

**CENSORED, SPIED ON, JAILED** | JOHN W. WHITEHEAD  
**THE TERRORIST LEADER WHO WASN'T** | REBECCA GORDON  
**WORD POWER!** | RON FASSBENDER

# ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING | PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

ISSUE 117

# LABOUR

# PAINS

Unions have been crushed. Wages are falling. Jobs are disappearing. When will workers fight back?

**THE ZOMBIE DOCTRINE**

*George Monbiot*

**STILL DOWN AND OUT IN PARIS AND LONDON**

*Luke Davies*

**THE DEATH GAP**

*Sam Pizzigati*

**'I GOT MINE, SCREW YOU!'**

*Fred Reed*



# ColdType

Issue 117 / May 2016

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*Fishing for coal.  
Photo: Chris Killip*

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# Censored, spied on, watchlisted and jailed

**John W. Whitehead** finds 15 ways in which to fall foul of the American police state

*“You had to live – did live, from habit that became instinct – in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized.” – George Orwell, 1984*

In past ages, those who dared to speak out against tyranny – viewed as an act of treason – were blinded, castrated, disfigured, mutilated, rendered mute by having their tongues cut out of their heads, and ultimately crucified. In the American police state, the price to be paid for speaking truth to power (also increasingly viewed as an act of treason) is surveillance, censorship, jail and ultimately death.

It’s a diabolically ingenious tactic for muzzling, disarming and ultimately eliminating one’s critics or potential adversaries. However, where many Americans go wrong is in assuming that you have to be doing something illegal or challenging the government’s authority in order to be flagged as a suspicious character, labelled an enemy of the state and locked up like a dangerous criminal.

In fact, all you really need to do is use certain trigger words, surf the internet, communicate using a cellphone, drive a car, stay at a hotel, purchase materials at a hardware store, take flying or boating lessons, appear suspicious, question government authority, or generally live in the United States.

With the help of automated eyes and

ears, a growing arsenal of high-tech software, hardware and techniques, government propaganda urging Americans to turn into spies and snitches, as well as social media and behavior sensing software, government agents are spinning a sticky spider-web of threat assessments, behavioral sensing warnings, flagged “words,” and “suspicious” activity reports aimed at snaring potential enemies of the state.

It’s the American take on the dystopian terrors foreshadowed by George Orwell, Aldous Huxley and Phillip K. Dick, all rolled up into one oppressive pre-crime and pre-thought crime package.

What’s more, the technocrats who run the surveillance state don’t even have to break a sweat while monitoring what you say, what you read, what you write, where you go, how much you spend, whom you support, and with whom you communicate. Computers now do the tedious work of trolling social media, the internet, text messages and phone calls for potentially anti-government remarks – all of which is carefully recorded, documented, and stored to be used against you some day at a time and place of the government’s choosing.

While this may sound like a riff on a bad joke, it’s a bad joke with “we the people” as the punchline. Yet it is no laughing matter that Americans are being jailed for growing orchids, feeding whales, collecting rain-wa-

**The technocrats who run the surveillance state don’t even have to break a sweat while monitoring what you say, what you read, what you write, where you go, how much you spend, whom you support, and with whom you communicate**

# BE AFRAID

**Simply by using a cell phone, you make yourself an easy target for government agents – working closely with corporations – who can listen in on your phone calls, read your text messages and emails, and track your movements**

ter, and praying in their backyards. There is nothing humorous about Americans having their families terrorized by SWAT teams, their pets killed, their children shot, their homes trashed, and their privacy shredded. And there's really not much comic relief to be found when the citizenry is forced to pay their own government to jail, spy on, censor, terrorize and kill them.

The following activities are guaranteed to get you censored, surveilled, eventually placed on a government watch list, possibly detained and potentially killed.

Laugh at your own peril.

**1. Use harmless trigger words like cloud, pork and pirates:** The Department of Homeland Security has an expansive list of keywords and phrases it uses to monitor social networking sites and online media for signs of terrorist or other threats. While you'll definitely send up an alert for using phrases such as dirty bomb, Jihad and agro terror, you're just as likely to get flagged for surveillance if you reference the terms SWAT, lockdown, police, cloud, food poisoning, pork, flu, Subway, smart, delays, cancelled, la familia, pirates, hurricane, forest fire, storm, flood, help, ice, snow, worm, warning or social media.

**2. Use a cell phone:** Simply by using a cell phone, you make yourself an easy target for government agents – working closely with corporations – who can listen in on your phone calls, read your text messages and emails, and track your movements based on the data transferred from, received by, and stored in your cell phone. Mention any of the so-called “trigger” words in a conversation or text message, and you'll get flagged for sure.

**3. Drive a car:** Unless you've got an old junkyard heap without any of the gadgets and gizmos that are so attractive to today's car buyers (GPS, satellite radio, electrical everything, smart systems, etc.), driv-

ing a car is like wearing a homing device: You'll be tracked from the moment you open that car door thanks to black box recorders and vehicle-to-vehicle communications systems that can monitor your speed, direction, location, the number of miles travelled, and even your seatbelt use. Once you add satellites, GPS devices, licence plate readers, and real-time traffic cameras to the mix, there's nowhere you can go on the highways and byways that you can't be followed. By the time you add self-driving cars into the futuristic mix, equipped with computers that know where you want to go, privacy and autonomy will be little more than distant mirages in your rearview mirror.

**4. Attend a political rally:** Enacted in the wake of 9/11, the Patriot Act redefined terrorism so broadly that many non-terrorist political activities such as protest marches, demonstrations and civil disobedience were considered potential terrorist acts, thereby rendering anyone desiring to engage in protected First Amendment expressive activities as suspects of the surveillance state.

**5. Express yourself on social media:** The FBI, CIA, NSA and other government agencies are investing in and relying on corporate surveillance technologies that can mine constitutionally protected speech on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram in order to identify potential extremists and predict who might engage in future acts of anti-government behaviour. A decorated Marine, 26-year-old Brandon Raub was targeted by the Secret Service because of his Facebook posts, interrogated by government agents about his views on government corruption, arrested with no warning, labeled mentally ill for subscribing to so-called “conspiratorial” views about the government, detained against his will in a psych ward for having dangerous opin-



Illustration: Wikimedia.org

A growing number of government programs are aimed at identifying, monitoring and locking up anyone considered potentially “dangerous” or mentally ill (according to government standards, of course)

ions, and isolated from his family, friends and attorneys.

**6. Serve in the military:** Operation Vigilant Eagle, the brainchild of the Dept. of Homeland Security, calls for surveillance of military veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, characterizing them as extremists and potential domestic terrorist threats, because they may be “disgruntled, disillusioned or suffering from the psychological effects of war.” Police agencies are also using BEWARE, an “early warning” computer system that tips them off to a potential suspect’s inclination to be a troublemaker, and assigns individuals a color-coded threat score – green, yellow or red – based on a variety of factors including one’s criminal records, military

background, medical history and social media surveillance.

**7. Disagree with a law enforcement official:** A growing number of government programs are aimed at identifying, monitoring and locking up anyone considered potentially “dangerous” or mentally ill (according to government standards, of course). For instance, a homeless man in New York City who reportedly had a history of violence, but no signs of mental illness, was forcibly detained in a psych ward for a week after arguing with shelter police. Although doctors cited no medical reason to commit him, the man was locked up in accordance with a \$22-million program that monitors mentally ill people considered “potentially” violent. According to

## BE AFRAID

**Miami-Dade police slammed 14-year-old Tremaine McMillian to the ground, putting him in a chokehold and handcuffing him after he allegedly gave them “dehumanizing stares” and walked away**

the Associated Press, “A judge finally ordered his release, ruling that the man’s commitment violated his civil rights and that bureaucrats had meddled in his medical treatment.”

**8. Call in sick to work:** In Virginia, a so-called police “welfare check” instigated by a 58-year-old man’s employer after he called in sick resulted in a two-hour, SWAT team-style raid on the man’s truck and a 72-hour mental health hold. During the stand-off, a heavily armed police tactical team confronted Benjamin Burruss as he was leaving an area motel, surrounded his truck, deployed a “stinger” device behind the rear tyres, launched a flash grenade, smashed the side window in order to drag him from the truck, handcuffed and searched him, and transported him to a local hospital for a psychiatric evaluation and mental health hold. All of this was done despite the fact that police acknowledged they had no legal basis nor probable cause for detaining Burruss, given that he had not threatened to harm anyone and was not mentally ill.

**9. Limp or stutter:** As a result of a nationwide push to certify a broad spectrum of government officials in mental health first-aid training (a 12-hour course comprised of PowerPoint presentations, videos, discussions, role playing and other interactive activities), more Americans are going to run the risk of being reported for having mental health issues by non-medical personnel. Mind you, once you get on such a government watch list – whether it’s a terrorist watch list, mental health watch list, or a dissident watch list – there’s no clear-cut way to get off, whether or not you should actually be on there. For instance, one 37-year-old disabled man was arrested, diagnosed by police and an unlicensed mental health screener as having “mental health issues,” apparently because of his slurred speech and unsteady

gait, and subsequently locked up for five days in a mental health facility against his will and with no access to family and friends. A subsequent hearing found that Gordon Goines, who suffers from a neurological condition similar to multiple sclerosis, has no mental illness and should not have been confined.

**10. Appear confused or nervous, fidget, whistle or smell bad:** According to the Transportation Security Administration’s 92-point secret behavior watch list for spotting terrorists, these are among some of the telling signs of suspicious behavior: fidgeting, whistling, bad body odor, yawning, clearing your throat, having a pale face from recently shaving your beard, covering your mouth with your hand when speaking, and blinking your eyes fast. You can also be pulled aside for interrogation if you “have ‘unusual items,’ like almanacs and ‘numerous pre-paid calling cards or cell phones.’” One critic of the program accurately referred to the program as a “license to harass.”

**11. Allow yourself to be seen in public waving a toy gun or anything remotely resembling a gun, such as a water nozzle or a remote control or a walking cane, for instance:** No longer is it unusual to hear about incidents in which police shoot unarmed individuals first and ask questions later. John Crawford was shot by police in an Ohio Wal-Mart for holding an air rifle sold in the store that he may have intended to buy. Thirteen-year-old Andy Lopez Cruz was shot seven times in 10 seconds by a California police officer who mistook the boy’s toy gun for an assault rifle. Christopher Roupe, 17, was shot and killed after opening the door to a police officer. The officer, mistaking the Wii remote control in Roupe’s hand for a gun, shot him in the chest. Another police officer repeatedly shot 70-year-old Bobby Canipe during a traffic stop. The cop saw the man reaching

for his cane and, believing the cane to be a rifle, opened fire.

**12. Staring at a police officer:** Miami-Dade police slammed 14-year-old Tremaine McMillian to the ground, putting him in a chokehold and handcuffing him after he allegedly gave them “dehumanizing stares” and walked away from them, which the officers found unacceptable.

**13. Appear to be pro-gun, pro-freedom or anti-government:** You might be a domestic terrorist in the eyes of the FBI (and its network of snitches) if you: express libertarian philosophies (statements, bumper stickers), exhibit Second Amendment-oriented views (NRA or gun club membership), read survivalist literature, including apocalyptic fiction, show signs of self-sufficiency (stockpiling food, ammo, hand tools, medical supplies), fear an economic collapse, buy gold and barter items; subscribe to religious views concerning the Book of Revelation, voice fears about Big Brother or big government, expound about constitutional rights and civil liberties, or believe in a New World Order conspiracy. This is all part of a larger trend in American governance whereby dissent is criminalized and pathologized, and dissenters are censored, silenced or declared unfit for society.

**14. Attend school:** Microcosms of the police state, America’s schools contain almost every aspect of the militarized, intolerant, senseless, overcriminalized, legalistic, surveillance-riddled, totalitarian landscape that plagues those of us on the “outside.” From the moment a child enters one of the nation’s 98,000 schools to the moment he or she graduates, your child will be exposed to a steady diet of draconian zero tolerance policies that criminalize childish behavior, overreaching anti-bullying statutes that criminalize speech, school resource officers (police) tasked with dis-

ciplining and/or arresting so-called “disorderly” students, standardized testing that emphasizes rote answers over critical thinking, politically correct mindsets that teach young people to censor themselves and those around them, and extensive biometric and surveillance systems that, coupled with the rest, acclimate young people to a world in which they have no freedom of thought, speech or movement. Additionally, as part of the government’s so-called ongoing war on terror, the FBI – the nation’s de facto secret police force – is now recruiting students and teachers to spy on each other and report anyone who appears to have the potential to be “anti-government” or “extremist” as part of its “Don’t Be a Puppet” campaign.

**15. Speak truth to power:** Long before Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden were castigated for blowing the whistle on the government’s war crimes and the National Security Agency’s abuse of its surveillance powers, activists such as Martin Luther King Jr. and John Lennon were being singled out for daring to speak truth to power. These men and others like them had their phone calls monitored and data files collected on their activities and associations. For a little while, at least, they became enemy No 1 in the eyes of the U.S. government.

There’s always a price to pay for standing up to the powers-that-be.

But as this list shows, you don’t even have to be a dissident to get flagged by the government for surveillance, censorship and detention.

All you really need to be is a citizen of the American police state. **CT**

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*John W. Whitehead is a constitutional attorney and founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. His latest book, Battlefield America: The War on the American People, is available at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)*

**At school, your child will be exposed to a steady diet of zero tolerance policies that criminalize childish behavior, anti-bullying statutes that criminalize speech, politically correct mindsets that teach young people to censor themselves, and extensive biometric and surveillance systems that acclimate young people to a world in which they have no freedom of thought, speech or movement**

# Voting fiasco was just a warm-up for November

After the New York primary, **Greg Palast** sees more trouble ahead for would-be voters at this year's US presidential election

**In my wasted younger days, I was in the Brooklyn County elections office with the hacks where we were assigned by the party to challenge voters' signatures en masse**

**B**uckle up, America. The voting demolition derby that was the New York primary on April 19 was merely the crash test for the coming voting wreckage in November: a carefully planned pile up.

First, live from New York . . .

Francesca Rheannon, whom you may know as the host of Writers' Voice radio – [www.writersvoice.net](http://www.writersvoice.net) – did the civic thing by volunteering to work the polls in a town east of New York City.

"I just got off my 17-hour shift as an election official. In my election district, out of 166 Democratic voters, 39 were forced to file affidavit ballots. The last [election] I worked in, exactly ONE voter needed an affidavit ballot."

