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Anticapitalist Readings of Weber's Protestant Ethic: Ernst Bloch, Walter Benjamin, Georg Lukacs, Erich Fromm

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This paper will try to analyze a curious intellectual phenomena: a group of Jewish-German authors that developed, during the Weimar Republic, a radical anti-capitalist and anti-protestant argument, directly inspired by Weberâ€™s *Protestant Ethic.* They did not hesitate to denounce capitalism as a sort of diabolic religion (Ernst Bloch, Walter Benjamin), or as the product of the evil ethical tendencies of Calvinism (Ernst Bloch, Erich Fromm).

Max Weber admired the protestant ethic as one of the great moments in the disenchantment of religion, and its transformation from magic rituals into an ethical life-conduct. His attitude towards capitalism is more ambivalent and contradictory. One could say that he is divided between his identity as a bourgeois which fully supports German capitalism and its imperial power, and his statute as an intellectual, sensitive to the arguments of the Romantic anti-capitalist *Zivilisationskritik* so influential among the German academic mandarins at the beginning of the 20th century. From this viewpoint, he could be compared to another split "if not schizophrenic" German bourgeois/intellectual: Walther Rathenau, Prussian and Jew, capitalist entrepreneur and sharp critic of the mechanical civilization.

Rejecting any socialist idea, Weber does not hesitate, on some occasions, to use apologetic arguments in defense of capitalism, in its relation to protestant ethics. This is particularly obvious in his description, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* of the origins of capitalism as the result of Protestant work ethic, i.e. the combination of hard work, methodic economic activity, frugal life and the reinvestment of savings: a description which is very close to the idealized self-image of the bourgeois!

Usually he seems to lean towards a resigned acceptance of bourgeois civilization, not as desirable, but as inevitable. However, in some key texts, which had a very significant impact on 20th century thought, he gives free rein to a insightful, pessimistic and radical critique of the paradoxes of capitalist rationality. Obviously, the issues raised by Weber are quite different from those of Marx. Weber ignores exploitation, is not interested in economic crisis, has little sympathy for the struggles of the proletariat, and does not question colonial expansion. However, influenced by the Romantic or Nietzschean *Kulturpessimismus*, he perceives a deep contradiction between the requirements of the formal modern rationality "of which bureaucracy and private enterprise are concrete manifestations" and those of the acting subject's autonomy. Distancing himself from Enlightenment's rationalist tradition, he is sensitive to the contradictions and limits of modern rationality, as it expresses itself in

capitalist economy and state administration: its formal and instrumental character and its tendency to produce effects that lead to the reversal of the emancipatory aspirations of modernity. The search for calculation and efficiency at any price leads to the bureaucratization and reification of human activities. This diagnosis of modernityâ€™s crisis will be, to a large extent, taken over by the Frankfurt School in its first period (Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse).

What is striking in Weber's pessimistic/resigned assessment of modernity is its refusal of the illusions of progress which were so powerful in the European consciousness at the beginning of the 20th century. This pessimism is inseparable from a critical view of the nature itself of capitalism and its dynamics of rationalisation/modernisation.

One can distinguish two aspects "intimately linked between them" in Weber's critique of the substance itself of the capitalist system:

The inversion between means and ends. For the spirit of capitalism "intimately linked to the protestant ethic – of which Benjamin Franklin is an ideal-typical figure" almost chemically pure to win money, to gather more and more money (to accumulate capital would say Marx) is the supreme good and the ultimate aim in life:

â€œThe pursuit of riches is fully stripped of all pleasurable, and surely all hedonistic aspects. Accordingly, this striving becomes understood completely as an end in itself â€" to such an extent that it appears as fully outside the normal course of affairs and simply irrational, at least when viewed from the perspective of the â€˜happinessâ€™ or â€˜utilityâ€™ of the single individual. Here, people are oriented to acquisition as the purpose of life: acquisition is no longer viewed as a means to the end of satisfying the substantive needs of life. Those people in possession of spontaneous (*unbefangene*) dispositions experience this situation as an absolutely meaningless reversal of â€˜naturalâ€™ conditions (as we would say today). Yet, this reversal constitutes just as surely a guiding principle of [modern] capitalism as incomprehension of this new situation characterizes all who remain untouched by [modern] capitalismâ€™s tentacles.â€

Supreme expression of modern aim-oriented rationality â€" Weberâ€™s *ZweckrationalitÃ¤t* or, according to the Frankfurt School, instrumental rationality â€" capitalist economy reveals itself, from the viewpoint of the â€œsubstantive needs of life.â€ or of human happiness, as â€³simply irrationalâ€³ or â€³absolutely meaningless.â€³ Weber returns several times to this issue in *The Protestant Ethic,* always insisting on the *irrationality* â€" his emphasis â€" of the logic of capitalist accumulation: a comparison between the spirit of capitalism and economic traditionalism â€" for whom work is simply â€³indispensable to lifeâ€³ â€" â€³renders obvious the *irrationality*, from the viewpoint of oneâ€™s personal happiness, of this way of organising lifeÂ : people live for their business rather than the reverse.â€³

Of course Weber believes that this â€³absurdâ€³ and â€³irrationalâ€³ system has its own formidable rationality: his remarks show nevertheless a deep critical distance towards the spirit of capitalism. Obviously two forms of rationality are in conflict here: one, the

ZweckrationalitÃ¤t, purely formal and instrumental, whose only aim is, in capitalism, production for production, accumulation for accumulation, money for money; the other, more substantial, which corresponds to the â€" pre-capitalist â€" â€³natural conditions,â€³ and refers to values (*WertrationalitÃ¤t*) such asÂ : peopleâ€™s happiness, the satisfaction of their needs.

This definition of capitalism as irrational is not without certain affinities with Marxâ€™ ideas. The subordination of the aim â€" the human being â€" to the means â€" the enterprise, money, commodity â€" is an argument that comes very near to the Marxist concept of alienation. Weber was conscious of this similarity, and refers to it in his 1918 conference on Socialism: â€³All this [the impersonnal functioning of capital] is what socialism defines as the â€˜domination of things over the human beings.â€™ which means: the means over the aim (the satisfaction of the needs).â€³ This explains, by the way, why Lukacsâ€™ theory of reification in *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) is based on both Marx and Weber.

2) The submission to an all powerful mechanism, the emprisonment in a system which oneself has created. This issue is intimately related to the former one, but it emphasizes the loss of freedom, the decline of individual autonomy. The *locus classicus* of this criticism is to be found in the last paragraphs of *The Protestant Ethic*, doubtless the most famous and influential passage of Weberâ€™s work â€" and one of the rare moments where he permitted himself what he calls â€³value and faith judgements.â€³ Again, the role of the protestant ethic in the origin of this process is taken into account.

First of all Weber considers, with a resigned nostalgia, that the triumph of the modern capitalist spirit requires the â€³renunciation of the Faustian multi-dimensionality of the human species.â€³ The acknowledgment of the rise of the bourgeois era has, for Goethe â€" as for Weber â€" the meaning of a Â«Â farewell to an era of full and beautiful humanity.â€³

On the other hand, capitalist rationality creates a more and more constraining and coercive context: â€³The Puritan *wanted* to be a person with a vocational calling; today we are *forced* to be.â€³ The modern â€" capitalist â€" economic order, with its technical conditions of mechanical and machine production, â€³determines the style of life of all individuals born into it, *not* only those directly engaged in earning a living.â€³ This constraint, Weber compares it with a sort of prison, or â€³iron cage,â€³ where the system of rational production encloses the individuals: â€³According to Baxter [a Puritan preacher â€" ML] the concern for material goods should lie upon the shoulders of his saints like â€˜a lightweight coat that could be thrown off at any time.â€™ Yet fate allowed a steel-hard casing (*stahlhartes GehÃ¤use*) to be forged from this coat.â€³

The expression became famous. It strikes by its tragic resignation, but also by its critical dimension. There are different interpretations or translations for the words *sthahlhartes GehÃ¤use:* for some it is a â€³casingâ€³ for others a â€³shellâ€³ or a â€³cell.â€³ But is is probable that Weber borrowed the image of an â€³iron cage of despairâ€³ from the English Puritan poet Bunyan. In any case, it seems to describe, in the *Protestant Ethic*, the reified

structures of capitalist economy as a sort of steel-hard prison â€" rigid, cold and pitiless.

Weberâ€™s pessimism leads him to fear the end of all values and ideals, and the advent, under the aegis of modern capitalism, of a â€³mechanized ossification, embellished with a sort of rigidly compelled sense of self-importance.â€³ He foresees the process of reification as extending, from the economic sphere, to all areas of social life: politics, law, culture**.**

Soon after Weberâ€™s death, there appears in the Weimar Republic an intellectual constellation – essentially composed of Jewish authors of German culture – which one could describe as *the anti-capitalist – as well as, to a large extent, anti-protestant, or anti-calvinist – readings of Max Weber.* This sort of interpretation must be considered, to a large extent, as a creative Â«Â misappropriationÂ Â» : these dissident â€œdisciplesâ€ will use the ambivalent arguments of the *Protestant Ethic* in order to develop a virulent anti-capitalist critique, of socialist/romantic inspiration.

The first star in this constellation is Ernst Bloch, who had taken part, in the years 1912-14, in Max Weberâ€™s circle of friends which met every Sunday at his home in Heidelberg. It is Bloch that Â«Â inventedÂ Â», in his *Thomas MÃ¼nzer* from 1921, the expression â€œcapitalism as religionâ€ (*Kapitalismus als religion*), a theological disaster whose moral responsibility he squarely places on the shoulders of Calvinism. The witness called for to sustain this accusation is none else than …Max WeberÂ : among Calvinâ€™s followers, says Bloch, Â«Â thanks to the abstract duty to work, production unfolds in a harsh and systematic way, since the ideal of poverty, applied by Calvin only to *consumption*, contributes to the formation of capital. The obligation of saving is imposed on wealth, conceived as an abstract quantity which is an aim in itself requiring growth. (â€¦) As Marx Weber has brilliantly shown, the capitalist economy in development is totally emancipated, detached, liberated from all qualms (*Skrupel)* of primitive Christianity, as well as well as of all relatively Christian aspects of the economic ideology of the Middle-Ages.â€ Weberâ€™s Â«Â axiologically neutralÂ Â» analysis of the rÃ´le of Calvinism in the rise of the capitalist spirit becomes, in the words of Ernst Bloch – a *sui-generis* Marxist fascinated by Catholicism – a ferocious attack on capitalism and its protestant originsâ€¦

Among Walter Benjamin unpublished papers which came out in 1985, edited by Ralph Tiedemann and Hermann SchweppenhÃ¤user in volume VI of the *Gesammelte Schriften* (Suhrkamp Verlag), the fragment â€œCapitalism as religionâ€ is one of his most intriguing, but also most interesting piecesÂ . It is made of only three or four pages, including notes and bibliographical references; dense, paradoxical, sometimes hermetic, it was not intended for publication and is not easily deciphered.

The title of the fragment is directly borrowed from Ernst Blochâ€™s above mentioned *Thomas MÃ¼nzer, theologian of revolution* (1921). We know that Benjamin read this book, because in a letter to Gershom Scholem from November 27, 1921 he told his friendÂ : Â«Â Recently he [Bloch] gave me, during his first visit here, the complete proofs of his â€˜MÃ¼nzerâ€™ and Iâ€™ve begun to read it.â€ This means that the date when the fragment was written is not

exactly Â«Â at latest in the middle of 1921Â Â», as the editors indicate in a note, but rather Â«at the soonest at the end of 1921Â Â». By the way, Benjamin did not at all share the views of his friend about a Calvinist/Protestant treason of the true spirit of Christianityâ€¦

Benjaminâ€™s fragment is visibly inspired by Max Weberâ€™s *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of CapitalismÂ ;* it is twice mentioned, once in the body of the text, and then in the bibliographical notes, which include the 1920 edition of the *Gesammelte AufsÃ¤tze sur Religionssoziologie,* as well as Ernst Troeltschâ€™s book, *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* (1912) – a work that develops, concerning the origins of capitalism, similar theses as Weber. However, as we shall see, Benjaminâ€™s argument goes well beyond Weber, and, above all, it substitutes his â€œvalue freeâ€ (*Wertfrei)* analysis by a passionate anti-capitalist attack.

Â«Â One must see capitalism as a religionÂ Â»: it is with this categorical statement that the fragment opens. It is followed by a reference, but at the same time a critical comment, to Max Weberâ€™s thesis : Â«Â To demonstrate the religions structure of capitalism – i.e. to demonstrate that it is not only a formation conditioned by religion, as Weber thinks, but an essentially religious phenomena â€“ would take us today into the meanders of a boundless universal polemicÂ .Â» Further on, the same idea appears again, in a somewhat attenuated form, in fact nearer to the Weberian argument : â€œChristianity, at the time of the Reformation, did not favor the establishment of capitalism, it transformed itself into capitalismâ€. This is not so far from the conclusions of *The Protestant Ethic*â€¦ What is new is the idea of the properly religious nature of the capitalist system itself : this goes well beyond Weber, even if it is based on many aspects of his analysis.

Both dimensions are visible in his discussion on the main characteristics of the â€œreligious structure of capitalismâ€. Benjamin does not quote Weber in this context, but his presentation is nourished by the ideas and arguments of the German sociologist, giving them however a new meaning, infinitely more critical, more radical â€“ socially, politically and philosophically (theologicallyÂ ?) â€“ and in contradiction with the Weberian thesis of secularization.

The first decisive trait of the capitalist religion is that is â€œa purely cultic religion, perhaps the most extremely cultic that ever existed. Nothing has meaning in it that is not immediately related to the cult, it has no specific dogma nor theology. Utilitarianism wins in it, from this viewpoint, its religious colorationÂ Â».

In other words : the utilitarian practices of capitalism – capital investment, speculations, financial operations, stock-exchange manipulations, selling and buying commodities – have the meaning of a religious cult. Capitalism does not require the acceptance of a creed, a doctrine or a theology, what counts are the actions, which take the form, by their social dynamics, of cult practices.

But what is that permits one to assimilate this economic capitalist practices to a religious â€œcultâ€? Benjamin does not explain it, but he uses, a few lines bellow, the word

â€œadoratorâ€; one can therefore suppose that, for him, the capitalist cult includes some divinities which are the object of adoration. For instance : â€œComparison between the images of saints in different religions and the bank notes of different statesâ€. Money, in the form of paper-notes, would therefore be the object of a cult similar to the one of saints in â€œordinaryâ€ religions. It is interesting to notice that, in a passage of *One-Way Stree* (t928), Benjamin compares the bank notes with the â€œfaÃ§ade-architecture of Hellâ€ (*Fassaden-architektur der HÃ¶lle*) which manifests â€œthe holy spirit of seriousnessâ€ of capitalism. Let us remember also that on the door – or the faÃ§ade â€“ of Danteâ€™s hell there is the famous inscription : Â«Â voi châ€™entrate, lasciate cui ogni speranzaÂ Â»Â ; according to Marx, these were the words inscribed by the capitalist at the entrance of the factory, for the instruction of his workers. As we shall see below, *despair* is for Benjamin the religious state of the world under capitalism.

The second decisive trait of capitalism, which is intimately linked to its concrete cult nature is that Â«Â the duration of the cult is permanentâ€. Capitalism is â€œthe celebration of a cult *sans trÃªve et sans merci*. There are no â€˜ordinary daysâ€™, no days which are not holidays, in the terrible meaning of the deployment of sacred pomp, of the extreme tension which inhabits the adorerâ€. Benjamin has probably once more taken his cue from Weberâ€™s *Protestant Ethic*, which emphasizes the methodic rules of behavior imposed by Calvinism/Capitalism, the permanent control of life conduct, and the â€œreligious value set on restless, continuous, and systematic work in a vocational callingâ€.

Restless, continuous, *sans trÃªve et sans merci* : Weberâ€™s idea is absorbed by Benjamin, almost with the same wordsÂ ; not without irony however, when speaking of the permanent Â«Â holidaysÂ Â»Â : in fact, the Puritan capitalists suppressed most of the Catholic holidays, considered as a form of idleness. Therefore, in the capitalist religion, every days sees the deployment of the â€œsacred pompâ€, i.e. the rituals of Stock-Exchange or Finance, while the adorers follow, with anguish and an Â«Â extreme tensionÂ Â», the rise and fall of the share values. Capitalist practices do not know any pause, they rule over the life of the individuals from morning to evening, from Spring to Winter, from the cradle to the tomb. As Burkhardt Lindner comments, Benjaminâ€™s fragment borrows from Weber the conception of capitalism as a dynamic system in global expansion, an iron destiny to which no one seems able to escape.

Benjamin continues his damnation of the capitalist religion with the following discourseÂ :

Â«Â In this way, capitalism is thrown into a monstrous movement. A monstrously guilty consciousness which does not know how to expiate, takes possession of the cult, not in order to atone for [expiate] this guilt, but in order to universalize it, to introduce it forcefully in consciousness, and above all, in order to involve God in this guilt, so that he himself has finally an interest in expiationâ€. Benjamin mentions, in this context, what he calls â€œthe daemonic ambiguity of the word *Schuld*â€ – which means at the same time â€œdebtâ€ and â€œguiltâ€.

One can find in Max Weber similar arguments, which also play with the connexions between

economic debt, moral duty and religious guilt : for the Puritan bourgeois, Â«Â what he spends for his *personal* aims is stolen from the service of Godâ€™s gloryÂ Â»Â ; one becomes therefore at the same time guilty and Â«Â in debtÂ Â» towards God. â€œThe idea of a personâ€™s *duty* to maintain possessions entrusted to him, to which he subordinates himself as a dutiful steward or even as a â€˜machine for producing wealthâ€™, lies upon his life with chilling seriousnessâ€. He must preserve these possessions and â€œfor Godâ€™s gloryâ€¦ increase their value through restless workâ€.

Benjaminâ€™s expression Â«Â forcefully introduce guilt into consciousnessÂ Â» is not so far from these Puritan/capitalist practices analyzed by Weber.

The result of this â€œmonstrousâ€ process of general capitalist culpability, is the generalization of *despair* : â€œWhat capitalism has of historically unheard of is that its religion is not reform but ruin of being. Despair extends itself until it becames the religious state of the world, of which one should expect salvationâ€. Benjamin adds, speaking of Nietzsche, that we assist to the Â«Â transition of the planet human being, following its absolutely solitary orbit, to the House of Despair (*Haus der Verzweiflung)*Â». *Haus der Verzweiflung, Stallhartes GehÃ¤use, Iron cage of despairÂ :* from Weber to Benjamin we find ourselves in the same semantic field, which tries to describe the merciless logic of the capitalist system.

