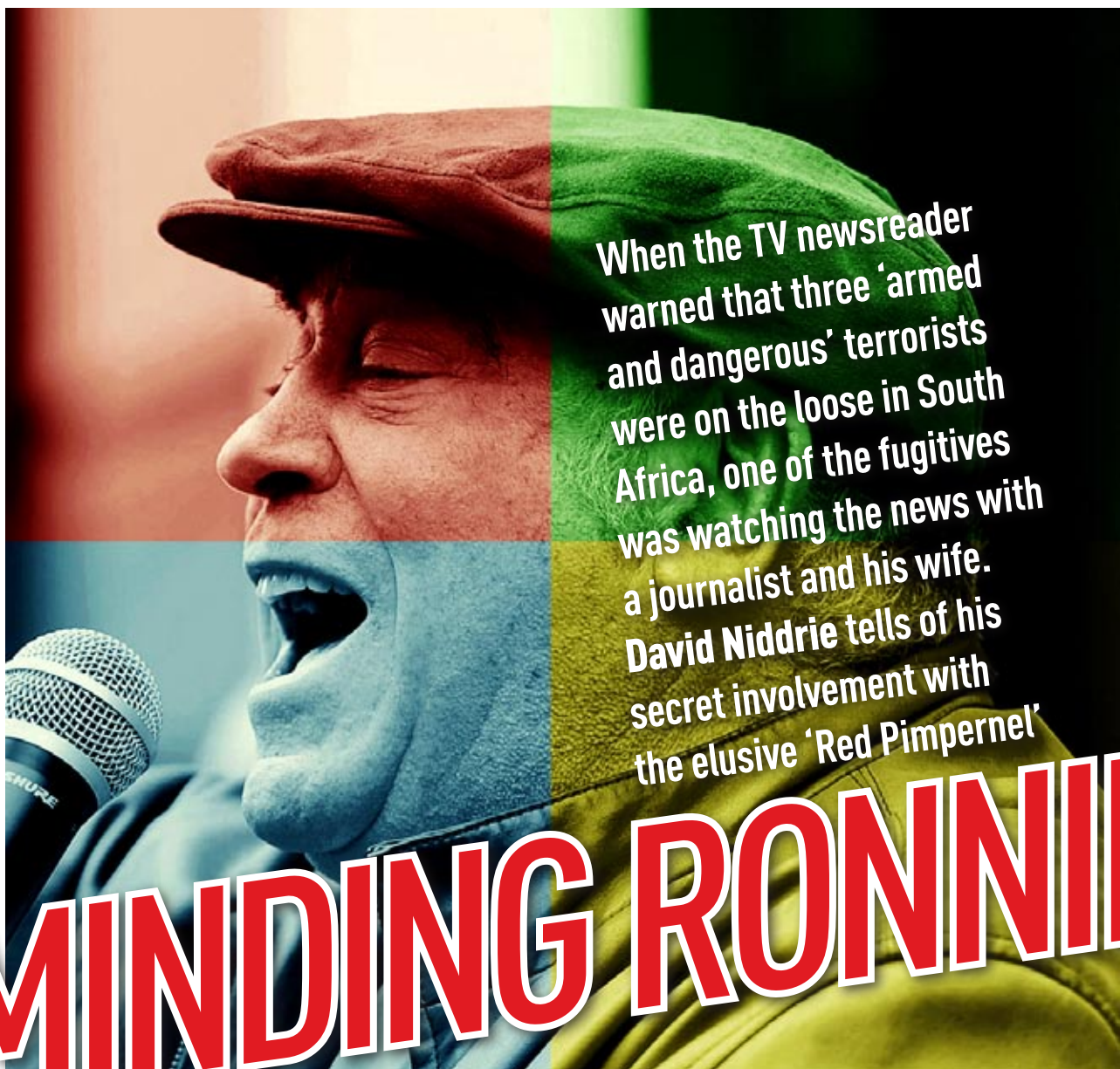


REMEMBERING HANOI HANNAH | DON NORTH
BUGGERED IF I KNOW WHERE I AM | JOSHUA NASH
THE EYES HAVE IT | RICHARD SANDLER

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING | PHOTOS WORTH SEEING

ISSUE 127



When the TV newsreader warned that three 'armed and dangerous' terrorists were on the loose in South Africa, one of the fugitives was watching the news with a journalist and his wife. David Niddrie tells of his secret involvement with the elusive 'Red Pimpernel'

MINDING RONNIE



Cover:

Ronnie Kasrils, the Red Pimpernel
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Editor: Tony Sutton – editor@coldtype.net

A modern tale of Dickensian cruelty

Ken Loach's film 'I, Daniel Blake' exposes the vicious face of Britain's ruling elite, writes **Daniel Margrain**

The mismanagement of the British economy by the New Labour and Tory governments that followed the global crash of 2008 led to the poorest and weakest in society suffering savage cuts and austerity. This is the context in which British film director Ken Loach denounced what he described as the government's "conscious cruelty," following the screening of his latest film, *I, Daniel Blake* at the Cannes Film Festival five months ago.

Loach's film questions the widely-accepted notion that the poor should take the blame for an economic predicament that is beyond their control.

I, Daniel Blake, which premiered in London on October 18, is the story of a skilled worker who, after having suffered a heart attack, is almost suicidal after trying to navigate the uncaring, remote and labyrinthine "work capability assessment" process that is integral to the UK benefit system.

Given the government's awareness of the causal link between its work capability assessment programme and suicide rates, the hatred they have towards the poor can be said to be pathological.

Cheque book euthanasia

The governments strategy of "cheque book euthanasia" is, in principle, similar to the way in which Nazi Germany, over time, created – through a strategy of divide and rule

– a climate in which the marginalisation and the dehumanisation of targeted minorities were blamed for the ills of society. In Germany, it was the Jews who bore the brunt of this treatment as the state methodically marked them out for destruction, first by innuendo, then by legal sanction, and finally by the direct action of rounding up and exterminating them.

Other groups, such as gypsies, communists, homosexuals and those with permanent disabilities, were labelled as being "undesirables," a drain on society and therefore other targets for elimination. The process by which the Final Solution was implemented was as gradual as it was deliberate. And, by cultivating the notion that the unemployed and disabled are somehow "undeserving" is to implant in the public consciousness the notion that some human beings are less worthy than others, are not a legitimate part of society and are therefore "sub-human."

I'm not suggesting a direct comparison between Nazi Germany and the contemporary British state. I am, however, arguing that there are disturbing parallels and similar types of trends that blinded Germans to the potential of Adolf Hitler that can be found within our British society today. What is certain, is that the universal social security system, based on proposals set out in the Beveridge Report of 1942, has been in steady retreat since the mid 1970s.

Given the government's awareness of the causal link between its work capability assessment programme and suicide rates, the hatred they have towards the poor can be said to be pathological

SCORNFUL ELITE



BACK TO DICKENS: Still from the film, *I, Daniel Blake*, directed by Ken Loach.

History has shown that the middle classes have been happy to accede to the divide-and-rule strategies of the ruling elites so long as they themselves are not directly affected

The Conservative government under David Cameron, and now Theresa May, seem to be taking this ethos several stages further, with their Dickensian “back to the future” policy not experienced since the Poor Law of the 19th-century.

The Poor Law became a national system of state support whereby the destitute would receive public assistance on the condition that they laboured in the state institution known as the workhouse, in conditions that were so harsh that the “able-bodied” unemployed would do virtually anything rather than apply for relief.

The only objective difference between then and now is there is no workhouse in existence. However, there is no reason to believe that the political establishment will not consider the re-introduction of a variation of the workhouse in the foreseeable future.

History has shown that the middle classes have been happy to accede to the divide-and-rule strategies of the ruling elites so long as they themselves are not directly affected. The middle classes of the mid-19-

th century, for example, tolerated the poor living in overcrowded squalor and dying of disease or hunger, until they realised that disease could spread from poor to rich neighbourhoods. That’s when they pushed for the building of sewage systems, clearing overcrowded city centres, the supplying clean water, and the provision of gas to light streets and heat homes. Then, as now, the ruling classes attitude towards the poor was, at best, indifferent.

Cheap labour

Women and children provided the cheapest and most adaptable labour for the spinning mills, and they were crammed in with no thought for the effect on their health or on the care of younger children. By the 1850s, however, the more far-sighted capitalists began to fear that future reserves of labour power were being exhausted. In 1871, Poor Law inspectors reported: “It is well established that no town-bred boys of the poorer classes, especially those reared in London, ever attains . . . four feet ten and a half inches in height, or a chest of 29 inches at the

age of 15. A stunted growth is characteristic of the race.”

The Mansion House Committee of 1893 drew the conclusion that “the obvious remedy . . . is to improve the stamina, physical and moral, of the London working class.”

A succession of laws restricted the hours in which children could work, and banned the employment of women in industries that might damage their chances of successful pregnancy. However, the ruling and middle classes of the Victorian era argued that they were justified in treating the unemployed, sick and disabled in the manner that they did was because they saw them as a “drain on society,” an argument that was reinforced by the pseudo-scientific writings of the 18th century Anglican clergyman, Robert Malthus.

According to Malthus, population growth will inevitably lead to resource depletion because, he claimed, there is a tendency for the mass of the population to reproduce at a greater rate than the ability of existing populations to produce food under conditions where living standards exceed the bare level of subsistence.

Malthus’s theory of population was invoked by 19th-century capitalists and their apologists to justify paying workers a bare subsistence and no more. This myth legitimised, in part, the thinking that underpinned Hitler’s extermination policy, and continues to shape the decision-making of today’s social policy-makers.

Malthus’s theory helps explain why so many people believe that the “conscious cruelty” illustrated in Ken Loach’s film, which ultimately results in the death of the poor and the weak, is a price worth paying.

Low-lying fruit

It is this kind of cruelty and pathological hatred of the working class by the ruling class that has continued to resonate throughout the centuries, and which Loach has managed to capture so movingly on film. During the press conference at Cannes, Loach

related the themes in *I, Daniel Blake* to a quotation by Bertolt Brecht – “and I always thought the simplest of words must suffice. When I say what things are like, it will break the hearts of all.”

In the film Loach was trying “to say what things are like, because it not only breaks your heart, but it should make you angry . . . In the places where . . . [the governments ‘work capability’ assessments] take place, some people who work there have been given instructions on how to deal with potential suicides, so they know this is going on . . . It is deeply shocking that this is happening at the heart of our world . . . the heart of it is a shocking, shocking policy.”

Paul Laverty, the film’s scriptwriter, said: “The people who are disabled have suffered six times more from the cuts than anyone else, and there was a remarkable phrase by one of the civil servants we heard who talked about the cuts, who said “low-lying fruit;” in other words the easy targets. So this story could have been much harsher, it could have been somebody with mental health difficulties . . . we could have told a story from someone who is much more vulnerable, much more heartbreaking.”

Laverty added: “I think it’s very important to remember too the systematic nature of it . . . talking to whistle blowers, people who worked inside the Department of Work and Pensions . . . there are several people we met, and they spoke to us anonymously . . . They said they were humiliated how they were forced to treat the public. So there is nothing accidental about it, and it is affecting a huge section of the population.”

The commercial and critical success of *I, Daniel Blake* is a testament to the growing awareness of the repugnant way in which the political establishment in Britain treats so many of their citizens. Whether the film will be as influential in affecting positive social change as one of Loach’s earliest films, *Cathy Come Home*, remains to be seen.

Malthus’s theory helps explain why so many people believe that the “conscious cruelty” illustrated in Ken Loach’s film, which ultimately results in the death of the poor and the weak, is a price worth paying

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Daniel Margrain, who lives in London, has a master’s degree in globalization, culture and the city. More of his political articles may be found at his blog at www.danielmargrain.com

CT

A government suddenly gone tone deaf

Rick Salutin wonders how Canada's Liberals managed to lose the perfect pitch they enjoyed pre- and post-election

Why should working people pay the price while the plutocrats get richer?

How does a government suddenly go tone deaf? It's as if Canada's Liberal cabinet was frolicking along among its dotting public when an explosion went off at close range, rattling their hearing. Before, they had perfect pitch – in opposition, during last year's election, even after it – for instance, in how they handled the Syrian refugee issue. Then Kaboom – they lose their sense of balance, they can't even hear themselves. Consider:

1. Chrystia Freeland walks out on the CETA talks

Our trade minister Chrystia Freeland seemed near tears over not closing her deal with the EU. There's now a tentative resolution but if tears must be shed here it should be for the generations whose lives have been wasted by these deals for 30 years. That's a political reality, not just a human one: it fuelled the Brexit, Sanders and Trump movements.

Did she not get the memo about free trade deals being no longer immune from criticism – even at official levels? The US Congressional Budget Office says, contrary to hype, the deals have “relatively small positive impacts.” An IMF research piece, “Liberalism Oversold,” says, “Instead of delivering growth, some neo-liberal policies have increased inequality.” A Tufts

University study calls previous models far too cheery; actually CETA could lead to “net losses in terms of employment, personal incomes and GDP in both Canada and the EU.” Economist Dean Baker says they're about “redistributing income upward.”

Inequality is an evil that Freeland knows well. It was the theme of her book, *Plutocrats*. She enthuses over free trade because it has raised levels in the Third World and that's a serious argument in its favour. But it did so while undermining the lives and bargaining power of working people in the developed countries: that's serious too. Why should they pay the price while the plutocrats get richer? As a minister, you ought to publicly acknowledge and deal with these questions – versus suffering over your own foiled projects.

2. Bombardier, about to get another billion in public money, announces 2,000 job cuts

The company's CEO said it's “to ensure the future of the company.” Okay, that's his job. But innovation minister Navdeep Bains echoed him, literally: “As the CEO mentioned [ECHOECHOECHO], this is their way of reorganizing . . . this is such an important company . . . we want to make sure the company is set up for success . . .” Doesn't Bombardier have its own PR team? It sounds like, “What's good for

General Motors is good for the USA,” from the 1950s. He didn’t even add the “good for the USA/Canada” part. This goes beyond tin ear, tone deaf syndrome. He bowed perfunctorily toward workers’ job losses, but even a CEO would. Who does he identify with? Scary question. He said Bombardier’s CEO was in touch with him the day before. He didn’t say anything about talking to the union or workers but why would he? They’ve been neutered by free trade deals that shipped jobs elsewhere and left them without significant leverage.

3. Justin Trudeau at a labour youth congress has part of the audience turn their backs on him.

“I think it reflects poorly on everyone who does want to listen and engage,” said the prime minister, sounding for the first time ever like your vice-principal. Earlier, his finance minister, Bill Morneau, told a Liberal meeting that eternal employment precarity for youth is “going to happen, we have to accept that.” Spoken like someone who won’t ever need to experience it. He said he wants to “soften the blow,” which is like telling

seniors that you know they’re going to be eating cat food but you’ll help them adjust. Trudeau said something just as offensive when he told the young workers that he’d addressed their issues by raising pensions. So you’re in your 20s and by the time you’re 65, you’ll have a pittance set aside. All that comes in between is your life.