That's nearly one of four voters. Why? Their names had gone missing from the voter rolls.

An affidavit ballot (called a "provisional" ballot in most other states) is a kind of placebo ballot. You get to pretend to vote – but the chance it will actually be counted is . . . well, good luck. If your name is wrongly removed, kiss your vote – affidavit or not – goodbye.

Rheannon's experience was hardly

unique. In Brooklyn alone, more than 125,000 names were quietly scrubbed from the voter rolls in the five months leading up to the primary.

To put it in prospective, the number of voters purged equals about half of the number who got to vote. Scott Stringer, the New York City comptroller, will now audit the elections board – now that the election is over. Hey, thanks, Scott.

Neal Rosenstein, the lead voting rights attorney for the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), which plans legal action, notes that part of the problem is that partisan hacks sit on the elections board in New York – hacks from both parties.

Brooklyn is under the control of the Kings County Democratic Party, one of the last of the big city machines. Would they attack their opponents' voter registrations? I don't have to guess: In my wasted younger days, I was in the Brooklyn County elections office with the hacks where we were assigned by the party to challenge voters' signatures en masse. (I wouldn't and nearly lost my state job.)

Am I saying the machine "fixed" the election for Hillary Clinton? Without fur-



ther investigation, it would be irresponsible for me to pronounce judgment. Some of the purged may have moved, some have died. But those who waited in line only to fill out affidavit ballots are unlikely to be deceased.

If the party machine had been aware of the mass purge underway, would they have stopped it? As they say in Brooklyn, fahgeddabouddit.

But whether party hacks shoplifted New York or not, that's small potatoes. Scrubbing voter rolls is not just a "New York value." It's a nation-wide epidemic, a disease eating away at the heart of our democracy.

**A lesson learned**

Voting officials learned a lesson from Katherine Harris, the Florida secretary of state who purged black voters in 2000. They learned how to repeat the purge, expand it, and carefully hide it.

I've been traveling the nation – from Ohio to Georgia to Arizona and back – and finding the voter-roll-purging machinery running at full speed. Nation-wide, state voting chiefs are, from my long experience, the most partisan officials you'll ever encounter.

From the data provided by the US Elections Assistance Commission, we can calculate that no less than 491,952 voters were wrongly removed from the rolls in 2008, the last reviewed presidential election. In addition, 2,383,587 voters filled out registration forms that were simply never added to voter rolls – and 767,023 provisional and affidavit ballots were not counted. And it's not just anyone's ballot. I'll never forget that, at one of my recent talks on vote suppression, I asked how many in the audience had ever been shunted to a provisional ballot. There were only two black people in the audience. They were the only two to raise their hand.

US Civil Rights Commission statistics tell the story. The chance of a ballot

“spoiled” – not counted for one reason or another – is 900 per cent higher if you're black than if you're white.

As NYPIRG's Rosenstein says, “Instead of purging voters, we should be enfranchising them.” Yes. Though we thought that was settled by the Civil War.

OK, we didn't know about the New York purge beforehand. But I'm telling you this now: My team is uncovering an unjustified ethnic cleansing of voter rolls from Ohio to Florida to Texas.

This year I was in Selma, Alabama, with Hank Sanders, an African-American who joined Martin Luther King on the 1965 march to Montgomery that won the Voting Rights Act. Today, he's State Senator Hank Sanders, a title that is a tribute to America's advance on voting rights. He's also Hank Sanders, purged voter, forced to vote “provisionally” this year.

Why? I'm investigating. But the state officials (and let's tell it like it is: it's mostly GOP officials) have used so many spurious grounds to cancel registrations – “caging,” “cross-checking,” and a host of other sick tricks, it's not easy to pin-point which one is responsible for the “lynching by laptop.”

It's worth noting that Brooklyn, like Alabama, was on the pre-clearance list in the Voting Rights Act. I can tell you right now, it's unlikely that neither Hank Sanders nor the 125,000 Brooklynites would have been purged had the Supreme Court not gutted the act in 2013. As I look upon the wreckage that was the New York primary, I see the prelude, the test run, for the catastrophic failure, the well-planned failure, of the voting system in November. The purges and votes “spoiled” – the votes not counted – not the voters, may well elect the next president.

**CT**

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**Greg Palast** is the author of *The Billionaires & Ballot Bandits*, *Armed Madhouse*, *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy* and *Vultures' Picnic*. His website is [www.gregpalast.com](http://www.gregpalast.com)

**Nationwide, state voting chiefs are, from my long experience, the most violently partisan officials you'll ever encounter.**



April 18, 2016: March for health, homes, jobs and education, organized by the People's Assembly.

# Word power!

Witnessing the changing language of political protest.

Photographs: **Ron Fassbender**. Words: **Tony Sutton**

Wave goodbye to the polite slogans. Scrap the neat, mass-produced banners. Personalize your rage ...

Political protest is incomplete without forests of gaudy signs covered with smart-assed slogans, brandished by fervent marchers, who want to make their world a better place.

Their messages are usually ignored by their political targets, however: As soon as the demonstrators pack up and go home, things continue exactly as before.

Maybe it's time to change tactics. Wave goodbye to the polite slogans. Scrap the neat, mass-produced banners. Personalize your rage with handwritten placards, con-

taining words that your mother said you should never, ever, use in public. There's nothing like a choice four-letter word (or two) to show how you feel about the foibles and hypocrisies of the rich and powerful. Your protests probably won't be any more effective than before, but leaders will, at least, know what you think of them! **CT**

*Ron Fassbender is a photographer based in London England. These photographs were taken at various demonstrations in that city during the past year.*



**DAYS OF RAGE**



April 18, 2016: March for health, homes, jobs and education.



April 18, 2016: March for health, homes, jobs and education.



April 9, 2016: Cameron must go protest.

# DAYS OF RAGE



November 4, 2015: Students call for free education.



March 13, 2016: Kill the housing bill protest.



June 20, 2015: People's Assembly protests government cuts.



July 8, 2015: Tory budget protest – what would Gandhi say?



July 8, 2015: Tory budget protest.



June 20, 2015: People's Assembly protests government cuts.

# The terrorist leader who wasn't

**Rebecca Gordon** on the shameful ordeal of Abu Zubaydah, an innocent man who was waterboarded 83 times by the CIA

**What the CIA did to Abu Zubaydah – is a prime example of the kind of still-unpunished crimes that officials such as Dick Cheney, George W. Bush, and Donald Rumsfeld committed in the so-called Global War on Terror**

The allegations against the man were serious indeed.

- Donald Rumsfeld said he was, “if not the No. 2, very close to the No 2 person” in al-Qaeda.

- The Central Intelligence Agency informed Assistant Attorney General Jay Bybee that he “served as Osama Bin Laden’s senior lieutenant. In that capacity, he has managed a network of training camps . . . He also acted as al-Qaeda’s coordinator of external contacts and foreign communications.”

- CIA Director Michael Hayden would tell the press in 2008 that 25 per cent of all the information his agency had gathered about al-Qaeda from human sources “originated” with one other detainee and him.

- George W. Bush would use his case to justify the CIA’s “enhanced interrogation program,” claiming that “he had run a terrorist camp in Af-

ghanistan where some of the 9/11 hijackers trained,” and that “he helped smuggle al-Qaeda leaders out of Afghanistan,” so they would not be captured by US military forces.

None of it was true.

And even if it had been true, what the CIA did to Abu Zubaydah – with the knowledge and approval of the highest government officials – is a prime example of the kind of still-unpunished crimes that officials such as Dick Cheney, George W. Bush, and Donald Rumsfeld committed in the so-called Global War on Terror.

So who was this infamous figure, and where is he now? His name is Zayn al-Abidin Muhammad Husayn, better known by his Arabic nickname, Abu Zubaydah. And as far as we know, he is still in solitary detention in Guantánamo.

In the 1980s, Zubaydah, a Saudi national, helped run the Khaldan camp, a mujahideen training facility set up in Afghanistan with CIA help during the Soviet occupation of that country. In other words, Zubaydah was then an American ally in the fight against the Soviets, one of President Ronald Reagan’s “freedom fighters.” (But then again, so, in effect, was Osama bin Laden.)

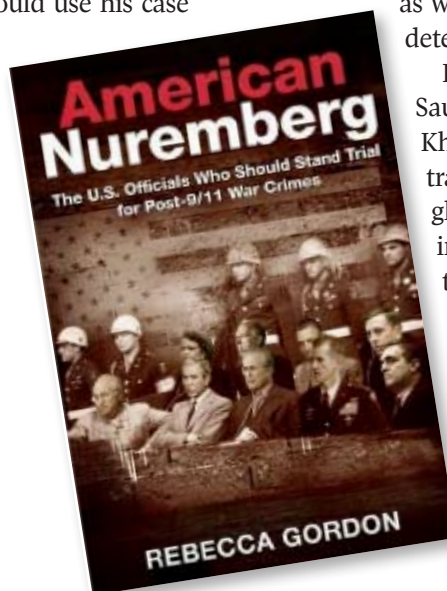
## AMERICAN NUREMBERG

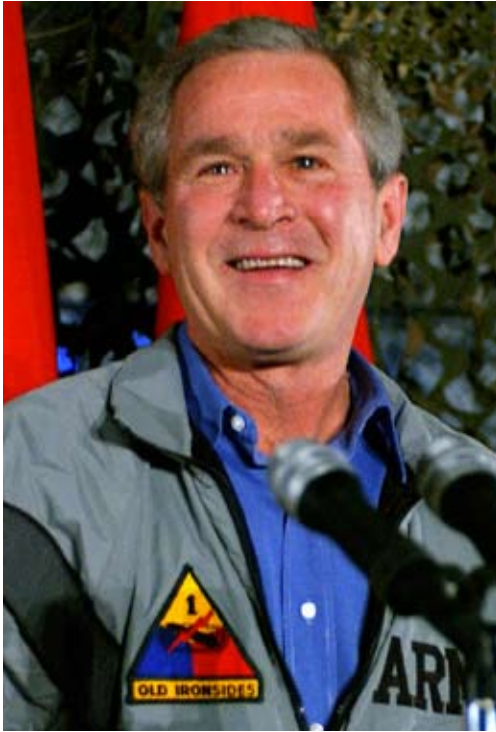
The US Officials Who Should Stand Trial for Post-9/11 War Crimes

By Rebecca Gordon

Published by Hot Books

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Zubaydah was the ringleader of nothing; he never took part in planning for the 9/11 attacks. He was brutally mistreated and, in another kind of world, would be Exhibit 1 in the war crimes trials of America's top leaders and its major intelligence agency

**Former US President George W. Bush (above) Bush used the story of the capture and interrogation of Abu Zubaydah (right) in a speech to the nation justifying the CIA's "enhanced interrogation" program.**

Photos: US Navy/Wikipedia

Zubaydah's later fate in the hands of the CIA was of a far grimmer nature. He had the dubious luck to be the subject of a number of CIA "firsts": The first post-9/11 prisoner to be waterboarded, the first to be experimented on by psychologists working as CIA contractors, one of the first of the agency's "ghost prisoners" (detainees hidden from the world, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, which, under the Geneva Conventions, must be allowed access to every prisoner of war), and one of the first prisoners to be cited in a memo, written by Jay Bybee for the Bush administration, on what the CIA could "legally" do to a detainee without supposedly violating US federal laws against torture.

Zubaydah's story is – or at least should be – the iconic tale of the illegal extremes to which the Bush administration and the CIA went in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. And yet former officials, from the CIA head Hayden

to Vice President Dick Cheney to George W. Bush himself, have presented it as a glowing example of the use of "enhanced interrogation techniques" to extract desperately needed information from the "evil-doers" of that time.

Zubaydah was an early experiment in post-9/11 CIA practices, and here's the remarkable thing (though it has yet to become part of the mainstream media accounts of his case): It was all a big lie. Zubaydah wasn't involved with al-Qaeda; he was the ringleader of nothing; he never took part in planning for the 9/11 attacks. He was brutally mistreated and, in another kind of world, would be Exhibit 1 in the war crimes trials of America's top leaders and its major intelligence agency.

But, notorious as he once was, he's been forgotten by all but his lawyers and a few tenacious reporters. He shouldn't have been. He was the test case for the kind of torture

## CIA TORTURE

**Zubaydah's interrogators would waterboard him an almost unimaginable 83 times in the course of a month; that is, they would strap him to a wooden board, place a cloth over his face, and gradually pour water through the cloth until he began to drown**

that Donald Trump now wants the US government to bring back, presumably because it “worked” so well the first time. With Republican presidential hopefuls promising future war crimes, it’s worth reconsidering his case and thinking about how to prevent it from happening again. After all, it’s only because no one has been held to account for the years of Bush administration torture practices that Trump and others feel free to promise even more war crimes in the future.

### **Experiments in torture**

In August, 2002, a group of FBI and CIA agents, and Pakistani forces captured Zubaydah (with about 50 other men) in Faisalabad, Pakistan. In the process, he was severely injured – shot in the thigh, testicle, and stomach. He might well have died, had the CIA not flown in an American surgeon to patch him up. The agency’s interest in his health was, however, anything but humanitarian. Its officials wanted to interrogate him, and, even after he had recovered sufficiently to be questioned, his captors occasionally withheld pain medication as a means of torture.

When he lost his left eye under mysterious circumstances while in CIA custody, the agency’s concern again was not for his health. The December, 2014, torture report produced by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (despite CIA opposition that included hacking into the committee’s computers) described the situation this way: With his left eye gone, “[i]n October 2002, DETENTION SITE GREEN [now known to be Thailand] recommended that the vision in his right eye be tested, noting that ‘[w]e have a lot riding upon his ability to see, read, and write.’ DETENTION SITE GREEN stressed that ‘this request is driven by our intelligence needs [not] humanitarian concern for AZ.’ ”

The CIA then set to work interrogating Zubaydah with the help of two contractors, the psychologists Bruce Jessen and James Mitchell. Zubaydah would be the first human subject on whom those two, who were

former instructors at the Air Force’s Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape (SERE) training centre, could test their theories about using torture to induce what they called “learned helplessness,” meant to reduce a suspect’s resistance to interrogation. Their price? Just \$81-million.

CIA records show that, using a plan drawn up by Jessen and Mitchell, Abu Zubaydah’s interrogators would waterboard him an almost unimaginable 83 times in the course of a month; that is, they would strap him to a wooden board, place a cloth over his face, and gradually pour water through the cloth until he began to drown. At one point during this endlessly repeated ordeal, the Senate committee reported, Zubaydah became “completely unresponsive, with bubbles rising through his open, full mouth.”