Lukacsâ€™ *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) is another example of how Weber can be used support of a radical critique of capitalism. The lukacsian concept of reification *(Verdinglichung)* is a powerfull and original synthesis between Marxâ€™s theory of commodity fetichism and Weberâ€™s theory of rationalization. By combining the Weberian category of formal rationality – characterized by abstraction and quantification – with the Marxist concepts of abstract labour and exchange-value, Lukacs reformulated the arguments of the German sociologist in the Marxist language. On the other hand, by extending the Marxist analysis of the commodity form and of the â€œreificationâ€ to other areas of society and culture, he took direct inspiration from the Weberian diagnosis of modern life as penetrated by the capitalist spirit of rational calculation *(Rechnenhaftigkeit).*

With the rise of capitalism, reification came to include *all dimensions of social life* – begining with the State, the administration, justice and law. According to Lukacs, this structural homogeneity has been observed by â€œall the lucid historians of modern capitalismâ€. Who are these lucid authors? The only exemple mentioned by him – and this is not by accident – is Max Weberâ€¦ Lukacs quotes several passages, including the following one from *Economy and Society : â€œ*The modern capitalist enterprise is above all intimately based on *calculation.* She needs in order to exist a justice and an administration whose functioning can also be, at least in principle, *rationally calculated* according to solid genera rules, as one calculates the predictable work done by a *machine*â€. His discussion of the bureaucratic system is also based on Weber, although the apparently â€œneutralâ€ descriptions of the sociologist from Heidelberg are put at the service of a ferocious critique of the inhuman and reified character of this purely formal administrative rationality, with its â€œgrowing scorn for the qualitative material essence of â€˜thingsâ€™â€.

This anti-capitalist radicalisation of Weberâ€™s ambivalent analysis is particularly striking in the lukacsian interpretation of the *Protestant Ethic*. First of all, in contraposition to most Marxist critics of the book, Lukacs has no interest in the â€œmaterialistâ€ quarrel on the origins of capitalism : â€œIt is quite indifferent, in order to appreciate the facts, that one approves or not Weberâ€™s causal interpretationâ€. What seems to him important, instead, is the significance of the Weberian thesis for a critical analysis of capitalist reification. According to Lukacs, â€œthe Calvinist combination of an ethics of the self-assertion (*BewÃ¤hrungsethik)* (innerwordly ascetism) with the complete transcendence of the objective powers that move the world and determine in its content the human destiny – *Deus absconditus* and predestination – represent, in a mythologizing way, but in its purest form, the bourgeois structure of the reified consciousness (thing in itself)â€. In a footnote , LukÃ¡cs explicitly mentions Weberâ€™s works, as well as a text by Engels that also suggests the deep affinity (*tieferen Verwandtschaft)* between capitalism and Calvinism.

Without formally belonging to the Institute of Social Research, Erich Fromm will be associated, during the 1930â€™s, to the Frankfurt School, publishing several essays and book-reviews in the Journal published by Max Horkheimer. One of the most interesting, dating from 1932, â€œThe psychoanalythical caracterology and its significance for social psychologyâ€ discusses the classic weberian thesis of the relations between religious ethics and the spirit of capitalism, with quite astonishing conclusions. Analyzing the capitalist/bourgeois spirit, as Sombart and Weber defined it, since 15th century Florence until Benjamin Franklin, Fromm compares it to the â€œanal characterâ€ studied by Freud and his disciple Karl Abraham. He opposes two radically distinct psycho-social forms : the pre-capitalist spirit, characteristic of the Catholic Middle-Age, for which the economic activity is subordinated to the search of pleasure and satisfaction as an end in itself; and the capitalist spirit, which considers thrift and acquisition as the essential aims. In the medieval society, the individual drew multiple satisfactions â€“ according to his social class – from sumptuous festivities, beautiful paintings, splendid monuments as well as many holiday festivities. â€œIt was understood that man had an innate right to happiness, blessedness and pleasure; that was viewed as the proper goal of all human activity, whether it was economic or not. The bourgeois spirit introduced a decisive change in this respect. Happiness or blessedness ceased to be the unquestioned goal of life. Something else took first place on the scale of values : dutyâ€.

To explain this transformation, Fromm quotes Weber, but also a contemporary book by a certain J.B. Kraus, *Scholastics, puritanism and capitalism* (1930)Â ; according to this author, what most clearly distinguished Calvin ethics of labour from the scholastic period, was the suppression of all finality and the emphasis on formal obedience to oneâ€™s calling in life. An iron discipline was required in order to act with a profound feeling of obedience and duty. According to Fromm, such a consideration of duty – instead of happiness – as the highest value, can be followed, starting with Calvinism, through all bourgeois thought, theological or profane. This applies not only to the imperative of labour, but also to the duty to *save*, celebrated by puritan ethics, Benjamin Franklinâ€™s rules, and 19th century bourgeois life-conduct. After surveying various psycho-social characteristics belonging to the bourgeois protestant spirit – the puritan limitation of sexual pleasure, the rejection of charity, the taste for order – he

connects them with the anal character, as studied by Freud, Jones et Abrahamâ€¦

Obviously, this essay interprets Weber against the grain, *gegen den Strich,* by denouncing both the protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism in Romantic terms, and by comparing them to pre-capitalist social and religious forms – such as the Medieval civilization – presented as morally and humanly superior. No doubt that his description of the Middle Age is largely idealized, but the hypothesis that Catholic ethics are hostile to the spirit of capitalism appears already in Weber. It may seem surprising that a non-believing, Freudo-Marxist Jew such as Fromm, refers himself to Medieval Catholicism in order to accuse the (protestant) spirit of capitalism, but one can find similar arguments among other Romantic Jewish thinkers of German culture.

These are four striking examples of this Â«Â inventiveÂ Â» readings – all by romantic/socialist Jewish/German thinkers â€“ which use Weberâ€™s sociological research, and in particular *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, as ammunition in order to mount a thorough attack on the capitalist system, its protestant/Calvinist origin, its values, its practices and its â€œreligionâ€. Some more research is needed to find out if there are other authors which belong to this surprising â€œconstellationâ€.

Lukacsâ€™ more sober assessment emphasizes the identity between Calvinist ethics and the bourgeois reified consciousness.

M.Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* translated by Stephen Kalberg, (Los Angeles: Blackwell) 2002, p. 17 (slight correction by me ML).

Ibid.

Ibid. p. 31. See also p.37.

Max Weber, Â«Â Der SozialismusÂ Â», in *Schriften fÃ¼r Sozialgeschichte und Politik (*Reclam) 1997, p. 246.

M.Weber, *The Protestant Ethicâ€¦*, p. 123.

Ibid. p. 123

See. E.Tiryakian, Â«Â The Sociological Import of a Metaphor. Tracking the Source of Max Weberâ€™s â€˜Iron Cageâ€™Â Â», in P. Hamilton (ed.), *Max Weber. Critical Assessment* (LondonÂ : Routledge, 1991) vol. I, 2. Pp. 109-120.

M.Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, p. 124.

Ernst Bloch, *Thomas MÃ¼nzer als Theologue der Revolution*, 1921, Frankfort, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972, p. 123.

E.Bloch, *Ibid*, p. 119

W.Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe*, Frankfort, Suhkamp, Bd.II, pp. 212-213

On the relation between Benjamin and Bloch on this issue, see Werner Hammacher Â«Â SchuldgeschichteÂ Â», in Dirk Baecker, *Kapitalismus als Religion,* Berlin, Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2003, pp. 91-92.

W.Benjamin, Â«Â Kapitalismus als ReligionÂ Â», ed. R.Tiedemann et H.SchwepenhÃ¤user, *Gesammelte Schriften*, VI, p. 102. All translations from the German are mine ML

W.Benjamin, *Einbahnstrasse*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band IV, 2001, p.139

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic* p. 116

B.Lindner, Â«Â Der 11.9.2001 oder Kapitalismus als ReligionÂ Â», in Nikolaus MÃ¼ller SchÃ¶ll (hg.), *Ereignis. Eine fundamentale Kategorie der Zeiterfahrung. Anspuch und Aporien,* Bielefeld, 2003, p. 201.

According to Burkhard Lindner, the historical perspective of the fragment is grounded on the premiss that . . . one cannot separate, in the system of capitalist religion, the â€œmythical guiltâ€ and the economic debt. (B.Lindner, *Ibid*. p. 207.)

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic,* p. 115.

Concerning the relation between Weber andLukÃ¡cs, there exists an important critical literature. Among the most interestingÂ : Andrew FEENBFRG, *LukÃ¡cs. Marx and the Sources of Critical Theory,* Totowa, Rowman and Littlefield, 1981 ; Andrew ARATO, Paul BREINESW, *The Young LukÃ¡cs and the Origins of Western Marxism,* New York, Seabury Press, 1979; Kurt BEIERSDORFER, *Max Weber und Georg LukÃ¡cs. Ãœber die Beziehung von Verstehender Soziologie und Westlichem Marxismus,* Francfortâ€˜surâ€˜le-Main, Campus Verlag, 1982.

Georg Lukacs*, Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein,* Berlin, Luchterhand, 1968, p. 270â€‘274.

G. Lukacs, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein,* p. 379. The quote from Engels refers to the preface to the English editions (1892) to the essay *From utopian to scientific socialism*. See also p. 350 the analysis of the capitalists double personality : on one side â€œan element of the movement of commoditiesâ€, on the other â€œan (objectively powerless) spectator of this movementâ€. In a footnote Lukacs adds : â€œthis explains the importance, emphasized by Weber, of the â€˜innerwordly ascetismâ€™ for the formation of the â€˜spiritâ€™ of capitalismâ€.

E.Fromm, *The Chrisis of Psychoanalysis,* New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970, p. 151.

Ibid. pp. 151-153.

Capitalism, Identity, and Social Rights

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Few questions of theory are as salient today as that of the relation between capitalism and social rights. Amid the rise of capitalism, during what became known as “the age of democratic revolution,” progressives placed primary upon constricting the arbitrary exercise of authority by defenders of “throne and altar” and the traditions associated with the ancien regime. Liberty became identified with the procurement of political rights freedom of religion, assembly, speech and the ability of individuals to act in any way they wished so long as it did not contradict the letter of the law. The logic was clear enough since it was precisely in the realm of civil society the economy, the family, educational institutions, and the myriad associations connected with everyday life — that individuals became who and what they were.

Basically it was a matter of keeping the state weak in order to make “civil society” strong. Especially in nations with weak states and weak labor movements, however, the bourgeoisie also began to insist that the freedom provided by the watchman state to “private” actors in civil society should be extended to capital itself and thus the demand arose to treat the corporation legally as an individual. But there was a problem. Freedom from state interference by such “individuals” or conflicting “private passions” produced tensions between the interests of working people in maximizing their wages and control over their “labor power” as against the interests of capital in maximizing its profits and maintaining control over its employees. Or, to put the matter a different way, the conflicts between private actors took an ever more decidedly social dimension. During the latter part of the nineteenth century, indeed, the growth of the labor movement and its increasing stridency for economic rights (like the “right to work” introduced by the socialist Louis Blanc in 1848) was known among the mainstream public as the “social question.”

Constraining the arbitrary power of economic institutions associated with the free market came to be understood as the answer to the social question. Nationalizing industry and welfare programs were hotly contested by the advocates of what Marx termed “the political economy of labor” and the “political economy of capital.” But this endemic conflict lost some of its meaning with a change in the meaning of capitalism that occurred amid the integration of social democracy into an establishmentarian republicanism, the rise of totalitarianism, and the creation of what Daniel Rousset called the “concentration camp universe” during the 1930s and 1940s. This view has grown ever stronger especially among academics with the rise of the “new social movements” and the new preoccupation with individual identity, democratic empowerment, and the commodity form. This complex of themes has changed the contemporary meaning of capitalism and, with it, of social rights. It demands a new and critical consideration in order to advance the progressive discourse.

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Capitalism ultimately involves the transformation of objects into commodities that are bought and sold on the market. The commodity thus becomes the form under which not merely production and consumption, but all social interaction is defined. The extent to which previously non-commercial activities like religion and art, or "free" goods like air and water, become subordinate to the commodity form is the extent to which it is possible to speak about the progress of capitalism or what, today, is called "globalization". According to this way of thinking, in short, capitalism is not merely the struggle between classes in an exploitative system but, rather, an overarching expression of a historical trajectory that has culminated in "modernity." Implicated in the creation of capitalist modernity is science, bureaucracy, standardization, the division of labor, and the criteria of "efficiency" that all speak to a world of scarcity or what philosophers liked to call "the realm of necessity." Common to all of this is the elimination of subjectivity and ethical qualities like solidarity in favor of objective determinations that speak to the capitalist production process.

Identity, personal responsibility, and even ideological differences thus lose their value. Quantity turns into quality and workers are increasingly rendered subject to "reification" or being treated as "things" as the division of labor takes hold and they succumb to the adage "time is money." Workers become mere costs of production in the pursuit of profit. "Alienation" is intimately connected with this process. The freedom associated with the full employment of human powers is truncated, nature becomes an object for domination, and trust between individuals is lost. Alienation strips the individual of any organic connection to the world and other people or, according to the "young Marx," turns workers into mere cogs of a machine that separates them from their comrades, the products of their labor, and their own potentiality as individuals. Capital ever more surely becomes the subject, and workers the object, of the commodity form — and what Hegel (not Marx) first termed an "inverted world" results. Creating capital becomes the all-consuming purpose of capitalism and, as a consequence, traditions fall by the wayside; social bonds vanish, and a form of what Emile Durkheim termed anomie arises in which the individual feels bereft and alone. Indeed, just as alienation produces a world in which the products of labor escape the control of their producers, reification renders these producers incapable or, better, unconcerned with subordinating their creations to their control.

Alienation and reification are usually (and mistakenly) been treated interchangeably. Both are expressions of the commodity form, but even more than that of a world beyond the control of those who created it. Both alienation and reification undermine solidarity, social identity, and the extension of democracy. That these concerns should have become so important in the aftermath of Auschwitz only makes sense given the denial of responsibility by those formerly in power and the transformation of the inmates into "things" identified with the numbers tattooed on their arms. What Theodor Adorno called the "totally administered society" or, better, a society totally administered according to the rationality of the commodity formâ€" had emerged as the enemy of subjectivity tout court. The frightening image made sense in the context of Nazism, Stalinism, and a burgeoning McCarthyism in the United States. The aftermath of World War II produced a new cultural concern with individuality and identity. Jean-Paul Sartre insisted that individuals take responsibility for their "freedom" but also for

their “situation.” He rendered these ideas concrete in Anti-Semite and Jew while Simone de Beauvoir did the same on a grander scale in The Second Sex. They also extended to issues of gender in Saint Genet, Sartre’s great work of existential psychoanalysis dealing with the great gay writer Jean Genet, and then issues of race and colonialism with the influence they exerted on figures like James Baldwin and Frantz Fanon.

All of these works spoke to the plight of excluded groups often held in contempt by mainstream advocates of the “system.” But the discrimination suffered by them was less related to capitalism than to the anthropological development of Western civilization. Pre-capitalist prejudices connected with patriarchy, religion, ethnocentrism, and colonial conquest now confronted the abstract and indeterminate individual that was the centerpiece of both liberal and market ideology. Enough progressive thinkers and activists now became less concerned with a historically determinate form of capitalist production than the repressive character of the entire ideological and institutional apparatus or, better, “the system” — connected with modernity. Insofar as universal and abstract political “rights” were part of this inheritance, what’s more, it became a matter of asserting the particular and concrete identity of a particular enfranchised group in order to make possible its recognition by “the system.”

The American Civil Rights Movement can thus be seen as a kind of transitional affair. This extra-parliamentary and mass based and grass roots organization, which never attempted to become a political party or present itself as an interest group, employed universal ideals, the liberal rule of law, religion, and the courts to enfranchise those subject to a tradition of discrimination and disenfranchisement. Among radical elements of the movement, however, concern with securing “rights” was misguided from the beginning. Rights were seen as guaranteeing not genuine empowerment but only equality under the law within an all-encompassing system of oppression in which the commodity form was constantly threatening to abolish individuality. Thus, in a way, the preoccupation with alienation obliterated the traditional primary accorded class in favor of articulating ever more specific identities and notions of solidarity based on ever more particular and unique experiences of reality.

Both race and gender can play important roles in capital accumulation. As identity politics took hold, however, it became ever less legitimate to invoke notions of universal or “class” solidarity let alone orthodox Marxist claims that the “liberation” of women or people of color must await the revolution. The new social movements forced radical theory, whether of the liberal or socialist persuasion, to address a set of what had basically been unacknowledged, yet obviously legitimate, grievances. These movements were revolutionary in the social, if not the political or economic sense. Their intellectual advocates made it apparent that human history was neither made by the canonical “dead white males” nor defined by the hegemonic institutions and assumptions of the “West.” Socialization was transformed and, “multiculturalism” provoked what in the 1980s were called the “culture wars.” The new social movements and attendant ideologies of identity posed an ethical challenge to a white society both mired in the residues of a racist past yet nonetheless attached to self-serving and traditional interpretations of its history. James Baldwin, the great black and gay novelist, put the matter well when he wrote that the reason why whites should learn about black culture and history is that this is the only

way in which they can learn anything about themselves. It is, I think, exactly the same when the issue involves straight people dealing with gay life or the colonizers trying to “understand” the colonized.

Social rights speak to more than the economy or equality before the law. Integrating baseball in the United States serves as a case in point. It was not simply a matter of legal or formal equality, but of a much deeper symbolic transformation. What was understood by everyone as the “American pastime” was now no longer white. Jackie Robinson also generated what is today an almost unimaginable sense of pride for people of color, the traditional racial iconography of the culture industry began to totter, and ultimately new socializing ideals and values of tolerance were introduced. A first step was taken in what would become a new and still unfinished cosmopolitan approach to sports including the acceptance of women participating in sports. The integration of sports was just one example of the way in which the “public sphere” would become transformed and what were previously considered private issues became issues of public concern. Thus, for example, the women’s liberation movement contested patriarchal hegemony and social discrimination through the creation of consciousness raising groups, conferences, women’s books stores, health clinics, and the like. Spousal abuse, incest, and a host of other issues became matters of legislative and legal concern through the activities of diverse social movements. New problems of intolerance fragmentation were undoubtedly generated with the unleashing of identity politics. Nevertheless, the accomplishments of the new social movements were real: the world was made larger, the excluded and the disenfranchised took center stage, anti-imperialism took a social turn, and the preconditions emerged for what I have elsewhere termed a “cosmopolitan sensibility.”

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Max Weber once said that ideology is not like a taxi-cab where the passenger can say to the driver stop at the corner I want to get off. The same is true of identity. Initial groups may be founded on general notions of a trans-class character like race, gender, ethnicity, or sexual preference. But there are a virtually infinite number of identities and organizations expressing them that can arise. The identity and experiences of a straight woman are different from those of a gay woman, those of a gay white woman are different those of a black woman, those of a black woman are different from those of a gay black woman, and those of a gay black woman are different from those of someone else. The point is that identity is not a static concept but rather retains a dynamic character that allows for its increasing specification through multiplication and “hybridity.” But there is a price for this. The existential emphasis upon an ever more precise subjectivity undermines both systemic concepts like capitalism and class as well as universal categories or dealing with the “other.” Competition for a finite set of resources also tended to intensify intolerance and, in order to legitimize claims, generated the desire among identity groups to appear as the “most” victimized. Indeed, speaking politically, by the 1980s the whole of the progressive citizenry had turned into less than the sum of its parts.

The consequence is clear: cultural and social progress has been coupled with economic and political regression. Legal and social equality, political rights and rights pertaining to the public sphere, have obviously grown for previously disenfranchised groups and social life has grown far more cosmopolitan since the 1980s. By the same token, however, an unprecedented roll back in social welfare programs has taken place along with an unrivalled upward shift in wealth — 1% of the population has garnered 75% of all wealth created from 2000-2008 — that has had a devastating impact. Workers become ever more dependent upon the unaccountable investment decisions of capitalists and this is the case not merely with what are usually considered "white" working people organized in unions, but working people in each of the identity groups or social movements that are politically in play.