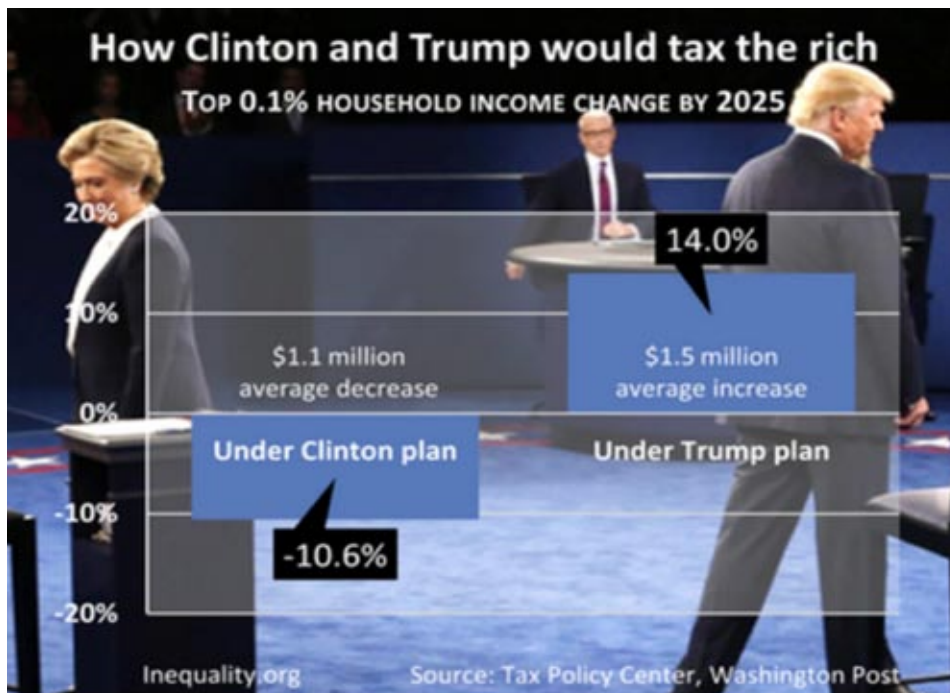
Jean Chrétien didn’t reach this point of disconnection till four years after becoming PM when a waitress asked him something abrasive in a town hall. He never did another one. He used to love those settings.

Why does it happen? Life gets too comfy? (You never have to worry about your dry cleaning, said an ex-cabinet minister. It just gets done.) Or is it the Yes Minister factor: those silky deputies who effectively replace your outlook on the real world. When you were in opposition, the view was relatively unobstructed. **CT**

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Rick Salutin is an author and activist based in Toronto. This article was first published in the Toronto Star.

Trudeau he told young workers that he’d addressed their issues by raising pensions. So you’re in your 20s and by the time you’re 65, you’ll have a pittance set aside. All that comes in between is your life

BY THE NUMBERS www.inequality.org



FREE TRADE PROTESTS



Berlin – Photo: Jakob Huber

Germany (and the rest of Europe) says No to trade deals

Thousands of outraged protesters gathered in Germany and other European cities during September and October to protest plans for two free trade plans, negotiated behind closed doors, with Canada – CETA (the Comprehensive Economic Free Trade Agreement); and the United States – the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). The protests are expected to grow as the big business-friendly deals get closer to ratification by the European parliament. Recent surveys have shown that citizens fear the deal will lower standards for products, consumer protection and the labour market.



Munich – Francaville Daniele

FREE TRADE PROTESTS



Cologne – Photo: Jörn Neumann



Leipzig – Photo: Gustav Pursche



Stuttgart – Photo: Ferdinando Iannone

All photographs from protests in Germany
courtesy of Campact newsagency, via Flickr.com

Good deaths in Mosul, bad deaths in Aleppo

As the US-backed offensive in Mosul, Iraq, begins, the mainstream media readies the American people to blame the terrorists for civilian casualties. But the opposite rules apply to Syria's Aleppo, reports **Robert Parry**

In the case of Mosul, the million-plus residents are not portrayed as likely victims of American airstrikes and Iraqi government ground assaults, though surely many will die during the offensive

Note how differently The New York Times prepares the American public for civilian casualties from the new US-backed Iraqi government assault on the city of Mosul to free it from the Islamic State, compared to unrelenting condemnation of the Russian-backed Syrian government assault on neighbourhoods of east Aleppo held by Al Qaeda.

In the case of Mosul, the million-plus residents are not portrayed as likely victims of American airstrikes and Iraqi government ground assaults, though surely many will die during the offensive. Instead, the civilians are said to be eagerly awaiting liberation from the Islamic State terrorists and their head-chopping brutality.

"Mosul's residents are hoarding food and furtively scrawling resistance slogans on walls," writes Times' veteran war correspondent Rod Nordland about this week's launch of the US-backed government offensive. "Those forces will fight to enter a city where for weeks the harsh authoritarian rule of the Islamic State . . . has sought to crack down on a population eager to either escape or rebel, according to interviews with roughly three dozen people from Mosul. . . ."

"Just getting out of Mosul had become difficult and dangerous: Those who were caught faced million-dinar fines, unless they were former members of the Iraqi Army or

police, in which case the punishment was beheading. . . . Graffiti and other displays of dissidence against the Islamic State were more common in recent weeks, as were executions when the vandals were caught."

The Times article continues: "Mosul residents chafed under social codes banning smoking and calling for splashing acid on body tattoos, summary executions of perceived opponents, whippings of those who missed prayers or trimmed their beards, and destroying 'un-Islamic' historical monuments."

So, the message is clear: if the inevitable happens and the US-backed offensive kills a number of Mosul's civilians, including children, the New York Times' readers have been hardened to accept this "collateral damage" as necessary to free the city from blood-thirsty extremists. The fight to crush these crazies is worth it, even if there are significant numbers of civilians killed in the "cross-fire."

And we've seen similar mainstream media treatment of other US-organised assaults on urban areas, such as the devastation of the Iraqi city, Fallujah, in 2004 when US Marines routed Iraqi insurgents from the city while levelling or severely damaging most of the city's buildings and killing hundreds of civilians. But those victims were portrayed in the Western press as "human

shields,” shifting the blame for their deaths onto the Iraqi insurgents.

Despite the fact that US forces invaded Iraq in defiance of international law – and thus all the thousands of civilian deaths across Iraq from the “shock and awe” US firepower should be considered war crimes – there was virtually no such analysis allowed into the pages of the New York Times or the other mainstream US media. Such talk was forced to the political fringes, as it continues to be today. War-crimes tribunals are only for the other guys.

Lust to kill children

By contrast, the Times routinely portrays the battle for east Aleppo as simply a case of barbaric Russian and Syrian leaders bombing innocent neighbourhoods with no regard for the human cost, operating out of an apparent lust to kill children.

Rather than focusing on Al Qaeda’s harsh rule of east Aleppo, the Times told its readers in late September how to perceive the Russian-Syrian offensive to drive out Al Qaeda and its allies. A Sept. 25 article by Anne Barnard and Somini Sengupta, titled Syria and Russia Appear Ready to Scorch Aleppo, began:

“Make life intolerable and death likely. Open an escape route, or offer a deal to those who leave or surrender. Let people trickle out. Kill whoever stays. Repeat until a deserted cityscape is yours. It is a strategy that both the Syrian government and its Russian allies have long embraced to subdue Syrian rebels, largely by crushing the civilian populations that support them.

“But in the past few days, as hopes for a revived cease-fire have disintegrated at the United Nations, the Syrians and Russians seem to be mobilising to apply this kill-all-who-resist strategy to the most ambitious target yet: the rebel-held sections of the divided metropolis of Aleppo.”

Again, note how the “rebels” are portrayed as local heroes, rather than a collection of jihadists from both inside and out-

side Syria fighting under the operational command of Al Qaeda’s Nusra Front, which recently underwent a name change to the Syria Conquest Front. But the name change and the pretence about “moderate” rebels are just more deceptions.

As journalist/historian Gareth Porter has written: “Information from a wide range of sources, including some of those the United States has been explicitly supporting, makes it clear that every armed anti-Assad organisation unit in those provinces [of Idlib and Aleppo] is engaged in a military structure controlled by Nusra militants. All of these rebel groups fight alongside the Nusra Front and coordinate their military activities with it . . .

“At least since 2014 the Obama administration has armed a number of Syrian rebel groups even though it knew the groups were coordinating closely with the Nusra Front, which was simultaneously getting arms from Turkey and Qatar. The strategy called for supplying TOW anti-tank missiles to the ‘Syrian Revolutionaries Front’ (SRF) as the core of a client Syrian army that would be independent of the Nusra Front.

“However, when a combined force of Nusra and non-jihadist brigades including the SRF captured the Syrian army base at Wadi al-Deif in December 2014, the truth began to emerge. The SRF and other groups to which the United States had supplied TOW missiles had fought under Nusra’s command to capture the base.”

Arming al Qaeda

This reality – the fact that the US government is indirectly supplying sophisticated weaponry to al Qaeda – is rarely mentioned in the mainstream US news media, though one might think it would make for a newsworthy story. But it would undercut the desired propaganda narrative of “good guy” rebels fighting “bad guy” government backed by “ultra-bad guy” Russians.

What if Americans understood that their tax money and US weaponry were going to

The fact that the US government is indirectly supplying sophisticated weaponry to al Qaeda is rarely mentioned in the mainstream US news media, though one might think it would make for a newsworthy story

MEDIA BIAS

In September 2013, Israel's ambassador to the United States Michael Oren, then a close adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, told the Jerusalem Post that Israel favoured Syria's Sunni extremists over President Bashar al-Assad

aid the terrorist group that perpetrated the 9/11 attacks? What if they understood the larger historical context that Washington helped midwife the modern jihadist movement – and Al Qaeda – through the US/Saudi support for the Afghan mujahedeen in the 1980s?

And what if Americans understood that Washington's supposed regional "allies," including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and Israel, have sided with al Qaeda in Syria because of their intense hatred of Shiite-ruled Iran, an ally of Syria's secular government?

These al Qaeda sympathies have been known for several years but never get reported in the mainstream US press. In September 2013, Israel's ambassador to the United States Michael Oren, then a close adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, told the Jerusalem Post that Israel favoured Syria's Sunni extremists over President Bashar al-Assad.

"The greatest danger to Israel is by the strategic arc that extends from Tehran, to Damascus to Beirut. And we saw the Assad regime as the keystone in that arc," Oren told the Jerusalem Post in an interview. "We always wanted Bashar Assad to go, we always preferred the bad guys who weren't backed by Iran to the bad guys who were backed by Iran." He said this was the case even if the "bad guys" were affiliated with al Qaeda.

And, in June 2014, speaking as a former ambassador at an Aspen Institute conference, Oren expanded on his position, saying Israel would even prefer a victory by the brutal Islamic State over continuation of the Iranian-backed Assad in Syria. "From Israel's perspective, if there's got to be an evil that's got to prevail, let the Sunni evil prevail," Oren said.

But such cynical – and dangerous – realpolitik is kept from the American people. Instead, the Syrian conflict is presented as all about the children. There is also little said about how al Qaeda's Nusra Front and its allied jihadists keep the civilian population in east Aleppo essentially as "human

shields." When "humanitarian corridors" have been opened to allow civilians to escape, they had been fired on by the jihadists determined to keep as many people under their control as possible.

Propaganda fodder

By forcing the civilians to stay, al Qaeda and its allies can exploit the injuries and deaths of civilians, especially the children, for propaganda advantages.

Going along with al Qaeda's propaganda strategy, the Times and other mainstream US news outlets have kept the focus on the children. A Times dispatch on Sept. 27 begins: "They cannot play, sleep or attend school. Increasingly, they cannot eat. Injury or illness could be fatal. Many just huddle with their parents in windowless underground shelters – which offer no protection from the powerful bombs that have turned east Aleppo into a kill zone.

"Among the roughly 250,000 people trapped in the insurgent redoubt of the divided northern Syrian city are 100,000 children, the most vulnerable victims of intensified bombings by Syrian forces and their Russian allies. Though the world is jolted periodically by the suffering of children in the Syria conflict – the photographs of Alan Kurdi's drowned body and Omran Daqneesh's bloodied face are prime examples – dead and traumatized children are increasingly common."

This propagandistic narrative has bled into the US presidential campaign with Martha Raddatz, a moderator of the second presidential debate, incorporating much of the evil-Russians theme into a question that went so far as to liken the human suffering in Aleppo to the Holocaust, the Nazi extermination campaign against Jews and other minorities.

That prompted former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to repeat her call for an expanded US military intervention in Syria, including a "no-fly zone," which US military commanders say would require a massive

operation that would kill many Syrians, both soldiers and civilians, to eliminate Syria's sophisticated air-defence systems and its air force.

Based on the recent Wikileaks publication of Clinton's speeches to investment bankers and other special interests, we also know that she recognises the high human cost from this strategy. In one June 2013 speech, she said, "To have a no-fly zone you have to take out all of the air defence, many of which are located in populated areas. So our missiles, even if they are standoff missiles so we're not putting our pilots at risk - you're going to kill a lot of Syrians. So all of a sudden this intervention that people talk about so glibly becomes an American and NATO involvement where you take a lot of civilians."

Yet, during the campaign, Clinton has spoken glibly about her own proposal to impose a "no-fly zone" over Syria, which has become even more dangerous since 2015 when the Russians agreed to directly assist the Syrian government in fighting al Qaeda and the Islamic State.

Also, left unsaid about such a US intervention is that it could open the way for al Qaeda and/or its spin off Islamic State to defeat the Syrian army and gain control of Damascus, creating the potential for even a worse bloodbath against Christians, Shiites, Alawites, secular Sunnis and other "heretics." Not to mention the fact that a US-imposed "no-fly zone" would be a clear violation of international law.

Over the next few weeks, we are sure hear much about the Islamic State using the people of Mosul as "human shields" and thus excusing US bombs when they strike civilians targets and kill children. It will all be the terrorists' fault, except that an opposite set of "journalistic" rules will apply to Aleppo.

CT

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, America's Stolen Narrative, either in print here or as an e-book (from Amazon and barnesandnoble.com). This article first appeared at www.consortiumnews.com

We are sure hear much about the Islamic State using the people of Mosul as "human shields" and thus excusing US bombs when they strike civilians targets and kill children

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Minding Ronnie

When the TV newsreader warned that three ‘armed and dangerous’ terrorists were on the loose in South Africa, one of the fugitives was watching the news with a journalist and his wife. **David Niddrie** tells of his involvement with Ronnie Kasrils, the elusive ‘Red Pimpernel’

It’s 26 years this month since the English-language channel of South Africa’s state broadcaster, the SABC, broadcast a bizarre news item in its early evening broadcast, declaring the ANC’s Kasrils and three others were “armed and dangerous” terrorists on the loose.

The item, accompanied by pictures of Kasrils, was brief, but delivered with appropriately autocratic gravitas: “The police are appealing to members of the public for assistance in locating Ronald Kasrils and three other members of the African National Congress and South African Communist Party,” the anchor intoned. “The four are wanted in connection with Operation Vula, the plot to overthrow the government by force.”