Each of those 83 uses of what was called “the watering cycle” consisted of four steps:

“1) demands for information interspersed with the application of the water just short of blocking his airway, 2) escalation of the amount of water applied until it blocked his airway and he started to have involuntary spasms, 3) raising the water-board to clear subject’s airway, 4) lowering of the water-board and return to demands for information.”

The CIA videotaped Zubaydah undergoing each of these “cycles,” only to destroy those tapes in 2005 when news of their existence surfaced and the embarrassment (and possible future culpability) of the agency seemed increasingly to be at stake. Director Hayden would later assure CNN that the tapes had been destroyed only because “they no longer had intelligence value and they posed a security risk.” Whose “security” was at risk if the tapes became public? Most likely, that of the agency’s operatives and contractors who were breaking multiple national and international laws against torture, along with the high CIA and Bush administration officials who had directly approved their actions.

In addition to the waterboarding, the Sen-



ate torture report indicates that Zubaydah endured excruciating stress positions (which cause terrible pain without leaving a mark), sleep deprivation (for up to 180 hours, which generally induces hallucinations or psychosis), unrelenting exposure to loud noises (another psychosis-inducer), “walling” (the agency’s term for repeatedly slamming the shoulder blades into a “flexible, false wall,” though Zubaydah told the International Committee of the Red Cross that when this was first done to him, “he was slammed directly against a hard concrete wall”), and confinement for hours in a box so cramped that he could not stand inside it. All of these methods of torture had been given explicit approval in a memo written to the CIA’s head lawyer, John Rizzo, by Jay Bybee, who was then serving in the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel. In that memo Bybee approved the use of 10 different “techniques” on Zubaydah.

It seems likely that, while the CIA was torturing Zubaydah at Jessen’s and Mitchell’s direction for whatever information he might have, it was also using him to test the “effectiveness” of waterboarding as a torture technique. If so, the agency and its contractors violated not only international law, but the US War Crimes Act, which expressly forbids experimenting on prisoners.

What might lead us to think that Zubaydah’s treatment was, in part, an experiment? In a May 30, 2005, memo sent to Rizzo, Steven Bradbury, head of the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel, discussed the CIA’s record keeping. There was, Bradbury commented, method to the CIA’s brutality. “Careful records are kept of each interrogation,” he wrote. This procedure, he continued, “allows for ongoing evaluation of the efficacy of each technique and its potential for any unintended or inappropriate results.” In other words, with the support of the Bush Justice Department, the CIA was keeping careful records of an experimental procedure designed to evaluate how well waterboarding worked.

This was Abu Zubaydah’s impression as well. “I was told during this period that I was one of the first to receive these interrogation techniques,” Zubaydah would later tell the International Committee of the Red Cross, “so no rules applied. It felt like they were experimenting and trying out techniques to be used later on other people.”

In addition to the videotaping, the CIA’s Office of Medical Services required a meticulous written record of every waterboarding session. The details to be recorded were spelled out clearly:

“In order to best inform future medical judgments and recommendations, it is important that every application of the waterboard be thoroughly documented: How long each application (and the entire procedure) lasted, how much water was used in the process (realizing that much splashes off), how exactly the water was applied, if a seal was achieved, if the naso- or oropharynx was filled, what sort of volume was expelled, how long was the break between applications, and how the subject looked between each treatment.”

Again, these were clearly meant to be the records of an experimental procedure, focusing as they did on how much water was effective; whether a “seal” was achieved (so no air could enter the victim’s lungs); whether the naso- or oropharynx (that is, the nose and throat) were so full of water the victim could not breathe; and just how much the “subject” vomitted up.

#### Hidden detainees

It was with Zubaydah that the CIA also began its post-9/11 practice of hiding detainees from the International Committee of the Red Cross by transferring them to its “black sites,” the secret prisons it was setting up in countries with complacent or complicit regimes around the world. Such unacknowledged detainees came to be known as “ghost prisoners,” because they had no official existence. As the Senate torture report noted, “In part to avoid declaring Abu

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Zubaydah to the International Committee of the Red Cross, which would be required if he were detained at a US military base, the CIA decided to seek authorization to clandestinely detain Abu Zubaydah at a facility in Country \_\_\_\_\_ [now known to have been Thailand].”

As British investigative journalist Andy Worthington reported in 2009, the Bush administration used Abu Zubaydah’s “interrogation” results to help justify the greatest crime of that administration, the unprovoked, illegal invasion of Iraq. Officials leaked to the media that he had confessed to knowing about a secret agreement involving Osama bin Laden, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (who later led al-Qaeda in Iraq), and Iraqi autocrat Saddam Hussein, to work together “to destabilize the autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq.” Of course, it was all lies. Zubaydah couldn’t have known about such an arrangement, first because it was, as Worthington says, “absurd,” and second, because Zubaydah was not a member of al-Qaeda at all.

In fact, the evidence that Zubaydah had anything to do with al-Qaeda was beyond circumstantial – it was entirely circular. The administration’s reasoning went something like this: Zubaydah, a “senior al-Qaeda lieutenant,” ran the Khaldan camp in Afghanistan, therefore, Khaldan was an al-Qaeda camp. If Khaldan was an al-Qaeda camp, then Zubaydah must have been a senior al-Qaeda official.

They then used their “enhanced techniques” to drag what they wanted to hear out of a man whose life bore no relation to the tortured lies he evidently finally told his captors. Not surprisingly, no aspect of the administration’s formula proved accurate. It was true that, for several years, the Bush administration routinely referred to Khaldan as an al-Qaeda training camp, but the CIA was well aware that it wasn’t.

The Senate Intelligence Committee’s torture report, for instance, made this crystal clear, quoting an August 16, 2006, CIA intel-

ligence assessment, “Countering Misconceptions About Training Camps in Afghanistan, 1990-2001,” this way:

“Khaldan Not Affiliated With al-Qaeda. A common misperception in outside articles is that Khaldan camp was run by al-Qaeda. Pre-11 September 2001 reporting miscast Abu Zubaydah as a ‘senior al-Qaeda lieutenant,’ which led to the inference that the Khaldan camp he was administering was tied to Osama bin Laden.”

## **Turned down**

Not only was Zubaydah not a senior al-Qaeda lieutenant, he had, according to the report, been turned down for membership in al-Qaeda as early as 1993, and the CIA knew it by at least 2006, if not far sooner. Nevertheless, the month after it privately clarified the nature of the Khaldan camp and Zubaydah’s lack of al-Qaeda connections, President Bush used the story of Zubaydah’s capture and interrogation in a speech to the nation justifying the CIA’s “enhanced interrogation” program. He then claimed that Zubaydah had “helped smuggle al-Qaeda leaders out of Afghanistan.”

In the same speech, Bush told the nation, “Our intelligence community believes [Zubaydah] had run a terrorist camp in Afghanistan where some of the 9/11 hijackers trained” (a reference presumably to Khaldan). Perhaps the CIA should have been looking instead at some of the people who actually trained the hijackers – the operators of flight schools in the United States, where, according to a September 23, 2001, Washington Post story, the FBI already knew “terrorists” were learning to fly 747s.

In June, 2007, the Bush administration doubled down on its claim that Zubaydah was involved with 9/11. At a hearing before the congressional Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, State Department Legal Adviser John Bellinger, discussing why the Guantánamo prison needed to remain open, explained that it “serves a very important purpose, to hold and detain in-

dividuals who are extremely dangerous . . . [like] Abu Zubaydah, people who have been planners of 9/11.”

In September, 2009, the US government quietly withdrew its many allegations against Abu Zubaydah. His attorneys had filed a habeas corpus petition on his behalf; that is, a petition to exercise the constitutional right of anyone in government custody to know on what charges they are being held. In that context, they were asking the government to supply certain documents to help substantiate their claim that his continued detention in Guantánamo was illegal. The new Obama administration replied with a 109-page brief filed in the US District Court in the District of Columbia, which is legally designated to hear the habeas cases of Guantánamo detainees.

#### Curious argument

The bulk of that brief came down to a government argument that was curious indeed, given the years of bragging about Zubaydah’s central role in al-Qaeda’s activities. It claimed that there was no reason to turn over any “exculpatory” documents demonstrating that he was not a member of al-Qaeda, or that he had no involvement in 9/11 or any other terrorist activity – because the government was no longer claiming that any of those things were true.

The government’s lawyers went on to claim, bizarrely, that the Bush administration had never “contended that [Zubaydah] had any personal involvement in planning or executing . . . the attacks of September 11, 2001.” They added that “the Government also has not contended in this proceeding that, at the time of his capture, [Zubaydah] had knowledge of any specific impending terrorist operations” – an especially curious claim, because the prevention of such future attacks was how the CIA justified its torture of Zubaydah in the first place. Far from believing that he was “if not the No 2, very close to the No 2 person in” al-Qaeda, as Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had once claimed, “the Government has not contended in this

proceeding that [Zubaydah] was a member of al-Qaeda or otherwise formally identified with al-Qaeda.”

And so, the case against the man who was waterboarded 83 times and contributed supposedly crucial information to the CIA on al-Qaeda plotting was oh-so-quietly withdrawn without either fuss or media attention. Exhibit 1 was now exhibit none.

Seven years after the initial filing of Zubaydah’s habeas petition, the DC District Court has yet to rule on it. Given the court’s average 751-day turnaround time on such petitions, this is an extraordinary length of time. Here, justice delayed is truly justice denied.

Perhaps we should not be surprised, however. According to the Senate Intelligence Committee report, CIA headquarters assured those who were interrogating Zubaydah that he would “never be placed in a situation where he has any significant contact with others and/or has the opportunity to be released.” In fact, “all major players are in concurrence,” stated the agency, that he “should remain incommunicado for the remainder of his life.” And so far, that’s exactly what’s happened.

The capture, torture, and propaganda use of Abu Zubaydah is the perfect example of the US government’s unique combination of willful law-breaking, ass-covering memo-writing, and, what some Salvadorans I once worked with called “strategic incompetence.” The fact that no one – not George Bush or Dick Cheney, not Jessen or Mitchell, nor multiple directors of the CIA – has been held accountable means that, unless we are very lucky, we will see more of the same in the future. **CT**

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# The death gap

The richest Americans now live 10 to 15 years longer than the poorest, and that gap is growing, writes **Sam Pizzigati**

**If doctors could by some miracle suddenly cure all cancer, federal health officials tell us, the average overall American life expectancy would increase by just three years**

**R**ich people live longer than poor people. No big news there – we’ve known that health tracks wealth for quite some time now. But here’s what we haven’t known: The life-expectancy gap between rich and poor in the United States is actually growing.

Since 2001, American men among the nation’s most affluent five per cent have seen their lifespans increase by more than two years. American women in that bracket have realized an almost three-year extension to their life expectancy. Meanwhile, the poorest five per cent of Americans have seen essentially no gains at all.

Now a three-year gain in average lifespan might not, at first glance, seem earth-shakingly significant. But consider this: If doctors could by some miracle suddenly cure all cancer, federal health officials tell us, the average overall American life expectancy would increase by just three years.

In other words, as MIT’s Michael Stepner co-author of a study, “The Association between Income and Life Expectancy in the United States, 2001-2014,” published by the Journal of the American Medical Association, the changes in life expectancy we’ve witnessed over the last 15 years rank as “the equivalent of the richest Americans winning the war on cancer.”

The gap widens to a chasm when you look at the one per cent. Forty-year-old American

women among our nation’s top one per cent can now expect to live 10 years longer than women of the same age in America’s poorest one per cent. For men, the gap has grown even wider – to 15 years.

The new research combines IRS tax records with Social Security Administration mortality data to paint a deeply unnerving picture of 21st-century life and death.

That poor Americans “have 10 or 15 fewer years of life,” notes Stepner, a co-author of the study, “really demonstrates the level of inequality we’ve had in the United States.”

So what do we do about this inequality?

Stepner and his colleagues belong to the “practical politics” camp. They see inequality as too entrenched to tackle head-on. Better, they advise, to spend money on social services for the poor and promote healthy behaviors, such as not smoking and eating wisely. Poor Americans, they note, live longer in unequal places – such as New York City – that take this approach.

But other analysts are pushing back on this perspective. Focusing on the unhealthy behaviours of the poor, they argue, lets the rich – and their political pals – off the hook.

People who engage in unhealthy habits, these analysts point out, don’t smoke or do drugs or over-indulge in junk food because they don’t know enough to protect their health. They engage in these habits

because they're seeking relief from the stresses of everyday life. Deeply unequal societies, researchers have documented over the past four decades, generate far more of these stresses than more equal societies. And this greater stress affects everyone, the affluent included.

In places where the wealthiest don't make all that much more than everyone else, where you stand on the economic ladder doesn't make all that much of a difference. You're not going to obsess – and stress – about it. However, in deeply unequal societies, it's a different story. If you have money in these societies, you're going to worry about losing it. If you don't have money, you're going to feel intense pressure to get it.

Amid all this stress, people will naturally

seek relief. The affluent can afford to get this relief from behaviours that support their health. They can go to spas and country clubs, and, if they should veer off onto some health-threatening path, they can always afford a stint in a luxury rehab center.

Poor people don't have those options. So the gap between how long they live and how long the rich live continues to widen. If we want to change that dynamic, we have only one choice: We have to confront, not accept, inequality. **CT**

*Sam Pizzigati writes on inequality for the Institute for Policy Studies. His latest book is **The Rich Don't Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class, 1900-1970** (Seven Stories Press).*

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**BENDIB'S WORLD**

Khalil Bendib



# Still down and out in Paris and London

The French have just had a general strike over new labour laws, writes **Luke Davies**. So why aren't British workers taking action to combat *their* jobs crisis

**Recent statistics suggest that unemployment in the UK is falling, but those figures are misleading**

**A**fter more than 400,000 workers took part in a general strike against efforts by the French president, Francois Hollande, to make it easier for employers to fire workers, France's Nuit Debout – Rise Up At Night – protests against neoliberal labour reforms continue to gather momentum.

In contrast, the UK's employment crisis has excited relatively little public interest. This is odd, considering that the scale of the problem in that country is comparable to the Great Depression. According to the latest figures, there are 1.68-million unemployed people seeking work in the UK. This is far fewer than the three-million people who were reportedly unemployed at the height of the Great Depression, and the employment issues facing British people today are of an equal – if not, greater – magnitude.