Coming to grips with this situation, in the first instance, calls for reintroducing the idea of capitalism as a determinate system involving private control over the social production of wealth. Such is the relationship that "the state" wishes to enforce and preserving that "contradiction" marks the limit to any attempts at reform or the pursuit of social rights. Just as flexibility exists with respect to the quantity and quality of reforms that can be achieved, however, there is nothing fixed about the type of state that a capitalist economy requires. The capitalist state can take the form of a dictatorship or a representative democracy with each having many variants. To be sure, by definition, every capitalist state privileges the interests of capital. Each after its fashion seeks to insulate private investment decisions from public control. But social movements are most successful within a liberal democracy whose regime, relatively, veers to the "left." The criterion of success involves the extent to which investment is directed to public rather than private purposes and public claims, or "social rights," are levied against the private appropriation of social wealth: or, to put it another way, success can be defined by the ability to implement economic and social legislation like social security and national health insurance as well as welfare programs like food stamps that primarily benefit working people and the unemployed. The degree to which community groups and organizational representatives of working people are capable of bringing about such programs is the degree to which they are contesting the rule of the free market or the "political economy of capital" in the name of economic democracy and the "political economy of labor."

Social rights can extend or diminish within the structural parameters of capitalist society. The state is already implicated in the workings of the "free market." At issue is the character of its intervention and the priorities it will determine, whether (say) those of the defense industry or those pertaining to health, education and welfare. These choices should not be underestimated since they will have a pronounced influence on public life. It deserves to be noted that the capitalist state is capable of instituting reforms because, so long as general capitalist interests are met with regard to the accumulation process, other interests can be accommodated. When it comes to the political pursuit of their aims note here the importance of liberal democracy capitalist interests must often enter into coalitions with classes and groups having very different interests. In the same vein, competition between differing capitalist elites over policies (such as protection and free trade, high and low interest rates, and many other issues) create spaces for the intervention of working people and other groups in the political process of determining economic priorities. Lastly, capitalists understand that elemental conflicts exist

within the system that they dominate. Seeking to preserve their hegemony over investment priorities and issues pertaining to the distribution of wealth, especially under turbulent circumstances, has thus often led them to make concessions in terms of social rights to workers who are viewed, in principle, as nothing more than a “cost of production.”

All of this has drastic political implications for the extension of social rights. Two points immediately become apparent with respect to the state: 1) the state plays an elemental role in securing the market and 2) it is the only institution capable of constraining the market. A serious contemporary strategy directed toward securing social rights for working people like that employed by the Civil Rights and the Poor Peoples’ Movement therefore cannot ignore the state in favor of decentralized units of workplace democracy like the original “soviets” or workers councils.

Only the state can control the market and only through the state is it possible to introduce reforms that might turn working people into something more than a mere cost of production. Cutting the work week and giving employees free time, raising wages and benefits, creating educational and travel programs that allow individuals to expand their experiences, and the like become ways of mitigating the impact of reification. It becomes a matter of breaking the dependency of working people upon capital and resisting “capitalism,” whatever the successes of identity politics, has not lost its importance. Rosa Luxemburg correctly spoke about the quest for reforms as a “labor of Sisyphus,” since reactionary capitalist interests are always on the lookout to roll them back, as the history of the United States since the Reagan Administration quite obviously demonstrates. But the truth of the matter is that the old labor movement is dead, along with its confidence of “inevitable victory,” and the choice is no longer between reform and revolution but between reform and reaction. The pursuit of reform is dramatically influenced by the liberal character or, better, the degree of accountability and transparency of the state and its institutions. Crackdowns on civil liberties and the creation of a “national security state” have a negative impact on the organizing capacities of working people and their allies. That is why defense of political liberty and the quest for social rights are flip sides of the same coin. Both require a sense of organizational and ideological unity among working people that has obviously eroded due to the integration of social democracy and the discrediting of communism. It is also undermined by the existence of racism, sexism, and the lack of recognition for the “other” whose increasingly particular concerns are represented by seemingly countless interest groups and movements.

All of this has made the ability to resist capitalism and assert the social rights of working people ever more difficult. It is an old story that the power of capital depends upon the degree not merely of organizational, but ideological, unity among working people. Insofar as structures of production and general organizing principles disappear from the standpoint of identity politics, on the most basic level capitalism turns into a metaphor rather than a determinate system of exploitation while “class” turns into one identity among others. There is no longer even a sense of what the target of resistance might be: the “corporations,” “corruption,” the “system” are all candidates. Most often it all comes down to discrete grievances and so, while coalitions among identity groups arise, they usually involve coalescing

around a single issue. Once that issue is dealt with, either successfully or unsuccessfully, the coalition disassembles and it is necessary to start from scratch the next time a new issue arises. Based more on interest than on principle, transitory in their very conception, obvious incentives exist for participants in these coalitions to engage in what might be termed the "moral economy of the separate deal." The class character of capitalism lacks a class response: resistance is usually envisioned as a mechanical formula the bureaucratic organizations representing race are added to those representing gender and those representing class without any sense that each interest group will privilege its own clientele at the expense of the others and prove capable of engaging in what might be called a moral economy of the separate deal. The question is how to think about conditions of unity, or resistance, in a new way.

Different strategies are required for the pursuit of different problems: it is one thing to secure the social rights of the excluded and disenfranchised, another thing to secure the environment or a single issue, and yet a third to secure the anti-capitalist interests of working people. There is little doubt that the discrimination leveled against any particular group requires mass action by that group or, if the abolitionists can be used as an example in the name of that group. History suggests that victims of discrimination must ultimately assert their rights themselves and that identity is an obvious ideological rallying cry. Consider only that the gay movement began in the response of its community to police repression during the "Stonewall" riots in New York City and the opening to The Second Sex where Simone de Beauvoir insisted that the first step in developing women's consciousness is the use of the word "we." In the same vein, where reforms of general salience are concerned, whether with regard to traffic pollution or demanding a street light at a corner, the aim is to create a coalition among all groups regardless of their political identification and ideology. With regard to class issues, however, both specific interests and ideology are of crucial importance.

Class interests become paramount when it becomes apparent that capitalists will bear the cost of reforms while workers will basically receive the benefits. Under pressure from capitalists, who can disinvest among other options, ideology will play a role given the need to unify workers primarily organized in terms of identity politics. If it is true that the power of capital depends upon the organizational and ideological unity of working people then it is necessary to conceptualize a stance that speaks to the interests of working people within each of the new social movements without privileging any. This I have termed the "class ideal." Insofar as theory should be linked to practice that connection must become concrete with regard to specific legislative proposals that directly benefit the universal interests of the working class. Perhaps this means nothing other than reformulating the demand of a particular group in more universal class terms. Instead of speaking about radical health care only for AIDS victims, for example, it might be more efficacious to call for improved "catastrophic" health care for all. Other ways of meeting the universal concerns of workers appear when it comes to the shorter work week, retirement, vacation time, and single payer health insurance. Even if what can only be a utopian response to "alienation" is no longer on the table, given the failure of to invigorate the idea of direct control of production in the form soviets, such reforms temper reification by returning a degree of autonomy and sense of individual possibility to workers.

Identity politics, coalitions of interests, and use of the class ideal can reinforce one another of appear prove mutually exclusive. Which strategy assumes primacy depends upon, using the old jargon, the historical context. Very little then, from the standpoint of immediate practicality, can be stated in general terms or in advance. Articulating these diverse strategies remains important, however, because intellectual clarity about the possibilities of practice is an element of practice itself. Workers may no longer solely be organized in unions, but they are organized in the myriad community identity groups that dot the political landscape. Raising awareness of the way in which class penetrates these groups and beginning the intellectual work of coordinating interests is perhaps the crucial political question facing progressive activists.

Old verities have become unreliable. The industrial proletariat no longer stands center stage, its "dictatorship" has everywhere been a disaster, and claims concerning the "inevitability" of revolution are no longer credible. But this does not mean that the world has become a postmodern collage or that capitalism is now simply a metaphor. The basic contradiction between the social production and the private appropriation of wealth still exists. The working class still exists. Individuals still sell their "labor power" or, better, their time — in exchange for a check. "Reification" still exists along with conflicting policies that will either mitigate or intensify it. Other policies will determine the character of state intervention, the priorities of investment, and the distribution of wealth. Choosing among policies in capitalist society requires making sense of the ongoing conflict between "the political economy of labor" and the "political economy of capital." For capitalism will accommodate social (and political) rights to the extent that social movements clear about their aims and purposes force it to do so. Or, to put it another way, the extent to which social (and political) rights are realizable under capitalism depends upon politics and ideology rather than economics and teleology. The past is the past: the "social question" must now find new answers and socialism, or its equivalent, yet another path to follow.

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Chomsky's Audience Problem: Is Anyone Listening?

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The "audience question" within rhetoric and composition needs to be turned on it its head, re-examined in light of new and compelling evidence, and subjected to a new analysis—an analysis which might have far-reaching political implications for our very understandings of whether or not satisfying an audience's psychological needs should necessarily be the foremost factor in crafting a message. The "audience question" refers to the recognition of the centrality of audience considerations for rhetoricians seeking to create symbolic inducement, while acknowledging that the whole concept of whom or what constitutes "the audience" is contested. Rhetoric, according to Aristotle's famous definition, refers to locating the available means of persuasion in any given case. This popular definition suggests that information, even if is factual, should be withheld or presented differently if it possesses the capacity to offend or alienate the audience. Such a facile definition of rhetoric, then, suggest that persuasion is frequently used to evade responsibility, to avoid facing psychologically-difficult facts, to rationalize a course of behavior that is dangerous but ideologically-serviceable, and (in the case of foreign affairs) to avoid looking into the eyes of the faces of victims of imperial violence.

Within the field of rhetoric and composition, a great deal of research has been done on audience, audience reception, and the various ways in which writers conceptualize their audience(s). Mary Jo Reiff, in her "Rereading 'Invoked' and 'Addressed' Readers through a Social Lens: Toward a Recognition of Multiple Audiences" found that "Since the early 1980s, there has been a flood of critical commentary and research on audience. An on-line search of ERIC abstracts from 1982 to March 1995 yields 4,159 entries focusing on the keyword 'audience,' and the MLA Bibliography records 3,999 audience-related entries." While a great deal of this critical commentary has taken up how audiences are created by writers, in the act of composing, very little of it has taken up a consideration of writers who deliberately avoid their audiences' "needs" because they believe the overwhelming power of their address, its basis in fact and history, demonstrates the irrefutability of their message. In the wake of the re-declaration of the War on Terror in "response" to the events of 9/11, U.S. citizens have been forced to take stock of recent history and our countries use of massive violence, particularly as that has been directed at indigenous populations, as we attempt to understand our place in the world, as what some have called a "global hegemon," at this particular historical moment.

What has Noam Chomsky's examinations of the American intellectual guild structure, in his numerous books about American domestic and international policy, meant for our understandings of intellectual labor? Does his political work radically reconfigure conceptions of intellectual labor by increasing our awareness of how dissident thought is contained and tamed when it makes claims upon—and challenges—the state? As theory within the humanities

drifts toward embracing increasingly complex thinking, what points of connections—if any—exist between these theoretical projects and Chomsky's deeply unpopular observations about American intellectuals as outlined in his political corpus? These are important questions that explore the levels of dissidence that are sustainable in contemporary American life.

Many globalization and cosmopolitan theories seek, for example, to justify and celebrate U.S. neo-imperialism, while ostensibly touting tolerance, global cultures, and globalization. As Timothy Brennan and others have argued, it has to be more than a mere coincidence that, as theory comes to increasingly celebrate complexity and complex thinking, it has often worked hand-in-hand with the extension of American imperial dominance. That theory, as an intellectual project, would serve to make the simple "more complex" and the understandable "consonant with the realities of networked culture" should give us pause, particularly in the context of examining the effects of U.S. foreign policy in a region such as the Middle East. This "will to complexity" should be questioned as promoting an intellectual complicity in concealing projections of American military power beneath what should properly be categorized an apologetics for neoliberalism's expansion, a refashioning of the very concept of intellectual responsibility tailored to avoid facing the harsh realities attending the expanse of the U.S. Empire.

Without placing the Real in quotation marks, Chomsky in his political work presents a truer and more accurate accounting of how and why events in the world play out in the ways they do than contemporary theoretical frameworks can. He does this without resorting to mystificatory devices such as "Empire," "the grammar of the Multitude," "biopower," and "the political," while also establishing a coherent theory of how power works that is capable of measuring competing interests and concerns. Those who dismiss Chomsky's political work as "simpleminded" or "simplistic" refuse to come to terms with the actual coherence of the explanatory frameworks that he offers, along with the significant empirical evidence he adduces to support his conclusions.

Chomsky's Challenge

In September of 2004, Noam Chomsky agreed to a re/interview with *Pretext* on his *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance*, which argues that United States' quest for global supremacy poses a distinct threat to the survival of the human species. *Pretext*'s list-owner believed that *Hegemony or Survival*, while not the standard fare for *Pretext*, would provoke heated discussion among participants about issues ranging from intellectual responsibility within the context of crimes of state to the futility of the United States fighting Bush's War on Terror. When the *Pretext* moderator agreed to have Chomsky and Finkelstein on the list for a few months back in 2004, and announced to the list's subscribers that Chomsky and Finkelstein would be participating in an online interview, he received a storm of email about how irresponsible he was for providing a platform to these two critics of Israel and U.S. policy in the Middle East to disseminate their views. While Chomsky and Finkelstein are controversial figures, and frequently generate strong reactions in response to their political views, it is difficult to seriously label their work and critiques as "unscholarly" or "unworthy of

debate." With this fact in mind, the moderator agreed to go forward with the discussion.

Many of the messages the moderator received in response to his decision to bring Finkelstein and Chomsky onto the *Pretext* list were quite vitriolic, much of the heat generated in response to Chomsky and Finkelstein's long-time criticism of Israel's human rights abuses of the Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories. Perhaps it is only predictable that the moderator would be denounced as "irresponsible" by the theorists on the list for giving Chomsky and Finkelstein a forum to challenge the right to lie in service of crimes of state. That "responsibility" within the current intellectual culture requires barring dissident intellectuals from an electronic forum to discuss their work is really quite indicative of the kind of silliness that passes as "sober analysis" within the U.S. academy, particularly when these crimes of state are ongoing.

The mechanism informing this subtle conformity with the policies of the present administration cannot be explained simply as arising out of a fear of professional repercussion or an institutional surveillance that produces a strong tendency toward denouncing prominent dissidents as "un-American" or "anti-Israeli," even though their analyses might be absolutely accurate. Instead, one must look at the rules of professional etiquette and taste that make Chomsky and Finkelstein appear as bizarre choices to include on this list in the first place, the *pretexts* that exist to exclude those perspectives that do not fit with conventional thinking, rules of conduct that are essentially drawn up in advance of any critical discussion's proper beginning.

As a relative handmaiden of neoliberalism, globalization theory contains within it the constraints of a professional decorum that puts distance between supposedly critical intellectuals and the actual field of battle where people die and blood is shed, allowing for evasive maneuvers and changes of course that accommodate the movement of capital. Such accommodations are part and parcel of the modern intellectual priesthood's role in advancing the aims of the nation-state. Although critical intellectuals abjure this kind of censorship, believing themselves to be radical and opposed to any and all apologies for unjust regimes that advance the interests of transnational corporations, the intense pressures that accompany the demands to comply with the dictates of concentrated power is overwhelming, producing the kinds of intellectual surveillance I described earlier.

The central role that axiology, the system of logic underpinning subjective value systems, legitimating the exclusion of some ways of knowing while embracing others, plays in justifying what can be thought and written about in academic scholarship cannot be underestimated or ignored. When central tenets of an axiological system are challenged, as dissenting scholarship often does, the system must remove the offending presence—even by illegitimate force if necessary, as several recent tenure battles have demonstrated. The productive ambiguity of cosmo theory's language protects intellectuals from confronting their complicity in supporting crimes of state by providing them with safe havens such as "complexity," "undecidability," and "distributed networks." Indeed, these "critical terms" have allowed for a sort of arcane mysticism to creep into academic theorizing, legitimizing the avoidance of direct confrontations

with power as unnecessarily polemical, reactionary, and provocative.

What Are the Stakes?

In September of 2004, insurgent attacks against U.S. troops in Iraq were beginning to peak; American citizens were coming to understand the full gravity of Bush's fateful decision to invade a relatively helpless country, while beginning to question the real motives for the invasion. Iraq's descent into chaos, as a result of the U.S. invasion in March of 2003 and the seemingly interminable occupation, created an exigency for examining the politics propelling the Bush administration's decision-making in the Middle East, opening up an opportunity to interrogate in this context previously forbidden topics pertaining to U.S. Middle East policy, Israel's quest for regional supremacy, and the key role U.S. intellectuals and journalists play in shaping public perceptions about U.S. and Israeli militarism. Indeed, how could the *Pretext* list avoid these issues any longer, while the Middle East continued to be rocked by cataclysmic violence seemingly generated by illegal occupations, religious division, and territorial disputes? Any genuine commitment to intellectual responsibility seemed to recommend serious engagement with issues around the Middle East conflict.

Furthermore, it seemed to me that scholars of rhetoric and critical theory should want to engage the relevant issues with one another around how the Bush administration misled the country into invading Iraq and the key roles U.S. and Israeli policy have played in the region, creating reservoirs of resentment against the United States. While U.S. support for Israel's occupation of the West Bank—and until recently Gaza—is frequently cited in the Arab world as the most proximate cause for widespread anger against the United States, one cannot lose sight of how effective U.S. counterinsurgency has been in breaking indigenous movements from Egypt to Saudi Arabia to Iraq since Israel's defeat of Nasser in the Six-Day War. In addition, the circumstances surrounding the CIA's toppling of Mossadeq in 1953, which led to the installation of the Shah of Iran, who became a regional gendarme for the U.S., remain relatively unknown. Indeed, the United States' unwillingness to recognize the grievances of the indigenous populations throughout the region, and the resentment this has produced, remains unfathomable to much of the U.S. population. Increasing the public's comprehension of the vital issues remains tantamount.

Unfortunately, this historical amnesia plagues the academic intelligentsia as well, since there appears to be a commitment to forgetting the facts of history when they are no longer convenient for the aims of American Empire. Examining the ways in which certain forms of intellectual labor are constructed and valued seems necessary to understanding how academics select the lines of inquiry they do in their scholarship. If there is an emphasis on reflecting on states of being (desire, affect, etc), rather that on states of affairs within the world (uses of power, intellectual deceit, etc.), how can a theory of intellectual activity be generated to help us understand intellectual production? That so many academic intellectuals avoid being designated as occupying a specific and identifiable political positions by invoking complex articulations, as these are supposedly staked out by the term "theory," should lead one to question what political work takes place by avoiding the establishment of positions that are

tied to political commitments. Indeed, to establish a strong political position is to be considered simplistic, lacking nuance, engaging in binary thinking, or advancing a politically motivated critique. These denunciations of position-taking are troubling because they sanction an easy-going complicity in obscuring operations of power, even when those operations are quite transparent, while avoiding the unpleasantness that often accompanies exposing intellectual mendacity. Evading substantive issues is characteristic of those who wish to avoid confronting the evidentiary burden Chomsky delivers when he analyzes the factors influencing U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

Pretext of Avoidance

Generally speaking, while the *Pretext* list is devoted to examining writers of, and issues pertaining to, critical and rhetorical theory, it occasionally takes up more overtly political issues such as those covered in *Hegemony or Survival*. Chomsky's *Hegemony or Survival*, frames a decision that will eventually have be made by human beings—"Will it be hegemony or survival? You decide." In other words, will the U.S.'s quest for global supremacy drive the human species to extinction, or will sober realism prevent this impending disaster?