The ‘news’ wasn’t bizarre because it was comprehensively inaccurate – that wasn’t uncommon for SABC news items by 1990. But it was bizarre because one of the four fugitives was dead – and the police knew it, having murdered him four months earlier and dumped his corpse into the Tugela River near Durban. And it was bizarre because, although Kasrils was armed (with a pistol he didn’t always carry with him) and, for an apartheid administration with its back to the wall, he was arguably dangerous, at that

time it would have been difficult to find a single South African TV viewer who didn’t know the police were hunting him and his two surviving comrades. It couldn’t conceivably be considered news.

By then Kasrils, the intelligence head of the ANC’s combat wing, Umkhonto weSizwe (MK) and its commissar Chris Hani had been avoiding arrest for four months. Kasrils’ immediate superior, Mac Maharaj, was already in detention – despite an indemnity from prosecution granted to all three to allow them to take part in negotiations for a truce between the ANC and the apartheid government. By November, Kasrils’ defiant response to the manhunt had earned him the nickname, “The Red Pimpernel” in hundreds of newspapers throughout the world.

At home in Johannesburg, my wife Collette and I missed that bulletin – we were putting our sons to bed. But we caught a repeat at 10 pm, when we watched it in our dining room – along with Kasrils, whom we had been “minding” for the previous four months.

Covert plan

The “Operation Vula” to which the SABC had referred was to a covert project, called Operation



After being on the run during 1990, Kasrils later became South Africa's Minister for Intelligence Services from 2004 to 2008.

Photo supplied by author

Vulindlela (“Open the road” in Zulu), that had been launched in the late 1980s by the then-outlawed ANC to infiltrate senior exiled officials back into South Africa to coordinate political and insurrectionary campaigns to overthrow the apartheid government.

Vula operatives also smuggled and hid large quantities of weapons into the country for use in the growing insurrection. It also made early use of telephone lines – well before the dawn of the internet – to transmit encrypted digital communication between South Africa, Zambia and London to allow near-instant command and decision-making in the fight against apartheid. The system allowed secret consultations between the exiled ANC leadership and Nelson Mandela, who was still jailed, although living in a warder’s house in the grounds of Victor Verster prison, near Cape Town.

The first Vula operative to re-enter South Africa in 1987 was Janet Love, a former white student activist with whom I had shared a house in

the late 1970s before she went into exile. Love, who was initially responsible for setting up safe houses in Durban and Johannesburg, avoided capture for four years. Others quickly followed, linking with local underground networks, one of which was headed by current South African Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan, and began to build the command and control structures the ANC needed to direct its revolution.

Several high profile ANC leaders – most of them also members of the South African Communist Party (SACP) – infiltrated back under Vula, after elaborately constructed alibis had been made for their absence from Lusaka and London. The cover for Mac Maharaj – Vula commander and veteran of Robben Island prison, where he transcribed most of Mandela’s memoirs – was that he’d suffered a medical collapse and had left for treatment in the USSR (detoxification, according to the Lusaka scuttlebutt). Soon afterwards, we heard that Kasrils had gone to Vietnam for treatment for a serious leg injury after

When you don't have nimble fingers, and are further encumbered by yellow kitchen gloves (we tried condoms, but they kept slipping off), inserting a few 35mm negatives into a box of tampons, resealing the box, and re-sealing the cellophane packaging can take hours

a car crash. Collette and I, veteran Lusaka watchers, wondered at the coincidence of two close comrades, integral to the ANC's underground activities, both leaving Lusaka at the same time. But we seemed to wonder alone, for subsequent events demonstrated that apartheid's supposedly infallible intelligence system had completely bought the cover stories.

Chris Hani, a growing legend among rank and file South African exiles, whose assassination in early 1993, while general secretary of the communist party, triggered the final push in negotiations to end apartheid, was part of the Vula network. Even current South African President Jacob Zuma made a token appearance. At the time, Zuma was head of ANC intelligence, where he had acquired a reputation for extremely rough treatment of suspected apartheid spies, and a partner to fellow president-to-be Thabo Mbeki in secret talks with apartheid's chief spy Neil Barnard.

Lifting 29-year ban on ANC

Then came FW de Klerk's announcement on February 2, 1990 that his government was lifting the 29-year ban on the ANC and other black political organisations. Still unsure of how seriously to take De Klerk's apparent olive branch – subsequent events would demonstrate the wisdom of this caution – the ANC decided to keep its underground structures, especially Vula, in place. So Maharaj, Kasrils and other leaders who were involved in Vula had to covertly leave South Africa so that they could openly “come home” as part of the ANC group granted indemnity from prosecution to participate in negotiations.

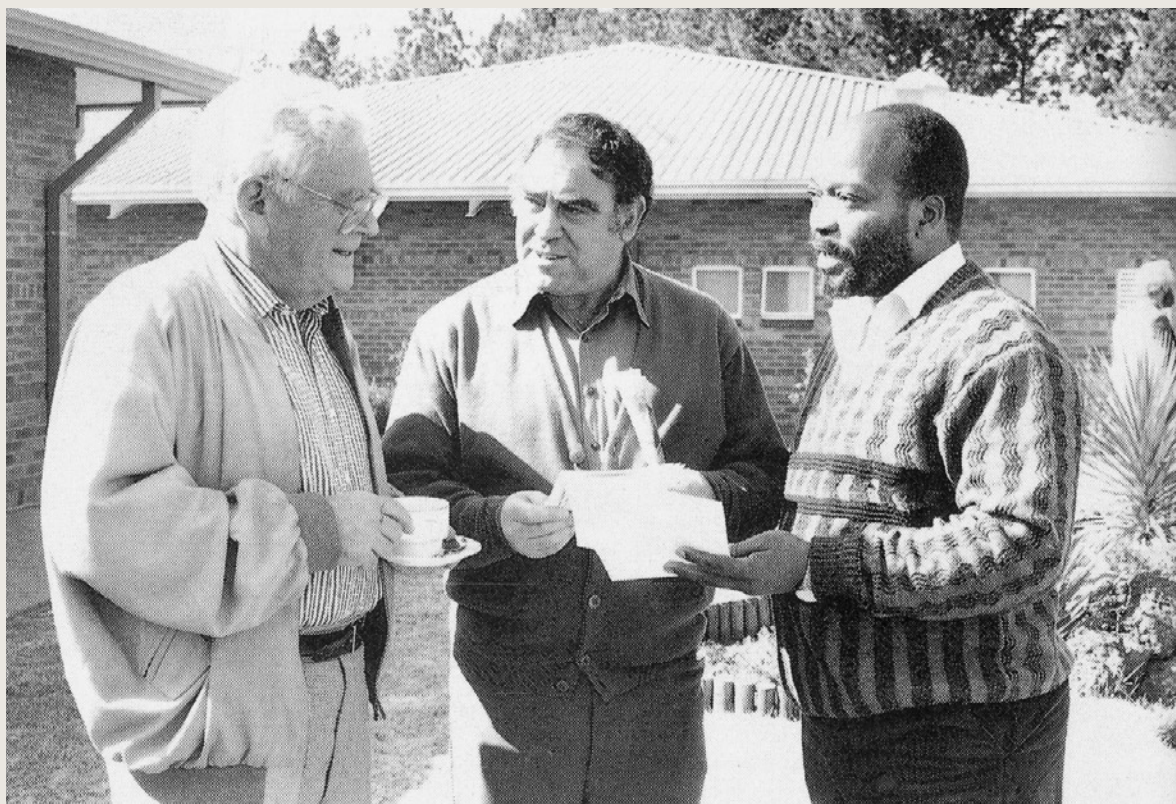
When Kasrils flew back into Johannesburg, I was at the airport, as a journalist, to meet him. We sat to chat for a few minutes, Kasrils with a walking stick to support the “injured” leg for which he'd received treatment in Vietnam. I surreptitiously checked the metal foot of his walk-

ing stick: it was virtually unmarked, confirming my assumption that he'd been in South Africa all along. By then, Collette and I knew that Maharaj had been back in the country, and we knew a little about Vula itself (although it would remain unknown to the security apparatus for another six months). For, in late 1989, Maharaj had made contact through Janet Love and came to our house and involved us on the fringes of Vula.

Collette and I were already ANC members – we had travelled to London to join the organisation in 1976 – at a time when membership earned a minimum of five years' South African jail time (Robben Island if you were black, Pretoria Central if you were white) with some torture thrown in. White members at that time probably numbered fewer than 100 but, after the student rebellion of June that year, ANC ranks began swelling as hundreds, then thousands, of young black rebels left the country to join MK, along with a small, but steadily growing, flow of white democrats.

In late 1977, Collette and I returned to Johannesburg, having received rudimentary communications training, some useful counter-surveillance techniques, an explanation of a conceptual framework called MCW (Military Combat Work) which had been adopted from Soviet experiences. I was 24, Collette two years younger; we got day jobs – we were both journalists – and settled down to become underground operatives.

Underground work is best summed up by that adage about war: Interminable boredom punctuated by moments of terror. We had some real missions – we did a fair bit of the reconnaissance for Operation Green Vegetables, an ambitious military plan that was eventually decreed by ANC President Oliver Tambo to be impractical. But most of our work was in was collecting information and writing reports – our night jobs were pretty much like our day jobs, except we worked wearing kitchen gloves, which made it infinitely more tedious.



Ronnie Kasrils (centre) with Joe Slovo (left) and Jacob Zuma in 1993. Zuma became South Africa's president in 2009.

Photo from *Armed and Dangerous*, by Ronnie Kasrils, Heinemann, 1993

We wrote in the middle of hot, sweaty nights, on manual typewriters, wearing kitchen gloves to avoid fingerprints. Then we burned the original reports after encoding them, using number groups from book codes (a page number, a line number, then count the words until the one you want), after which we photographed each page, and developed the negatives. Then we inserted the negatives into an innocuous item to be posted to a cover address, initially in London, but later in Zimbabwe.

When you don't have nimble fingers, and are further encumbered by yellow kitchen gloves (we tried condoms, but they kept slipping off), inserting a few 35mm negatives into a box of tampons, resealing the box, and re-sealing the cellophane packaging can take hours. A box of chocolates, or the sealed end of a toothpaste tube, is equally challenging.

Mind-numbing tedium doesn't begin to describe the process, especially when you add in the time and difficulty of caching and retrieving a typewriter (as identifiable as fingerprints), and the need to get everything done in one night so there is nothing incriminating lying around for

accidental discovery. And, although preparing pamphlets – we did quite a few – doesn't require inserting negatives into packets of domestic consumables, the inevitable kitchen gloves added hours to writing, inserting in envelopes and posting.

Our Kasrils' connection

We'd worked for Kasrils (our first instructor in London) and Maharaj, and knew them both fairly well by 1989. At the time Collette was running a consumer complaints supplement for *City Press*, the Johannesburg Sunday paper, while I was a freelance journalist, writing for local weeklies and foreign dailies, and laying out and sub-editing the communist party's *Umsebenzi* monthly newspaper. I was also involved in organising a campaign to stop the De Klerk government entrenching its control of the SABC as a propaganda organ for the minority government.

In July 1990, with negotiations for political integration inching forward, security police in the coastal province of Natal, captured two ANC operatives, Charles Ndaba and Mbuso Shabalala, and accidentally stumbled onto the Vula opera-

ON THE RUN

A bit of fast talking kept a security company's armed response team (inexplicably dressed in red overalls) out of the property after we'd mis-keyed the alarm pad. At the same time, bodyguards accompanying Mandela and Sisulu were checking out the garden, armed with AK-47s

tion. They began rolling up parts of the network, capturing Gebhuza, the network commander in Durban. (Gebhuza was the nom-de-guerre of Siphwe Nyanda, later South Africa's Minister of Communications from 2009-10 and chief of the national defence force (SANDF) from 1998-2005.

Alerted to this – in addition to its pre-internet digital communications network, Vula made extensive use of pagers for secure messages – Kasrils and Maharaj dashed to Durban to immunise their networks. They were largely successful, but not before the police found documents setting out Vula's objectives and identifying Maharaj, Chris Hani and Kasrils as part of the leadership. The network went to ground and waited. With their indemnity from arrest, the leaders decided to brazen it out. But three days later, the police grabbed Maharaj as he left the Johannesburg ANC offices. Hani, fortuitously, was in the Transkei – a notionally “independent” bantustan ruled over by a military government headed by ANC sympathiser Bantu Holomisa. He was thus at least partly safe. And when the police got Maharaj,

Kasrils was also away from the office. Alerted to Maharaj's arrest, he made his way to our house.

In his book, *Armed and Dangerous* (the title was taken from the SABC news item), Kasrils used our noms-de-guerre, “Sarah” and “Errol.” He even did the same for our dog, a diminutive-but-assertive mongrel with enormous eyebrows, which we named Frank. In *Armed and Dangerous*, Frank makes a brief appearance as “Max” (another of Kasrils' cover names).

Kasrils had secure transport – he'd never used his own car when there was a possibility of surveillance. But he needed a safe hideaway, so spent the next few days with us. The first problem was that he was due to address a dinner of the Foreign Correspondents' Association the following day. Kasrils thought he'd have to cancel; we argued that he didn't need to, and it was important that he didn't – De Klerk and his ministers were telling anyone who would listen that Vula was a communist party initiative intended to derail peace negotiations and seize power. It was important that someone in Vula was free to counter the propaganda.

We didn't think the police would charge into the FCA lunch to arrest Kasrils (too much adverse publicity), so getting him in and out safely was the issue. Getting into the restaurant, located in a turn of the 20th-century mansion with parking shielded by many high trees, would be easy: lying on the floor of someone's car, the police wouldn't see him. But getting him out would require a bit of misdirection to get the police to follow the wrong vehicle – they wouldn't have the resources to follow 50 journalists' cars.

It worked perfectly. With the help of a friendly journalist, Amina Frense, a South African working as a produc-



Cartoonist's impression of Kasrils in disguise while police were hunting him. Photo from *Armed and Dangerous*, by Ronnie Kasrils, Heinemann, 1993



Ronnie Kasrils: Became South Africa's intelligence minister in post-apartheid government.

er for a German TV channel (she would, many years later, become Kasrils' second wife), we got Kasrils into the restaurant and out again. I was waiting a few blocks away; Kasrils jumped out of his exit car, into mine, and the police didn't even know he'd gone – the helicopter hovering above the restaurant didn't spot a thing.

The foreign journos loved the deception and immediately dubbed him “The Red Pimpernel.” A week later we used a similar deception to get him in and out of the FNB football stadium – 20 years later it hosted the World Cup Final – where the communist party was relaunching. The 50,000 supporters attending loved it.

Meeting with foreign journalists

As one of my first tasks while Collette and I were hiding Kasrils, I had to arrange a meeting between Kasrils, Slovo, Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu about the exposure of Operation Vula, and how to handle President De Klerk's resulting attempt to drive a wedge between the ANC and its

communist party ally.

We couldn't use our house as a venue, so I “borrowed” the home of a colleague, John Mattison, NPR's local correspondent, who was out of town for a few days. Our child-minding arrangement fell through at the last minute, so our boys – Luke and Cai – came along to the meeting.

We had a few worrying moments, disaster was narrowly averted when a bit of fast talking kept a security company's armed response team (inexplicably dressed in red overalls) out of the property after we'd mis-keyed the alarm pad. At the same time, bodyguards accompanying Mandela and Sisulu were checking out the garden, armed with AK-47s. They hadn't been back in South Africa for long, and wouldn't have responded well to seeing pistol-waving men in red overalls storming down the driveway.