Statistics suggest that unemployment is falling, but those figures are misleading – many people are moving into precarious new forms of employment, which offer low pay and little job security. From 2014 to 2015, the number of zero-hour contract jobs rose by 104,000 to 1.7-million, and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) recently reported that only one in 40 jobs created since the recession has been full-time.

In the 1930s, if you were a part-time or itinerant labourer – flitting between short-term jobs – you were not seen as employed.

Instead, you would likely have been considered a vagrant.

Writing in 1936, homeless memoirist William Gape defined a vagrant as someone who is “compelled to seek his livelihood day-by-day.” And the “tramp” memoirs of authors such as Jack London, W. H. Davies and Bart Kennedy tell of protagonists jumping from one short-term job to another. Whether they were working as cow-herders, dockers, oyster pickers, railroad workers, fruit pickers or as labourers – the early 20th-century equivalent to zero-hour contract jobs – all of these authors regarded themselves as unemployed.

An extensive survey conducted by the BBC in 1934 offered accounts of the lives of unemployed people, nearly all of whom described being in and out of short-term jobs, ranging from the unemployed advertising agent who “found odd jobs at sign painting, Christmas card production and so on,” an unemployed miner who “picked up a knowledge of slating and general house repair work,” and the unemployed youth, who found occasional work “packing soft goods” and “delivering circulars.”

These accounts sound similar to the experiences of precariously employed people working in service industries today. But while the 1934 survey identifies these workers as long-term unemployed, today such people are considered to be in work.

Back then, odd jobs made up a tiny fraction of the employment market – small enough not to count. Even in 1979, after women had entered the work force en masse, part-time work still only represented 16.4 per cent of employment. By 2014, this figure had risen to 38 per cent.

So, although there were far more people categorized as unemployed in the time of the Great Depression, the way we define such categories has changed – and many of those in partial employment today would have been considered unemployed by 1930s standards.

These days, many more people rely on government support in order to survive than during the Great Depression. Last year, 3.79-million people claimed unemployment benefits in the UK. In 1930, the number of people reportedly registered at the Employment Exchange (where unemployed people would apply for relief) was 1.68-million. This represents a significant increase – even taking population growth into account.

Of course, dependence on state support may have increased simply because there is more available, but a recent survey conducted by the Office for National Statistics found that 4.6-million people in the UK live in a state of “persistent poverty,” while a similar number depend on housing benefits to survive. And these figures don’t count many people in precarious employment and extreme poverty in the UK, such as the estimated 618,000 “irregular migrants” living in London.

The difference between the Great Depression and now is that in the 1930s the employment crisis provoked unprecedented political activism and unrest. The National Unemployed Workers’ Movement – founded in 1921 by the Communist Party of Great Britain – grew to 100,000 members and organized public demonstrations that made front-page news. And membership of political parties rocketed during the 1930s. The Communist Party of Great Britain grew from 3,000 to 17,000 members, while Labour Party

membership soared from 277,211 to 408,844. So significant was the nationwide response to high unemployment that the prime minister, Ramsay MacDonald, was forced to resign in 1931, after a cabinet dispute over the issue.

British culture was also transformed. Publisher Victor Gollancz established the Left Book Club, claiming to have more than 900 reading groups committed to discussing radical literature. Poets such as W. H. Auden and Stephen Spender changed their approach as writers after they saw “the crisis spread to Great Britain.” George Orwell was “forced into becoming a sort of pamphleteer” after experiencing unemployment and poverty at first hand in Paris, London and a host of Britain’s industrial towns en route to writing his book, *The Road to Wigan Pier*. Novels that told the stories of young people struggling to make a living – such as Walter Greenwood’s *Love on the Dole*, and James Hanley’s *Drift* – also became best-sellers, while popular films, including Charlie Chaplin’s *City Lights* and Lewis Milestone’s *Hallelujah, I’m a Bum*, dramatized and sensationalized the experience of unemployment.

By comparison, our response has been minimal. Certainly, there are grassroots radical organizations and networks today, including the People’s Assembly, Brick Lane Debates and Focus E15, which consider poverty and unemployment in the UK to be a priority issue, and politicians, including Leader of the Opposition Jeremy Corbyn, marched on parliament on April 16, as part of a demonstration demanding health, homes, jobs and education for all. But Britain’s jobs crisis hasn’t produced a mass labour movement to match the one in France.

Perhaps we simply haven’t noticed the growth of the grey area between employment and unemployment. Or maybe our imaginations have not yet been captured in the way that inspired inter-war writers and dramatists. But we shouldn’t let ourselves be fooled into imagining we live in better times.

**A recent survey conducted by the Office for National Statistics found that 4.6-million people in the UK live in a state of “persistent poverty,” while a similar number depend on housing benefits to survive**

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**Luke Davies** is a PhD candidate at University College of London. This article was originally published at [www.theconversation.com](http://www.theconversation.com)

**CT**

# The zombie doctrine

Crisis after crisis is being caused by a failed ideology. But it cannot be stopped without a coherent alternative, writes George Monbiot

**The organization of labour and collective bargaining by trade unions are portrayed as market distortions, that impede the formation of a natural hierarchy of winners and losers**

It's as if the people of the Soviet Union had never heard of communism. The ideology that dominates our lives has, for most of us, no name. Mention it in conversation, and you'll be rewarded with a shrug. Even if your listeners have heard the term before, they will struggle to define it. Neoliberalism: do you know what it is?

Its anonymity is both a symptom and cause of its power. It has played a major role in a remarkable variety of crises: the financial meltdown of 2007-8; the offshoring of wealth and power, of which the Panama Papers offer us merely a glimpse; the slow collapse of public health and education; resurgent child poverty; the epidemic of loneliness; the collapse of ecosystems; the rise of Donald Trump. But we respond to these crises as if they emerge in isolation, apparently unaware that they have all been either catalyzed or exacerbated by the same coherent philosophy, a philosophy that has – or had – a name. What greater power can there be than to operate namelessly?

So pervasive has neoliberalism become that we seldom even recognize it as an ideology. We appear to accept the proposition that this utopian, millenarian faith describes a neutral force, a kind of biological law, like Darwin's theory of evolution. But the philosophy arose as a conscious attempt to reshape human life and shift the locus of power.

Neoliberalism sees competition as the defining characteristic of human relations. It redefines citizens as consumers, whose democratic choices are best exercised by buying and selling, a process that rewards merit and punishes inefficiency. It maintains that the market delivers benefits that could never be achieved by planning.

Attempts to limit competition are treated as inimical to liberty. Tax and regulation should be minimized, public services should be privatized. The organization of labour and collective bargaining by trade unions are portrayed as market distortions, that impede the formation of a natural hierarchy of winners and losers. Inequality is recast as virtuous: a reward for utility and a generator of wealth, which trickles down to enrich everyone. Efforts to create a more equal society are both counter-productive and morally corrosive. The market ensures that everyone gets what they deserve.

We internalize and reproduce its creeds. The rich persuade themselves that they acquired their wealth through merit, ignoring the advantages – such as education, inheritance and class – that may have helped to secure it. The poor begin to blame themselves for their failures, even when they can do little to change their circumstances.

Never mind structural unemployment: If you don't have a job it's because you are unenterprising. Never mind the impossible





**FACES OF NEOLIBERALISM: Friedrich Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, Ronald Reagan, and Margaret Thatcher.** (Wikipedia)

costs of housing: If your credit card is maxed out, you're feckless and improvident. Never mind that your children no longer have a school playing field: If they get fat, it's your fault. In a world governed by competition, those who fall behind become defined and self-defined as losers.

Among the results, as Paul Verhaeghe documents in his book *What About Me?* are epidemics of self-harm, eating disorders, depression, loneliness, performance anxiety and social phobia. Perhaps it's unsurprising that Britain, in which neoliberal ideology has been most rigorously applied, is the loneliness capital of Europe. We are all neoliberals now.

The term neoliberalism was coined at a meeting in Paris in 1938. Among the delegates were two men who came to define the ideology, Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek. Both exiles from Austria, they saw social democracy, exemplified by Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and the gradual development of Britain's welfare state, as manifestations of a collectivism that occupied the same spectrum as Naziism and communism.

In *The Road to Serfdom*, published in

1944, Hayek argued that government planning, by crushing individualism, would lead inexorably to totalitarian control. Like Mises's book *Bureaucracy, The Road to Serfdom* was widely read. It came to the attention of some very wealthy people, who saw in the philosophy an opportunity to free themselves from regulation and tax. When, in 1947, Hayek founded the first organization that would spread the doctrine of neoliberalism – the Mont Pelerin Society – it was supported financially by millionaires and their foundations.

With their help, he began to create what Daniel Stedman Jones describes in *Masters of the Universe* as “a kind of neoliberal international” – a transatlantic network of academics, businessmen, journalists and activists. The movement's rich backers funded a series of think tanks that would refine and promote the ideology. Among them were the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, the Institute of Economic Affairs, the Centre for Policy Studies and the Adam Smith Institute. They also financed academic positions and departments, particularly at the universities of Chicago and Virginia.

As it evolved, neoliberalism became

**The Road to Serfdom came to the attention of some very wealthy people, who saw in the philosophy an opportunity to free themselves from regulation and tax**

**Freedom from trade unions and collective bargaining means the freedom to suppress wages. Freedom from regulation means the freedom to poison rivers, endanger workers, charge iniquitous rates of interest and design convoluted financial instruments**

more strident. Hayek's view that governments should regulate competition to prevent monopolies from forming gave way, among American apostles such as Milton Friedman, to the belief that monopoly power could be seen as a reward for efficiency.

Something else happened during this transition: The movement lost its name. In 1951, Milton Friedman was happy to describe himself as a neoliberal. But soon after that, the term began to disappear. Stranger still, even as the ideology became crisper and the movement more coherent, the lost name was not replaced by any common alternative.

At first, despite its lavish funding, neoliberalism remained at the margins. The post-war consensus was almost universal – John Maynard Keynes's economic prescriptions were widely applied, full employment and the relief of poverty were common goals in the US and much of western Europe, top rates of tax were high, and governments sought social outcomes without embarrassment, developing new public services and safety nets.

But, in the 1970s, when Keynesian policies began to fall apart and economic crises struck on both sides of the Atlantic, neoliberal ideas began to enter the mainstream. As Milton Friedman remarked, "When the time came that you had to change . . . there was an alternative ready there to be picked up." With the help of sympathetic journalists and political advisors, elements of neoliberalism, especially its prescriptions for monetary policy, were adopted by Jimmy Carter's administration in the United States and Jim Callaghan's Labour government in Britain.

After Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan took power, the rest of the package soon followed: massive tax cuts for the rich, the crushing of trade unions, deregulation, privatisation, outsourcing and competition in public services. Through the IMF, the World Bank, the Maastricht treaty and the World Trade Organisation, neoliberal policies were

imposed – often without democratic consent – on much of the world. Most remarkable was its adoption among parties that once belonged to the left: Labour and the Democrats, for example. As Daniel Stedman Jones notes, "It is hard to think of another utopia to have been as fully realized."

It may seem strange that a doctrine promising choice and freedom should have been promoted with the slogan, "There is no alternative." But, as Friedrich Hayek remarked on a visit to Pinochet's Chile – one of the first nations in which the program was comprehensively applied, "My personal preference leans toward a liberal dictatorship rather than toward a democratic government devoid of liberalism." The freedom neoliberalism offers, which sounds so beguiling when expressed in general terms, turns out to mean freedom for the pike, not for the minnows.

Freedom from trade unions and collective bargaining means the freedom to suppress wages. Freedom from regulation means the freedom to poison rivers, endanger workers, charge iniquitous rates of interest and design convoluted financial instruments. Freedom from tax means freedom from the distribution of wealth that lifts people out of poverty.

As Naomi Klein documents in her book, *The Shock Doctrine*, neoliberal theorists advocated the use of crises to impose unpopular policies while people were distracted – for example, in the aftermath of Pinochet's coup, the Iraq war, and Hurricane Katrina, which Milton Friedman described as "an opportunity to radically reform the educational system" in New Orleans.

Where neoliberal policies cannot be imposed domestically, they are imposed internationally, through trade treaties incorporating "investor-state dispute settlement": offshore tribunals in which corporations can press for the removal of social and environmental protections. When parliaments have voted to restrict sales of cigarettes,

protect water supplies from mining companies, freeze energy bills or prevent pharmaceutical firms from ripping off the state, corporations have sued, often successfully. Democracy is reduced to theatre.

Another paradox of neoliberalism is that universal competition relies upon universal quantification and comparison. The result is that workers, job-seekers and public services of every kind are subject to a pettifogging, stifling regime of assessment and monitoring, designed to identify the winners and punish the losers. The doctrine that, Ludwig von Mises proposed, would free us from the bureaucratic nightmare of central planning has instead created one.

Neoliberalism was not conceived as a self-serving racket, but it rapidly became one. Economic growth has been markedly slower in the neoliberal era (since 1980 in Britain and the US) than it was in the preceding decades, but not for the very rich. Inequality in the distribution of both income and wealth, after 60 years of decline, rose rapidly in this era, due to the smashing of trade unions, tax reductions, rising rents, privatization and deregulation.

The privatization or marketization of public services – such as energy, water, trains, health, education, roads and prisons – has enabled corporations to set up tollbooths in front of essential assets and charge rent, either to citizens or to government, for their use. Rent is another term for unearned income. When you pay an inflated price for a train ticket, only part of the fare compensates the operators for the money they spend on fuel, wages, rolling stock and other outlays. The rest reflects the fact that they have you over a barrel.

Those who own and run the UK's privatized or semi-privatized services make stupendous fortunes by investing little and charging much. In Russia and India, oligarchs acquired state assets through fire-sales. In Mexico, Carlos Slim was granted control of almost all landline and mobile

phone services and soon became the world's richest man.

Financialization, as Andrew Sayer points out in *Why We Can't Afford the Rich*, has had similar impacts. "Like rent," he argues, "interest is . . . unearned income that accrues without any effort." As the poor become poorer and the rich become richer, the rich acquire increasing control over another crucial asset: money. Interest payments, overwhelmingly, are a transfer of money from the poor to the rich. As property prices and the withdrawal of state funding load people with debt (think of the switch from student grants to student loans), the banks and their executives clean up.

Sayer argues that the past four decades have been characterized by a transfer of wealth not only from the poor to the rich, but within the ranks of the wealthy – from those who make their money by producing new goods or services to those who make their money by controlling existing assets and harvesting rent, interest or capital gains. Earned income has been supplanted by unearned income.