The survival of the human species is by no means a sure thing since environmental destruction, terminal nuclear war, and the pursuit and ongoing depletion of vital resources such as oil and water could very well end human life on the planet. As the United States has made clear in documents such as The Project for the New American Century's "Rebuilding America's Defenses" and the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies' "A Strategy for Securing the Realm," it will dominate the world by force and will tolerate no competitors. What are the consequences of this commitment to hegemony for human survival? According to Chomsky, quests for hegemony are obviously interrelated with human survival; decisions about global domination are not irrational (profit motive, expanding global markets, etc.) with respect to the institutional frameworks within which they are made; however, they are extremely hazardous and irrational from the standpoint of human life. The increasing world tensions because of the continued prospect of nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and environmental collapse are certainly matters of concern. The U.S. is alone in the world in trying to move toward the militarization of space; these policies are in place to assure U.S. dominance over capital investment, an extreme threat to survival. Across the board, the decision to be a hegemon and, in turn, whether this poses a threat to the survival of the human species is something we must face if we want to have a future.

Chomsky fielded questions from *Pretext* subscribers, many of whom are leading theorists in English and related fields, for over one month. Although Chomsky has been recognized as one of the veritable geniuses of the twentieth century, a touchstone of the Left, subscribers had a very difficult time in interacting and communicating with him about his book and his many reflections about the state of intellectual culture and the distinct role U.S. intellectuals play—within the academy and middle-brow journalism—to justify U.S. military adventurism, all of which Chomsky has repeatedly described with contempt and derision. While Chomsky made frequent reference to "facts," "the historical record," and within the context of discussing

contentious issues such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, “the uncontroversial claim” that Israel’s persecution of the Palestinians in the occupied territories far surpassed any potential claims of victimhood Jews could lay claim to against Palestinians, list participants—perhaps having grown up on a good dose of postmodern theory—sought to check Chomsky by informing him that truth, facts, and the historical record are socially constructed and that it is foolhardy to believe that one could act as if one were an observer on the world stage reporting events as they actually happened. Chomsky found himself confused by these objections to his use of phrases like “the uncontroversial record,” “facts,” and “well-documented atrocities,” wondering why participants sought to avoid serious discussion about substantive issues, while concocting tales about his “tone, hauteur, rage, and curt answers.”

Given Chomsky’s stature as a scientist in the field of linguistics, it was truly ironic that he found himself chided in this way. After all, the Chomskyian revolution in linguistics transformed the entire field, creating a new approach to understanding the underlying structure of human language. If Chomsky’s stature in linguistics can be viewed as impeccable and unquestionable, why would anyone assume he would be less conscientious and scrupulous in studying U.S. foreign policy? The answer to this question contains within it a cautionary tale about the particular hazards attending taking dissident political positions in the United States and the particular dangers associated with refusing to engage in the willful obfuscation of painful realities informing much contemporary theory.

Communicative Impasse

What many viewed as a misfit between Chomsky—the octogenarian who has transformed the field of linguistics and established a reputation as the most persistent critic of U.S. foreign policy—and the audience comprising the *Pretext* list, may in fact be a commentary on the state of theory in the humanities, i.e. an important moment reflecting how intellectual labor has been radically reconfigured within the academy since the late seventies and early eighties. The reasons for this reconfiguration warrant extended analysis.

When the *Pretext* discussion with Chomsky turned to specific aspects of the Israel-Palestine conflict, such as the circumstances leading up to the ’82 Lebanon War and Israel’s specific desire to subvert a PLO peace offensive, hostility mounted as various libidinal attachments around Jewish and Palestinian suffering became apparent. The anger that was displayed by some participants reveals the extent to which the humanities have been depoliticized when it comes to examining intellectual silence and evasion around key U.S. foreign policy issues. The implication was clear: rhetoricians should not be considering, or discussing, these types of issue. As experts have indicated in reference to Israel’s attack upon Southern Lebanon on June 6th, 1982, “Operation Peace for Galilee” is a misnomer; the operation should have been called “The Operation to Safeguard the Occupation of the West Bank,” as Israel sought to create a Christian-Maronite broker state in Lebanon, while breaking the any vestige of Palestinian nationalism by crushing the PLO. Within the context of the *Pretext* discussion, there was not even disagreement with Chomsky about the circumstances surrounding Israel’s ’82 invasion because no one seemed to be even remotely aware of what had occurred between June 6th and

October of that year; although events within this time period—from the Israeli invasion to the Sabra-Shatila massacres—were all preludes to the bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks on October 23rd, 1983.

Just as the specific circumstances surrounding the ’82 Israeli invasion of Lebanon became an object of debate on the *Pretext* list, all participation stopped. Not only did participation stop, it ground to a complete halt as the discussion could not be framed through any of the theoretical frameworks available to the participants, who were eager to condemn Chomsky for not recognizing the force of his unconscious “anti-Semitism” behind his criticisms of Israel’s ’82 invasion. If only Chomsky would read more Zizek, as one participant argued, he would understand the latent anti-Semitism behind his responses: Never mind that fact that Israel had long planned, sought to create a pretext for, and carried out the invasion. It was easier to talk about an all-pervasive anti-Semitism, unconscious forces, and what Zizek had written about “the figure of the Jew” in *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*.

The person who most objected to this discussion was formerly a part of the Israeli Defense Forces and believed he could intimidate list members into believing his recounting of Israel’s June ’82 invasion, i.e. that Israel launched the invasion in response to Palestinian attacks on Israel’s Northern border. These symbolic attacks, in response to Israeli shelling, were used as pretext for the Israeli invasion. As Chomsky calmly recited the facts, the former IDF officer had nowhere to hide, withdrawing from the discussion a few messages later, while demonstrating that he lacked the very knowledge about Israel’s invasion that he accused me of not possessing. Of even more interest is the fact that no one seemed to be aware of the circumstances surrounding Israel’s invasion of Lebanon, perhaps not realizing these events are pivotal to understanding much of what is happening at this moment in the Middle East. Indeed, Osama Bin Laden referenced Israel’s massive air strikes in Beirut in June â€˜82 when explaining why Al-Qaeda selected Manhattan’s skyline for the September 11th, 2001 attacks: Beirut’s skyline matches Manhattan’s quite closely. None of this registers within the reigning intellectual culture.

The promotion of U.S. foreign policy desperately relies upon “selling” a course of U.S. action to articulate audiences; however, this selling requires propaganda of an extraordinary sort—the propaganda has to invert reality and the facts, enabling a refashioning of the historical diplomatic record. When Sadat offered peace to the Israelis in 1971, guaranteeing security along the ’67 Green line, as well as a recognition of Israel’s “right to exist,” (a phrase often misunderstood in the West because a crucial portion is left out—“as a Jewish supremacist apartheid state”), Israel dismissed it and journalists did not report it. In 1979, however, Sadat was recast as a “man of peace” because he was led to accept a peace of the strong, that fashioned by Israel and the United States.

Analyzing the Impasse

So, what does it mean that a list of nearly two hundred theorists had nothing to say about these topics of serious concern? While one can only make limited conclusions based on this one

discussion, some possibly disturbing inferences can be drawn. First, theory—or at least a certain brand of theory—seems to sustain an interest in claiming that history, since it is constructed, cannot be subject to a factual inventorying—historical facts can be dismissed as passé; perspectives and experiences, according to the dictates of postmodern theory, are all that is relevant. Since perspectives are multiple, and factual pronouncements about history are unitary and in turn dismiss other possible perspectives, requiring a foreclosure of possibility, it is unsurprising that Chomsky's attempts to document "the historical record," "the uncontroversial facts," and "state apologetics" seem bizarre and somehow incorrect, although Chomsky in books such as his *The Fateful Triangle: The United State, Israel, and the Palestinians* demonstrates a commitment to rigorous analysis through in-depth empirical testing, revealing that he has scoured all available media and government sources before asserting that the U.S media—despite being accused of being hypercritical of Israeli military actions in the summer of 1982—was in fact highly protective of them. Indeed, it is the extensiveness of the documentation supporting his assertions about U.S. and Israeli policy in the Middle East within his political work that accounts for the bitter condemnations lodged against his deeply unpopular conclusions.

When Chomsky tells us that "the facts are readily available for those who care look" or that "anyone can read human right's reports," he seems to assume that we, and our colleagues, know where to look for these human rights reports or the alternative news source that would tell us that "The United States is the only country in history to be found guilty of international terrorism" (in this case against Nicaragua) or that "The United States invaded South Vietnam and supported terrible atrocities in East Timor." This certainty about facts and history, when coupled with Chomsky's rejection of postmodern theory, for example, reflects his deep belief in a no-nonsense approach to intellectual affairs: how many intellectuals and writers set out stating they do not wish to persuade anything of anyone; just to present the facts and to let listeners or readers decide for themselves what is true?

I don't have any theory of rhetoric, but what I have in the back of my mind is that one should not try to persuade; rather, you should try to lay out the territory as best you can so that other people can use their own intellectual powers to work out for themselves what they think is right or wrong. For example, I try particularly in political writing, to make it extremely clear in advance exactly where I stand. In my view, the idea of neutral objectivity is largely fraudulent. It's not that I take the realistic view with regard to fact, but the fact is that everyone approaches complex and controversial questions—especially those of human significance—with an ax to grind, and I like that ax to be apparent right up front so that people can compensate for it .But to the extent that I can monitor my own rhetorical activities, which is probably not a lot, I try to refrain from efforts to bring people to reach my conclusions.

Chomsky's unwillingness to be persuasive and his reluctance to employ a style that might be more convincing is disarming and threatening at the same time. For one to be so invested in "the facts" and "truth" is contrary to academic conceptions of how reality is more complex than it seems, suggesting that the search for more complex explanations might in fact be convenient pretexts for avoiding the obvious. However, Chomsky's political writings do allow for an

inventorying and calculating of material interests, maintaining a consistency across time, and possessing a predicative capacity that is better than supposedly more complex theories. Apropos of this, consider the following reflection from Norman Finkelstein about Chomsky's intellectual attributes: "Basically to free yourself from ideological controls and go where reasoning and the facts take you, which is easy to say but difficult to practice. Another interesting aspect of Professor Chomsky is that his writing rises above the jargon of the times. Books which were written in the 1960s read like they were written yesterday." It is the continued relevance of Chomsky's political work, its capacity to remain relevant despite the passage of time while other intellectual fashions fade into the background, suggesting that he is writing about politics in a way that helps average citizens to make sense of the world around them. Chomsky's capacity to speak to a wide range of audiences demonstrates how one can be brilliant, antinomian, radical, accessible, analytically scrupulous, and internationally renowned as a scientist all at the same time. This example poses a major challenge to the modernist common sense of the academy, which often posits that academic specialization requires the production of hyper-specialized vocabularies that can only be understood within small circles of similarly situated specialists.

Confronting History

In the wake of the re-declaration of the War on Terror in "response" to the events of 9/11, U.S. citizens have been forced to take stock of recent history and our countries use of massive violence, particularly as it has been directed at indigenous populations, as we attempt to understand our place in the world, as what some have called a "global hegemon," at this particular historical moment. While on the one hand President Bush mouths popular pieties that the United States is a freedom-loving and law-abiding country, the historical record demonstrates that sticking to the letter of the law has not been one of the country's strong suits. In fact, with respect to the current situation in the Middle East and the invasion and occupation of Iraq, the flouting of international law and consensus has been at the forefront of U.S. foreign policy for the last fifty years.

The U.S.'s overwhelming monopoly over the instruments of violence and mass death, perhaps unsurprisingly, leads to the sweeping of these facts out of the way, vetoing them out of history, proving that the state and the educated classes can rise to the demands of the doctrinal system and its propaganda apparatus. No contradiction, no matter how stark or upsetting, can *not* be resolved or explained away when there are brilliant minds at work. How, then, one may ask, have U.S. citizens been able to avoid addressing their direct complicity in the U.S. government's criminal behavior as this has manifested itself in the Bush administration's continued criminal occupation of Iraq, which was of course preceded by an illegal invasion that was condemned by an international consensus? This state of affairs, in conjunction with the U.S. government's continued support of Israel's forty-year occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, continues to create strong resentment against the United States government.

The U.S. press has been effective in shielding the public from the images of destruction in Iraq and Afghanistan, the images that would move even the hardest heart to reflect upon the very

foreign-policy plan—in service to a domestic lobby that seeks to control the resources of the entire region—sanctioning the effective murder of nearly a hundred thousand civilians, who cannot be considered terrorists or those who abetted either Osama bin Laden or Saddam Hussein, two former U.S. clients. The profound criminality, of what Tariq Ali has frequently called, "the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq" has been easily been ignored by Western audiences because the United States invaded a defenseless and non-white nation, which possesses the second largest oil reserves in the world, in addition to being a geopolitical-strategic asset.

While the stated reasons for the invasion (Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, the necessity of overthrowing Saddam Hussein's regime, bringing democracy to the oppressed Iraqi people, etc.) have all been exhausted and proven to be quite ridiculous, U.S. citizens are left to ponder the real reasons for the invasion: the United States' continued need to dominate the world's petroleum reserves; its desire to build three major military bases in Iraq—along with three in Afghanistan—which will give the U.S. complete control—along with its Israeli "cop on the beat"—of the entire Middle East region; the United States' desire to show the rest of the world the power of the U.S. military, registering how massive an assault the U.S. could wage against similar regimes in the Middle East and elsewhere. The message was clear: any challenge to U.S. military hegemony and U.S. dominance of world markets, will be met with an invasion. North Korea, smart enough to understand that arming itself with nuclear weapons would make the commissars in Washington think twice about invading, challenged the U.S. to make the first move; since North Korea wasn't defenseless—one of the primary prerequisites of the Bush doctrine—it stood out as a worthy opponent and hence not a target of interest..

Turning to another relatively uncontroversial and well-documented instance of how the U.S.'s disregard for international law impacts world politics, consider the 1987 World Court ruling against the United States for international terrorism in Nicaragua. The judgment itself was dismissed with contempt by the commissars in Washington, with the jurisdiction of the court itself being ridiculed. Nicaragua, instead of dropping bombs on Boston, turned to the World Court for relief against the mining of its harbors, as well as the continued onslaught against its civilian population and democratically-elected government. The Reagan administration's funding of the Contras, through weapon sales to Iran through Israel in direct contravention of the Boland Amendment, suggested that since the American taxpayer cannot be relied upon to understand the gravity of communist fighters only "three days driving distance from Harlingen, Texas," or the significance of purported sales of MIG jets to El Salvador, covert operations have to be put in place to spare the paymasters the pain of confronting the inevitably "complex" aspects of foreign policy in Central America. Simpler minds, however, are able to deduce that what happened in Central America throughout the eighties conforms to the merest of truisms: state violence works, irrespective of laws, courts, and niceties that the United States expects other weaker countries to abide by. That the United States, as the only country ever to be found guilty of international terrorism, could twice declare a war on terror demonstrates just how elastic the doctrinal system can be when it comes to rising to the needs of the powerful. In this case, "the powerful" consist of transnational corporations, overwhelmingly U.S. dominated, that seek to control the world's expanding economic markets in conjunction with U.S. military

planners.

Naturally, there is a strong resistance to facing the U.S.'s external behavior, its continual flouting of the diplomatic record and international law, and the overall reliance on massive violence to ensure the flourishing of "democracy," "free markets," etc., rhetorical devices that are really calls to violence against weak Third World countries that might be ripe for expanding markets of U.S. corporations. Scholars who bring up the United States' or its favorite client states' numerous violations of international law, in exactly the language with which we would condemn a hated enemy, face a hysterical stream of abuse and vilification. Once we understand the bounds and demands of educated discourse all becomes clear. As Chomsky points out, "A person who has not internalized these conventions ["the team," by definition, is the United States and "the mainstream" is the position occupied by "the team," however much the world may be out of step] can scarcely be taken seriously; accordingly, such commentary, which abounds, does not even evoke an amused smile in cultivated circles."

The inability of articulate audiences to comprehend Chomsky's political writings results from their own corruption and indoctrination; average people completely understand Chomsky's insights with respect to the operation of power whereas elites exhibit only blank looks of incomprehension. If these writings were to gain some salience within the mainstream, they would pose a distinct threat to the doctrinal system, the reconstruction of American imperial history, and the academic guild structure, while also charting a path for young scholars who wish to escape the trap of commissar politics.

Screening out those who might try to rise to the challenge of the responsible intellectual that Chomsky sets out within his political writing has been an unarticulated imperative of elite, intellectual culture within academe, particularly since the 1960s. The imperial history Chomsky has been so persistent in documenting demonstrates how ideological serviceable this scholarship has been for the promotion of U.S. power, particularly in its avoidance in addressing the direct complicity of the intellectual classes in promoting a scholarly discourse that masquerades as being vigilant and antagonistic to collusive intellectuals, while serving a vital propaganda function for the economic philosophy of neoliberalism. In fact, Chomsky convincingly demonstrates that collusive intellectuals are crucial to sustaining the triumphs of the propaganda system, which places the merest truisms out of reach of the general population that often pays the heavy costs to the Pentagon system and high-tech industry.

Beyond his relentless documentation of "the facts," the most fascinating, and at the same time, most troubling feature of Chomsky's political writings is its seemingly repeated insistence that history, the history we read in schools and come to perhaps understand as "official," has been written quite willfully and deceptively to serve the interests of U.S. power—particularly the relatively recent history of U.S. military intervention and overseas imperialism from the time of the Vietnam war to the present—as well as to protect ordinary citizens from the basic and well-established facts about the severe human cost paid by designated enemies, "unworthy victims," who are not white and remain faceless to us, those who essentially occupy the role of paymasters. Managing this history, and silencing or marginalizing dissenting revisionist

histories, requires constant ideological management—a task the propaganda system has been quite effective in serving. That this history has been subject to a careful reconstruction and that it must be protected from critical interrogation and inspection, has been repeatedly demonstrated by Chomsky over the years:

Not surprisingly, inquiry reveals a highly selective culling of facts and much outright lying. Some areas of the world are almost entirely blacked out, where disclosure of major abuses would disturb both pliable clients and the U.S. economic, military, and political interests that find this pliability advantageous. As we have described throughout the two volumes [*The Political Economy of Human Rights*], the first principle of the Free Press is the averting of eyes from benign or constructive terror, along with a general avoidance of invidious language and a sympathetic understanding for the difficult problems faced by the terrorizing elites backed by the United States.

The treatment his work has received suggests that if he were to gain a mainstream salience serious questions would be asked about how what Chomsky calls “articulate elites” control the state and maintain a monopoly of violence.