We managed to keep the competing arsenals apart and the meeting went ahead with only minor mishaps. Mandela, I suspect, regretted telling Collette that “You people didn't know how to cook our food.” Having prepared dozens of meals for striking trade unionists and in-hiding activists, Collette knew full well how to prepare appropriate meals, and bluntly rejected what she described as Mandela's racist stereotyping. Mandela ate every morsel she put on his plate.

A few minutes later he invited our son, Cai, not quite two and well overdue for his afternoon nap, onto his lap. Cai climbed up, then immediately vomited on to the great man. He still dines out on his contribution to the Mandela legend.

Kasrils was re-connected to the ANC leadership, but the police were still hunting him. He stayed with us for the next few weeks, venturing out regularly to nurture underground networks and who-knows-what-else. He particularly enjoyed phoning journalists from call boxes to offer unsolicited interviews in which he contested the apartheid government's interpretation of events, challenged inaccurate media analysis, and generally mocked the regime's inability to catch him.

Having engaged in endless debate about the relative merits and class bases of football and rugby (he is a lifelong Arsenal supporter and, until then, a class snob about rugby's origins), we arranged for a friend to take him to Ellis Park to

ON THE RUN

With 30-odd years of intense, continuous activity behind him, Kasrils was getting antsy. It manifested, whenever he came or stayed over, in his consumption of vast amounts of whisky. Like most professional spooks and politicians, his capacity was apparently open-ended. Mine wasn't

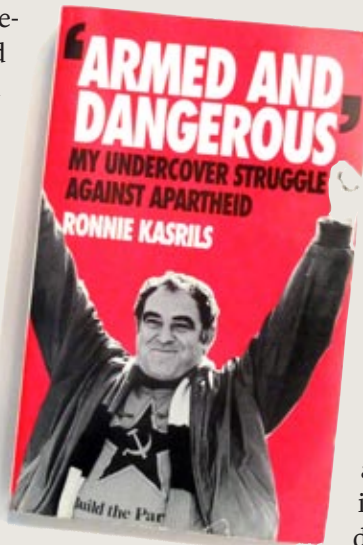
watch a provincial rugby game. The resulting media coverage – Kasrils told several journalists about having been to the game – was probably the high point of his “armed and dangerous” period propaganda. The rigorously pro-apartheid Afrikaans Sunday newspaper Rapport ran a cartoon of him, with trademark bushy eyebrows, dressed as a woman with enormous balloons under his dress, chatting to a policeman as he searched the stadium for “the Red Pimpernel.” Even apartheid’s own media were mocking its efforts.

As the De Klerk government furiously withdrew the indemnity granted to Kasrils, Maharaj and Hani, we moved Kasrils to different safe houses – he stayed with a group of nuns, with several journalists, with the parents of a friend of my son Luke, a banker, and an archaeologist.

Attempt to split ANC and communists

The November “armed and dangerous” TV piece was linked to the decision to charge Maharaj and Gebhuza in court – a crass and clumsy attempt by the right-wing securocrats who dominated De Klerk’s government to force a split between the ANC and the communist party. The initiative was never going to work, despite what appeared to be some covert approval by associates of Thabo Mbeki, who later succeeded Mandela as the country’s president.

Kasrils kept himself as busy as he was able, phoning journalists, making his way to a rendezvous with Hani in the Transkei, developing a manual for the ANC-aligned “self-defence units” in black townships, and other activities that he didn’t share with us. But the months dragged



“Collette thought the writing of his autobiography would be an effective outlet for Kasrils’ energy.”

on. And, with 30-odd years of intense, continuous activity behind him, Kasrils was getting antsy. It manifested, whenever he came or stayed over, in his consumption of vast amounts of whisky. Like most professional spooks and politicians, his capacity was apparently open-ended. Mine wasn’t.

Collette thought the writing of his autobiography would be an effective outlet for Kasrils’ energy and quietly set about nudging him into thinking it was his idea. She did, he did, and an early draft of the first few chapters of *Armed and Dangerous* was the result.

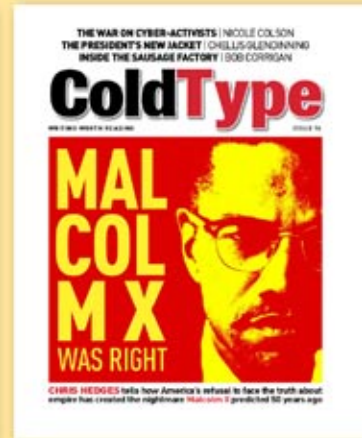
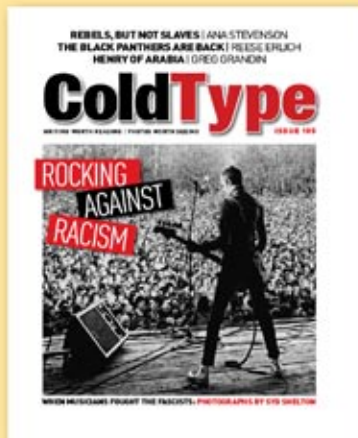
By 1991 it was clear our task of minding Kasrils was winding down

when the case against Maharaj and Gebhuza collapsed, and De Klerk’s attempt to cast Vula as a “Red Plot” ran out of steam. Then, in March that year, I attended a press conference at Mandela’s Soweto home, where the president-in-waiting introduced to the public the formerly covert leadership of the Vula network. A few days later, the operatives were granted indemnity from prosecution, and Kasrils and Maharaj’s previous indemnities were reinstated.

In closing, it is essential to note that our experiences, however intense, were not typical of the thousands of South Africans who lost their lives or liberty – or of the hundreds of thousands who risked doing so – in the struggle to topple apartheid. As white South Africans, we had that first layer of protection: we didn’t look like the enemy. **CT**

David Niddrie is a Johannesburg-based former journalist, now working as a media consultant

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Syria: Why is the truth so hard to decipher?

Ramzy Baroud searches for meaning in a conflict that has destroyed so many countries in the Middle East

The only truth that all parties seem to agree upon is that hundreds of thousands are dead, and Syria is shattered

“The United States has the power to decree the death of nations,” wrote Stephen Kinzer in the Boston Globe last February. Kinzer’s article was titled The Media are Misleading the Public on Syria. In his piece, the scholar at a Brown University Institute contested that media misinformation on Syria is leading to the kind of ignorance which is enabling the American government to pursue any policy, however imprudent, in the war-torn Arab country.

The US government can “decree the death of nations” with “popular support because many Americans – and many journalists – are content with the official story,” he wrote.

Kinzer, in principle makes a strong point. His article, however, was particularly popular among those who sees the Syrian government entirely innocent of any culpability in the ongoing war, and that Iran and Russia are at no fault whatsoever; better yet, their intervention in Syria is entirely morally-guided and altruistic.

That said, Kinzer’s assertion regarding the US government’s dangerous meddling in Syria’s affairs, the renewed Cold War with Russia and ill-defined military mission in that country, is all true.

Neither is the US, nor its Western and other allies, following rules of war nor adhering to a particularly noble set of principles

aimed at ending that most devastating war, which has killed well over 300,000 people, rendered millions displaced and destroyed the country’s wealth and infrastructure.

So what is the truth on Syria?

In the last five-and-a-half years, since a regional uprising turned into an armed rebellion – turned into civil, regional and international war – “the truth on Syria” has been segmented into many self-tailored “truths,” each promoted by one of the warring parties to be the one and only, absolute and uncontested, reality. But since there are many parties to the conflict, the versions of the “truth” communicated to us via copious media, are numerous and, most often, unverifiable.

The only truth that all parties seem to agree upon is that hundreds of thousands are dead, and Syria is shattered. But, of course, each points to the other side for culpability of the ongoing genocide.

An oddly refreshing, although disturbing “truth” was articulated by Alon Ben-David in the Israeli Jerusalem Post last year.

The title of his article speaks volumes: May it Never End: The Uncomfortable Truth about the War in Syria.

“If Israel’s interest in the war in Syria can be summarised in brief, it would be: That it should never end,” Ben-David wrote. “No one will say this publicly, but the continuation of the fighting in Syria, as long as there

is a recognised authority in Damascus, allows Israel to stay out of the swamp and distance itself from the swarms of mosquitoes that are buzzing in it.”

Of course, Israel never truly “stayed out of the swamp,” but that is for a separate discussion.

Aside from the egotistical, unsympathetic language, Israel’s “truth,” according to the writer, is predicated on two premises: the need for an official authority in Damascus, and that the war must continue, at least, until the fire burns the whole country down, which is, in fact, happening.

Russia’s supporters, of course, refuse to accept the fact that Moscow is also fighting a turf war and that it is entirely fair to question the legality of Russia’s actions in the context of US-Russian regional and global rivalry while, at the same time, attempting to underscore Moscow’s own self-seeking motives.

The other side, which is calling for greater American firepower, commit an even greater sin. Not least, since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the US has not only scarred, but truly devastated the Middle East – killing, wounding and displacing millions – and has no intention of preserving Syria’s territorial integrity or the human rights of its people.

That group’s plausible hatred for the Bashar al-Assad regime has blinded them to numerous facts, including the fact that the only country in the region that Washington is truly and fully committed to in terms of security is Israel, which has recently received a generous aid package of \$38-billion.

Keeping in mind Ben-David’s reasoning, it is no surprise that the US is in no rush to end the war in Syria, but rather to intentionally prolong it.

The American “truth” on Syria – reiterated by its European cheerleaders, of course – is largely centred around demonising Russia – never about saving lives, nor even – at least not yet – about regime change.

For the US, the war is largely pertinent to American regional interests. After suffer-

ing major military and political setbacks in the Middle East, and considering its ongoing economic misfortunes, the US military capabilities have been greatly eclipsed. It is now, more or less, another powerful western country, but no longer the only dominant one, able to “decree the death of nations” on its own.

So, when Secretary of State John Kerry called recently for a war crime investigation into Russian bombings in Syria, we can be certain that he was not sincere, and his impassioned appeal was tailored to win only political capital. Expectedly, his accusations were parroted in predictable tandem by the French, the British and others. Then, soon after, they evaporated into the augmenting, but useless discourse, in which words are only words, while the war grinds on, unabated.

So why is the truth on Syria so difficult to decipher?

Despite the proliferation of massive platforms for propaganda, there are still many good journalists who recognise that, no matter what one’s personal opinion is, facts must be checked and that honest reporting and analysis should not be part of the burgeoning propaganda war.

Yes, these journalists exist, but they fight against many odds. One is that much of the existing, well-funded media infrastructure is part of the information war in the Middle East. And good journalists, are either forced to, albeit begrudgingly, toe the line or to stay out of the discussion altogether.

But the problem is not entirely that of media manipulation of facts, videos and images. The war in Syria has polarised the discourse like never before, and most of those who are invested in that conflict find themselves forced to take sides, thus, at times abandoning any reason or common sense.

It is rather sad that years after the war in Syria ends, and the last of the mass graves is dug and covered, many unpleasant truths will be revealed. But would it matter, then?

In 2003, the US has not only scarred, but truly devastated the Middle East – killing, wounding and displacing millions – and has no intention of preserving Syria’s territorial integrity or the human rights of its people

REALITY BITES

Syria has been destroyed and its future is bloody and bleak

Only recently, we discovered that the Pentagon had spent over \$500-million in manufacturing propaganda war videos on Iraq. The money was largely spent on developing fake al Qaeda videos. Unsurprisingly, much of the US media either did not report the news, or quickly glossed over it, as if the most revealing piece of information of the US invasion of Iraq – which destabilised the Middle East until today- is the least relevant.

What will we end up learning about Syria in the future? And will it make any difference, aside from a sense of moral gratification by those who have argued all along that the war in Syria is never about Syrians?

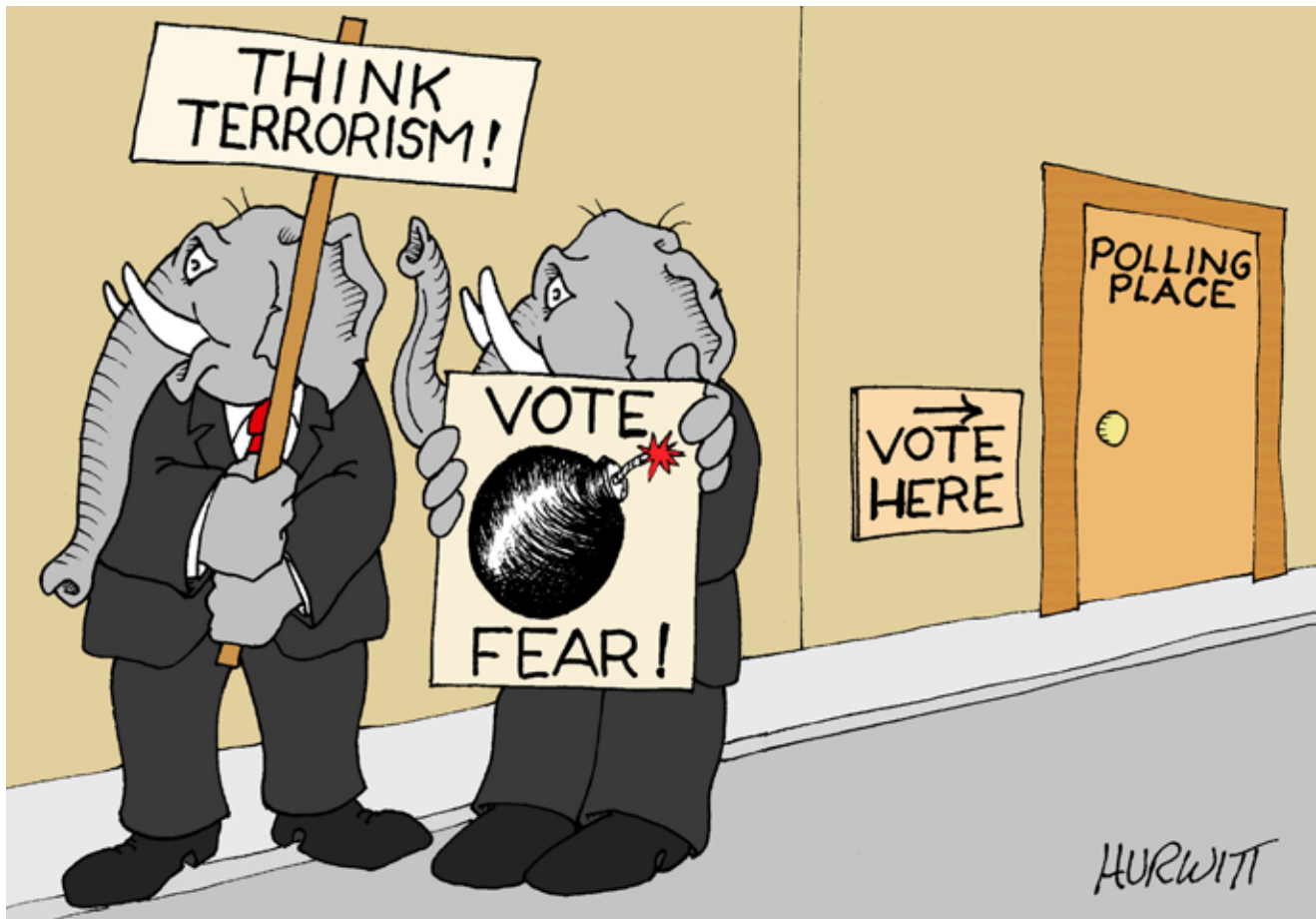
The truth on Syria is that, regardless of

how the war ends, Syria has been destroyed and its future is bloody and bleak; and that, regardless of the regional and global ‘winners’ of the conflict, the Syrian people have already lost. **CT**

Ramzy Baroud has been writing about the Middle East for more than 20 years. He is an internationally-syndicated columnist, a media consultant, an author of several books and the founder of PalestineChronicle.com – where this article first appeared. His books include Searching Jenin, The Second Palestinian Intifada, and his latest, My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story. His website is www.ramzybaroud.net

HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt



The man in the mirror

Donald Trump is not an outlier, but the distillation of our dominant values, writes **George Monbiot**

What is the worst thing about Donald Trump? The lies? The racist stereotypes? The misogyny? The alleged gropings? The apparent refusal to accept democratic outcomes? All these are bad enough. But they're not the worst. The worst thing about Donald Trump is that he's the man in the mirror.