Neoliberal policies are everywhere beset by market failures. Not only are the banks too big to fail, but so are the corporations now charged with delivering public services. As Tony Judt pointed out in *Ill Fares the Land*, Friedrich Hayek forgot that vital national services cannot be allowed to collapse, which means that competition cannot run its course. Business takes the profits, the state keeps the risk.

The greater the failure, the more extreme the ideology becomes. Governments use neoliberal crises as both excuse and opportunity to cut taxes, privatize remaining public services, rip holes in the social safety net, deregulate corporations and re-regulate citizens. The self-hating state now sinks its teeth into every organ of the public sector.

Perhaps the most dangerous impact of neoliberalism is not the economic crises it has caused, but the political crisis. As the domain of the state is reduced, our ability

**The privatization or marketization of public services – such as energy, water, trains, health, education, roads and prisons – has enabled corporations to set up tollbooths in front of essential assets and charge rent, either to citizens or to government, for their use**

**“The market” sounds like a natural system that might bear upon us equally, like gravity or atmospheric pressure. But it is fraught with power relations**

to change the course of our lives through voting also contracts. Instead, neoliberal theory asserts, people can exercise choice through spending. But some have more to spend than others: In the great consumer or shareholder democracy, votes are not equally distributed. The result is a disempowerment of the poor and middle. As parties of the right and former left adopt similar neoliberal policies, disempowerment turns to disenfranchisement. Large numbers of people have been shed from politics.

Chris Hedges remarks that “fascist movements build their base not from the politically active but the politically inactive, the ‘losers’ who feel, often correctly, they have no voice or role to play in the political establishment.” When political debate no longer speaks to us, people become responsive instead to slogans, symbols and sensation. To the admirers of Donald Trump, for example, facts and arguments appear irrelevant.

Tony Judt pointed out that when the thick mesh of interactions between people and the state has been reduced to nothing but authority and obedience, the only remaining force that binds us is state power. The totalitarianism Hayek feared is more likely to emerge when governments, having lost the moral authority that arises from the delivery of public services, are reduced to “cajoling, threatening and ultimately coercing people to obey them”.

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Like communism, neoliberalism is the God that failed. But the zombie doctrine staggers on, and one of the reasons is its anonymity. Or rather, a cluster of anonymities.

The invisible doctrine of the invisible hand is promoted by invisible backers. Slowly, very slowly, we have begun to discover the names of a few of them. We find that the Institute of Economic Affairs, which has argued forcefully in the media against the further regulation of the tobacco industry, has been secretly funded by British American Tobacco since 1963. We discover that

Charles and David Koch, two of the richest men in the world, founded the institute that set up the Tea Party movement. We find that Charles Koch, in establishing one of his think tanks, noted that “in order to avoid undesirable criticism, how the organization is controlled and directed should not be widely advertised.”

The words used by neoliberalism often conceal more than they elucidate. “The market” sounds like a natural system that might bear upon us equally, like gravity or atmospheric pressure. But it is fraught with power relations. What “the market wants” tends to mean what corporations and their bosses want. “Investment,” as Andrew Sayer notes, means two quite different things. One is the funding of productive and socially useful activities, the other is the purchase of existing assets to milk them for rent, interest, dividends and capital gains. Using the same word for different activities “camouflages the sources of wealth,” leading us to confuse wealth extraction with wealth creation.

A century ago, the nouveau riche were disparaged by those who had inherited their money. Entrepreneurs sought social acceptance by passing themselves off as rentiers. Today, the relationship has been reversed: The rentiers and inheritors style themselves entrepreneurs. They claim to have earned their unearned income.

These anonymities and confusions mesh with the namelessness and placelessness of modern capitalism: the franchise model that ensures that workers do not know for whom they toil, the companies registered through a network of offshore secrecy regimes so complex that even the police cannot discover the beneficial owners, the tax arrangements that bamboozle governments, the financial products no one understands.

The anonymity of neoliberalism is fiercely guarded. Those who are influenced by Hayek, Mises and Friedman tend to reject the term, maintaining – with some justice

– that it is used today only pejoratively. But they offer us no substitute. Some describe themselves as classical liberals or libertarians, but these descriptions are both misleading and curiously self-effacing, because they suggest that there is nothing novel about *The Road to Serfdom*, *Bureaucracy* or Friedman’s classic work, *Capitalism and Freedom*.

For all that, there is something admirable about the neoliberal project, at least in its early stages. It was a distinctive, innovative philosophy promoted by a coherent network of thinkers and activists with a clear plan of action. It was patient and persistent. *The Road to Serfdom* became the path to power.

Neoliberalism’s triumph also reflects the failure of the left. When laissez-faire economics led to catastrophe in 1929, Keynes devised a comprehensive economic theory to replace it. When Keynesian demand management hit the buffers in the 1970s, there was “an alternative ready there to be picked up.” But when neoliberalism fell apart in 2008 there was . . . nothing. This is why the zombie walks. The left and centre

have produced no new general framework of economic thought for 80 years.

Every invocation of Lord Keynes is an admission of failure. To propose Keynesian solutions to the crises of the 21st-century is to ignore three obvious problems: It is hard to mobilize people around old ideas, the flaws exposed in the 1970s have not gone away, and, most importantly, they have nothing to say about our gravest predicament – the environmental crisis. Keynesianism works by stimulating consumer demand to promote economic growth. Consumer demand and economic growth are the motors of environmental destruction.

What the history of both Keynesianism and neoliberalism show is that it’s not enough to oppose a broken system. A coherent alternative has to be proposed. For Labour, the Democrats and the wider left, the central task should be to develop an economic Apollo programme, a conscious attempt to design a new system, tailored to the demands of the 21st century. **CT**

*George Monbiot’s new book, How Did We Get into This Mess?, is published by Verso. His web site is www.monbiot.com*

**The left and centre have produced no new general framework of economic thought for 80 years**

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# 'I got mine, screw you!'

Fred Reed on capitalism and the minimum wage

**Businesspeople argue that the minimum wage constitutes intolerable interference by the government in the conduct of business – meanwhile sending armies of lobbyists to Washington to make the government interfere in the conduct of business**

To understand the arguments of capitalists against the minimum wage, follow the money. In all the thickets of pious reasoning about the merits of capitalism and the market, the key is the dollar. The rest is fraud. Carefully ignored is the question that will be crucial in coming decades: what to do about an increasing number of people for whom there is no work.

There is of course much hypocrisy in the theoretical edifice. For example, businesspeople argue that the minimum wage constitutes intolerable interference by the government in the conduct of business – meanwhile sending armies of lobbyists to Washington to make the government interfere in the conduct of business. In fact capitalists have no objection to federal meddling. They just want it to be such meddling as puts more money in their pockets.

They also say that they want to protect the worker's freedom to sell his labour at a mutually agreed price. Curiously, in practice this means the employer's freedom to push wages as close to starvation as he can get away with. This miraculous congruence of high principle with low profit is among the wonders of the universe.

In every case, without exception, the capitalist's high principles will lead to more in his pocket. He will be against a minimum wage because, he says, it prevents young blacks from entering the job market and learning

its ways. You can tell he is deeply concerned about young blacks: He probably wakes up in the middle of the night, worrying about them. He doesn't, however, hire any.

The quest for cheap labour has perhaps caused less misery than war – itself a most profitable business – but it is neck and neck. Businessmen imported blacks as slaves to have cheap labour, with disastrous results that continue to this day. Businessmen encourage illegal immigration from the Latin lands so as to have cheap labour. They sent America's factories to China to have cheap labour. And now they peer with drooling lips and avid gaze at . . . robots. These will drudge away day and night, making no demands, never unionizing, needing no retirement or medical benefits. Actually, though, capitalists want robots because capitalists care about freedom and want to help young blacks.

A cynic might see this as intellectual scaffolding for social Darwinism and unaccountability – see, it's all due to the workings of the market. And the capitalist is only a bystander. But, no. It's about freedom, and justice, and all.

Among the fantastic trappings of “free enterprise” – it sounds nicer than “capitalism,” doesn't it? – is that it rewards hard work and determination, which, if pursued, will lead to prosperity. This is both beloved by many who believe it in part because for them it performed as described. The intelligent, healthy,

ambitious and – a major advantage – unscrupulous can usually get ahead. And so, talking to others like themselves, they ask, “If I can do it, why can’t they?” The underlying notion is that the poor are poor because they are lazy and lack ambition. Some fit the description. Lots don’t.

Here we come to commentator’s disease, epidemic and among talking heads and columnists. A woman of my acquaintance once said, “In Washington, you assume that everybody is in the 99th percentile.” Decompressed from the apothegmatic, it is true. Cognitive stratification is real, though seldom noticed and never mentioned. The city attracts the highly bright. They hang out together. They date. They marry. They don’t know anybody who is not like them. The same holds in many places, and on the web, but Washington is where policy comes from. By and large they are neither arrogant nor snobs. They include a great many journalists. It is fun to speak of the press as imbeciles, but, apart perhaps from babble-blond anchors chosen for their looks, they are not. Even at dismal publications such as Army Times and Federal Computer Week, both of which I was once familiar with, you find very smart people.

What has this to do with the minimum wage? A fair amount. People with an IQ of 130 and up tend to assume unconsciously – important word: “unconsciously” – that you can do anything just by doing it. If they wanted to learn Sanskrit, they would get a textbook and go for it. It would take time and effort, but the outcome would never be in doubt. Yes, they understand that some people are smarter than others, but they often seem not to grasp how much smarter, or what the consequences are. A large part of the population can’t learn-much of anything. Not won’t. Can’t.

Few of the very bright have ever had to make the unhappy calculation: a low minimum wage, minus bus fare to work, rent, food, medical care and cable TV. They have never had to choose between a winter coat and cable TV, their only entertainment. They

don’t really know that many people do. Out of sight, out of mind.

Cognitive stratification has political consequences. It leads liberals to think that their client groups can go to college. It leads conservatives to think that with hard work and determination . . .

It ain’t so. An economic system that works reasonably well when there are lots of simple jobs doesn’t work when there aren’t.

As the stock market reaches new highs and the nation’s wealth concentrates in fewer and fewer hands, we hear that a rising tide floats all boats. This is fine if you have a boat. Maybe it only looks as though capitalists flourish while the middle class sinks, and the welfare rolls grow, and kids have to live at home, and they will have no retirement. Well, some boats leak, I guess.

When the theorists of free enterprise imagine that our unemployed young lady should be permitted the freedom to sell her labour for what it is worth, they do not worry that her labour isn’t worth enough to feed her. Others, with the lack of empathy that characterizes conservatives, don’t care. If you look at the godawful conditions of their employees in the sweatshops of, say, Bangladesh, you will see that not caring is common. Let them eat cake.

The question arises: What does the country do with the large and growing number of people whose labour is worth nothing? Or, perhaps more accurately, whose labour isn’t needed? We see this in the cities today. An illiterate kid in Detroit has no value at all in the market for labour. Assuming that he wants to work, a questionable assumption, what then? Endlessly expanding welfare? What about the literate, averagely intelligent kid for whom there are no jobs? If people working in McDonald’s can barely live on their wages, and strike, or the state institutes a higher minimum wage, McDonald’s will automate their jobs, is automating their jobs, and conservatives will exult – the commie bastards got what they asked for.

This is capitalism in its perfection. **CT**

**When the theorists of free enterprise imagine that our unemployed young lady should be permitted the freedom to sell her labour for what it is worth, they do not worry that her labour isn’t worth enough to feed her**

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**Fred Reed** worked for *Soldier of Fortune* magazine and the *Washington Times*. He lives in Mexico and blogs at [www.fredoneverything.org](http://www.fredoneverything.org)

# On the beach

All **Chris Killip** wanted to do was to photograph the scenes on the beach in front of him. But the locals said no. A story of friendship – and persistence

**M**any qualities are necessary to be a good photographer – technical knowledge, hand-and-eye coordination, an inner vision, perhaps. But another ingredient is essential if you are to make the transition from being merely good to being great: Persistence.

Chris Killip has that quality in abundance, judging by his account of his extraordinary years-long endeavours before taking a single shot for his book, *Seacoal*.

In the book's introduction, Killip writes that when he first saw the beach at Lynemouth, a coastal village 20 miles north of Newcastle upon Tyne, in north east England, in 1976, "I recognized the industry – the coal mine at the water's edge, Ellington Colliery, mined coal four miles out beneath the North Sea. The coal was fed into the electrical power station next door, and the power generated was relayed to Alcan's aluminium smelter less than a mile further inland.

"The beach was full of activity with horses and carts backed into the sea. Men were standing in the sea next to the carts, using small wire nets attached to poles to fish out

**It's cold and rough, but there's coal out there. And it's Critch's job to get the stuff onto his cart.**









The wind's howling down from Siberia, the snow's falling. But John Cook (Cookie) takes it all in his stride.



**Beasts of burden: In the shallows of Lynemouth beach.**

the coal from the water beneath them.”

Killip hurried down to the beach, where he began to prepare the camera to take another picture. “Upside down on the ground-glass screen, I could see a horse and cart coming swiftly towards me. Startled, I looked up, and the angry-looking driver used his reins to lash out at me. Another horse and cart came at me from the other side, and both drivers were telling me to leave the beach.”

That was the end of that. But a couple of years later, he was back. And again two years later. He was repulsed each time.

“Then, in early October, 1982, I returned for another try. This time I managed to fall over during my battlefield retreat, filling my face and my camera with dirt, sand and coal.

“I decided to try and break this cycle by confronting these men. There was only one pub in the village near the beach, so I knew where they would be drinking. I announced myself as the person who they had tried to kill, and asked, ‘Can we talk?’”

Killip told them he had never seen anything like their seacoal beach. “I swore I was not from the social security, the dole, the police or the tax office.” After an awkward silence, one of the men said, “No. We don’t want you on the beach.”

It seemed to be all over. Then another

**“Startled, I looked up, and the angry-looking driver used his reins to lash out at me. Another horse and cart came from the other side, and both drivers were telling me to leave the beach”**

## IN THE PICTURE



Kids play on the blustery seashore in a home-made tent.

**When Critchley heard Killip's tale, he laughed, walked to the middle of the bar and announced, "The photographer will be on the beach with me at eight o'clock tomorrow morning. Does anybody here object?"**

man, Trevor Critchley, came into the bar with his wife, introduced himself to Killip, saying they'd met a year earlier at a horse fair. When Critchley heard Killip's tale, he laughed, walked to the middle of the bar and announced, "The photographer will be on the beach with me at eight o'clock tomorrow morning. Does anybody here object?" Nobody did. "I quickly learned that if the seacoal beach had a main man, it was Trevor," writes Killip, who continues, "There was a long-held belief that seacoal came from a coal seam which had broken through the surface of the seabed. The more visible explanation is that seacoal came from the coal mine tipping its waste into the sea.