The simplicity and straightforwardness of Chomsky’s prose, his relentless marshalling of information, the devastating clarity, and the distinct moral sense guiding his critical writings have buoyed the spirits of non-intellectuals against the corruptions of an age. He continues to believe in fundamental human goodness, within an intellectual era that has seen the concept of post humanism attack the whole concept of “the human.” His refusal to accept the logic of neoliberalism, and the vast devastation it has wreaked upon the Third World, bespeaks a rhetoric of great refusal—the ruling order is based upon a history of bloodshed and violence, which if accurately documented, would radically alter basic understandings of how we measure history. Chomsky’s moving and continual passion for the oppressed (a virtue supposedly guiding much academic work, but rarely actually demonstrated) guides him through a relentless schedule of talking, writing, and corresponding with ordinary people who are far away from centers of concentrated power.

Chomsky’s political work has not been given the careful treatment it merits; instead, we are handed idée rescues about his “defense” of Faurisson’s findings (Werner Cohen), his “apologies for Pol Pot,” (Keith Windschuttle), his predilection for conspiracy theories, and that he is “a fanatical defender of the PLO,” (Elliot Abrams). One might very well predict, if she were a careful watcher of the doctrinal filters, that this very situation would obtain: Chomsky’s work does not meet the requirement of concision—a requirement that has crept into academic scholarship—in that he does not provide any of the usual guideposts that might constrain his thought within a particular economy of well recognized academic terms, tropes, figures, etc. (postmodernism, post humanism, social constructionism, etc.). That he has resisted the general tendency to write preening academic prose and has instead continually delivered up “just the facts,” bespeaks either a tremendous narcissism or a heroic effort that will stand the tests of verification and time. Chomsky’s political scholarship directly threatens the academic guild structure, forcing it to deal with its own complicity in the promotion of U.S. aims of state, and

the studied ignorance of this work is not an accident or due to error. Instead, a whole effort has arisen to “contain Chomsky” and the effects of his work.

Condemnations of Chomsky seemingly never attempt to deal with the massive documentation he provides or the numerous invitations he has issued to his interlocutors to show him where he’s wrong or misguided. Inevitably, he’s called anti-American, anti-Israeli, anti Semitic, a Holocaust denier, a tireless enemy, the greatest mind of the twentieth century contaminated by radical politics, someone who took his political commitments too far, etc. He’s not postmodern enough, sophisticated enough, hip enough, etc. Bashing Chomsky, as Norman G. Finkelstein points out in a recent essay, has become ritualized among apostates seeking a grand exit from the political left:

A rite of passage for apostates peculiar to U.S. political culture is bashing Noam Chomsky. It’s the political equivalent of a bar mitzvah, a ritual signaling that one has “grown up” — i.e., grown out of one’s “childish” past. It’s hard to pick up an article or book by ex-radicals — Gitlin’s *Letters to a Young Activist*, Paul Berman’s *Terror and Liberalism*… — that doesn’t include a hysterical attack on him. Behind this venom there’s also a transparent psychological factor at play. Chomsky mirrors their idealistic past as well as sordid present, an obstinate reminder that they once had principles but no longer do, that they sold out but he didn’t. Hating to be reminded, they keep trying to shatter the glass. He’s the demon from the past that, after recantation, no amount of incantation can exorcise.

This obligation to take a cheap shot at Chomsky before announcing that one has reached political maturity has, indeed, become a rite of passage, a departure from the realm of commitment into the realm of the comical, where arguments no longer really matter. As Finkelstein concludes:

Two altogether opposed political stances can each draw an audience’s attention. One is to be politically consistent, but nonetheless original in one’s insights; the other, an inchoate form of apostasy, is to bank on the shock value of an occasional, wildly inconsistent outburst. The former approach, which Chomsky exemplifies, requires hard work, whereas the latter is a lazy substitute for it.

Chomsky brings academics up against an uncomfortable conclusion: some academic scholarship actively contributes to a system of apologetics for state violence; and, if this scholarship were pursued with an iota of concern for objectivity rather than in subservience to the state, a great deal could be done to alleviate human suffering in the world. It is this recognition of the challenge contained within Chomsky’s political corpus that is particularly unpalatable to academics in the social sciences and the humanities.

Chomsky’s relentless pursuit of rescuing the historical record from the shear mendacity of the intellectual guild structure is dramatic, necessary, and naturally upsetting to those most invested in its preservation. Although he sought to engage those contributing to the *Pretext* discussion in some serious intellectual inquiry, he was frustrated by the complete lack of

interest in examining the facts surrounding Israel's invasion of Lebanon in June 1982. Out of frustration, he wrote:

> *I've always been intrigued by intellectual history, as you know, and in particular by the way intellectuals protect themselves from finding out the truth about themselves—which, rather typically throughout history, is support and apologetics for the crimes of the power system they serve. In this field, the method seems to be to evade facts entirely, and to concoct tales about rage, hauteur, style, curt answers, etc. I don't recall having seen one substantive comment, except for the efforts of the ex-Israeli who quickly withdrew when his claims were shown to be false. It's also interesting that there seems to be no need to substantiate even the tales, irrelevant as they are, apart from serving as a useful device of self-protection.*

That there could be no serious intellectual exchange with Chomsky on the *Pretext* list merits our reflection. One the one hand, Chomsky was accused of offering up truisms about intellectuals, things people know about how the intellectual world operates but did not feel required to articulate, while on the other hand being condemned for rejecting complex explanations about politics and serious world events. These complex explanations, as the examples I have examined indicate, provide untenable connections to reality, obfuscating the crimes of Holy States and protecting various dimensions of state worship among supposedly critical intellectuals from scrutiny. Chomsky's insistence that political events and the atrocities that often arise within them can be documented precisely, and that body counts and dates do matter, has an unsettling effect upon those who have invested in the critical language of postmodernism and its related idioms.

By insisting on identifying guilty parties, and the corrupt intellectuals that often support them, Chomsky demands that we be honest about the practices that guide our conceptions of political responsibility, risking the ostracism that public exposures of inconvenient truths often bring with them. As he writes in the context of describing the immense destruction that was being visited upon Vietnam in *For Reasons of State*: "The cultural and institutional barriers that block the way to a more just and humane society are immense. There are, nevertheless, long-term tendencies that threaten the hegemony of coercive institutions and ideologies." Sustaining and nurturing these long-term tendencies that threaten the hegemony of coercive institutions and ideologies is crucial to creating a culture committed to seriously dealing with the country's imperial history.

Noam Chomksy's political corpus forces a fundamental reassessment of how intellectual labor attains value and functions within the American academy and beyond, while also raising troubling questions about the irrelevance of so much contemporary academic inquiry and theorization, which has historically functioned to obfuscate and obscure the truth about the United States' imperial behavior. A new conception of intellectual labor will have to confront Chomsky's critiques of the intellectual class, noting the distinct tendency that intellectuals

have in gravitating toward centers of concentrated power and engaging in a perverse form of state worship, while ignoring or suppressing uncomfortable truths about themselves.

Notes:

See *JAC*, 16:3 (1996), pp. 407-24.

As Brennan writes: "The United States continues to invade other countries, but the invasion is not now supposed to be an invasion: rather, the nation extends its shadow, becomes the elsewhere, decenters itself. To what extent current theory helps the United States perform this function with relative impunity is a vital question, it seems to me," (*At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now*, p. 6). Chomsky writes that: "In an age of science and technology, it is inevitable that their prestige will be employed as an ideological instrument—specifically that the social and behavioral sciences will in various ways be made to serve in defense of national policy or as a mask for special interest. It is not merely that intellectuals are strongly tempted, in a society that offers them prestige and affluence, to take what is now called a "pragmatic attitude" (in a perverse sense of "pragmatism" which is, sad to say, not without some historical justification, as shown in the Dewey-Bourne interchange during the First World War—see Introduction, pages 5-7), that is, an attitude that one must "accept," not critically analyze or struggle to change, the existing distribution of power, domestic or international, and the political realities that flow from it, and must only for "slow measures of improvement" in a technological, piecemeal manner (*American Power and the New Mandarins*, 317). Also, see Gopal Balakrishnan's edited collection *Debating Empire* (London: Verso, 2003).

In their *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, Hardt and Negri write:

> *Our point of departure [in Empire] was the recognition that contemporary global order can no longer be understood adequately in terms of imperialism as it was practiced by the modern powers, based primarily on the sovereignty of the nation-state extended over foreign territory. Instead, a "network power," a new form of sovereignty, is now emerging, and it includes as its primary elements, or nodes, the dominant nation-states along with supranational institutions, major capitalist corporations, and other powers (xii).*

See Paul Berman's *Terror and Liberalism* , (New York: W.W. Norton Co.), pp. 144-153.

See: HYPERLINK "https://condor.depaul.edu/~mabraha5/pretext1.pdf" (September 13th, 2009). Replace the 1 in "pretext1" with 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 to access the whole reinterview with Chomsky and Finkelstein.

See Julien Benda's *The Treason of the Intellectuals (La Trahison Des Clercs)*, trans., Richard Altington, (New York: W. W. and Norton Company, 1928)and Masao Miyoshi's "A Borderless World? From Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation-State," *Critical*

Inquiry, 19:4 (Summer 1993), pp. 726-751.

See Joseph Massad's "Policing the Academy" at HYPERLINK "https://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2003/633/op2.htm" (June 4th, 2008).

In his review of Chomsky's *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians*, entitled "The Permission to Narrate," Edward Said writes:

[Chomsky's] isolation from the actual arena of contest, his distance from power as a fiercely uncompromising intellectual, his ability to tell the dispassionate truth (while no longer able to write in previously hospitable places like the *New York Review of Books*) have made it possible for him to avoid the ideological traps and the dishonesty he perceives in Israeli and U.S. apologists. There is, of course, no state worship in Chomsky, nor is there any glossing over uncomfortable truths or indecent practices that exist within one's own camp. But are isolation, the concern for justice, the passion to record injustice, sufficient to ensure one's own freedom from ideology? When Chomsky claims to be dealing with facts, he does deal with more facts than his opponents. But where are facts if not embedded in history, and then reconstituted and recovered by human agents stirred by some perceived or desired or hoped for historical narrative whose future aim is to restore justice to the dispossessed? In other words, the reporters of fact, like Chomsky, as well as the concealers of fact, like the "supporters of Israel," are acting within history, according to codifiable norms of representation, in a context of competing ideological and intellectual values. When he states the facts as widely, as clearly, as completely as any person alive, Chomsky, is not merely performing a mechanical reporting chore, from some Archimedean point outside propaganda and cliché: he is doing something extremely sophisticated, underpinned by standards of argument, coherence, and proof that are not derived from the merely "factual." But the irony is that Chomsky does not reflect theoretically on what he does; he just does it. So, on the one hand, he leaves us to suppose that telling the truth is a simple matter while, on the other hand, he compiles masses of evidence showing that no one can really deal with the facts. How can we then suppose that one man can tell the truth? Does he believe that in writing this book he will lead others to tell the truth also? What makes it possible for us as human beings to state the facts, to manufacture new ones, or to ignore some and focus on others?

Answers to these questions must reside in a theory of perception, a theory of intellectual activity, and in an epistemological account of ideological structures as they pertain to specific problems as well as to concrete historical and geographical circumstances. None of these things is within the capacity of a solitary individual to produce, and none is possible without some sense of communal or collective commitment to assign them a more than personal validity. It is this commitment that national narratives authorize and represent, although Chomsky's understandable reluctance to hew to any national or state line prevents him from admitting it (The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination, 1969-1994, (New York: Vintage, 1995), 267-268, emphasis mine).

See: HYPERLINK "https://www.americanempireproject.com/bookpage.asp?ISBN=0805076883"

(March 23rd, 2008).

Consider the prominence of conceptions such as “empire,” “biopolitics,” “command centers” and “multitudes,” which in fact serve to glorify and mystify operations of power rather than to elucidate them. These large structures, which represent projections of power, becoming relatively meaningless in helping one to predict and discuss how power actually works in the world. I would wager that these structures in fact serve to confuse those seeking to learn about how power actually works.

In his *Wars of Positions: The Cultural Politics of Left and Right* (New York: Columbia U P, 2006), Timothy Brennan writes of “the post-turn,” when “political belonging was ejected from the idea of identity” and when many left intellectuals ran away from “any politics seeking to enter or make claims on the state” (X). On a related note, in his *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market*, Bourdieu writes: “[Globalization] is a myth in the strong sense of the word, a powerful discourse, an *idée force*, an idea which has social force, which obtains belief. It is the main weapon in the battles against the gains of the welfare state” (34).

See Avner Yaniv’s *Dilemmas of Security: Politics, Strategy, and the Israeli Experience in Lebanon.*, (Oxford: Oxford U P, 1987).

Welcome to the Desert of the Real. New York and London: Verso, 2006, pp. 126-134.

As Chomsky wrote in that context:

Here the question of “lack of knowledge” does arise. To review the familiar and well-documented facts, in mid-1981 a US-brokered truce was established on the Israel-Lebanon border (we can go into what happened before, but to the limited extent that it is relevant to the 1982 invasion, it simply reinforces what we learnt by looking at the period after the truce). For the next year, Israel carried out a series of murderous and destructive attacks against Lebanon, apparently trying to elicit some PLO response that could be used as a pretext for the planned invasion. There was none, apart from some very minor and symbolic retaliations to Israeli attack. Failing to construct the desired pretext of Palestinian incursions and attacks, Israel invaded anyway, pretending that this was a response to an assassination attempt against the Israeli Ambassador to London—though Israel knew at once that the attempt was carried out not by the PLO, but by Abu Nidal, who was at war with the PLO and had been condemned to death by them. The Israeli invasion began with the bombing of Sabra-Shatila Palestinians refugee camp, including its hospital, killing 200 people, according to the eyewitness testimony of the Us Mideast scholar Cheryl Rubenberg. Then came the invasion, killing perhaps another 20,000 (victims are rarely counted accurately by the powerful) and leaving vast destruction. The actual reasons were not concealed: the goal was to put an end to the PLO efforts at a negotiated settlement, which were becoming an embarrassment and to impose an Israeli client regime in Lebanon.

So yes, knowledge is useful, and lack of knowledge can indeed be a problem. (HYPERLINK “https://www.pre-text.com/ptlist/reinvw.html”, emphasis mine, March 23rd, 2007).

“Language, Politics, and Composition: A Conversation with Noam Chomsky.” *Journal of Advanced Composition* 11 (1991), p. 6.

See Finkelstein’s interview with Y.M.D Fremes at: HYPERLINK “https://www.normanfinkelstein.com/article.php?pg=4&ar=17” (May 26th, 2008).

In their *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, Hardt and Negri write:

In the contradictory new global economic order that is emerging through international agreements, there are woven together both globalizing tendencies and resurgent nationalist elements, both liberal proposals and self-interested perversions of liberal ideals, both regional political solidarities and neocolonial operation of commercial and financial domination (171).

See Richard Faulk and Howard Friel’s *The Record of the Paper: How the New York Times Misreports U.S. Foreign Policy*, (New York and London: Verso, 2004).

World Orders, Old and New, p. 240.

After the Cataclysm: Postwar Indochina and the Reconstruction of Imperial Ideology, (Cambridge: South End, 1979), p. 295.

See Cohn’s “Holocaust Denial” in the *Anti-Chomsky Reader*; Windschuttle’s “Unmasking Noam Chomsky” at HYPERLINK “https://www.cis.org.au/Policy/winter03/polwin03-6.pdf” (June 4th, 2008); and Eliot Abram’s letter to the editor of the *Index on Censorship* at HYPERLINK “https://normanfinkelstein.files.wordpress.com/2007/04/abrams.pdf” (June 4th, 2008).

See: HYPERLINK “https://www.normanfinkelstein.com/article.php?pg=4&ar=6” (March 19th, 2008).

See: HYPERLINK “https://www.normanfinkelstein.com/article.php?pg=4&ar=6” (March 19th, 2008).

10/27/2004 email to the author

For Reasons of State, p. xli.

Joseph Haydn Two Centuries Later

By | 2010: Vol.9, Issue 1

Two hundred years after his death in May 1809, Joseph Haydn remains one of the least acclaimed of the great classical composers. Of course he faces stiff competition for recognition, especially from his immediate contemporaries. His friend twenty-four years his junior, Mozart, continues to engage us, and not only because of a fascination with extraordinary genius. His works, and especially the operas, remain at the heart of the repertory; he makes his characters come alive through music, and the dramatic issues they face seem remarkably close to our own. Haydn's pupil in Vienna in the early to mid-1790s, Beethoven, has in the minds of some excelled all other composers because his works exemplify the highest aspirations of humanity, relegating composers before him to the status of mere precursors. To make matters worse for Haydn, Beethoven complained about his teaching, and we have been much too prepared to accept only his side of the story. Can we even talk about a great Viennese triumvirate that includes Haydn, who was something of a late bloomer in comparison to his two illustrious contemporaries, from a peasant background, bogged down in the mosquito infested swamps of Eszterháza in the service of an aristocratic patron, unlike Mozart and Beethoven, who broke those bonds? They clearly appeal more to our democratic sensibilities, while Haydn appears on the surface to be stuck in an ancient regime time warp well after most of Europe and America had moved forward.

Aside from what happened at the time, Haydn's reputation also has to contend with his reception during the 19th and 20th centuries, and neither century treated him very kindly. Mozart suffered a similar fate during the 19th century, which early on preferred new music over the old, and in any event relished works more emotionally engaging than they thought typified the 18th century; only the Piano Concerto in D minor (K466) and Don Giovanni held their ground before the 20th century. Mozart's other works needed to be revived in the 20th century, and when that revival came, audiences seemed surprised that they had let their enthusiasm lapse. Beethoven needed no such revival, since audiences of the 19th century always felt stirred by his works, and in the 20th century a number of his works have even accompanied some of the great historical events. The British adopted his Fifth Symphony during the darkest years of World War II as the strongest symbol of hope and victory (in fact the opening four-note motif gives us "V" in Morse Code), while the humanitarianism of the Ninth Symphony marked the founding of the European Union. Since the 19th century neglected most of Haydn's works, with the exception of The Creation in Britain, access to his music lay in almost complete disarray by the early 20th century, with no clear recognition of what made up his output. His popularity during his own time prompted unscrupulous publishers to issue works by lesser composers in his name, and similarly, some 20th-century performers felt the need to alter his works, especially the symphonies, to make them, so they believed, acceptable to audiences accustomed to something more emotionally evocative. Efforts to disentangle this mess have required some very astute archival scholarship; when H.

C. Robbins Landon issued his edition of the complete symphonies in the 1960s, the world finally had reliable scores of these works.

Haydn has not become a household name in the way that his celebrated cohorts have, but we do need to pose the question if there could even have been a Mozart or a Beethoven without Haydn. That question runs the risk of relegating him to a figure of historical significance, disengaged from the appeal of the music itself, but I will take the risk since I am convinced that no composer achieved more than Haydn in giving rise to the great repertory of much of the past two centuries. Of course the accomplishments of J. S. Bach and Handel have left us awestruck, and we should not underestimate the bearing they had on the next generation, especially on vocal music, which most of the 18th century considered far superior to instrumental music. When Haydn first took employment as a composer, instrumental music scarcely flickered on the musical horizon, and throughout much of his career, when speaking of his finest achievements, he singled out his vocal works, as in this remark from his Autobiographical Sketch from 1776: “The following compositions of mine have received the most approbation: Le Pescatrice, I’incontro improvizo, L’infedeltà delusa, Il Ritorno di Tobia, Stabat Mater [1767]… In the chamber-music style I have been fortunate enough to please almost all nations except the Berliners.”1 Here he notes his operas and other vocal works by name, and lumps all of his instrumental works together under the category “chamber-music style.” Even in 1784 he did not dispute the opinion that his opera Armida was his finest work to date.2 We have taken a very different viewâ€”that his symphonies and string quartets represent his best efforts, but if theorists and critics at the time found these types of works inferior, he would not publicly contradict them.

