter, into the main entrance. The difficulty is that Dung Gate abuts the Palestinian neighbourhood of Silwan.

Ir Amim notes that Dung Gate is seen by Israel as an important gateway for the settlers as they intensify their takeover of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem, part of efforts to encircle the Al-Aqsa compound.

Israel is therefore building a cable car that will carry visitors from West Jerusalem over Silwan directly to a settler-run compound. From there, visitors will be able to enter above ground through Dung Gate or underground through tunnels running below the Old City walls to surface at the foot of the Western Wall.

Palestinians and Israeli activists are concerned that the purpose is to direct Jewish and foreign visitors away from the Muslim and Christian quarters, both to conceal the Palestinian presence in the Old City and to starve Palestinian shopkeepers of the traditional trade from those passing through Damascus and Jaffa gates.

Jonathan Cook won the *Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism*. His latest books are *Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East* (Pluto Press) and *Disappearing Palestine: Israel's Experiments in Human Despair* (Zed Books). His website is www.jonathan-cook.net/

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