"While local people had always collected seacoal for their own fires or to supplement their income, one man had the official rights to the seacoal at Lynemouth, but he needed to utilize the labour force in order to get it. There was an uneasy and pragmatic relationship between him and the seacoalers. Having your own lorry meant that you could be an independent operator and sell your seacoal away from the camp wherever you could. The seacoal camp only became a permanent, but decidedly unapproved, fixture in the late '70s.



The Lynemouth coal mine rises out of the mist.



## IN THE PICTURE



Above: On the beach. Helen Laidler performs tricks with her hula hoop. Below (book cover): Brian Laidler sorts coal.

.....  
**Chris Killip** is a professor of visual and environmental studies at Harvard University, where he has taught since 1991. His books include *Isle of Man* (1980), *Pirelli Work* (2006), *Here Comes Everybody* (2009), *Seacoal* (2011) and *arbeit/work* (2012).

It was an exacting place, hostile to strangers, defined by friendships and rivalries, and dominated by the struggle to survive.

“In February, 1983, I moved into a caravan on the camp and lived there, on and off, for the next 14 months. There the weather was such a domineering force, and I have never been colder nor wetter. The wind came off the North Sea from Russia via Scandinavia.”

In later years, as the mining industry collapsed, the seacoal camp was leveled and landscaped. “The coal mine is gone, and with it the coal. All that is left is a small council approved caravan site for travellers.”

And there’s this book, a glorious tribute to one man’s persistence. **Tony Sutton**



### SEACOAL

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# The end of the Scottish Press?

The circulation of Scotland's daily and Sunday newspapers is collapsing. **Peter Geoghegan** wonders what killed their days of glory

**Graham Spiers, a lifelong Rangers football club fan, had been banned by the club in August. No reason was given, but there had been unhappiness with his criticisms of the board's behaviour since the club's financial collapse**

Late last year, the Rangers football team played host to Hibernian. Both teams are currently in the Scottish Championship, the second tier of Scottish football – after going into administration in 2012, Rangers had to work its way back up from the bottom division. The two first played more than a century ago; this time Rangers won 4-2. I watched the game on a dodgy internet stream, but could still clearly hear the fans in the Ibrox stands singing The Billy Boys (We're up to our knees in Fenian blood/Surrender or you'll die). Two days later, on December 30, Graham Spiers, a freelance sportswriter, filed his regular online column for the Glasgow newspaper, the Herald, and it appeared the same day under the headline, "Rangers Must Uphold Progress by Resisting Return of the Old Songs."

Spiers, a lifelong Rangers fan, had been banned by the club in August. No reason was given, but there had been unhappiness with his criticisms of the board's behaviour since the club's financial collapse. His column questioned whether Rangers had the "mettle" to tackle sectarian behaviour during matches. It also included an allegation about a member of the Rangers board. Magnus Llewellyn, the Herald's editor-in-chief, told Spiers his column "struck exactly the right tone." Rangers disagreed and lodged a complaint. A month later,

the Herald published an apology; Spiers refused to endorse it and issued a counter-statement accusing Rangers of putting pressure on the Herald.

The story didn't end there. Angela Haggerty, a young journalist who had recently started a weekly column on social media for the Sunday Herald, tweeted her support of Spiers. A Rangers representative swiftly contacted the paper, adducing her tweet as evidence of a breach of the agreed apology. Within an hour, she had been fired.

Companies owned by members of the Rangers board are regular Herald advertisers and, in an email in early January, Llewellyn had told Spiers that one particular director "is always trying to use you and other material he disagrees with as a commercial lever." Both the Herald and Rangers strongly deny that any threat was made to withdraw advertising either after Spiers's original article, or Haggerty's tweet. (A couple of weeks later Haggerty's column was reinstated, after what the Herald described as "a re-examination of the context of her original social media postings.")

While Spiers's point about Rangers's unwillingness to confront the sectarian behaviour of its fans is hard to dispute, it's less clear why his allegation about the Rangers board member was published: it would have been extremely difficult to defend in court. One explanation is that the piece





**CIRCULATIONS DIVE:** Scotland's main daily and Sunday newspapers.

wasn't sent to the paper's lawyers. The Herald blamed "an editorial staff error" for this, but sub-editors are under increasing pressure to get pieces online quickly, especially stories about the Old Firm. In the centre of the Herald's skeletally staffed newsroom, a bank of monitors displays the most-read online articles. Spiers's were often among them. During the dispute about the piece, Newsquest, which bought the Herald in 2003, announced that up to 25 journalists would be made redundant in the third round of job losses in less than a year.

Spiers admits that he was only able to behave as he did because he's an established writer with a steady supply of freelance work. "If I was a 26-year-old on £21,000," he told me, "I wouldn't have been able to defend myself."

Scotland used to boast one of the highest concentrations of newspaper readers in the world. The Sunday Post sold 1.7-million copies every week in a country whose population was barely three times that. Still published in Dundee by DC Thomson, which is also responsible for the Beano comic, it now sells 163,000, close to the sales of the

upmarket London-based Sunday paper, the Observer. The glory days of Scottish journalism are long gone. When the Scottish Affairs Committee at Westminster discussed the crisis in the Scottish press industry in 2009, the Herald was selling just under 60,000 copies a day; now that figure is less than 35,000. Of course, Scottish newspapers aren't the only ones in trouble. The Independent and the Independent on Sunday recently ceased printing following the sale of the papers' cut-price spin-off, i, to Johnston Press, owners of the Scotsman. Job losses are imminent at the Guardian and rumoured at the Telegraph.

When Newsquest, the UK subdivision of the American publishing giant Gannett, paid £216-million for the Herald and its stablemates, the Sunday Herald and the tabloid Evening Times, the Sunday Herald's journalists alone occupied almost an entire floor in the group's offices. Now, 13 years later, there are 10 staff assigned solely to the Sunday paper, and just one full-time production journalist. Cover prices have risen while pagination has shrunk. Once a cam-

**The Sunday Post sold 1.7-million copies every week in a country whose population was barely three times that. Now it now sells 163,000**

## MEDIA WOES

**In 2005, the Scotsman had more than 500 journalists and production staff, according to accounts filed at Companies House. Now, just 130 produce a paper increasingly lacking decent features, analysis and original reporting**

paigning newspaper, the Herald now seems committed to a single cause: shareholder returns.

In the last financial year profits rose by more than a quarter, to £11.6-million. Turnover was flat; all the gains were made by cutting more than £2-million from costs, mostly staff. Much of the paper is now sub-edited at Newsquest's offices in Newport. Judging by rudimentary errors, the finer points of Scottish politics and football are not keenly felt in South Wales.

Last year, while I was freelancing for the Herald group, new production systems were being installed in the newsroom. During a tutorial on the software a middle-aged journalist asked where international stories fitted into the template. The youthful Newsquest trainer was nonplussed: "There's no foreign news on the Warrington Guardian." Newsquest, however, did cause a splash when, seeing a gap in the market, it launched a pro-independence daily, the National, at the Scottish National Party (SNP) Conference in November, 2014. The paper's first edition sold out, but Newsquest hasn't given adequate resources to its newest title, and with sales now around 10,000, it looks unlikely to be around much longer.

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The situation on the east coast is, if anything, worse. "This is a great business, and these are great newspapers," a Johnston Press executive told a room full of Scotsman journalists in December, 2005, just after the local media group had purchased the paper and its sister title, Scotland on Sunday, for £160-million, almost double the price paid by the Barclay brothers 10 years earlier. Almost immediately the successful Scotsman.com development team was broken up and the website relocated 300 miles south to Peterborough, and advertising was outsourced to a London agency with little local expertise. The biggest change was staffing: In 2005, the Scotsman had more than 500 journalists and production staff, according to accounts filed at

Companies House. Now, just 130 produce a paper increasingly lacking decent features, analysis and original reporting. Earlier this year, staff threatened strike action over yet more redundancies. Its Brussels bureau and international stringers have long since been axed. In 2014, the Scotsman left its purpose-built £20-million sandstone and glass offices in the shadow of the Scottish Parliament as part of another round of cost-cutting. Rockstar North, creators of the video game Grand Theft Auto, took over the lease.

Curiously, penny-pinching at Johnston Press has not extended to the boardroom; in 2014, its chief executive, Ashley Highfield, was paid £1.65-million. Ever more desperate attempts are being made to find new revenue streams: One scheme, Friends of the Scotsman, encourages organizations to take out subscriptions in exchange for editorial content – advertorials. In January, an internal email to Johnston Press staff classified Scotland on Sunday as a "sub core" title, fuelling rumours that it might be sold, or closed. Sales for both papers in the second half of 2015 were around 22,000.

It might seem like the decline of the Herald and the Scotsman is no different from that experienced by papers all over the world, but these papers have seen a particularly steep drop in circulation. Both are now comfortably outsold by DC Thomson's regional titles, the Dundee Courier and the Aberdeen-based Press and Journal, which sold 43,000 and 56,400 respectively in the second half of 2015, and which benefit from a local focus and continued investment. "Aberdeen and Dundee are the only places in Scotland with jobs," a journalist who recently took voluntary redundancy from the Herald told me. The Herald and the Scotsman are also struggling unsuccessfully to compete for sales and advertising with the Scottish editions of the London nationals – particularly the Times, which has invested in new staff in Scotland. The once robust

Scottish tabloid market is struggling, too: sales of the Daily Record plummeted by 63.5 per cent between 1992 and 2011 (it currently sells around 200,000 copies).

The golden age of the Scottish press is often romanticized. Many titles were unadventurous, taking the loyalty of their readers for granted, and unwilling to criticize shibboleths of Scottish society: the Labour Party, the Old Firm, particularly the blue half. But after the 1979 devolution referendum, the press took on the role of national champion. Both the Herald and the Scotsman published their own proposals for a devolved assembly years before the 1997 referendum, but they weren't concerned only with Scotland: They covered British and international news, and saw themselves as competing with the London nationals.

Rather than further invigorating Scotland's media, devolution, when it finally arrived, seemed to bring with it a less ambitious Scottish press, and less interest on the part of the London papers in what was going on in the country. During the independence referendum, some titles, notably the Scottish editions of the London papers, adopted a conspicuously unionist stance: The referendum day edition of the Times came with a wraparound red, white and blue cover featuring a quote from Auld Lang Syne on the reverse and a brief history of the Union on the inside pages. Almost 45 per cent of Scots voted to leave the UK, but only one newspaper, the Sunday Herald, backed a Yes vote. The Telegraph's Scotland editor, Alan Cochrane, appeared to confirm many nationalists' view of the press when, in his post-referendum memoir, he wrote about spiking an unflattering column on Alistair Darling, head of the Better Together campaign against independence "It's not really good journalism, but what the hell does journalism matter? This is much more important."

The Scottish National Party (SNP) often cultivates the impression that the

press corps is unified in its opposition to the party. Twitter avatars with yellow SNP ribbons are particularly unhappy with the news coverage offered by BBC Scotland. The SNP has called for a federal BBC as part of the charter renewal process, and the BBC recently agreed to produce three pilot programs of what's become known as the Scottish Six – rather than cutting away to the news "where you are" after London has covered the important stuff. The whole program would be produced in Glasgow, but it's far from clear, however, where the cash needed to produce an hour of news every evening would be found. The opposition parties see the proposed bulletin as a concession to the SNP, but nationalists remain highly ambivalent about the BBC. A survey last year found that less than half of Scots were satisfied with BBC output, compared to 55 per cent in Wales and 61 per cent in England.

Many nationalists prefer the new pro-independence websites that sprang up during and after the referendum. The most partisan is the most popular: The former computer games journalist Stuart Campbell's blog Wings over Scotland attracts more than a quarter-of-a-million unique visitors a month, and sites such as Bella Caledonia and Common Space also have a healthy following. The popularity of these sites attests to the rupture between many Scots and their once hegemonic newspaper industry. As the Herald journalist Iain Macwhirter wrote in 2014, "Scotland has a national political system, but is in danger of losing a national media." A third successive SNP victory in this month's Scottish elections is all but guaranteed. The future of the country's press is far less certain. **CT**

.....  
*Peter Geoghegan's most recent book is The People's Referendum: Why Scotland Will Never Be the Same Again. He is co-director of the Ferret, an investigative online magazine. This essay originally appeared in the London Review of books at [www.lrb.co.uk](http://www.lrb.co.uk)*

**Rather than further invigorating Scotland's media, devolution, when it finally arrived, seemed to bring with it a less ambitious Scottish press, and less interest on the part of the London papers in what was going on in the country**

# Lil' Kim's unbearable whiteness of being

Victoria Anderson on the new look unveiled by a famous rap queen

**I understand all too well how Lil' Kim (or Lil' Vim, as someone I know unkindly dubbed her – referencing a brand of “extra-whitening” scouring powder) has ended up the way she has**

Late last month, the world saw – via that new, visual means of wildfire gossip-mongering known as “trending on social media” – Lil' Kim's new face and hair. For anyone who doesn't know Lil Kim, she isn't a teenage Instagram model: Born Kimberley Jones in 1974, she's one of the most successful female rappers the world has seen, and, assuming it matters, she used to be a black woman.

But after years of speculation about plastic surgery and progressive skin-bleaching, and who knows what she's done to her hair, she's not black any more. Kim, who seems like a genuinely sweet, if vulnerable, woman, explained in 2000 that she'd always been told by men – “even the ones I was dating” – that she wasn't pretty enough. Well, OK. But I doubt there was a single black person on this earth – male or female – who didn't look at Lil' Kim's new, white face and feel a deep, inscrutable, pain. Because Lil' Kim just announced to the whole world that as far as she's concerned, black just isn't beautiful.

Now, we can blame “racist,” “sexist,” “hetero-normative,” society for this. We can blame Instagram. We can blame the unrealistic photoshopped advertising images that saturate our screens and, by extension, our psyches. We can bleat about “intersectionality” and “patriarchy.” We can blame the music industry. We can blame Barbie, Mattel and Malibu Stacey.