If we look at the state of the symphony and the string quartet at the start of his career, we have to concede two points: the symphony existed primarily as a type of service composition, providing an overture for opera or celebrating the occasions of noble visitors and events such as court weddings, and the string quartet did not exist. Forty years later, when he left England in 1795 after his second sojourn, the symphony had become elevated to a place of enormous respect, standing on equal footing with opera as a type of public composition, not just for the nobility but for the new audience that had emerged and covered a broader social spectrum. Not only had audiences in London raved about his symphonies, but concert societies throughout Europe did the same. Of even greater importance than the new popularity of the symphony is the fact that Haydn created symphonies that could engage an audience as any other work of drama could, and in the process could address social, religious, and philosophical issues, using purely instrumental music to do it. When Beethoven found his “new way” just after the turn of the century and wrote the “Eroica” Symphony as his first realization of that way, he had a venue for that type of work thanks to Haydn, and he also had a model for a symphony to be something other than a celebratory piece. Had it not been for Haydn creating this model, Beethoven may simply have continued to write symphonies like his first two, if he had continued with this genre at all. If no one had discovered this potential for the symphony to engage audiences about those matters they care about most deeply, we may not have had the great symphonies of Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, DvoÅ™ák, Mahler, Shostakovich, or Prokofiev (who readily acknowledged the debt he owed Haydn).

Since Haydn can be credited with inventing the string quartet, we need to consider how this genre, which he turned into the premier vehicle for chamber music, came about. In all probability it did not happen quite the way his biographer Georg August Griesinger described it roughly half a century after the fact:

The following, purely coincidental circumstance led him to try his hand at the composition of quartets. A Baron Fürnberg… from time to time invited his parish priest, his estates' manager, Haydn and Albrechtsberger (a brother of the well-known contrapuntalist, who played the violoncello) in order to have a little music. Fürnberg asked Haydn to write something that could be played by these four friends of the Art. Haydn, who was then eighteen years old, accepted the proposal, and so originated his first Quartet.3

If he invented the quartet as a teenager, perhaps posterity would compare him to the youthful Mozart, but memories conveniently fade. He had forgotten that he did not specify in his scores for another fifteen years that the bottom line should be for cello, instead of the more general basso, as in the baroque basso continuo. Regardless of when quartets became quartets, he gave us the finest imaginable kind of chamber music, and not simply a perfectible type of absolute music. His quartets cultivated a conversational relationship among the four players, any one of whom could take the lead at any moment, and the intimacy of the experience had much in common with the ways in which people experienced the novel and other literature at the time, in snug social groups such as families, salons, or reading clubs.4 He knew these literary approaches from the writer he considered his hero, Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, and in a letter to an enthusiast in Bergen, he acknowledged that "you happily persuade me… that I am often the enviable means by which you, and so many families sensible to heartfelt emotion, derive, in their homely circle, their pleasureâ€"their enjoyment."5 Beethoven, whose teacher in Bonn, the organist Christian Gottlob Neefe, had studied with Gellert in Leipzig, gleaned this function of the string quartet from Haydn.6

Symphonies and the Enlightenment

Haydn brought something that went far beyond technical musical matters to both the string quartet and symphony, and precisely this gave substance to these genres, allowing them to be the foundation for instrumental music for at least a century and a half. One cannot say for certain when he started handling the symphony this way, and the terms of his contract with the Eszterházy family did not make it easy for him to treat the symphony as anything other than a celebratory work. During the 1770s he started to write some of his symphonies in minor keys, and at the same time gave them more substance than earlier ones, but his patron, Nicholas Eszterházy, did not especially like these, and Haydn retreated to the familiar major keys. The contract stipulated that his works belonged to his patron, but Prince Nicholas soon recognized Haydn as the jewel in his courtly crown, and it was to the court's advantage to have Haydn's works known internationally. As Haydn's fame spread, concert societies elsewhere in Europe began to approach him with commissions, and an especially significant one came late in 1784, from Comte d'Ogny representing the Concert de la Loge Olympique in Paris, a Masonic organization with first-rate musicians who performed in a Masonic hall to an audience more

diverse than the one he knew at court.

This commission coincided with Haydn's own initiation into the Masonic Lodge "Zur wahren Eintracht" (True Concord) in Vienna, and in all probability he saw this commission as an opportunity to infuse his newest symphonies with the enlightened principles that he embraced along with the members of this lodge. Unlike the more traditional Viennese lodges, "Zur wahren Eintracht" attracted the leading intellectuals and scientists of the nation, and under the direction of its master Ignaz von Born, it became the equivalent of an academy of arts and sciences, something Vienna did not have. Its members included leaders from all the arts and professions, and as the foremost composer in the land, the lodge approach Haydn with an invitation to join. Haydn already knew some of the members from his attendance of literary and musical salons in Vienna, so joining the lodge seemed a logical step since he shared their enlightened outlook. He confirmed this in the reply to his invitation, responding that "The highly favourable impression which Freemasonry has made on me has long awakened in my breast the sincerest wish to become a member of the Order, with its humanitarian and wise principles [as well as] the inexpressible joy of being among a circle of such worthy men."7 His initiation took place on 15 February 1785, but he did not attend another meeting, prompting some to speculate that he lacked a genuine interest and simply joined out of expediency. In fact, he had no other opportunities to attend: with his hectic schedule he could not get away from Eszterháza, and by the time he could, the lodge no longer existed, having been dissolved by the Freimaurerpatent (law concerning Freemasonry) issued by Joseph II. Joseph simply did not trust any secret society, whether it had good intentions or not, and so he reorganized the existing lodges, drastically reducing their number so they could be more easily monitored. Most of the members of "Zur wahren Eintract" left Freemasonry at that point or soon after, including the master Born, since their interest focused on the special attributes of this one lodge.

All the evidence points to Haydn being as serious about this lodge as the other members, and one of their goals was to reinforce their enlightened goals among other Freemasons with a publication: the Journal für Freymaurer. Since the membership included some of the most prominent writers in Vienna, this turned out to be a natural step, and again underlined the wish for the lodge to be something akin to an academy. In fact, at his initiation Haydn received an exhortation from Joseph von Holzmeister to do the same with music, and that appeared in the next issue of the Journal.8 Haydn needed no such prompting, although the commission of six symphonies from a Masonic society in Paris may have seemed the ideal opportunity to put this into practice, now giving fellow Freemasons something in purely instrumental music that they could recognize as supporting their social and philosophical goals.

To achieve this, he had to depart from the view to which most theorist at the time subscribed, of the primacy of the single affect. During the previous decade or two one can see Haydn building contrast to a much greater extent into his works, and that could involve distinctively different themes or contrast between phrases with tonal or harmonic stability set against passages of ambiguity. Themes could accomplish this in purely musical ways or they could also do it by evoking associations that audiences would recognize, such as with folk music, street

songs, dances, and liturgical music, and Haydn used all of these. Contrast could occur in any movement, but it worked best in sonata form movements typically at the beginning of a work, in which conflicting forces can interact and come to a point of resolution not unlike a drama for the stage. Haydn did not invent sonata form, but he transformed it into a process generating drama in music that every composer for the next century or more would use as a starting point; Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony would be unimaginable without Haydn's achievements.

For the six Paris symphonies, there appears to be good evidence that Haydn presented No. 83 first to the audience, and the sonata form first movement has some exceptional features not previously seen in his symphonies. It starts with a musical problem embedded in the first four thematic notes, outlining a minor triad but emphasizing the dissonant augmented fourth (or tritone) in the ascending pattern before the weak arrival of the triadic note. That tension temporarily dissipates with the entrance of the relative major key and a new theme with a lively dance rhythm, and he follows this with some comic reliefâ€"the "clucking" theme which gave this symphony the epithet "La Poule." Before the end of the exposition he presents an inverted variant of the opening tension-filled motif, assuring us that the problem has not been removed by the cheerful dance themes. We have now been introduced to the thematic players in the drama, and just as one would expect on the stage, these forces then engage each other in the development section, in fact using some very sophisticated counterpoint that allows them to interact simultaneously. Later in that section he returns to the original four-note problem, alternating the dissonance-filled problem with an adjustment of it which gives a resolution.

The players have been particularly well defined in this movement, so when we arrive at the recapitulation, we recognize all of them clearly. Before Haydn the recapitulation had provided little more than a restatement of the themes now in the home or tonic key, perhaps adjusted to the tonic major if the work uses a minor key. This will not suffice for Haydn, as he proceeds to address the dramatic problems from earlier and seeks a resolution as a playwright would. Listeners to purely instrumental works may not know how this can happen, so Haydn takes us by the hand and shows us in no uncertain terms, making the flow of the movement come to a complete halt on a long chord with a fermata over it, a sign that indicates it should be held significantly longer than the written duration. With this pause, he has the listeners' attention, and he follows it by returning immediately to the problem of the opening motif, stating it twice, and then giving its solution, which leads quickly to the end of the movement. By stating the problem and the solution side by side, as had also been true in the development, he takes his players in conflict and allows them to embrace, not eliminating one through a forced resolution, but by presenting the two now living in coexistence, having overcome their problem. This type of internal resolution would be used by Beethoven less than two decades later in the first movement of the "Eroica" Symphony.

One could say that with this type of coexistence and the manner of defining it, which became standard procedure in many of his subsequent symphonies, Haydn achieved in music what his literary idols had in plays and novels, giving a musical demonstration of the principle of tolerance. Almost every writer from the 18th century subscribed to the view that works of art

should serve a moral purpose, with morality now defined in a secular way. The Third Earl of Shaftesbury had emphasized this in his highly influential Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times from 1711, and this work may have even had a stronger appeal in Germany and Austria than it did in England. The literary circles in which Haydn traveled discussed its German translation at length, and Haydn even had a copy of it in his personal library. For Shaftesbury morality could be equated to aesthetics, and an artist could serve a moral goal by bringing about refinement; something higher, though, would be achieved if the work actually taught a moral lesson. Haydn subscribed to this notion entirely, and when speaking to his biographer Griesinger near the end of his life, he gave some idea of how this could apply to his symphonies. Griesinger wished to know "from what motives Haydn wrote his compositions, as well as the feelings and ideas that he had in mind and that he strove to express through musical language," and Haydn may have given him more than he expected: "But he said that he oftentimes had portrayed moral characters in his symphonies. In one of his oldest, which however, he could not accurately identify, â€˜the dominant idea is of God speaking with an abandoned sinner, pleading with him to reform. But the sinner in his thoughtlessness pays no heed to the admonition.'"9 Trying to identify the work will be futile, since Haydn appears to be setting up an image to get at a larger principle; that principle lies in the term "moral characters," the same one used by Addison and Steele in England or Johann Mattheson and Gellert in Germany in their moral weeklies for portrayals of exemplars of morality. Once again Haydn brings us back to literary genres.

Shaftesbury made it clear that writers must know their audience, and for Haydn that happened in a new and crucial way during his two visits to England, starting in 1791 and ending in 1795, an enterprise that became possible after the death of his patron Nicholas Eszterházy. Now free of the fetters of court, he could mingle with his new audience, getting to know individuals in it (or people who could instruct him in matters of the taste of the English, such as Charles Burney, Thomas Holcroft, or Thomas Twining), and actually attending the concerts to gauge the reaction. When he arrived in England he shrewdly made the rounds of the newspapers to meet the critics, and after hearing some of his symphonies performed he made revisions based on audience response. He wrote twelve symphonies for performance in the Hanover Square Rooms in London, for four separate concert seasons, and another element of shrewdness lay in making certain his works would always be performed on the second half of the concert. One can see a pattern in his English symphonies of writing popular elements into early ones to get the audience on his side, and then gradually raising the level of complexity so that more sophisticated dramatic procedures could be infused, ones that could serve moral goals as the Paris symphonies had. In the ones for the final season he no longer had to win the audience, which he now had in the palm of his hand, and he could make the works as complex as he liked, as he did with Symphony No. 102, and still be confident that his audience would be with him.

Many of these works use procedures similar to No. 83, now with an even higher level of complexity, and in No. 103 he raised this to a new height in taking the listeners by the hand to instruct them in listening. Now the recapitulation not only stops the motion with a fermata but it actually brings back the opening drum roll and part of the slow introduction. As in No. 83, he follows this intrusion with the crucial passage he wants us to focus on, a melding of the Dies

Irae-like introduction with it death associations and a bright life-affirming dance theme, a fusion most listeners will miss when it first appears in the exposition, but now becomes singled out as the crux of the movement. Once again, he gives us a fusion of the conflicting forces, and he underlines the notion of tolerance, or an ability to accept the coexistence of opposites. In a way Beethoven too reached a point in his career of appreciating the need to direct his listeners through the process, as happens in the finale of the Ninth Symphony, which reminds us of each of the previous movements before rejecting each one in turn and moving on to a new and higher principle.

Haydn's personal library

Haydn needed to be rescued at various points in the last two centuries, first of all from obscurity early in the 20th century, and then from the assumption that persisted far too long of him being almost an idiot savantâ€"brilliant with music but unaware of his cultural surroundings. One of the indicators of how misguided this view was did not emerge until after his death, when the preparation of his Nachlass, or estate documentation, revealed the breadth and scope of his personal library. Despite the existence of these documents, no one paid much attention to them until the mid 1970s, when an article by Maria Hörwarthner took a close look at his library.10 Surprisingly well stocked, his library contained a few hundred items, including works of literature, popular philosophical works, histories, dictionaries, general interest books on anything from magic to Freemasonry, travel books, and treatises on music. Many of his books, as one would expect, are in German, but he also had books in English, French, Italian, and Latin.

We may like to think of the personal library as a central sanctuary of the life of an intellectual, writer, or creative artist, but in the case of Haydn the possibility exists that he read very few of the books he owned. His books in English, for example, almost certainly sat unopened on his shelves. Being almost sixty at the time of his first trip to England, he made little progress with the language, and his best hope for communicating with his friends in England depended in large measure on their ability to speak another language, especially Italian, the lingua franca of music. In Italian he got on just fine with his closest associate and strongest champion in England, Charles Burney, an international traveler, writer, music historian, and father of the novelist Fanny Burney. With others he did not fare so well, such as one of his other English supporters, the writer Thomas Holcroft, with whom English had to be the language of communication. One note from Haydn to Holcroft has survived, and it gives a fair idea of his struggle with the language: "Dear Sir! I tack me the liberty to Send you the Canon, and the 2 Songs and if is possible, I self will come to you to day, o to morrow. I was oblieged to tack a Medicine to Day, perhaps I see you this Evening. I am Sir with the greatest Respect, Your Oblig Serv Haydn."11 This delightfully fractured usage reminds one of a scene from Casablanca, of an elderly German-speaking couple on their way to America, one of whom asks the other "what o'clock," and the waiter assures them they will get along just fine in America. Writing may not be a good indicator of reading skills, but one can hardly imagine Haydn making much headway with his volumes of Sterne, Adam Smith, Burke, Holcroft, Pope, or least of all, Shakespeare.

The largest part of his collection consisted of works of literature in single volumes or collections, including plays, novels, poetry, satires, portrayals of moral characters, fables, epigrams, and virtually every other type of writing that existed in the 18th century. This included many of the major German writers, and numerous lesser ones as well, some of whom he knew personally. He had some literary works in English and French, but more in Italian, including ones by Metastasio, Goldoni, and Tasso.

His other books cover a wide range of interests, and some of these are purely practical, such as language dictionaries and primers, lexicons of composers or learned Austrians, and guides to gardening, nature, and conversation; somewhat more surprising are his encyclopedias of economics and studies in chemistry, botany, agriculture, meteorology, and politics. His general books, sometimes in popularized versions, include studies of astronomy, travel, magic, theology, and Freemasonry; histories of America, Scotland, the Habsburg monarchy, or the whole world; music histories and theoretical treatises; and moral philosophy and aesthetics, the latter notably by Moses Mendelssohn, Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, and Shaftesbury. Did Haydn have all these interests? The short answer, in all probability, is yes. Some of them we know about through correspondence, such as his keen interest in astronomy or other areas of science. Others, such as Freemasonry, tie into his personal involvement. Subjects such as travel would have come without prompting; by 1795 he had traveled extensively throughout Europe and had crossed the English Channel more than once.

Haydn undoubtedly paid most attention to his volumes of German and Italian literature. Of the German poets represented, he set numerous of their poems to music, including Gellert, Lessing, Gleim, Hagedorn, Bürger, Lichtwer, Gotter, and Ramler. Among these, Christian Fürchtegott Gellert stands out especially. Haydn set a number of Gellert's Geistliche Oden und Lieder to music as part song, but most strikingly, he told the Swedish diplomat Frederik Silverstolpe, who visited him in 1797, that he considered Gellert to be his hero.12 That Haydn had much in common with Gellert did not escape the attention of his contemporaries. As early as 1766 the Wiener Diarium reported that, "in short, Haydn is that in music which Gellert is in poetry." Much later, in 1786, in a conversation between Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf and Joseph II, the two agreed that while Mozart could be compared with Klopstock, Haydn had more in common with Gellert.13

If Haydn did not read many of the books he owned, then why did he own such a fine library? During his most productive years one can hardly imagine where he would have found the time for reading. Before the death of his patron Prince Nicholas in 1790, he mounted as many as 100 opera performances per year, and for these he conducted all performances, rehearsed the singers, added arias and orchestration, and that does not include the staggering number of works he composed. In all probability, he received many of his books as gifts from visitors as tokens of esteem, and this has led some to believe that he simply kept his books as a status symbol. He had come from a lower class, the son of a wheelwright, and while his musical prowess gave him great prestige, the appearance of his library could round out the image. By the mid 1780s if not earlier he had established himself as the greatest composer in German speaking countries, if not the entire world, and that reputation would hold at least until the

beginning of the 19th century (we may be more inclined to give the nod to Mozart, but his contemporaries did not share that view). What better gift to give than a book, and that would be especially true of his English books while he lived in England. Some of these in fact would have been gifts from the authors themselves, such as Holcroft and Burney. The complete works of Shakespeare in ten volumes, Captain Cook's Voyages, or The Selected Works of Laurence Sterne, would have made excellent gifts. He spent a great deal of time with people who had read some of the most notable ones thoroughly, and there can be little doubt that he actively put some of these enlightened views into practice.

While Haydn may in fact have cared about his books offering status, for him they stand as the tangible link between ideas he became deeply committed to and the nature of his enlightened musical achievement, and it matters little if he read them or not. Not only did his works appeal to audiences of his time more than any other composer, but that appeal carried with it the weight and substance of the best thinking of writers and philosophers, allowing his works to serve higher goals. Since these goals firmly remain a part of the consciousness of the present, we can embrace him with the same enthusiasm as his contemporaries, and the presence of his works in the repertory confirms that we have.