We love to horrify ourselves with his excesses, and to see him as a monstrous outlier, the polar opposite of everything a modern, civilised society represents. But he is nothing of the kind. He is the distillation of all that we have been induced to desire and admire. Trump is so repulsive not because he offends our civilisation's most basic values, but because he embodies them.

Trump personifies the traits promoted by the media and corporate worlds he affects to revile; the worlds that created him. He is a bundle of extrinsic values – the fetishisation of wealth, power and image – in a nation where extrinsic values are championed throughout public discourse. His conspicuous consumption, self-amplification and towering (if fragile) ego are in tune with the dominant narratives of our age.

As the recipient of vast inherited wealth who markets himself as solely responsible for his good fortune, he is the man of our times. The Apprentice tells the story of everything he is not: the little guy dragging himself up from the bottom through

enterprise and skill. None of this distinguishes him from the majority of the very rich, whose entrepreneurial image, loyally projected by the media, clashes with their histories of huge bequests, government assistance, monopolies and rent-seeking.

If his politics differ from those of the rest of the modern Republican party, it is because they are, in some respects, more liberal. Every vice, for the Republican trailblazers, is now a virtue; every virtue a vice. Encouraged by the corporate media, they have been waging a full-spectrum assault on empathy, altruism and the decencies we owe to other people. Their gleeful stoving in of faces, their cackling destruction of political safeguards and democratic norms, their stomping on all that is generous and caring and cooperative in human nature have turned the party into a game of Mortal Kombat scripted by Breitbart News.

Did Donald Trump invent the xenophobia and racism that infuses his campaign? Did he invent his conspiracy theories about stolen elections and the criminality of his opponents? No. They were there all along. What is new and different about him is that he has streamlined these narratives into a virulent demagoguery. But the opportunity has been building for years; all that was required was someone blunt and unscrupulous enough to take it.

Nor can you single out Trump for ignor-

We love to horrify ourselves with Trump's excesses, and to see him as a monstrous outlier, the polar opposite of everything a modern, civilised society represents

TRUMPED!

If his politics differ from those of the rest of the modern Republican party, it is because they are, in some respects, more liberal. Every vice, for the Republican trailblazers, is now a virtue; every virtue a vice

ing, denying and deriding the key issues of our time, such as climate change. Almost all prominent Republicans have been at it. In fact, across the four presidential debates, not one question about climate change was asked. Even when politicians and journalists accept the science, it makes little difference if they avoid the subject like the plague.

James Madison envisaged the constitution of the United States as representation tempered by competition between factions. In the 10th Federalist Paper, written in 1787, he argued that large republics were better insulated from corruption than small, or “pure” democracies, as the greater number of citizens would make it “more difficult for unworthy candidates to practice with success the vicious arts by which elections are too often carried”. A large electorate would protect the system against oppressive interest groups. Politics practised on a grand scale would be more likely to select people of “enlightened views and virtuous sentiments”. Instead, the United States – in common with many other nations – now suffers the worst of both worlds: a large electorate dominated by a tiny faction. Instead of republics being governed, as Madison feared, by “the secret wishes of an unjust and interested majority”, they are beholden to the not-so-secret wishes of an unjust and interested minority. What Madison could not have foreseen was the extent to which unconstrained campaign finance and a sophisticated lobbying industry would come to dominate an entire nation, regardless of its size.

Fear of upsetting their funders

For every representative, Republican or Democrat, who retains a trace element of independence, there are three sitting in the breast pocket of corporate capital. Since the Supreme Court decided that there should be no effective limits on campaign finance, and, to a lesser extent, long before, candidates have been reduced to tongue-tied automata, incapable of responding to those in

need of help, incapable of regulating those in need of restraint, for fear of upsetting their funders.

Democracy in the United States is so corrupted by money that it is no longer recognisable as democracy. You can kick individual politicians out of office, but what do you do when the entire structure of politics is corrupt? Turn to the demagogue who rages into this political vacuum, denouncing the forces he exemplifies. The problem is not, as Trump claims, that the election will be stolen by ballot rigging. It is that the entire electoral process is stolen from the American people before they get anywhere near to casting their votes. When Trump claims that the little guy is being screwed by the system, he’s right. The only problem is that he is the system.

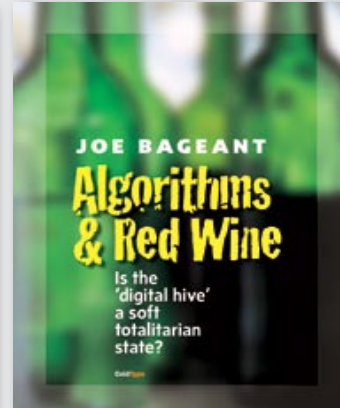
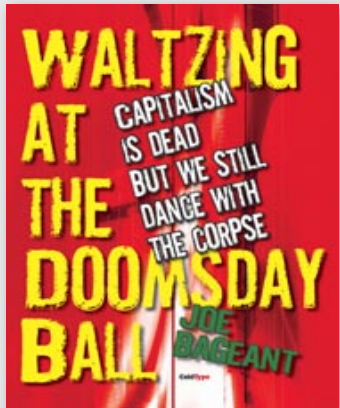
The political constitution of the United States is not, as Madison envisaged, representation tempered by competition between factions. The true constitution is plutocracy tempered by scandal. In other words, all that impedes the absolute power of money is the occasional exposure of the excesses of the wealthy. What distinguishes Trump’s political career is that, until recently, his scandals have done him no harm.

Trump disgusts us because, where others use a dog whistle, he uses a klaxon. We hate to hear his themes so clearly articulated. But we know in our hearts that they suffuse the way the world is run.

Because this story did not begin with Trump, it will not end with Trump, however badly he might lose the election. Yes, he is a shallow, mendacious, boorish and extremely dangerous man. But those traits ensure that he is not an outsider but the perfect representation of his caste, the caste that runs the global economy and governs our politics. He is our system, stripped of its pretences. **CT**

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

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IN THE PICTURE

The eyes have it

The contrasting faces of New York City during the '80s and '90s. Photographs by **Richard Sandler**. Text: **Tony Sutton**



Two Faces, 5th Avenue, New York City, 1989

New York City had a strange, fascinating, allure in the 1980s: it was one of the few places I regularly visited that had more menace than Johannesburg, the South African city in which I then lived. Joburg had good reason for apprehension – it was the biggest city of a pariah state, isolated by international boycotts and convulsed by an increasingly-violent revolution, that would soon undergo a painful changeover from apartheid thuggery to multi-racial democracy.

New York had none of those fears, but it did have Times Square, an area that drew millions of visitors, each year, attracted – yet simultaneously repulsed – by its brazen contempt for the norms of middle class society. Here you'd find yourself in a cesspit of sex stores, peep shows, prostitution, freshly-needed drug addicts, intense poverty and home-



CC Train, New York City, 1985

IN THE PICTURE



IN THE PICTURE



Black nannies/white tykes, SoHo, New York City, 1982

lessness – then, in sparkling contrast, literally just around the corner, there'd be the richest people you'd ever seen, shopping in glitzy stores or stepping out of swishy autos into the glamour of Broadway, the world's greatest entertainment showcase.

Worlds apart; but they met – often uncomfortably – in the streets and on the subways, whose carriages, inside and out, were psychedelic explosions of colour

I was reminded of those long-past days spent in the area around Times Square – before its vibrancy was smashed into civility by Mayor Rudy Giuliani as he cleaned up the area ready for redevelopment into corporate-friendly vacuousness – when I picked up street photographer Richard Sandler's book *The Eyes of the City*, a retrospective



West 32nd Street, New York City, 1983



Waiting Line, Studio 54, New York City, 1981



Subway Noir, New York City, 1986

of his work in New York City and Boston, drawn mainly from the '80s and '90s.

Sandler is the master of the moment, his images capturing the contrasts of city life, along with the obliviousness that great financial division bestows. His eye for disparities abound: a bejewelled white lady hardly notices the black beggar in front of her, dragging his life's possessions behind him in a shopping cart; a legless war vet crosses the street, perched perilously on a skateboard beneath the gaze of uncomprehending passers-by; a demonstrator holds a sign proclaiming Jews Against Zionism, showing that resistance to Israeli violence in the Middle East goes back much longer than some people may think.

There's also the seamier side: Crowds

IN THE PICTURE



Hasid and Hipster, New York City, 2001

swarm outside a cinema showing *Insatiable*, the film that made Marilyn Chambers a sex goddess, while, a few pages further, a smaller group gazes warily at a sign in front of a seedy establishment offering Live Sex Shows: Red Hot and Raunchy.

And there's the New York subway: As I look at Sandler's stark images, I recall my first trip into that Dantean netherworld where, for a few moments, I felt lost and exposed, wondering if I'd escape alive. I did, of course, and returned to the city, where I rode its painted subway many more times before Giuliani began the great clean-up that saw Times Square surrender its hedonistic individuality to the whims of narcissistic corporate marketers, whose sole function in life is to sell us more crap.

CT



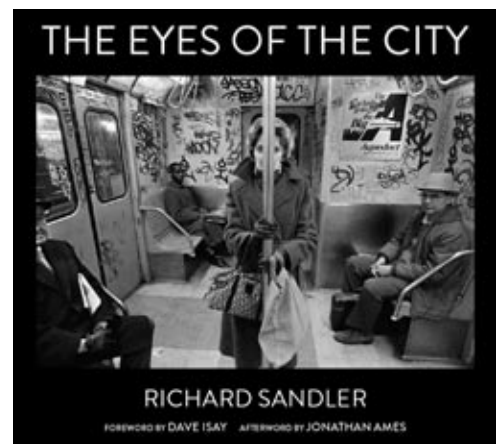
Woman in Next Car, New York City, circa 1987



Grand Central Terminal, New York City, 1990



East 34th Street, New York City, 1980



THE EYES OF THE CITY

Richard Sandler
powerHouse Books, Brooklyn, New York
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Bugged if I know where I am

A new book reveals the stories behind Australia's weird and wonderful place names. **Joshua Nash** looks at some of them

Australia's place name landscape is largely boring as bat turd and as stodgy and starchy as badly cooked porridge

Why is it that despite how much and how often we use toponyms (place names) linguists, geographers, cartographers, and historians know so little about how they actually work?

Why is it that place names are less prone to change than other aspects of language such as accents and pronunciations? And how is it that regardless of how well furnished a map or smartphone may be with place names and directions, we still get lost? And why are so many Australian places named after knobs?

Eamon Evans's 280-page *Mount Buggery to Nowhere Else: The Stories Behind Australia's weird and wonderful place names* lists hundreds of place names – colonial, Aboriginal, German, and others – that adorn the country. It is an entertaining, non-academic read with a playful manner, which charts place names from the serious – the many names for Australia, for example – to the jocular, such as Australia's many rude and dirty topographic monikers.

Many of Evans's humorous stories go a way to responding to some of the scientific inadequacies and toponymic foibles so common in place naming studies. And after I've spent almost a decade inundated with often sterile and uninspirational place name theory and how it may fit within more general research in onomastics, the study of proper names, Evans's tongue-in-cheek take is more

than welcome.

The book begins with a reasonable and justified dis of Lucky Starr and his 1962 claim "I've been everywhere." Evans doubts this claim – fair enough, Lucky lists at least 94 places – and estimates Australia has around four million place names. Visiting all of these sites would take yonks, around half a lifetime, writes Evans, and would involve using lots of petrol, shoes, and time travelling beyond the Black Stump and back o' Bourke.

I grew up in Adelaide, surrounded by road and place names honouring rich and powerful, dead white men (plus a minuscule number of women). I mean, how many William Streets, Edward Streets, Victoria Everythings, and Queen Elizabeth Otherthings does Australia need?

Naming is power, which Evans obviously understands. Furthermore, he takes the piss. And he bloody well should. Our place name landscape is largely boring as bat turd and as stodgy and starchy as badly cooked porridge.

In telling us about the histories and origins of places, the colonial makeup of our pre-European toponymically terra-annuled joint is made real. Take Lake Alexandrina in South Australia: "Named after Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandrina of Kent, the then heir to the British throne. A nice gesture, but perhaps a wasted one, as the prin-

cess much preferred her middle name. We now call her Queen Victoria.”

We get quirky introductions to each of the nine chapters – one for Australia and one each for every state and territory – plus more toponymic toilet humour than one could poke a dirty toilet brush at in an out-back dunny. The knob gets quite a mention, which we are told is a prominent rounded hill, mountain, or elevation on a ridge, with Chinamans Knob, Governors Knob, Iron Knob, Nimbin’s Blue Knob, Spanker Knob, and Yorkeys Knob. I think you get the picture.

We’re told about Mount Little Dick in Victoria, which Evans hopes is named after a small man named Richard who used to live there and nothing else; Lake Fanny near Mossy Nipple Bend in Tasmania, and a few perky hills in also Tasmania called The Nipples.

This feminal place name reminds me of a topographical name on Kangaroo Island that I documented back in 2009. The Tits is a place with undulating landscape similar to a woman’s corporeal scenery on the left side of Hog Bay Road near Pelican Lagoon. Between the Tits is a fishing ground off Kangaroo Head, which uses the space between the Tits in lining up the ground.

Apart from the colonial propensity for double entendres, some of these places are simply the victim of time: Cockburn (pronounced “ko-burn”) was named after the prominent sailor Sir George Cockburn. Intercourse Island, 1,500 kilometres north of Perth, was the site of a productive conversation between Captain Philip Parker King and some local Indigenous people.

The listing of the town Verdun in South Australia gives excellent information about the cleansing-cum-sanitisation of German place names in South Australia during the Great War. Friedrichstadt became Tangari, Neudorf became Mamburdi, and Hahndorf became Ambleside to become Hahndorf again in 1935. “About the only German place name that wasn’t changed,” Evans tells us,

“was Adelaide – a city named after a German princess”

Let’s not forget those place names which are mistakes. For example, Bundle Bundle was bungled to become Bungle Bungle; Mount Kokeby, named after Baron Rokeby, was misspelled as “Kokeby” after a spelling error in one of the town’s first train timetables. Place names are filled with specimens of our laziness and folly.