But, just for a moment, let's not blame anyone, for the fact that Lil' Kim has such a compromised self-image – and let's not equate Kim with Rachel Dolezal, the white NAACP leader who purported to be black, last year claiming a controversial “trans-racial” identity. Dolezal may have permed her hair, but she never changed her features or her skin tone, nor was she filled with tragic self-loathing. Dolezal's attitude was, rather, one of entitlement.

For now, let's just accept all this without trying to blame anyone.

Unfortunately I understand all too well how Lil' Kim (or Lil' Vim, as someone I know unkindly dubbed her – referencing a brand of “extra-whitening” scouring powder) has ended up the way she has.

Kim and I are the same age; when I was a little girl, I also wanted to be white. And it wasn't because I thought white people were “cool.” It was because I believed that not being white made me ugly by default. My (white) mother was so uncomfortable with my black genes that she told me I was of South American, rather than Jamaican (and ergo African), descent – and I believed her. Why wouldn't I? I was in my teens before I found out the truth.

Rather than use make-up and plastic surgery to reconstruct a self-identity, I threw myself into books. Chiefly anything by or about Malcolm X, or any of the Black Pan-



New look: Rapper Lil' Kim.

Photo: Instagram.

thers – aged 15, I read *Roots*, all 700 pages of it. When I was 16, a copy of Frantz Fanon’s 1952 classic *Black Skin, White Masks*, was given to me by white schoolfriends, who were amused by my new militant stance, and whose motives, I suspect, were slightly tongue-in-cheek.

Those books did for me what no amount of reconstructive surgery could have done. Fanon, a psychiatrist from the French West Indies, wrote about the psychology of blackness as a legacy of colonization and white supremacy. What all those books told me was that this internalized self-image of black ugliness, black inferiority is a lie, one that’s taken root inside, like a particularly insidious form of brain cancer.

Although I read a lot, those were pre-internet days. It was only recently, via video footage, that I understood quite how aesthetically beautiful the Black Panther leaders were, in their black leather jackets and berets. Huey Newton was like a pin-up; Kathleen Cleaver and Angela Davis were not only beautiful women with fashionable Afros – they were brilliant, articulate and outspoken women at the forefront of a thwarted revolution. In 1968, Kathleen

Cleaver told an interviewer:

“For so many, many years we were told that only white people were beautiful; that only straight hair, light eyes, light skin were beautiful; and so black women would try everything they could to straighten their hair, lighten their skin, to look as much like white women. But this has changed, because black people are aware.”

Well, I wish Lil’ Kim had been aware. Come to that, when I was 10-years-old, well after the rise and fall of the Black Panther Party, I wish I had been aware.

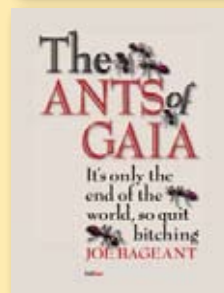
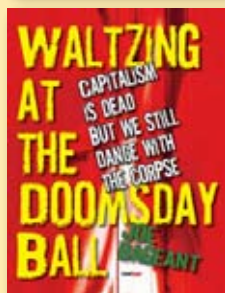
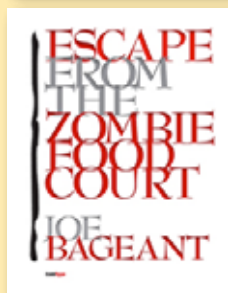
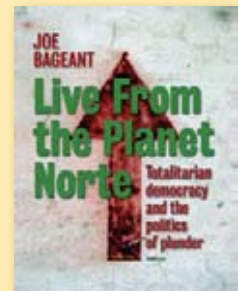
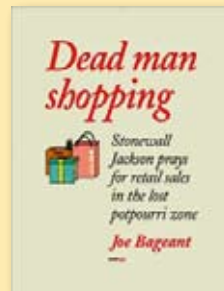
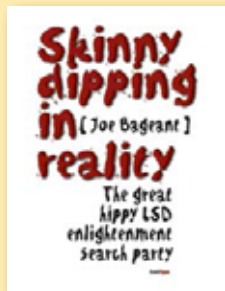
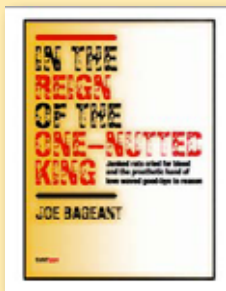
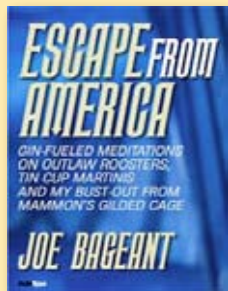
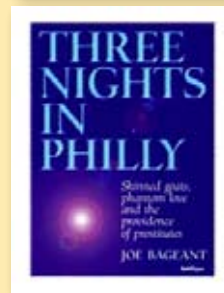
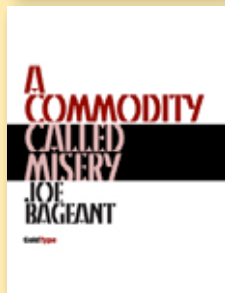
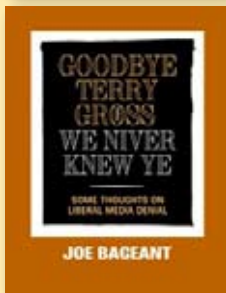
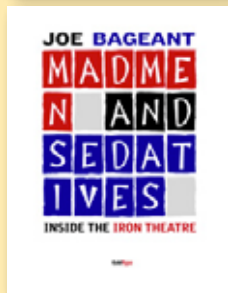
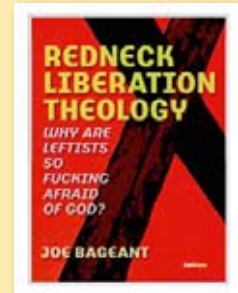
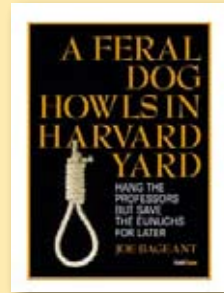
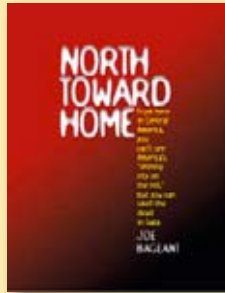
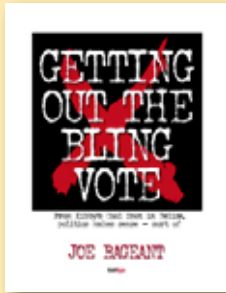
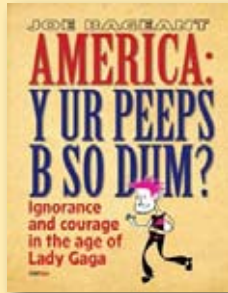
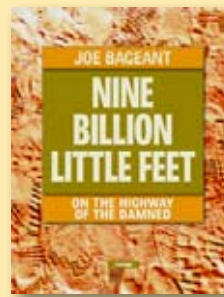
This year marks the 50-year anniversary of the birth of the Panthers and the cry that “Black is Beautiful.” It’s not true to say that nothing has changed in the interim period – much has changed, although progress is never guaranteed to happen in a straight line. Perhaps what none of these writers and revolutionaries could have foretold 50 or 60 years ago was that the psychology of colonization would persist, invisibly, even when laws and statutes are in place to protect the rights of all.

Without blaming, let’s just accept this fact for what it is. And now I ask you: Is it acceptable?

CT

**It was only recently, via video footage, that I understood quite how aesthetically beautiful the Black Panther leaders were, in their black leather jackets and berets**

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**Victoria Anderson**  
*is a visiting researcher in cultural studies at Cardiff University in Wales. This article first appeared at [www.theconversation.org](http://www.theconversation.org)*



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

# Breaking the silence over Palestine

**Eamonn McCann** reports on a tour that is telling the truth about life under Israeli occupation

“It was probably one of the most shocking experiences of my life, and I saw things I wish I’d never seen, heard things I don’t think I’ll ever forget. It’s important to try and impart some of that – the shame that the international community should feel at what is happening and what is being allowed to happen. That’s all I can do, but it’s something.”

Thus Eimear McBride wrote in the Irish Times recently after returning from a seven-day visit to the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

“Living in the West Bank is like being trapped in a cage,” she continued. “The walls of the cage are being wound ever tighter around the Palestinian people. It’s hard to see that kind of suffering and believe there is an end in sight.”

McBride is author of the brilliant book, *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing*, published in 2013, winner of the Goldsmiths Prize that year and, the following year, of the Baileys Women’s Prize for Fiction. She had travelled with photojournalist Taiye Selasi, the Indian novelist Hari Kunzru and Israeli writer Ala Hlehel.

They were among a group of more than 30 writers invited by *Breaking the Silence* to visit the region and to contribute a chapter each to a book to be published in 2017 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Six-Day War and the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights and east Jerusalem. Others taking part will include the Irish writer Colm Toibin and Nobel Prize winner Mario Vargas Llosa.

*Breaking the Silence* comprises Israeli soldiers who have served in the Occupied Territories. They gather and publish testimonies from fellow soldiers to reveal the truth of life under occupation. Spokespersons for *Breaking the Silence* have visited Northern Ireland in recent years to describe their aims and activities to audiences of mainly pro-Palestinian activists and Christian groups.

Meanwhile, back in the USA, presidential candidates are striving to outdo one another in their pledges, if elected, to do everything in their power to defend the occupation, increase arms supplies to the Israeli defence forces and generally put the weight of the US behind Israel’s maintenance of the oppression of Palestinians.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) has just held its annual gathering in Washington, attended by presidential hopefuls and a concatenation of congresspersons anxious to avoid the appearance of being insufficiently supportive of whatever it is Israel happens to be doing to suppress Palestinian rights.

The current leader in the Republican race, Donald Trump, reportedly drew wild applause with his promise to bow to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and tear up the nuclear deal with Iran, negotiated last year by Barack Obama. He condemned the knife murders of Israeli civilians by Palestinians while offering not a word of disapproval

**Breaking the Silence** comprises Israeli soldiers who have served in the Occupied Territories. They gather and publish testimonies from fellow soldiers to reveal the truth of life under occupation

## TRUTH TELLING

**Hillary Clinton announced that the first leader she would invite to the White House would be Netanyahu**

of Israel's use of artillery, missiles and planes to murder Palestinians.

Coming to the podium after Trump, Ted Cruz had to go one better. He declared that there was no such place as Palestine and, therefore, no need for restraint in taking it over.

Hillary Clinton's most popular promise was to use the power of the presidency to combat the campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS). She, too, undertook to increase arms supplies to Israel and announced that the first leader she would invite to the White House would be Netanyahu – a direct repudiation of Obama's refusal to invite Netanyahu when the Israeli prime minister turned up in the US to campaign against Obama's Iran deal.

Interestingly enough, Bernie Sanders, the only Jewish candidate still standing, was the only one who dared skip the convention. His offer to appear by video-link was dismissed by an affronted AIPAC leadership: how dare he not come when called? In a letter to the convention, Sanders declared backing for an (eventual) end to the occupation but was

careful to speak of the safety of Palestinians, rather than of a safe Palestinian homeland.

Still, against a background of the violent rhetoric of his rivals, Sanders was relatively progressive.

The soldiers of Breaking the Silence have joined with the writers to try and break through obdurate resistance to observable truth and to encourage a no-holds-barred dialogue on the future of Palestine/Israel.

They have the goodwill of organizations such as Jewish Voice for Peace, Jews for Justice for Palestinians, the human rights group B'Tselem and many others – including the BDS campaign – that earnestly desire a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Eimear McBride is wonderful writer who has never BEFORE been associated with taking a political stance. Perhaps some of those who continue to ignore the case for the Palestinians will reflect on what she has to say – and think again.

**CT**

*Eamonn McCann is a writer and social activist based in Derry, Northern Ireland. This article was first published in the Belfast Telegraph.*

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# Labour Party in the grip of Zionist inquisition

**Stuart Littlewood** looks at the manufactured row over Zionism and anti-Semitism that is causing serious problems for Jeremy Corbyn

The orchestrated smear campaign against pro-Palestine sympathizers sent me reaching for my pen. But musician Gilad Atzmon, too, was eyeing the Labour Party's crazed witch hunt for "anti-Semites" with misgiving and had already declared, in his usual robust way, that Labour under Jeremy Corbyn was not so much a party as a piece of Zionist-occupied territory.

Writing in his blog – [www.gilad.co.uk](http://www.gilad.co.uk) – in an essay titled *The Protocols of the Elders of the Labour*, about Corbyn and the Labour Party's shadow finance minister John McDonnell's servile commitment to expel anyone whose remarks might be interpreted by the Zionist mafioso as hateful or simply upsetting to Jews, Atzmon concludes: "Corbyn's Labour is now unequivocally a spineless club of Shabbos Goyim," which I take to mean non-Jewish dogsbodies who do menial jobs that Jews are forbidden to do for religious reasons.

"The Labour party's policies," writes Atzmon, "are now compatible with Jewish culture: intolerant to the core and concerned primarily with the imaginary suffering of one people only. These people are not the working class, they are probably the most privileged ethnic group in Britain. Corbyn's Labour is a Zionist occupied territory... It proves my thesis that the Left is not a friend of Palestine, the oppressed or the workless people.

"I would have never believed that Jeremy Corbyn would engage in such colossally treacherous politics. I did not anticipate that Corbyn would become a Zionist lapdog. Corbyn was a great hope to many of us. I guess that the time has come to accept that the Left is a dead concept, it has nothing to offer."

## Zionist power play

The latest casualty in this ugly Zionist power play is former mayor of London Ken Livingstone. In a heated public spat with one of the party's chief inquisitors, MP John Mann, he had the temerity to defend a female MP, Naz Shah, who had fallen foul of the party's anti-Semitism police for comments made on Facebook before becoming an MP, where she had suggested that the state of Israel be transferred to the United States. She apologized, but Labour's Israel lobby went ballistic after raking up this old remark. Had they forgotten that their hero, David Ben-Gurion, himself, was mad-keen on population transfer... of Palestinian Arabs, that is? So what's to get excited about? Well, Mann happens to be chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Anti-Semitism, and one-sidedness is the name of his game.

What seems to have generated the greatest sound and fury is this observation by Livingstone: "When Hitler won his election in 1932, his policy then was that Jews should be

**In a heated public spat with one of the party's chief inquisitors, MP John Mann, former London mayor Ken Livingstone had the temerity to defend a female MP, Naz Shah, who had fallen foul of the party's anti-Semitism police for comments made on Facebook before becoming an MP**



Cartoon: Carlos Latuff (@Latuff Cartoons)

**It scarcely needs saying that Zionism may mean self-determination for the Jewish people, but it has cruelly denied the Palestinians their right to self-determination for decades**

moved to Israel. He was supporting Zionism before he went mad and ended up killing six million Jews.”