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Orwell and the British Left

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According to his own last words on the subject, just before his death, Orwell was a supporter of Socialism and of the British Labour Party which had swept to power in 1945. Before then, for most of his writing career, certainly from *The Road to Wigan Pier* in 1937 onwards, George Orwell was an avowed proponent of socialism, although his conceptions of what that meant certainly changed over the years.

Despite his own unequivocal and often expressed views, the popularity of the Orwell "brand" has led many people to misrepresent his views since his death, and to appropriate his prestige for their own political projects. That was typified by the introduction to the most popular edition of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in the US, which quotes him accurately as saying that all his work "was against totalitarianism," while in a somewhat Orwellian manner cutting out his important following phrase "and for democratic socialism." Since his death of course, other people's ideas of socialism have also changed, and even geography has an effect. Socialism will have entirely different connotations, for example, for West Europeans, East Europeans and for Americans, as the truncated Orwell quote would suggest.

This chapter briefly traces Orwell's political development in the context of the British socialist politics of his era and shows how at an early stage he defined himself specifically as a "democratic socialist," thus intending to distance himself, and indeed socialism itself, from the various totalitarian tendencies that claimed, spuriously in his view, to be socialist.

Just as Orwell in some ways tried to define his socialism by exclusion, of communism for example, this chapter will rebut some the posthumous claims about his political thought that have been made in clear disregard for his own stated words. In doing so, it relies mostly on Orwell's own writings, substantiated as they are by many contemporary accounts of colleagues and correspondents.

However, if we are rely upon Orwell's own works they do need to be put in context for modern readers. The changes in the British Labour Party and society since he died, not to mention the clear difference between British and American domestic politics, despite recent signs of convergence, demand some explanations.

Striking Back at the Empire: Orwell and Class

Any reference point for Orwell's politics has to be British, indeed, even more precisely, English, since that is where, despite his internationalism, he drew his political inspirations. Although it sometimes evokes comment, it was not at all anomalous that Orwell, an old Etonian scion of a family of imperial civil servants should have become a socialist. Many leaders of the Labour Party, Clement Attlee, or Hugh Gaitskell for example, came from similar and even loftier social

positions. What is more surprising is the gradualness of his transition to socialism, and it may be that which kept him more firmly attached to the politics he eventually chose, as opposed to the instant conversions to Communism, and often equally instantaneous apostasy, that sometimes characterized others of his milieu.

Orwell's political metamorphosis from his imperialist chrysalis began with his experience in the British imperial police in Burma which gave him a profound distaste for the British Empire at work, although the later literary manifestation of that dislike in Burmese Days in 1934 certainly seems to have come as a surprise to his colleagues in the force.

Not long after his return from the outposts of empire, he described himself as a "Tory Anarchist," to the editor of the Adelphi magazine and repeated this designation several times over the years. This was not the same as being a conservative: Samuel Johnson, William Cobbett, Jonathan Swift and others have provided a respectable precedent for writers by calling themselves Tories while defending what they saw as ancient liberties.

Apart from his distaste for the effect of imperialism on subject peoples, his Burmese experience doubtless accentuated his sensitivity to the caste system at home in Britain. Although the minute gradations of the hierarchy of rank in the Raj were notorious, it was simply a more codified and explicit version of the informal but still rigidly delimited social system in Britain, as reflected in Orwell's calibration of his own origins in the "lower upper middle-class."

That sensitivity to the caste order of the British social hierarchy was reinforced by his excursions into the lower orders for Down and Out in Paris and London, (1933) and The Road to Wigan Pier. His excursions not only moved him to concern for how society treated its poorer sections, the plongeurs of Paris, the tramps of England and the miners of Wigan but emphasized how the British, or rather the English, caste system was not necessarily reducible to crude Marxist economic class analysis.

In the famous repartee between Ernest Hemingway and Scott Fitzgerald, the latter declared "The rich are different from you and me," to be robustly and famously countered by Hemingway. "Yes, they have more money." But Orwell discovered the obverse, that the poor really were different from the middle classes and that the difference between a British working class person and their upper middle class compatriots, even a "lower" upper middle class Orwell, was more deep-rooted than any mere quantitative difference in salary.

Indeed, Orwell went beyond accepting that the poor are different. He decided that they were better, in their ethics, their social cohesion, and even their patriotism. The latter concept was, of course, anathema to orthodox Marxists who held that the working class has no country. Unfortunately for dogma, twentieth century history seems to have settled this question in Orwell's favour. But then one of the qualities of the working class in Britain, according *The Road To Wigan Pier* was he had yet to meet "a working miner, steel-worker, cotton weaver, docker, navvy or what not, who was 'ideologically sound'."

Most of Orwell's contemporaries and subsequent critics see *The Road to Wigan Pier* as his

personal road to a socialist Damascus. It was there that he discovered that poverty and squalor were the fate, not only of the tramps and what Marx had once unkindly called the lumpenproletariat, who had fallen through the gaps in the floor of society. He found that the miners of Wigan and the dockers of Liverpool, workers whose toil kept the whole British economic enterprise going, were trapped in hopelessness if unemployed, and dire insecurity even if they had a breadwinner working.

His research came as a revelation to him and to many of his readers. Before the Second World War and the social reforms in its wake, British society was much more stratified even than now. Workers and their children were rarely likely to get beyond elementary school, and even the autodidacts among them rarely had the leisure or opportunity to develop the literary skills that would allow the middle class reader a glimpse through the class curtain. Orwell had gone beyond the event horizon for most of the middle class of Britain. With an outsider's senses, for example, of smell, he had gone to a different social planet — and discovered intelligent life there.

His experience completed his conversion from "Tory anarchist" to convinced Socialist, but it should be remembered that within the Broad Church of British Labour, there has always been room for Tory Anarchists and similar eccentrics, and he clearly did not rid himself of all his prejudices and eccentricities.

For example, he gratuitously added a Blimpish growl against other middle class socialists to *The Road to Wigan Pier*, "vegetarians with wilting beards, Bolshevik commissars (half gangster half gramophone), of earnest ladies in sandals…, escaped Quakers, birth-control fanatics…) There is an element of exorcism in the exercise, since his own chosen life-style, keeping goats, running small holdings, fervent chain-smoking and ritualistic tea making, made him eminently parodiable in his own terms.

For example, it is difficult to believe, looking at the perennial scruffiness of his attire in all his contemporary photographs, that he ordered his clothes custom-made from his tailor! He may have been affecting an insouciance to distance himself from his origins. Even at the end of his life, in the hospitals, he was comparing, unfavourably, the middle class accents of visitors with the regional dialects of the staff.

There was also a Dickensian element in his outlook, which is not surprising in view of his own deep appreciation for the novelist. Just as Dickens actually made the trade union officials in Hard Times almost a culpable as Gradgrind the capitalist, Orwell's phobias included the labour leaders who had come up in the world, and he did not seem to relate strongly to the trade unions, the cooperative movement, and the other genuinely working class bodies that made up much of the Labour Party's base in Britain.

Indeed, the class struggle, in its more mundane form, of strikes and go-slows, do not enter Orwell's works, whether essays or novels, in any significant way. While in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Winston Smith thought the only hope lay with the Proles, it is noticeable that they were

not joining unions or striking! Even allowing for the fact that strikes were relatively rare and unions relatively weak after the defeat of the General Strike in 1926, one suspect that for Orwell, the English Proles were almost an equivalent of the Russian peasantry for Tolstoy, a moral force more than the socio-political unit of traditional Marxism.

The Independent Labour Party

When he did get involved in politics, Orwell chose to join a distinctively British body, the Independent Labour Party, which was towards the left and indeed the revolutionary flank of the British Labour Movement, but which had many distinctive approaches that Orwell shared. He was not as lonely a figure as an American socialist with similar ideas may have been, not least since socialism was in the mainstream in Britain.

The ILP had left the Labour Party earlier in 1932, but still had a wide, albeit shrinking base, members of parliament, and indeed still had many close connections and sympathizers inside the Labour Party itself and the unions. Although the ILP considered itself revolutionary, it was by no means Leninist and was open and non-dogmatic in its beliefs, with a mixture of pragmatic belief in improving the lot of people now and a firm belief that things could and should get much better — without being too specific about the form that future society would take.

It held what it called a "Third Way" position between Leninism and Labour Party right's reformism, which is, of course, not to be confused with Tony Blair's and Bill Clinton's later appropriation of that title.

The ILP believed that socialism could be brought about by an elected Labour Party, which could suppress counter-revolution "by ordinary legal power backed by a Labour organization, and could thus effect the revolutionary change to socialism."

Indeed the ILP's identification of a distinctively "British Road to Socialism," backed by the power of mass organizations, was later usurped by the Communist Party of Great Britain itself, even down to the name, after the Second World War.

The ILP's indigenous, non-dogmatic but robust politics is clearly one of the sources that Orwell was drawing on, when he declared, "England is the only European country where internal politics are conducted in a more or less humane and decent manner." He claimed, along with the ILP, that it "would be possible to abolish poverty without destroying liberty," and its people were "more capable than most people of making revolutionary changes without bloodshed." The emphasis of the ILP was just this, the abolition of poverty in the course of a makeover of society made possible by mass support.

While some commentators have inferred that Orwell was repudiating the Labour Party by suggesting that it was converging with the Conservatives, if read in context, Orwell was actually celebrating such convergence as a distinctively British and implicitly better way of doing things. He elaborated "Thus, no Conservative government will ever revert to what would

have been called conservatism in the nineteenth century. No Socialist government will massacre the propertied class, nor even expropriate them without compensation."

It was ILP leaders like Fenner Brockway who introduced him to Secker and Warburg for publication of Homage to Catalonia in 1938, and later Animal Farm in 1945 when the more communist-inclined Victor Gollancz demurred at Orwell's political direction. Showing the same humanistic approach that Orwell certainly shared, and in a way anticipating the theme of Nineteen Eighty-Four, the ILP's leader, James Maxton MP, in his last major speech in 1945, repudiated statist versions of socialism, declaring, "We must not allow ourselves to become ants in an anthill." In that he could draw upon the support of a vociferous co-operative movement whose political representatives in the inter war years had also warned of the dangers to workers of state control.

Orwell's ILP connection explains how he could consider himself to be a revolutionary, while strongly spurning "foreign" ideologies such as the various forms of Leninism.

The Spanish Disconnection

Orwell had initially alienated the communists and many others of the more rigid left with his excoriation of them in **The Road to Wigan Pier**, but what really sundered any vestigial comradely feelings with them was undoubtedly the publication of **Homage to Catalonia** in 1938, and its exposure of the behaviour of the Soviets, their agents and supporters in Spain during the Civil War.

While he joined the militia of the Spanish sister party of the ILP, the POUM, in Catalonia at the end of 1936, it would appear that he was initially somewhat innocent of the sectarianism of the left and would at one point have happily joined the Communist-dominated International Brigades, because they were on a more active front near Madrid.

However, he was already on the Communist Party's blacklist, with Comintern agents tracking him, as he became aware when the Communist-dominated Spanish Republican forces moved against the POUM and Anarchists in Barcelona. The Soviet line was that the POUM was Trotskyist, and commentators have often accepted that at its face value, although its leader, Andreas Nin had had strong disagreements with Trotsky. Regardless of whether or not it was Trotskyist, it certainly was not, despite what the Communist press declared, in league with the Fascists.

Orwell's shock at the blatant lies of pro-Soviet writers was compounded by the perils of his own flight across the frontier, just ahead of the KGB, and the fate of several of his colleagues who did not make it. The vegetarians and escaped Quakers that he had inveighed against in **The Road to Wigan Pier** may have seemed an impediment to the onward march of socialism, but his Spanish experience persuaded him that the Soviet Union and its supporters were outright enemies. The experience exposed Orwell to the concepts for which he later coined the memorable phrases "doublethink" and "duckspeak."

Critics debate whether Orwell was actually well versed in Marxism, but several very close to him say that he had read Marx extensively. What may fool people is that like those around the ILP or Tribune, Orwell would have instinctively revolted against the idea of using the specific Marxist dialect, which sounded so foreign to native English speakers

World War Two and Orwell's Politics

After Catalonia, the Soviet Pact with Nazi Germany in 1939 would not have surprised him as much as it did more trusting souls on the Left, but both the Pact, and the way that some intellectuals in Britain turned on a sixpence to match Moscow's new love affair with the former Nazi enemy provided rich material for both **Animal Farm** and **Nineteen Eighty-Four**, not to mention a steady stream of war time commentaries.

As a result Orwell invited many on the Left to the ultimate in thoughtcrime. As befits one who fought against both, he came to "the old, true and unpalatable conclusion that a Communist and a Fascist are somewhat nearer to one another than either is to a democrat" Although this essential identity of totalitarianism despite its rhetorical colours was the constant theme of Orwell's well-argued work for the last decade of his life, this was still a shocking concept to many who had adopted the slogan "No enemies on the Left!" during the late thirties. That was when Moscow had decided that democratic socialists were no longer the "Social-Fascists" of 1933, but essential partners in the Popular Front period. Many of them kept up kept up that belief even as Stalin decided he had no enemies in Berlin.

The mainstream Labour Party was broadly in favour of the war effort, despite a large pacifist element. Some ILP leaders, such as Maxton, continued to oppose the "imperialist" war with Germany without, however, ever subscribing to the Soviet embrace of their new Nazi ally â€"which caused a rapid realignment of the far left. The British Communist Party had promptly followed Moscow's lead and declared it to be an imperialist war, a position held more consistently by people like Maxton and the tiny Trotskyist movement who remained antiwar even after the Soviet Union had involuntarily joined the war when Hitler attacked it.

While the ILP's position of revolutionary opposition to the war was also initially reflected by Orwell, he and many others soon moved to strong, albeit highly conditional support for the British war effort. He rapidly lost his earlier pessimistic fear that it would bring about a form of fascism in Britain, deciding instead that the social changes and pressures of total war on the home front presented, not so much the opportunity, but more the indispensability of revolution. He had joined the Home Guard, the equivalent of the old militia, and the possibilities of an armed and trained populace excited him.

In the course of the Second World War, the British government would seize control of the economy and direct it towards the war effort to an extent far beyond anything that even Nazi Germany managed. Of course, it was all done in the name of victory, but when the scaremongers warned that socialism would mean draconian rationing and taxation, wartime Britain already had them both, unchallenged by the rich. The war about a large element of

social and economic levelling, indicating what was possible in peacetime.

At the same time, with Orwell's customary tendency to see the skull beneath the skin, his experience of war time Britain, the shortages, the rationing, the bureaucratic regulation also provided the backdrop for **Nineteen Eight-Four**. He had already detected this in the siege mentality of the Soviets and the bellicosity of the Nazis, but the direct experience in Britain was a chilling evocation of the possibilities inherent in war hysteria and the numbing effect of war's deprivations. It could happen here after all.

His time at the BBC, where he produced programmes for India in 1941, tempered any tendency to euphoria. His not always successful attempts to get radical and nationalist Indian guests on the programme showed that the old imperialist establishment was far from dead and his direct experience of ideological control of the content, much magnified, became a crucial component of Nineteen Eighty Four.

Then as the war went on, the social unity, and the enforced egalitarianism that it entailed brought him to explicit support for the Labour Party or at least its left wing, where many had drifted from the ILP.

The Labour left mostly organized around Tribune, the independent weekly newspaper which Orwell joined as literary editor after leaving the BBC in 1943. He wrote some of his most memorable essays, including the As I Please columns, for it. It was an accurate title. His colleagues did not always share all his views, but it is a reflection of the eclectic nature of the Labour Party that, unlike in the more Leninist sectarian milieu, there was no hint of censorship. Orwell had a found an appropriate journalistic home at last.

He retained his old school and class connections and their contacts with decision-makers and his new Labour party connections added more as people connected with Tribune or the ILP joined both the wartime coalition cabinet and the post-war Labour government. His editor, Aneurin Bevan, not only joined the cabinet, he was instrumental in setting up the National Health Service.

Although we are unsure whether or not Orwell actually joined the Labour Party, he certainly canvassed for it in the May 1945 election that returned the self-declared socialist party to power with a massive majority. As we have seen, right up to his death, as we know in his attempts to correct American misapprehensions about the purpose of Nineteen Eighty-Four, he described himself a supporter of the Party and the government.

Socialist Anti-Soviet

In the heat of the war and even after, many on the Left were prepared to overlook the Soviet German pact, not least as the Red Army for several years rolled back the Axis forces in a way that the Western Allies did not.

Orwell's incisively unforgiving attitude to the Soviet Union made him an uncomfortable partner

for some of the Labour left, who while deploring Communism as it was practiced in Eastern Europe were equally, or more, concerned about the growing tendency for London and Washington to realign against their former Soviet Ally.

For example, Michael Foot, a colleague and subsequent editor of Tribune and leader of the Labour Party, while speaking admiringly of Orwell, still mischaracterizes him as a Trotskyist because of his firm anti-Soviet attitudes compared with the more ambivalent attitude that others had to the Soviet Ally. The real Trotskyists, as Orwell was discovering from his correspondence with Partisan Review in the USA, where they were relatively much stronger than in the Britain, consistently opposed the war.

Even before the 1945 election he had warned, “There is the impending showdown with Russia which people at the top of the Labour Party no doubt realize to be unavoidable.” He left no doubt which side he would put himself on. “In case of war breaking out, if one were compelled to choose between Russia and America, I would always choose America,” he told his former publisher Victor Gollancz warning that “In international politics… you must be prepared to practice appeasement indefinitely, or at some point you must be ready to fight.” However, he kept a sense of proportion, for example, curbing Bertrand Russell’s initial enthusiasm for a pre-emptive nuclear strike against Russia.

The publication of *Animal Farm*, in 1945 “that anti-Soviet Farrago” as it was described in the communist *Daily Worker*, compounded his many sins with the Moscow-inclined left, whose vitriol level rose along with its phenomenal sales. What disgruntled Orwell more than their predictable attacks were the people on both the left and the right who agreed with the fable’s core message of a revolution gone bad, but felt it inexpedient to publish it during a war in which the USSR was an ally. Their determined efforts to thwart the satire’s publication provided yet more inspiration for the world of tightly controlled information in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

The List

In recent years, the release of government documents showed that Orwell had provided a list to the British government of people that he thought the government’s “Information Research Department.” should not employ. For many people on both sides of the Atlantic, this has conjured up Un-American Activities Committee hearings and McCarthyite purges and dismissals, and some saw it as a vindication of their long-time questioning of Orwell’s socialism.

However, that begs far too many questions. The Labour government elected in 1945 had set up the IRD specifically to subsidize publications that championed “social-democracy as a successful alternative to Communism.”

Not one of those on Orwell’s “List” lost their jobs, were imprisoned, or can provably be said to have had any resulting impediments to their chosen careers, except possibly missing freelance assignments from a government department that they presumably disagreed with anyway!

Indeed, in 1948, just a little before, Orwell had written to his anarchist friend George Woodcock suggesting that their organization, the Freedom Defence Association, consider action against blacklisting. He explained, “It’s not easy to have a clear position, because, if one admits the right of governments to govern, one must admit their right to choose suitable agents, & I think any organization has the right to protect itself against infiltration methods. But at the same time, the way in which the government seems to be going to work is vaguely disquieting.”