One can always quibble about what was not given. Regarding the contemporary issue of dual naming, something which could be taken from both a humorous and serious perspective, it was a shame not to have seen a little more beyond the Uluru-Ayers Rock example. For example, Nobbys Head in Newcastle is officially known as Whibayganba. What was formerly known as Grampians National Park in Victoria is now officially called Grampians/Gariwerd. The area contains the dual name Halls Gap/Budja Budja.

Dual place naming is a weighty and contentious affair in modern Australian politics and the social cartography of this once unnamed land is dependent on best representing all levels of place naming: Indigenous, British, German, and others. Perhaps this is something for the second edition of Evans’s book, if he’s not too buggered.

The story of Adaminaby, a mining town in New South Wales that Evans says was supposedly named in honour of the line, “Ada’s mine it be,” makes one wonder about the credibility of some bush toponymic lore. But Evans happily acknowledges the hazier areas of his research, and ultimately, who cares?

Place names are fun and their study should be the same. What Evans offers is an amusing take on a potentially very dry topic. It’s not a weighty book and is minus a conclusion to pull it all together, but it would make a grouse Chrissie present.

If wit and quips can be used to good effect to get people thinking about important matters like place naming from a humorous and lively perspective, then Evans’s account is a noble achievement.

We’re told about Mount Little Dick in Victoria, which Evans hopes is named after a small man named Richard who used to live there and nothing else

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Joshua Nash is a postdoctoral research fellow, at the School of Behavioural, Cognitive and Social Sciences at the University of New England. This book review was originally published at www.theconversation.com From Mount Bungle to Nowhere Else, by Eamon Evans, is published by Hachette Australia

CT

Hanoi Hannah: Propaganda queen

The death of Hanoi Hannah, the woman behind the radio voice that urged American GIs to turn against the Vietnam War, brought back memories of another time when propaganda trumped truth, writes **Don North**

Hannah's scripts were written by North Vietnam Army propaganda experts, advised by Cubans. Her 30-minute programmes were broadcast three times a day

Her name was Trinh Thi Ngo, but she called herself Thu Houg – the Fragrance of Autumn. We called her Hanoi Hannah. Her job was not to charm and seduce, but to chill and frighten. Her English was almost impeccable and, as North Vietnam's premier propagandist, she tried to convince American GI's that the war was immoral and that they should lay down their arms and go home.

The wartime words of Hanoi Hannah were part of the soundtrack for the Vietnam War, which may have been the first war fought to a rock 'n' roll background. But, for American GI's along with the beat came the messages: propaganda from North Vietnam's radio beamed south, or misinformation from the US Army radio in Saigon. Even so, radio brought music with a familiar sound to soldiers who thought the war was the end of the world. To many it didn't matter who was broadcasting, the Voice of Vietnam or the US Armed Forces Radio . . .

Trinh Thi Ngo's death on September 30, at the age of 87, brought back a flood of memories from my days as a young war correspondent covering the Vietnam War. I not only listened to Hanoi Hannah during the war, but I got to interview her afterwards.

Trinh was born in Hanoi in 1931. Her father owned the largest glass factory in Vietnam.

She took a liking to American films, her favourite being *Gone With The Wind*, which she watched five times. She wanted to enjoy American films without the French or Vietnamese subtitles, so her family gave her private English lessons. She joined Voice of Vietnam (VOV) in 1955 as a volunteer. Her unaccented English, correct intonation, and large vocabulary soon got her a staff job reading the news to Asia's English-speaking countries.

When the first US Marines landed at Danang in 1965, VOV decided to start propaganda broadcasts to the US troops, just as they had done for the French invaders years earlier. Hannah's scripts were written by North Vietnam Army propaganda experts, advised by Cubans. Her 30-minute programmes were broadcast three times a day.

I first heard the silken voice of Hanoi Hannah in 1965 while at a US Special Forces base at An Lac, 100 miles west of Nha Trang. I had been on patrol with Montagnard Irregulars and their American advisers. It had been raining hard for a week, keeping the supply plane that was my ticket out from coming in. At night, after the perimeter was secured, there wasn't much to do but play cards, read, drink beer and listen to the radio. Up in the Central Highlands, the Voice of Vietnam boomed in loud and clear.



Trinh Thi Ngo, the Vietnam War's "Hanoi Hannah" during an interview with Don North on the Rex Hotel rooftop bar in Ho Chi Minh City (or Saigon) in 1978.

Photo: Don North

Hanoi Hannah: *"We gotta get out of this place, if it's the last thing we ever do. We gotta get out of this place, surely there's a better place for me and you. The Animals. Now for the war news. American casualties in Vietnam. Army Corporal Larry J. Samples, Canada, Alabama ... Staff Sergeant Charles R. Miller, Tucson, Arizona ... Sergeant Frank Hererra, Coolidge, Arizona."* – Hanoi Hannah, Sept. 15, 1965

Her broadcasts were mostly exaggerated war news, encouragement to frag officers and go AWOL, or suggestions that the soldiers' wives or girlfriends at home were cheating on them. She was mostly greeted with loud

laughs and often beer cans thrown at the radio. But taped interviews with downed US pilots or from American anti-war advocates such as Jane Fonda were heard with anger.

PsyOps: Winning hearts and minds

By 1965, the airwaves over North and South Vietnam had become a confusing battleground of conflicting propaganda. Working on the premise of "capture their hearts and minds, and their hearts and souls will follow," both sides supported dozens of radio stations spewing malice and disinformation 24 hours a day.

The Voice of America, with transmitters

Her broadcasts were mostly exaggerated war news, encouragement to frag officers and go AWOL, or suggestions that the soldiers' wives or girlfriends at home were cheating on them

THE VOICE OF WAR

For almost five years, as a radio and TV correspondent for ABC News, tape-record Hannah's programs most days in case she said something newsworthy or presented a captured American pilot on her programme

in Hue and the Philippines was one of the most powerful voices, rivalling the Voice of Vietnam. It is estimated the CIA ran 11 clandestine broadcasts of "black" or "false flag" radio such as Red Star, allegedly run by communist defectors. The American Studies and Observation Group (SOG) ran a broadcast with a fake Hanoi Hannah, while the South Vietnamese regime ran Mother of Vietnam radio, with host Mai Lan, a South Vietnamese with a seductive voice who had studied broadcasting in the US.

Women broadcasters of propaganda

Hanoi Hannah followed a line of women broadcasting propaganda to a mostly male audience . . .

Axis Sally: British and American troops on the march in Italy in World War II heard the voice of Rita Zucca, who was born in New York. She first broadcast for Mussolini's fascist government and later for Nazi Germany. Based in Rome, she hosted Jerry's Front. Her signature sign on was "Hello Suckers!" Sally was captured by US forces in February 1943 and convicted of collaboration with the enemy.

Tokyo Rose: Born in Los Angeles in 1916, she was visiting Japan when war broke out in 1941 and forced to broadcast for the Japanese. In her daily programme, The Zero Hour, she would predict attacks, identify American ships and play American music while speaking American slang. After the war she was arrested by US authorities, convicted of treason and imprisoned until 1956. Two decades later, she was pardoned by President Gerald Ford.

Seoul City Sue: During the Korean war, Anna Wallis, a Methodist missionary from Arkansas, was the North Korean radio voice in 1950. Her programmes named American soldiers captured or killed, and she threatened newly arrived soldiers. She spoke in a monotone and had little pop music to offer, so her show was not popular. In 1969, she was executed by the North Korean Army, suspected of being a South Korean spy.

Baghdad Betty: In September 1990, soon after the arrival in Saudi Arabia of the US 82nd Airborne, Iraq's Voice of Peace began broadcasting with an English-speaking Iraqi woman, named Baghdad Betty by Americans. She played pop music as she bad-mouthed American troops, saying they drank liquor and defiled the holy places of Islam. Her propaganda writers had a jaundiced view of American culture.

Hanoi Hannah: *American GI's don't fight this unjust, immoral and illegal war of Johnson's. Get out of Vietnam now while you're still alive. This is the Voice of Vietnam. Now here's Connie Francis, singing "I almost lost my mind."* August, 1967.

News from My Lai

For almost five years, as a radio and TV correspondent for ABC News, I tape-recorded Hannah's programmes most days in case she said something newsworthy or presented a captured American pilot on her programme. It was just another source of information or disinformation to be checked out in the communications pudding of the Vietnam War.

The most shocking news story of the Vietnam war was broken by Hanoi Hannah on the Voice of Vietnam a few weeks after the March 16, 1968, massacre of Vietnamese civilians at the village of My Lai. Hannah named the location and estimated toll of civilians killed by American soldiers, but misidentified the division involved. Because of that error, the US denied the report, leaving the story unreported until Seymour Hersh, reporting for Despatch News Agency, investigated more than a year later. Because Voice of Vietnam so often exaggerated or made false reports, little attention was given at the time to Hanoi Hannah's report, but when the story of the massacre was finally picked up by Western news sources it increased the growing domestic opposition to the war.

Hannah's broadcasts to American troops

lasted eight years, ending in 1973, after most US troops left for home. However, on April 30, 1975, she was the first person in the world to break the news: “Saigon is liberated. Vietnam is completely independent and unified.”

Post-war life

In May 1978, I returned to Vietnam and asked the Foreign Ministry to arrange an interview with Trinh Thi Ngo. By then, Hanoi Hannah had left her beloved Hanoi and moved to Ho Chi Minh City, the former city of Saigon, with her husband.

Our appointment was set up for the rooftop bar of the Rex Hotel, where I waited with Ken Watkins, a Vietnam veteran from Houston, Texas, who had been with the First US Marines and was a regular listener to Hannah. While waiting, Ken recalled his memories of Hanoi Hannah: “The signal was pretty good around Danang, and we would tune in once or twice a week to hear her talk about the war. US Armed Forces radio didn’t talk about the war or attitudes at home.

“Hannah didn’t necessarily make sense. She used American English, but really didn’t speak our language, despite her hip expressions and the hit tunes she played, including some banned on US Army radio. The best thing going for her was that she was female and had a nice, soft, voice. Whenever she mentioned our unit, the First Marines, and disclosed where we were, that always stood out in my mind. Some of us thought she had spies everywhere or a crystal ball.”

So an ex-Marine and a former Vietnam war correspondent waited that sunny morning for the real Hanoi Hannah to appear. Then she appeared – elegant and attractive in a striking yellow Ao Dai, the Vietnamese traditional dress. A few points from the interview:

North: “Many American soldiers think you received excellent intelligence on their units, battle-readiness and casualties. What was the main source of your information?”

Hannah: “US Army Stars and Stripes.



“Hanoi Hannah” broadcasting during the Vietnam War.

We read from it. We had it flown in every day. We also read Newsweek, Time and several newspapers. We took the remarks of American journalists and put them in our broadcasts, especially about casualties . . . high casualties.”

North: “Do you remember any articles in particular that you used?”

Hannah: “Yes, Arnaud De Borchgrave in Newsweek. I remember we used his articles. Americans are xenophobic, they will believe their own people rather than the adversary. And Don Luce about the tiger cages. We would often say to the GIs that the Saigon regime was not worth their support.”

North: “Did you ever feel anger toward American soldiers?”

Hannah: “When the bombs came on Hanoi, I did feel angry. During the 1972 Christmas bombing, our broadcasting was moved to a remote area outside the city. To the Vietnamese, Hanoi is sacred ground. But even then, when I spoke to the GIs I tried always to be calm, I never felt aggression toward Americans as a people. I never called them the enemy, only adversaries.”

North: “Did you ever evaluate the effects of your broadcasts?”

Hannah: “No, during the war it was difficult to get feedback except through foreign news reports but we knew we were being

“The signal was pretty good around Danang, and we would tune in once or twice a week to hear her talk about the war. US Armed Forces radio didn’t talk about the war or attitudes at home”

THE VOICE OF WAR

If we didn't know before, the Vietnam War should have taught us that communications are now so pervasive in this shrinking world that suppression of information is impossible. Accuracy and honesty is essential

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

heard.”

North: “What were your main aims?”

Hannah: “We mentioned that GIs should go AWOL and suggested some frigging, or is that fragging. We advised them to do what they think proper against the war.”

North: “I don't know of a single fragging case after your suggestion, and there were few, if any defections, did that surprise you?”

Hannah: “No, we just continued our work. I believed in it. I put my heart in my work.”

North: “If you could make a final broadcast to American GI's today, what would you say?”

Hannah: “Let's let bygones, be bygones. Let's move on and be friends. There will be many benefits if we can be friends together. There is no reason to be enemies.”

Hanoi Hannah: “*Now for our talk. A Vietnam black GI who refuses to be a victim of racism is Billy Smith. It seems on the morning of March 15th a fragmentation grenade went off in an officer's barracks in Bien Hoa killing two gung-ho Lieutenants. Smith was illegally searched, arrested and put in Long Binh jail and brought home for trial. The evidence that showed him guilty was this: being black, poor and against the war and refusing to be a victim of racism.*”

Truth, lies and propaganda

By zapping the truth through a censorship policy of deletions and by allowing in the exaggerations of propaganda, US Armed Forces radio lost the trust of many American soldiers in Vietnam when they were most isolated and vulnerable to enemy propaganda. It wasn't that Hanoi Hannah always told the truth; she didn't. But she was most effective when she did tell the truth and US Armed Forces radio was fudging it. If we didn't know before, the Vietnam War should have taught us that communications are now so pervasive in this shrinking world that suppression of information is impossible. Accuracy and honesty is essential, not

just because it's morally right but because it's practical, too.

Hanoi Hannah could always be assured of at least the American prisoner of war (POW) audience “authorised” to hear her broadcast in prisons like the Hanoi Hilton.

Sen. John McCain, a Hanoi Hilton inmate for over five years, recently remarked: “I heard Hannah every day. She was a marvellous entertainer. I'm surprised she didn't get to Hollywood.”

Lt. Commander Ray Voden of McLean, Virginia, shot down over Hanoi on April 3, 1965, endured her broadcasts for eight years: “Hannah's broadcasts often stirred up arguments among the POW's. There were nearly fist fights over the program. Some guys wanted to hear it, while others tried to ignore it. Personally, I listened because I usually gleaned information, reading between the lines. She always exaggerated our aircraft losses, often claiming hundreds of our planes shot down when we hadn't heard anti-aircraft fire in weeks.

“Music was the best part of it. Sometimes playing American tunes that were supposed to make us homesick had the opposite effect. One time they played Downtown by Petula Clark and everyone started dancing and yelling for an hour, just went wild. Another one that gave us a hoot was Don't Fence Me In.

“I've no hatred for her now. She was doing her job and I was doing mine. But no, I wouldn't go out of my way to meet her today if given a chance.”

Meeting and interviewing Hanoi Hannah was like being Dorothy parting the curtains hiding the Wizard of Oz. The terrible Hannah behind the façade we constructed, turned out to be a mild-mannered announcer who spoke English and read Stars and Stripes.