Joan Ryan MP, chair of Labour Friends of Israel, said: “To speak of Zionism – the right of the Jewish people to self-determination – and Hitler in the same sentence is quite breathtaking. I am appalled that Ken Livingstone has chosen to do so . . . He should be suspended from the Labour Party immediately.”

It scarcely needs saying that Zionism may mean self-determination for the Jewish people, but it has cruelly denied the Palestinians their right to self-determination for decades. Nevertheless Livingstone has been suspended from the party after 47 years’ membership.

Jonathan Arkush, the president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, can be relied on to put in his two-pennyworth on these occa-

sions, and he didn’t disappoint: “Ken Livingstone’s comments were abhorrent and beyond disgraceful. His latest comments combine Holocaust revisionism with anti-Semitism denial, when the evidence is there for all to see. He lacks any sense of decency. He must now be expelled from the Labour Party.”

And on the suspension of Naz Shah, Arkush was in overdrive: “If the Labour Party is to re-establish its credibility on this issue, it needs to take four important steps forward:

“First, there must be a credible inquiry into the entire Naz Shah episode. Secondly, the party has to take effective measures to eradicate anti-Semitism wherever it occurs within its membership. Thirdly, the leader must make it clear that allegations of anti-Semitism are not to be dismissed as arguments about Israel. Fourthly, Jeremy Corbyn must now respond to our repeated calls for

him to accept that his meetings with rank anti-Semites before he became leader were not appropriate and will not be repeated.

**Witch hunters' balloon pricked**

Whether Livingstone's claim that Hitler was a Zionist is correct, I know not and care not. He presumably checked his facts and was itching to score with this mischievous titbit. Whether that was a wise thing to do is a matter for idle chatter, not expulsion. Meanwhile Zionist hotheads inside and outside the party would do well to pay attention to the Jewish Socialists' Group, which has some sound advice for them and sticks a pin in their not-so-pretty balloon with this measured statement:

“Anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism are not the same. Zionism is a political ideology which has always been contested within Jewish life since it emerged in 1897, and it is entirely legitimate for non-Jews as well as Jews to express opinions about it, whether positive or negative. Not all Jews are Zionists. Not all Zionists are Jews.

“Criticism of Israeli government policy and Israeli state actions against the Palestinians is not anti-Semitism. Those who conflate criticism of Israeli policy with anti-Semitism, whether they are supporters or opponents of Israeli policy, are actually helping the anti-Semites. We reject any attempt, from whichever quarter, to place legitimate criticism of Israeli policy out of bounds.

“Accusations of anti-Semitism are currently being weaponized to attack the Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour Party with claims that Labour has a “problem” of anti-Semitism. This is despite Corbyn's long-standing record of actively opposing fascism and all forms of racism, and being a firm supporter of the rights of refugees and of human rights globally.

“A very small number of such cases seem to be real instances of anti-Semitism. Others represent genuine criticism of Israeli policy and support for Palestinian rights, but expressed in clumsy and ambiguous language,

which may unknowingly cross a line into anti-Semitism. Further cases are simply forthright expressions of support for Palestinian rights, which condemn Israeli government policy and aspects of Zionist ideology, and have nothing whatsoever to do with anti-Semitism.”

The JSG goes further and suggests that the attacks come from four main sources – the Conservative Party, Conservative-supporting media and pro-Zionist Israeli media sources, right-wing and pro-Zionist elements claiming to speak on behalf of the Jewish community, and opponents of Jeremy Corbyn within the Labour Party. These groups make common cause to wreck the Corbyn leadership, divert attention from Israeli government crimes and discredit those who dare to criticize Israeli policy or the Zionist enterprise.

In short, the JSG puts the witchfinder-generals firmly in their place.

Of course, if Labour – or the Conservatives – truly wished to be squeaky-clean in matters of racism they would disband their Israel fan clubs (i.e. Friends of Israel) and suspend all who refuse to condemn Israel's brutal acts of ethnic cleansing and other war crimes.

If people holding public office put themselves in a position where they are influenced by a foreign military power, they flagrantly breach the UK government's Principles of Public Life. There are far too many Labour and Conservative MPs and MEPs who fall into that category.

The Labour Party has announced it is considering reviewing its rules to send a clear message of zero-tolerance on anti-Semitism. For balance, why not match this with zero-tolerance of those who use the party as a platform for promoting the criminal Israeli regime and its continuing territorial ambitions? Go on, Labour, prove Atzmon wrong . . . prove the party is not Zionist-occupied territory. **CT**

*Stuart Littlewood's book Radio Free Palestine, can now be read on the internet at [www.radiofreepalestine.org.uk](http://www.radiofreepalestine.org.uk)*

**“Zionism is a political ideology that has always been contested within Jewish life since it emerged in 1897, and it is entirely legitimate for non-Jews as well as Jews to express opinions about it, whether positive or negative.**

# Baiting the Bear

**CM Hallinan** looks at the dangerous war games being played between the United States, NATO and Russia

**Is Russia really a military threat to the United States and its neighbours? Is it seriously trying to “revenge” itself for the 1989 collapse of the Soviet Union? Is it actively trying to rebuild the old Soviet empire?**

“**A**ggressive,” “revanchist,” “swaggering.” These are just some of the adjectives the mainstream press and leading US and European political figures are routinely inserting before the words “Russia,” and “Vladimir Putin.” It is a vocabulary most Americans have not seen or heard since the height of the Cold War.

The question is: Why?

Is Russia really a military threat to the United States and its neighbours? Is it seriously trying to take revenge for the 1989 collapse of the Soviet Union? Is it actively trying to rebuild the old Soviet empire? The answers to these questions are critical, because, for the first time since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, several nuclear-armed powers are on the edge of a military conflict with fewer safeguards than existed 50 years ago.

Consider the following events:

- NATO member Turkey shoots down a Russian warplane.
- Russian fighter-bombers come within 30 feet of a US guided missile destroyer, and a Russian fighter does a barrel roll over a US surveillance plane. Several US senators call for a military response to such encounters in the future.
- NATO and the US begin deploying three combat brigades – about 14,000 troops and their equipment – in several

countries that border Russia, and Washington has more than quadrupled its military spending in the region.

- US State Department officials accuse Russia of “dismantling” arms control agreements, while Moscow charges that Washington is pursuing several destabilizing weapons programs.

- Both NATO and the Russians have carried out large war games on one another’s borders and plan more in the future, although the highly respected European Leadership Network (ELN) warns that the manoeuvres are creating mistrust.

In the scary aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis, the major nuclear powers established some ground rules to avoid the possibility of nuclear war, including the so-called hot line between Washington and Moscow. But, as the threat of nuclear holocaust faded, many of those safeguards were allowed to lapse, creating what the ELN calls a “dangerous situation.”

According to a recent report by the ELN, since March of last year there have been more than 60 incidents that had “the potential to trigger a major crisis between a nuclear armed state and a nuclear armed alliance.” The report warns that, “There is today no agreement between NATO and Russia on how to manage close military encounters.”

Such agreements do exist, but they are



**DEFENDING AGAINST THE RUSSIANS, NOT TERRORISTS: The Lockheed Martin F35 Lightning II.**

Photo: Wikipedia

bilateral and don't include most alliance members. Of 28 NATO members, 11 have memorandums on how to avoid military escalation at sea, but only the US, Canada and Greece have what are called Preventing Dangerous Military Activities (DMA) agreements that cover land and air as well. In any case, there are no such agreements with the NATO alliance as a whole.

### **Tough talking**

The lack of such agreements was starkly demonstrated in the encounter between Russian aircraft and the US. The incident took place less than 70 miles off Baltiysk, home of Russia's Baltic Sea Fleet, and led to an alarming exchange in the Senate Armed Services Committee among Republican John McCain, Democrat Joe Donnelly, and US Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, soon to as-

sume command of US forces in Europe.

**McCain:** "This may sound a little tough, but should we make an announcement to the Russians that if they place the men and women on board navy ships in danger, that we will take appropriate action?"

**Scaparrotti:** "That should be known, yes."

**Donnelly:** "Is there a point . . . where we tell them in advance enough, the next time it doesn't end well for you?"

**Scaparrotti:** "We should engage them and make clear what is acceptable. Once we make that known we have to enforce it."

For the Americans, the Russian fly-by was "aggressive." For the Russians, US military forces getting within spitting range of their Baltic Fleet is the very definition of "aggressive." What if someone on the

**What if someone on the destroyer panicked and shot down the plane?**

**From Moscow's point of view, the US is continuing to spread its network of anti-missile systems in Europe and Asia, which the Russians see as a threat to their nuclear force**

destroyer panicked and shot down the plane? Would the Russians have responded with an anti-ship missile? Would the US have retaliated and invoked Article 5 of the NATO Treaty, bringing the other 27 members into the fray? Faced by the combined power of NATO, would the Russians – feeling their survival at stake – consider using a short-range nuclear weapon? Would the US then attempt to take out Moscow's nuclear missiles with its new hypersonic glide vehicle? Would that, in turn, kick in the chilling logic of thermonuclear war: Use your nukes or lose them?

Far-fetched? Unfortunately, not at all. The world came within minutes of a nuclear war during the Cuban missile crisis, and, as researcher Eric Schlosser demonstrated in his book, *Command and Control*, the US came distressingly close at least twice more by accident.

One of the problems about nuclear war is that it is almost impossible to envision. The destructive powers of today's weapons have nothing in common with the tiny bombs that incinerated Hiroshima and Nagasaki, so experience is not much of a guide. Suffice it to say, just a small portion of world's nukes would end civilization as we know it, and a general exchange could possibly extinguish human life.

With such an outcome at least in the realm of possibility, it becomes essential to step back and try to see the world through another's eyes.

Is Russia really a danger to the US and its neighbours? NATO points to Russia's 2008 war with Georgia and its 2014 intervention in eastern Ukraine as examples of "Russian aggression."

But from Moscow, the view is very different. In 1990, US Secretary of State James Baker and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl pledged to then-Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO would not move eastward, nor recruit former members of the East bloc military alliance, the

Warsaw Pact. By 1995 NATO had enlisted Pact members Romania, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Bulgaria and Slovakia, and it signed on Montenegro this year. Georgia is currently being considered, and there is a push to bring Ukraine aboard. From Moscow's perspective, NATO is not only moving east, but encircling Russia.

"I don't think many people understand the visceral way Russia views NATO and the European Union as an existential threat," says US Admiral Mark Ferguson, commander of US naval forces in Europe.

Most NATO members have no interest in starting a fight with Russia, but others sound like they think it wouldn't be a bad idea. On April 15, Witold Waszczykowski, the foreign minister of Poland's right-wing government, told reporters that Russia is "more dangerous than the Islamic State," because Moscow is an "existential threat to Europe." The minister made his comments at a NATO conference discussing the deployment of a US armoured brigade on Poland's eastern border.

Is Russia reneging on arms control agreements? The charge springs from the fact that Moscow has refused to consider cutting more of its nuclear weapons, is boycotting nuclear talks, is deploying intermediate range nuclear missiles, and is backing off a conventional weapons agreement. But again, Moscow sees all that very differently.

### **Spreading network**

From Moscow's point of view, the US is continuing to spread its network of anti-missile systems in Europe and Asia, which Russian sees as a threat to its nuclear force (as does China). And as far as "reneging" goes, it was the US that dumped the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, not Russia,

The US is also pouring billions of dollars into "modernizing" its nuclear weapons. It also proposes using intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) to carry conventional

warheads (if you see one coming, how do you know it's not a nuke?), and is planning to deploy high velocity glide vehicles that will allow the US to strike targets worldwide with devastating accuracy. And since NATO is beefing up its forces and marching east, why should Russia tie itself to a conventional weapons treaty?

What about Russia's seizure of the Crimea? According to the US State Department, redrawing European boundaries is not acceptable in the 21st-century – unless you are Kosovo breaking away from Serbia under an umbrella of NATO air power, in which case it's fine. Residents of both regions voted overwhelmingly to secede.

Georgia? The Georgians stupidly started it.

### Silly season

But if Russia is not a threat, then why the campaign of vilification, the damaging economic sanctions, and the provocative military actions?

First, it is the silly season – American elections – and bear baiting is an easy way to look “tough.” It is also a tried and true tactic of the US armaments industry to keep its production lines humming and its bottom lines rising. The Islamic State is scary, but you don't need big-ticket weapons systems to fight it. The \$1.5-trillion F-35s are for the Russkies, not terrorists.

There are also those who still dream of regime change in Russia. Certainly that was in the minds of the neocons when they used the National Endowment for Democracy and Freedom House to engineer – at the cost of \$5-billion – the coup that toppled Ukraine into NATO's camp. The New American Century gang and its think tanks – who brought you Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria – would love to leverage Russia out of Central Asia.

The most frightening aspect of current East-West tension is that there is virtually no discussion of the subject, and when

there is it consists largely of distorted history and gratuitous insults. Vladimir Putin might not be a nice guy, but the evidence he is trying to re-establish some Russian empire, and is a threat to his neighbours or the US, is thin to non-existent. His 2014 speech at the Valdai International Discussion Club is more common sense than bombast.

Expansionist? Russia has two bases in the Middle East and a handful in Central Asia. The US has 662 bases around the world and Special Forces (SOF) deployed in between 70 and 90 countries at any moment. Last year SOFs were active in 147 countries. The US is actively engaged in five wars and is considering a sixth in Libya. Russian military spending will fall next year, and the US will out-spend Moscow by a factor of 10. Who, in this comparison, looks threatening?

There are a number of areas where cooperation with Russia could pay dividends. Without Moscow there would be no nuclear agreement with Iran, and the Russians can play a valuable role in resolving the Syrian civil war. That, in turn, would have a dramatic effect on the numbers of migrants trying to crowd into Europe.

Instead, an April 20 meeting between NATO ministers and Russia ended in “profound disagreements” according to alliance head Jens Stoltenberg. Russian ambassador to NATO, Alexander Grushko said that the continued deployment of armed forces on its borders makes it impossible to have a “meaningful dialogue.”

We are baiting the bear, not a sport that ever ends well.

**CT**

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**The Islamic State is scary but you don't need big-ticket weapons systems to fight it. The \$1.5-trillion F-35s are for the Russkies, not terrorists**

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