After her death on September 30, Madam Trinh Thi Ngo was interred in Long Tri, Chau Than District, Long An province, following the Vietnamese custom of burial next to her husband and his family. Her only son escaped Vietnam in 1973 and now lives in San Francisco.

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Travellers

A poem by Barbara Millar

Sea gulls squawked and arched their wings
and dove for scraps above the terminal
where long grey busses in their slots
waited for their human cargo,
each with his own destination.

From the wharf I could hear sea lions
belch like foghorns, each to each,
like newborn pups and their mothers
on a rocky beach.

A pelican on a crowded pier
stands above his shadow.

The Oakland bus leaves from the
Embarcadero.
They check messages and text.
No one reads on this wired bus
unlike those I took in the turbulent Age of
Aquarius
when flowers filled the barrels of guns
and we sung "Here Comes the Sun."

They are all young, except we two,
the old lady across the aisle and me.
I remember wearing Che on a black tee
with bell bottom jeans when I carried signs
across a college green;
glad and golden in my nubile youth,
full of hope, a stranger to disillusionment
and despair.
We wondered why God was so unfair or if
he existed.

The young men gazed straight ahead;
noticing nothing in particular.
Their curlicued tattoos bore names in red
and blue
like Angel and Estelle (or something else
celestial)
in a cupid's sanguine heart with an arrow
passing through.

The traffic on the bridge was light.
And to the right, a balmy bay reflects the
sky;
now and then, tiny triangles of white
leaned back to fill their sails with wind.
Foam tipped waves rose and slapped

against a tidal swell.
Sea snails slept on polished stones, starfish
in the shallows.
A pelican on a pier stood above his
shadow.

Small and lean, such tiny hands and feet,
more than sixty years at least.
A mass of wrinkles and withered skin
pinched her cheeks.
Asian eyed, perhaps she spent her life
planting rice
in unrelenting heat and harvesting the
crop
before the monsoon came.
What was her name?

We passed the yellow daffodils around the
lake,
snow white orchids, crocus and Queen
Anne's lace.
Cosmos and chrysanthemums rested in
the shade of cherry trees.
Their nascent blooms scent a summer
breeze.

We both got off at Laurel Street.
I watched her walk until she stopped to
rest.
I wondered how long t'would be
before I, too, stopped for breath.

Was she remembering how her lover
lifted her silk ao dai,
across which mountain mists
floated above a golden temple and the
lofty pines,
the memory of that kiss more sacred than
the rest.

His lips were warm and wet inside her
mouth
and tasted like cinnamon.
Her eyes caught in the net of his obsession,
ablaze with happiness.

It was an innocent and tender time

before the fertile earth burned black
from fires in the sky.
The cow stopped giving milk,
their udders scorched, the oxen blind.

Could our separate souls
speak in a language we both knew?
Or were we just marking time
before a sad and solitary death
enjoying all the simple pleasures
while they last?

Or was she thinking of that bloody
February afternoon
when her beau, not yet nineteen, took a
bullet to the brain
on that high and grassy mound.

She would say he was
the sweetest boy
she'd ever known.

Had we met, we might have had a cup of
tea,
a slice of lemon pie.
Perhaps we would have walked
through her creaking garden gate
to see the tiny bridge over the small, but
luminous pond.
Sparkling iridescent scales flashed in the
sun.
A Buddha carved in polished jade laughs
at water lilies.

Had I had a chance to speak, I might have
said,
"I lost my true love too."
He died on a high and grassy hill that
February afternoon."
He was the last of his platoon.

Now they are brothers in death and sisters
in grief are we.
But as I guessed, we went our separate
paths.
I went east. She went west
and never again they crossed.

Did the US just declare war on Russia?

Darius Shahtahmasebi wonders when the media will take notice of US provocation of Russia in a dangerous game of nuclear confrontation

The fact that our media refuses to pay attention to the dangers of our own establishment in sending warnings to adverse nuclear powers based on unasserted allegations shows our media is playing a very dangerous game

Three weeks ago, America's oldest continuously published weekly magazine, the Nation, asked the question: has the White House declared war on Russia?

As the two nuclear powers sabre-rattle over conflicts within Syria, and to some extent, over the Ukrainian crisis, asking these questions to determine who will pull the trigger first has become more paramount than it was at the peak of the Cold War.

The Nation's contributing editor, Stephen F. Cohen, reported Vice President Joe Biden's statement that the White House was preparing to send Vladimir Putin a "message" – most likely in the form of a cyber attack – amounted to a virtual "American declaration of war on Russia" in Russia's eyes. Biden's threat is reportedly in response to allegations that Russia hacked Democratic Party offices in order to disrupt the presidential election.

Chuck Todd, host of the Meet the Press on NBC, asked Joe Biden: "Why haven't we sent a message yet to Putin?"

Biden responded, "We are sending a message [to Putin] . . . We have a capacity to do it, and..."

"He'll know it?" Todd interrupted.

"He'll know it. It will be at the time of our choosing, and under the circumstances that will have the greatest impact," the US vice president replied.

What are the effects of this kind of rhetoric when dealing with international relations? Western media decided to pay little attention to Biden's statements, yet his words have stunned Moscow. As reported by the Nation:

"Biden's statement, which clearly had been planned by the White House, could scarcely have been more dangerous or reckless – especially considering that there is no actual evidence or logic for the two allegations against Russia that seem to have prompted it."

The statements will not come without any measured response from Russia. According to presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov, Russia's response is well underway:

"The fact is, US unpredictability and aggression keep growing, and such threats against Moscow and our country's leadership are unprecedented, because the threat is being announced at the level of the US vice president. Of course, given such an aggressive, unpredictable line, we have to take measures to protect our interests, somehow hedge the risks."

The fact that our media refuses to pay attention to the dangers of our own establishment in sending warnings to adverse nuclear powers based on unasserted allegations shows our media is playing a very dangerous game with us – the people. This attempt to pull the wool over our eyes and

prepare us for a direct confrontation with Russia can be seen clearly in the battle for Aleppo, Syria.

As the Nation astutely noted: “Only a few weeks ago, President Obama had agreed with Putin on a joint US-Russian military campaign against ‘terrorists’ in Aleppo. That agreement collapsed primarily because of an attack by US warplanes on Syrian forces. Russia and its Syrian allies continued their air assault on east Aleppo now, according to Washington and the mainstream media, against anti-Assad ‘rebels.’”

“Where,” asks “Cohen, have the jihad terrorists gone? They had been deleted from the US narrative, which now accused Russia of ‘war crimes’ in Aleppo for the same military campaign in which Washington was to have been a full partner.”

So where is this conflict headed? A top US general, Marine General Joseph Dunford, told the Senate Armed Services Committee in September that the enforcement of a “no-fly zone” in Syria would mean a US war with both Syria and Russia. Hillary Clinton is well aware of the repercussions of this war, as she acknowledged in a secret speech to Goldman Sachs, recently released by Wikileaks:

“To have a no-fly zone you have to take out all of the air defence, many of which are located in populated areas. So our missiles, even if they are standoff missiles so we’re not putting our pilots at risk – you’re going

to kill a lot of Syrians. . . . So all of a sudden this intervention that people talk about so glibly becomes an American and NATO involvement where you take a lot of civilians.”

This is the same establishment that has been calling out Russia for allegedly committing war crimes in Aleppo, although Clinton’s proposal would result in far more civilian deaths and likely lead to a direct war with Russia.

As the war against Syria transitions into a much wider global conflict that could include nuclear powers Russia and China, our own media is deceiving us by dishonestly reporting on the events leading up to the activation of the doomsday clock.

History doesn’t occur in a vacuum; when the US and Russia confront each other directly, it won’t be because of a mere incident occurring in Syrian airspace.

It will be because the two nuclear powers have been confronting each other with little resistance from the corporate media, which keeps us well entertained and preoccupied with political charades, celebrity gossip, and outright propaganda. **CT**

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Top US general, Marine General Joseph Dunford, told the Senate Armed Services Committee in September that the enforcement of a “no-fly zone” in Syria would mean a US war with both Syria and Russia.

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How the Ouija board got its sinister reputation

Joseph E. Laycock traces its history from spiritualist roots to scary films



SCARY?: Screenshot from the movie, *Ouija: Origins of Evil*

The Fox sisters became overnight celebrities, and Spiritualism, a religious movement based on communicating with the dead, was born.

By now, most of us have vague notions of the Ouija board horror narrative, in which demonic spirits communicate with – even possess – kids. Director Mike Flanagan furthers this trope in his new film *Ouija: Origin of Evil*. Set in 1967, a widow and her daughters earn a living scamming clients seeking to contact dead loved ones. The family business is relatively harmless until the youngest daughter discovers an old Ouija board, attempts to contact her deceased father and instead becomes possessed by evil spirits.

The Ouija board, however, didn't always have this sinister reputation.

In fact, the Ouija board developed out of Spiritualism, a 19th-century movement known for its optimistic views about the future and the afterlife. As Spiritualism's pop-

ularity waned, the Ouija board emerged as a popular parlour game; it was only in the 20th-century that the Catholic Church and the horror movie industry rebranded the game as a doorway to the demonic.

Spiritualist origins

The Spiritualist movement is often said to have begun in Hydesville, New York, in 1848, when two sisters, Kate and Maggie Fox, reported hearing a series of mysterious raps in their tiny home. No one could discern where the raps were coming from, and they manifested in other houses the sisters visited. With no apparent source, the raps were attributed to spirits, and they appeared to respond to the sisters' questions.

The Fox sisters became overnight celebrities, and Spiritualism, a religious movement based on communicating with the dead, was born. Spiritualism spread across the Atlantic and into South America, but its popularity surged in the wake of the Civil War. The bloodiest war in American history had left many grieving families longing for ways to speak with their lost loved ones, and many sought comfort from spirit "mediums" – people like the Fox sisters who could allegedly talk to the dead. In 1893, Spiritualism became an official religious denomination, and in 1897, the *New York Times* reported that Spiritualism had eight million followers worldwide.

From the start, Christian critics claimed Spiritualism was just thinly disguised witchcraft. But Spiritualists were rarely dark or morbid. Spiritualist writer Andrew Jackson Davis even challenged the very idea of hell, asserting that all spirits can enter a blissful “Summerland” in the afterlife. Spiritualists also supported progressive causes, including abolition, temperance and women’s suffrage.

In their heyday, the Spiritualists developed numerous techniques and devices for talking to the dead. Early Spiritualists engaged in a practice called “alphabet calling,” in which someone rattled off the alphabet until the spirit rapped to indicate a specific letter. This laboured method created a demand for more efficient ways of communicating with the dead.

Some mediums engaged in “automatic writing.” The medium would enter a trance state and allow the spirits to guide their hand as they wrote messages (a phenomenon that’s also featured in the film). French Spiritualist Allan Kardec reported that during an 1853 séance (literally “a sitting” or session talking to spirits), the spirits suggested that the participants stick a pencil through an upside-down basket. This allowed everyone to place their hands on the basket to help the spirits guide the pencil across the paper. The basket evolved into a device called a planchette (from the French planche, meaning board).

By 1886, Spiritualists had developed the planchette further. The pencils were discarded and the planchette was paired with a board with the alphabet written on it. There were numerous models of these “talking boards.” Brandon Hodge is the foremost historian of these automatic writing devices, with a private collection of over 200 planchettes, as well as talking boards and other séance apparatus.

The design that most Americans know today was patented by the Kennard Novelty Company in 1891. Helen Peters, a sister-in-law of one of the company’s founders, asked



From the start, Christians tried to equate Spiritualism with witchcraft.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

the board what it should be named and received the cryptic answer “Ouija.” In 1882, William Fuld became supervisor of the company. Fuld made a fortune on the Ouija board and opened several new factories. Eerily, he

MAKING CONTACT

The board wasn't just a way to talk to a dead relative; it also became a way to conjure up dark forces and dismiss them from the safety of one's basement

died in 1927 when he fell from the roof of a factory he claimed the board had instructed him to build.

From parlour game to portal into hell

By the 20th-century, Spiritualism's popularity had begun to wane, partly due to the work of frauds.

While most mediums claimed subjective experiences of spirits during trance states, so-called "physical mediums" engaged in increasingly elaborate chicanery to convince audiences they were having a genuine encounter with the supernatural. Some of these tricks, such as concealing children inside cabinets where they could make noises or move objects, are depicted in Flanagan's film. In the 1940s, the National Association of Spiritualism banned physical mediumship. But by then the damage had been done. Most people thought you were a sucker if you believed you could talk to the dead.

The Ouija board was generally regarded as a parlour game with little connection to the occult. But during World War I, the Ouija board's popularity spiked, especially on college campuses. Folklorist Bill Ellis reports that by 1920, one professor had declared it "a serious national menace."

Meanwhile, many American Catholics who already prayed to the saints had been attracted to Spiritualism. Church authorities moved quickly to counter this.

J. Godfrey Raupert was a "psychic investigator" who hoped to scientifically "prove" Spiritualism before he converted to Catholicism and renounced it. Pope Pius X commissioned Raupert to warn Catholics about the Ouija board. In 1919 he published a book, *The New Black Magic and the Truth About the Ouija Board*.

"For more reasons than one," Raupert inveighed, "the board should not be tolerated in any Christian household or placed within the reach of the young."

Despite such warnings, sales continued to grow. They peaked during 1960s, when, boosted by counterculture and popular in-

terest in the occult, the Ouija board outsold Monopoly.

But it was William Peter Blatty's 1971 novel *The Exorcist* – together with its 1973 film adaptation – that cemented the Ouija board's sinister reputation in the popular imagination. Blatty based his story on an actual case of an allegedly possessed boy that occurred in Maryland in 1949. According to a "diary" seen by Jesuit priests Blatty met at Georgetown University, the boy had been introduced to the Ouija board by an aunt who was interested in Spiritualism; the first signs of the boy's possession began shortly after the aunt died. Blatty's story took these details and filled in the gaps.

The result was a national obsession with exorcism and the demonic.

Ouija: Origin of Evil pays homage to the film adaptation of *The Exorcist*. The trailer shows a young girl in the so-called "hysterical arch," recalling the famous contortions in the film. This pose was first popularised by early French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, who photographed women in "hysteria" and suggested this condition was the true cause of demonic possession.

Paradoxically, this demonic reputation only enhanced the Ouija board's popularity with adolescents. The board wasn't just a way to talk to a dead relative; it also became a way to conjure up dark forces and dismiss them from the safety of one's basement. Ellis suggests that as a window to the demonic, the Ouija board allows teenagers to "participate directly in myth." In this sense, it's a quasi-religious experience, in which the board conjures up a demonic "anti-world" that brave adolescents can challenge and reject.

Meanwhile, thrill-seekers who don't want to get so personal with the demonic can simply watch the movie. **CT**

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Throwing in the towel

Sandy Tolan outlines what the bankruptcy of White House policy means for Israelis and Palestinians

Washington has finally thrown in the towel on its long, tortured efforts to establish peace between Israel and the Palestinians. You won't find any acknowledgement of this in the official record. Formally, the US still supports a two-state solution to the conflict. But the Obama administration's recent 10-year, \$38-billion pledge to renew Israel's arsenal of weaponry, while still ostensibly pursuing "peace," makes clear just how bankrupt that policy is.

For two decades, Israeli leaders and their neoconservative backers in this country, hell-bent on building and expanding settlements on Palestinian land, have worked to undermine America's stated efforts – and paid no price. Now, with that record weapons package, the US has made it all too clear that they won't have to. Ever.

The military alliance between the United States and Israel has long been at odds with the stated intentions of successive administrations in Washington to foster peace in the Holy Land. One White House after another has preferred the "solution" of having it both ways: supporting a two-state solution while richly rewarding, with lethal weaponry, an incorrigible client state that was working as fast as it could to undermine just such a solution.

This ongoing duality seemed at its most surreal in the last few weeks. First, President

Obama announced the new military deal, with its promised delivery of fighter jets and other hardware, citing the "unshakable" American military alliance with Israel. The following week, at the United Nations, he declared, "Israel must recognize that it cannot permanently occupy and settle Palestinian land." Next, he flew to Israel for the funeral of Shimon Peres, and in a tribute to the Nobel Prize-winning former Israeli president, spoke of a man who grasped that "the Jewish people weren't born to rule another people" and brought up the "unfinished business" of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. (Peres is remembered quite differently by Palestinians as an early pioneer of settlement building and the author of the brutal Operation Grapes of Wrath assaults on Lebanon in 1996.) Not long after the funeral, the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu brazenly approved a new settlement deep in the West Bank, prompting the State Department to "strongly condemn" the action as "deeply troubling."

Such scolding words, however, shrivel into nothingness in the face of a single number: 38 billion. With its latest promise of military aid, the United States has essentially sanctioned Israel's impunity, its endless colonization of Palestinian land, its military occupation of the West Bank, and its periodic attacks by F-16 fighter jets and Apache helicopters using Hellfire missiles

The military alliance between the United States and Israel has long been at odds with the stated intentions of successive administrations in Washington to foster peace in the Holy Land

PALESTINE'S FUTURE

After all these decades, the two-state solution, critically flawed as it was, should now officially be declared dead – and consider the United States an accomplice in its murder

on the civilians of Gaza.

Yes, Hamas's crude and occasionally deadly rockets sometimes help provoke Israeli fire, and human rights investigations have found that both sides have committed war crimes. But Israel's explosive power in the 2014 Gaza war, fuelled in large part by American military aid and political support, exceeded that of Hamas by an estimated 1,500-to-1. By one estimate, all of Hamas's rockets, measured in explosive power, were equal to 12 of the one-ton bombs Israel dropped on Gaza. And it loosed hundreds of those, and fired tens of thousands of shells, rockets and mortars. In the process, nearly 250 times more Palestinian civilians died than civilians in Israel.

Now, with Gaza severed from the West Bank, and Palestinians facing new waves of settlers amid a half-century-long military occupation, the US has chosen not to apply pressure to its out-of-control ally, but instead to resupply its armed forces in a massive way. This means that we've finally arrived at something of a historic (if hardly noticed) moment. After all these decades, the two-state solution, critically flawed as it was, should now officially be declared dead – and consider the United States an accomplice in its murder. In other words, the Obama administration has handed Israel's leaders and the neoconservatives who have long championed this path the victory they've sought for more than two decades.

The Chaos Kids

Twenty years ago, the pro-Israel hard right in America designed the core strategy that helped lead to this American capitulation. In 1996, a task force led by neocons Richard Perle (future chairman of the Defense Policy Board), David Wurmser (future senior Middle East adviser to Vice President Dick Cheney), Douglas Feith (future undersecretary of defence), and others issued a policy paper aimed at incoming Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm ad-

vocated that Israel walk away from its embrace of the Oslo peace process and Oslo's focus on territorial concessions. The paper's essential ingredients included weakening Israel's neighbours via regime change in Saddam Hussein's Iraq and "roll back" in Syria and Iran. The authors' recommendations turned out to be anything but a wish list, given that a number of them would soon hold influential positions in the administration of George W. Bush.

As journalist Jim Lobe wrote in 2007: "[T]he task force, which was chaired by Perle, argued that regime change in Iraq – of which Feith was among the most ardent advocates within the Pentagon – would enable Israel and the US to decisively shift the balance of power in the region so that Israel could make a 'clean break' from the Oslo process (or any framework that would require it to give up 'land for peace') and, in so doing, 'secure the realm' against Palestinian territorial claims."

In other words, as early as 1996, these neocons were already imagining what would become the disastrous invasion of Iraq in 2003. You could argue, of course, that neither the neocons nor Netanyahu could have foreseen the chaos that would follow, with Iraq nearly cracking open and Syria essentially collapsing into horrific civil war and violence, civilians stranded under relentless bombing, and the biggest refugee crisis since World War II gripping Europe and the world. But you would, at least in some sense, be wrong, for certain of the neocon advocates of regime change imagined chaos as an essential part of the process from early on.

"One can only hope that we turn the region into a cauldron, and faster, please," wrote Michael Ledeen of the American Enterprise Institute in the National Review during the buildup to the invasion of Iraq. (In 1985, as a consultant to the National Security Council and to Oliver North, Ledeen had helped broker the illegal arms-for-hostages deal with Iran by setting up meetings between weapons dealers and Israel.) "The

war won't end in Baghdad," Ledeen later wrote, in the Wall Street Journal. "We must also topple terror states in Tehran and Damascus."

The neocons got so much more than they bargained for in Iraq, and so much less than they wanted in Syria and Iran. Their recent attempts – with Netanyahu as their chief spokesman – to block the Obama administration's Iran nuclear deal, for example, went down in flames. Still, it's stunning to think just how much their strategy of regime change and chaos helped transform our world and the Greater Middle East for the worse, and to be reminded that its ultimate goal, at least in those early days, was in large part to keep Israel from having to pursue a peace deal with the Palestinians. Of course, there were other benefits the neocons imagined back then as part of their historic attempt to redraw the map of the Middle East. Controlling some of the vast oil reserves of that region was one of them, but of course that didn't exactly turn out to be a "mission accomplished" moment either. Only the Israeli part of the plan seemed to succeed as once imagined.

Collapsing states

So here we are 20 years later. All around the Holy Land, states are collapsing or at least their foundations are crumbling, and Israel's actions make clear that it isn't about to help improve the situation in any way. It visibly intends to pursue a policy of colonisation, permanent human rights violations, and absolute rule over the Palestinians. These are facts on the ground that former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Netanyahu, the Israeli right wing, and those American neocon visionaries fought so hard to establish. A succession of leaders in Washington – at least those who weren't designing this policy themselves – have been played for fools.

In the two-plus decades since the 1993 Oslo Agreement, which some believed would put Israel and the Palestinians on the

path to peace, and that Clean Break document which was written to undermine it, the West Bank settler population has grown from 109,000 to nearly 400,000 (an estimated 15 percent of whom are American). The would-be capital of a Palestinian state, East Jerusalem, is now surrounded by 17 Jewish settlements. Palestinians nominally control a mere 18 percent of the West Bank (also known as Area A), or 4 percent of the entire land base of Israel/Palestine.

The Palestinians' would-be homeland is now checkered with military bases, settlements, settler-only roads, and hundreds of checkpoints and barriers – all in a West Bank the size of Delaware, the second-smallest state in the US. An estimated 40 percent of adult male Palestinians, and thousands of children, have seen the insides of Israeli jails and prisons; many of them languish there without charges.

Israel has, in essence, created a Jim Crow-like separate and unequal reality there: a one-state "solution" that it alone controls. The United States has done almost nothing about this (other than carefully couched, periodic State Department words of complaint), while its ally marched forward unchecked. Not since James Baker was secretary of state under the first President Bush before – notably enough – the signing of the Oslo accords has any US leader threatened to withhold funds unless Israel stops building settlements on Palestinian land. The phrase "friends don't let friends drive drunk" no longer applies in US-Israeli relations. Rather, what we hear are regular pledges of "absolute, total, unvarnished commitment to Israel's security." Those were, in fact, the words of Vice President Joe Biden during a 2010 visit to Israel – a pledge offered, as it turned out, only a few hours before the Netanyahu government announced the construction of 1,600 new apartments in East Jerusalem.

"Unvarnished commitment" in 2016 means that \$38-billion for what Obama called "the world's most advanced weapons

Israel intends to pursue a policy of colonisation, permanent human rights violations, and absolute rule over the Palestinians

PALESTINE'S FUTURE

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technology." That includes 33 of Lockheed's F-35 Joint Strike Fighter jets, at \$200-million per jet, part of a troubled \$1.5-trillion weapons system subsidised by US taxpayers. Other deadly hardware headed for Israel: cargo planes, F-15 fighter jets, battle tanks, armoured personnel carriers, a new class of warships whose guided missiles would undoubtedly be aimed directly at Gaza, and more of Lockheed's Hellfire missiles. If recent history is any indication, you would need to add fresh supplies of bombs, grenades, torpedoes, rocket launchers, mortars, howitzers, machine guns, shotguns, pistols, and bayonets. As part of the agreement, US arms manufacturers will soon supply 100 percent of that weaponry, while Israeli weapons manufacturers will be phased out of US military aid. "It's a win-win for Israeli security and the US economy," a White House aide cheerily told the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz.

The Clinton (Trump) White House and Israel

Current policy, if that's the right word, could perhaps be summed up as weapons, weapons, and more weapons, while Washington otherwise washed its hands of what was always known as "the peace process" (despite that fig leaf still in place). Today, functionally, there's no such process left. And that's unlikely to change under either a President Clinton or a President Trump. If anything, it may get worse.

During the Democratic primary campaign, for instance, Hillary Clinton promised to invite Netanyahu to the White House "during my first month in office" in order to "reaffirm" Washington's "unbreakable bond with Israel." In a speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which labels itself "America's pro-Israel lobby," she was virtually silent on the Israeli settlement issue, except to promise to protect Israel against its own violations of international law. She attacked Trump from the right, denouncing his once-expressed wish to remain "neutral" on the issue of Israel and Palestine.

In the 1990s, as first lady, Clinton had stirred controversy by uttering the word "Palestine" and kissing Yasser Arafat's widow, Suha, on the cheek. Now she fully embraces those who believe Israel can do no wrong, including Hollywood mogul Haim Saban, who has donated at least \$6.4-million to her campaign, and millions more to the Clinton Foundation and the Democratic National Committee. Saban, an Israeli-American whose billions came largely from the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers franchise, describes himself as "a one-issue guy, and my issue is Israel."

Last year, he convened a "secret" Las Vegas meeting with fellow billionaire Sheldon Adelson, the bankroller of a panoply of Republican candidates and a huge supporter of Israel's settlement project. Their aim: to shut down, if not criminalise, the pro-Palestinian Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement, or BDS. That boycott movement targets cultural institutions and businesses including those that profit from the occupation of the West Bank. Its approach is akin to the movement to impose sanctions on South Africa during the apartheid era.

With Saban's millions destined for her campaign war chest, Clinton wrote to her benefactor to express her "alarm" over BDS, "seeking your thoughts and recommendations" to "work together to counter BDS." Yet it's a non-violent movement that aims to confront Israel's human rights abuses through direct economic and political pressure, not guns or terror attacks. Would Clinton prefer suicide bombers and rockets? Never mind that the relatively modest movement has been endorsed by an assortment of international trade unions, scholarly associations, church groups, the Jewish Voice for Peace, and Nobel Peace Prize winner Desmond Tutu. At the root of BDS, Clinton has hinted darkly, is anti-semitism. "At a time when anti-semitism is on the rise across the world," she wrote Saban, "we need to repudiate forceful efforts to malign and undermine Israel and

the Jewish people.”

As for Trump, some Palestinians were encouraged by his statement to MSNBC's Joe Scarborough that he might “be sort of a neutral guy” on the issue. He told the AP: “I have a real question as to whether or not both sides want to make it. A lot will have to do with Israel and whether or not Israel wants to make the deal – whether or not Israel's willing to sacrifice certain things.” Yet Trump subsequently fell in line with Republican orthodoxy, pledging among other things to move the US Embassy to Jerusalem, a litmus test for supporters of the hard right in Israel, and a virtual guarantee that East Jerusalem, at the center of the Palestinian dream of statehood, will remain in Israel's hands.

In the short term, then, the prospect for an American-brokered just peace may be as bleak as it's ever been – even though US officials know full well that a just solution to the conflict would remove a primary recruiting tool for jihadists. For the next four to eight years, American leadership will, by all indications, shore up the status quo, which means combining all that weaponry and de facto acquiescence in Israel's land grabs with, perhaps, the occasional hand-wringing State Department statement.

“With patience, change will come”

However, like Jim Crow, like South African apartheid, the status quo of this moment simply can't last forever. Eventually, the future of the region will not be left to the self-proclaimed “honest brokers” of Washington who lecture Palestinians on the proper forms of non-violence, while offering no genuine alternatives to surrender. Given the long history of Palestinian resistance, it is foolhardy to expect such a surrender now and particularly unwise to slander a movement of nonviolent resistance – especially given what we know about the kinds of resistance that are possible.

Whether by peaceful resistance or other means, the status quo will change, in part

simply because it must: a structure this twisted cannot stand on its own forever. Already AIPAC's monumental attempts to scuttle the Iran deal have led to humiliating defeat and that's just a taste of what, sooner or later, the future could hold. After all, young Americans, including young Jews, are increasingly opposed to Israel's domination of Palestinian lands, and increasingly supportive of the boycott movement. In addition, the balance of power in the region is shifting. We can't know how Russia, China, Turkey, and Iran will operate there in the years to come, but amid the ongoing chaos, US influence will undoubtedly diminish over time. As a member of a prominent Gaza family said to me many years ago: “Does Israel think America will always protect them, always give them arms, and that they will always be the biggest power in the Middle East? Do they really expect they can maintain this hold on us forever?”

A popular Arab folk ballad, *El Helwa Di*, promises a penniless child who has placed her life in God's hands: “With patience, change will come. All will be better.”

Perhaps it will prove useful, in the end, to abandon the illusions of the now-terminal two-state solution, at least as envisioned in the Oslo process. In the language of those accords, after all, the words “freedom” and “independence” never appear, while “security” is mentioned 12 times.

In a regime of growing confinement, the Israelis have steadily undermined Palestinian sovereignty, aided and abetted by an American acquiescence in Israel's ongoing settlement project. Now, at least, there is an opportunity to lay the foundations for some newer kind of solution grounded in human rights, freedom of movement, complete cessation of settlement building, and equal access to land, water, and places of worship. It will have to be based on a new reality, which Israel and the United States have had such a hand in creating. Think of it as the one-state solution. **CT**

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WRITING WORTH READING | PHOTOS WORTH SEEING



When the TV newsreader warned that three 'armed and dangerous' terrorists were on the loose in South Africa, one of the fugitives was watching the news with a journalist and his wife. David Niddrie tells of his secret involvement with the elusive 'Red Pimpernel'

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Robert Fisk on the deadly legacy of Israeli 'Peacemaker' Shimon Peres

BLOOD AND FIRE AND SLAUGHTER

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NIGHTS OF RAGE

Black men must die at the hands of US police?