Indeed, he went on point out that the communists were victims of the type of measures that they had themselves been calling for against fascists, while he himself more consistently lamented a general public indifference to freedom of speech.

Despite his uncomfortable anti-Sovietism, he never forgot that “one defeats the fanatic by not being fanatic oneself, but on the contrary by using one’s intelligence,” and did not apply double standards. He opposed the blacklisting and repressive action against individual fascists and communists alike, hewing to a higher, inexpedient, standard of civil liberties.

Orwell’s Socialism

Orwell’s memorable final books ensured that he is remembered more for what he was against, totalitarianism, that what he was for, which as he often asserted, was democratic socialism. *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as the Cold War chilled down all over the world, led to Orwell’s adoption by many conservatives in Europe and America, thus confirming for many of the communist-influenced left the dark suspicions they already had about Orwell’s political positions.

His death in 1950 not long after the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* froze Orwell’s political development in the coldest days of the Cold War and presented a stationary target for those of his opponents whose Manichaean world view considered any criticisms of the Soviet Union, especially those as trenchant as Orwell’s, as giving aid and comfort to the “real” enemy — “Western Imperialism.”

While his vision of socialism definitely excluded the Bolshevik model, it was an empirical and pragmatic version. He wrote during the war “Socialists don’t claim to be able to make the world perfect: they claim to be able to make it better,” — a view that would have been entirely in harmony with the broad church that the Labour Party represented.

“Better” could apply ethically as much as financially. For example, in 1941, as he wrestled with the reality of a capitalist British government that had more controls on industry, labour and even food, clothes and furniture, than any other Western nation had ever tolerated &msash; and still basically retained a free society, he warned, “I think we ought to guard against assuming that as a system to live under, socialism will be greatly preferable to democratic capitalism.”

He was not suggesting that socialism was less ethical, or even less efficient, than capitalism,

but he consistently maintained that relative British prosperity under capitalism depended on the unsustainable and unethical exploitation of the subject peoples of the Empire. It typified his political approach, which combined a strong empirical and pragmatic streak with what a later Labour Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, was to say about his approach to foreign policy, that it should have “an ethical dimension.”

There is no doubt that his experience of working for Tribune, and with people like Michael Foot and Aneurin Bevan helped consolidate his support for the Labour Party. Along with the left around Tribune, he cavilled at the Labour leadership’s occasionally overcautious attitude to social change — even as he agreed with its staunch anti-Sovietism.

However the post war social democratic consensus in Britain ensured that Orwell and his works became not only part of the popular consciousness, but also a generally accepted part of political discourse. For democratic socialists, Orwell has become an icon, someone who could reconcile a concern for social justice with a concern for civil rights, and indeed who saw that there was no possibility of one without the other. When conservative Prime Minister John Major quoted Orwell in an election speech, there were guffaws from those, mostly Labour supporters who compared the writer’s socialism with the prime ministers recidivist conservatism, but the quotation bespeaks a popularity. The fact that Orwell is so often misappropriated is a tribute to his popular stature, but also to the failure of his misappropriators to read what he wrote so clearly and eloquently about his beliefs.

Despite the posthumous claims by conservatives and communists alike that Orwell had abandoned socialism by the end of his life, none of his colleagues at Tribune or in the Labour Party and ILP, has ever disagreed with the continuing force of Orwell’s self-assessment, “Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic Socialism, as I understand it.”

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The Fourth Estate in the Service of Power: Media Coverage of the Middle East

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You open the newspaper on any day and you can be sure to find at least one front-page article related to the Middle East. It will be something ugly or depressing, something implicating the United States directly or indirectly — Israel and Palestine, the Iraq war, the standoff with Iran, the war in Afghanistan, the prisoner torture cases in Iraq and Afghanistan, the rendition of terror suspects to third countries, etc. And you wonder how much of the story is true, how much is distorted, and how much is omitted outright. It is not just for lack of space.

My sample of newspaper articles is somewhat random, by necessity, but also appropriate enough to make a few essential points. By its nature, propaganda is dishonest and meant to deceive. Nothing is singularly new in this. Every empire, past and present, relies on deceitful manipulation or suppression of information. Today, it is most dangerously used in the service of US-led Western domination. It is most dangerous because of the global interests it serves and because of the unprecedented and far-reaching means it can enlist.

===== 1 =====

The Iraq war, the most destructive conflict directly involving American troops since the Vietnam war, is not over and yet already half-forgotten.

Who remembers Falluja? Or what does the mass media allow us to remember? On November 8, 2004, American troops started their offensive against Falluja by occupying the main city hospital. According to the embedded New York Times reporter on the scene, soldiers “eagerly” kicked in the doors of Falluja General Hospital, and patients and hospital employees were forced to lie on the floor while troops tied their hands behind their backs. Lost on the Times reporter was that turning a medical facility into a theatre of combat was a war crime.[1] Two days earlier, another hospital in the city center had been razed to the ground by massive US air raids, another war crime not called by its only rightful name.[2]

What followed was an orgy of killing and destruction, pitting warplanes and tanks against insurgents armed with Kalashnikov rifles. Even when embedded reporters reveled in the killing efficiency of the US military, they still described the scene for what it was — a “sliver of apocalypse,” in the words of the Times’ reporters.[3] Terrified civilians trying to flee the city were pushed back, to face almost-certain death. After one week of its offensive, the US military had swept through most of the city, leaving behind a landscape of total devastation — shelled buildings, bullet-riddled cars and rotting corpses.[4]

Falluja was not the only scene of war crimes in Iraq. Some were covered by the mainstream

media, others were left out or conveniently displaced from public attention. Who reminds us now of the grotesque torture of prisoners at Abu Ghraib? Just a blip in an otherwise benign occupation?[5] Be it racism or crass insensitivity, even when the press reported the horror stories, it was rarely from the Iraqis' vantage point.[6]

The Geneva Conventions forbid the targeting of civilian installations, whether state-owned or not. In the second week of the invasion in March 2003, the Iraqi TV offices were destroyed by a US missile strike. During the preceding week, a chorus of media commentators had been clamoring for their destruction, because "allowing Iraqi TV to stay on the air gives Saddam a strong tool to help keep his regime intact." After the facility was destroyed, the New York Times chief military correspondent Michael Gordon justified the attack by saying "when we're trying to send the exact opposite [of Saddam's] message, I think, [Iraqi television] was an appropriate target." In effect: Iraqis have to receive our message and only ours, Saddam's or any other contradicting ours must be suppressed, that journalists will be killed in the facility is of no consequence. The Geneva Conventions be damned, cheerleading and hacking for empire is the media's function![7]

The cumulative effect is numbing and breeds indifference to those at the receiving end of the violence, the better to minimize any public outcry. The chasm is widest between perception (or non-perception, literally, in this case) and reality when bombs are rained down from warplanes, from a safe distance where mangled corpses and body parts cannot be seen. Here is a sample of short reports, from the earlier years of the occupation, as detached as those of a lab technician experimenting with mice:

- Baqubah: "Some 30 insurgents were stationed in buildings near the stadium in eastern Baqubah, apparently to obstruct US forces from reaching downtown. Rather than clear the buildings — two vacant schools and a swimming pool — Colonel Pittard decided to demolish them with four 500-lb. bombs." (Christian Science Monitor, July 21, 2004)
- Tall Afar: "Soldiers from the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, also known as the Stryker Brigade, launched a fierce attack on Tall Afar on Thursday … The fighting, which included three airstrikes involving AC-130 gunships and F-16 fighter jets, killed 67 insurgents, according to the U.S. military." (Washington Post, September 12, 2004)
- Sadr City, Baghdad: "Hospital officials in Sadr City, a vast slum in northeast Baghdad that is overwhelmingly hostile to the American occupation, said one person had been killed in an overnight airstrike by the Americans. For weeks, the military has been deploying an AC-130 gunship and fighter jets over the area to try to rout the Mahdi Army, a militia loyal to the firebrand Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr." (New York Times, October 6, 2004)

There are hundreds of other such reports — from Najaf, Basra, Ramadi, Mosul, and other Iraqi cities — arousing as much compassion (that of an icicle) as the preceding excerpts, not even mentioning the ugly euphemism of "collateral damage" or else equating the dead by the dozens

with “insurgents,” and eliciting no comment and no denunciation whatsoever, on or off the editorial pages.[8]

On August 15, 2009, an article in the New York Times gave its readers a glimpse of the devastation that had befallen Iraqis, without mentioning anything of the background that led to it. The article described the current catastrophic deterioration of the Iraqi economy: “As recently as the 1980’s, Iraq was self-sufficient in producing wheat, rice, fruits, vegetables, and sheep and poultry products. Its industrial sector exported textiles and leather goods, including purses and shoes, as well as steel and cement. But wars and sanctions … have left each industry a shadow of its former self. “[9] Not stated, but correctly assumed, is that Saddam Hussein was criminally implicated in all these wars since the 1980’s. But so was the United States implicated in all these wars, whether it armed Saddam Hussein and egged him on in confronting Iran in the 1980’s, or whether it smashed the same wayward Saddam Hussein who had invaded Kuwait in 1990 (foolishly without US consent). Long before the 1980’s, in fact, the US had already been implicated in Iraq’s descent into darkness: In 1963, the CIA played a role in ushering the Baath party into power, which then led to the long benighted years of Saddam Hussein’s dictatorship.[10]

Iraq — the one country in the Middle East which, as recently as 50 years ago, held the potential of a truly varied and affluent economy, with an abundance of natural resources (water, agriculture, industry, oil and other minerals, mountains and desert), in addition to being the repository of great ancient and medieval civilizations — has been systematically destroyed and turned into a land of unspeakable misery.

No one is held accountable for this. Reading the mainstream press, it may as well be the result of many tsunamis or other natural disasters of unprecedented proportions that have hit Iraq, disasters unrelated to policies pursued by the US over many decades.

===== 2 =====

How is it that the Iraq catastrophe can be consigned to oblivion with no reckoning for its perpetrators and no public outcry to bring them to justice? We should first point the finger at The New York Times which, as much as any other newspaper, has been hard at work to make war crimes appear natural and routine.

The Times is the “newspaper of record” in the US, the standard to emulate for other dailies. Under a cultivated image of objectivity and dispassionate reporting, the Times is in fact a champion of American exceptionalism and a chief promoter of America’s presumed benevolent and selfless involvement with the rest of the world. When it comes to the Middle East, in particular, we have to be on guard to see through misstatements, half-truths and outright falsehoods. These are not always innocent and they fulfill a purpose. Sometimes it is easy to get to the truth because there are accessible sources of alternative information, online or in specialized publications. Sometimes it is difficult and it takes the effort of a research paper.[11]

The Times has 8 twice-weekly columnists and 3 once-weekly columnists. Among the twice-

weekly columnists, the specialists on foreign affairs are Roger Cohen, Thomas L. Friedman and Nicholas D. Kristof. Among the once-weekly, Frank Rich is the most likely to address US policies abroad. These four columnists have accumulated multiple journalistic prizes — awarded or nominated for the Pulitzer and other prizes several times — and are among the most influential pundits in the US.

It is instructive to examine how these four columnists mention (or do not mention) the Middle East, and how they all shift their focus and tone as America's fortunes wax and wane. What they write in the Times approximately defines the scope of respectable opinion on foreign affairs. Their views span the political spectrum within relatively narrow limits, from progressive liberal to liberal hawk, but always upholding America's presumed mission to the world. "Liberal" or "hawk" does not mean consistently so, across all issues and at all times; in fact, under close scrutiny, double standards and expediency are commonplace in the Times' coverage of foreign affairs.

Frank Rich does not shy away from issues related to US foreign policy in the wider Middle East, but he is singularly reluctant if they implicate Israel. Since August 1, 2006 — to take an arbitrary cut-off date — Rich has written more than 100 columns dealing with the war in Iraq, and more than 25 columns related to the war in Afghanistan or to the standoff with Iran or to both. In his more recent writings, he has been implacable in his opposition to former President George W. Bush's crude and secretive policies, the war in Iraq, and the current escalation in Afghanistan championed by President Obama.

Over the same 3-year period since August 1, 2006, however, Rich has never addressed issues related to Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands, let alone how these are directly abetted by US policies. There are occasional references to Hamas, Hezbollah, and the situation in Lebanon, but these are all incidental to whatever matter he discusses. To take but one example, Rich has written a total of 7 articles[12] where "Hamas" comes up, over his entire tenure as a Times op-ed columnist since 1994. In each of these 7 references, he brandishes Hamas as a group deserving to be targeted in the "war on terror" or else views a presumed association with Hamas as evidence of fanaticism and evil intentions, betraying a highly skewed perception of what Hamas is about or realistically capable of doing.[13]

Nicholas Kristof is as reticent as Frank Rich when it comes to Israel, the Palestinians, and other Arabs nearby. His sympathies for the victims of political repression are easily aroused if these victims are in China or Darfur, but not if they are in Israel or in any of the nearby autocratic regimes allied with the US (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan).

The full scope of Kristof's writing can be grasped by reading his blog, where he expands on his twice-weekly columns, adding thoughts he cannot always squeeze into an 800-word text.[14] There is a "tag list" in the main page of the blog, which tallies the number of times he has written about a particular topic. By my last check (August 31, 2009), "Darfur" tops his list (with a count of 111), followed by "Africa" (with 79), and then "China" (with 68). "Iraq" is about two-third down the list (with a count of 21), and "Israel" is the very last entry (with 14). These

numbers reflect Kristof's priorities, or else his ability to write without intimidation and self-censorship. Of the 14 entries about Israel, about half are on the situation in Gaza and several of the remaining half are fending off attacks by irate readers for his presumed anti-Israel bias — attacks that are far more virulent and numerous, proportionally, than others Kristof receives because of his writing on other topics — which is also revealing about the audience Kristof attracts and caters to.

Kristof opens a recent article (co-authored with Sheryl WuDunn) with a resounding paragraph: "In the 19th century, the paramount moral challenge was slavery. In the 20th century, it was totalitarianism. In this century, it is the brutality inflicted on so many women and girls around the globe: sex trafficking, acid attacks, bride burnings and mass rape."[15] No doubt, Kristof refers to the challenges which the US is presumed to have heroically taken on and defeated in the 19th century (the Civil War) and in the 20th century (fascism and, probably in Kristof's mind, communism assimilated to Stalinism in its various incarnations).[16] But what happened to these other scourges of the last two centuries — colonialism and imperialism — that have equaled if not far surpassed the ravages of the "paramount moral challenges" cited by Kristof? Totally omitted: In Kristof's blinkered history, these are not worthy of mention. Of course, to do otherwise would disturb America's self-image as a fundamentally benevolent, friendly and heroic superpower — despite its occasional excesses. This is beyond the limits the Times will tolerate, implicitly or not, because the US and its Western allies are now imperialism's chief protagonists. The less said about imperialism, the better to absolve its crimes.[17]

One of Thomas Friedman's famous titles is: "The World Is Flat," probably what he thought would be a witty title to get people to pay attention to his arrogant screeds.[18] Some do — witness the three Pulitzers he has won — and they are in good company: President Obama is reported to be a serious reader of Friedman's books.[19]

Among Times columnists, Friedman is the most prone to write about Israel, Arab countries, and the Middle East in general. Other careful readers have closely followed his writings and documented his outlandish biases.[20] No need to rehash these here. These are not just differences in writing style or political philosophy. True, he likes to pepper his columns with provocative and disdainful puns, often reflecting crude racism and unabashed cheering for empire. But just as reprehensible is his brazen carelessness with facts — to put it straight, he is a dishonest apologist.

Friedman can switch, without any introspection or hint of remorse, from one position to its opposite depending on America's changing fortunes. Below are quotations from four of Friedman's columns, at four different dates since the invasion of Iraq — from strident gung-ho support for the war to unapologetic rejection of the resentful and ungrateful Iraqis — the titles are as noteworthy as the quoted sentences:

- Under the title "Come the Revolution," April 2, 2003: "While they may not be able to describe it, many Arabs intuit that this US invasion of Iraq is something they've never seen before — the revolutionary side of US power." (Note the racism.)

- Under the title “It’s No Vietnam”, October 30, 2003: “US power is not being used in Iraq for oil, or imperialism, or to shore up a corrupt status quo … [The March 2003 invasion] is the most radical-liberal revolutionary war the US has ever launched — a war of choice to install some democracy in the heart of the Arab-Muslim world.” (Not much different from what the British invaders claimed after World War I.)
- Under the title “The Central Truth,” September 8, 2006: “It truly, truly baffles me why [President Bush] who bet so much of his legacy on this project, [building a democratizing society in the heart of the Arab-Muslim world,] never gave it his best shot and tolerated so much incompetence. He summoned us to D-Day and gave us the moral equivalent of the invasion of Panama.” (My translation: Let’s blame the Iraq debacle on incompetence; the poorly applied and insufficient means denied us the glorious and noble end.)
- Under the title “Goodbye Iraq, and Good Luck,” July 14, 2009: “[Iraqis] still have not figured out whom [sic] they want to be as a country. They are exhausted from years of civil strife and really don’t want to go there again. Yet on the big unresolved issues … the different ethnic communities still don’t want to compromise much either.” (My translation: Cut and run, we owe the Iraqis nothing for destroying their country and all the atrocities we committed, it was a civil war all along and all of their doing.)

Friedman can also blithely manufacture facts to suit his ideological preferences. Nothing seems contrived in the long trail of half-truths, misleading statements, and plain falsehoods he produces. They come to him naturally. These are not differences of interpretation, but flat lies, though not always immediately apparent to the reader. I pick some from two recent columns, on June 9 and August 8 of this year.

In his column of June 9, two days after the Lebanese national elections, Friedman wrote: “A solid majority of all Lebanese — Muslims, Christians and Druse — voted for the [US-supported] March 14 coalition.”[21] In the rest of the column he is gushing with praise for the “solid majority of Lebanese” who vindicated President Obama’s vision to “preserve Lebanon’s sovereignty and independence from any regional power.” Let’s leave aside the claim that President Obama and his policies in the Middle East promote a truly sovereign and independent Lebanon — maybe this is a matter of opinion.

What cannot be attributed to opinion is the fiction that a “solid majority of all Lebanese” voted for the March 14 coalition. This is a plain falsehood. According to figures available from the website of the Lebanese Ministry of Interior, about 54% of eligible voters cast a ballot. Of these 54%, the popular vote was approximately 25% for the March 14 coalition and 29% for the opposition; that is, among voters who did not sit out an election of little interest to about half of them, a majority voted against the March 14 coalition. How was that possible? Indeed the March 14 coalition lost the popular vote, but still won a majority of the parliamentary seats, because of a very skewed apportioning of Lebanese voters by districts — a form of extreme gerrymandering, Lebanese style. Something surely known to Friedman, who prides himself on being a student of Middle Eastern history.[22]

These percentages and the skewed apportioning by districts were openly discussed in the Lebanese press at the time of the elections. None of that appeared anywhere in the mainstream media in the US. But no matter the hard facts. Editorials and op-eds in major US newspapers could not hold back their enthusiastic celebration of the June 7 elections, repeatedly held up as a testimony to the Lebanese people's preference for democracy — in turn repeatedly equated with support for President Obama and US policies.[23]

In his column of August 8, Friedman rhapsodized from Ramallah about the newly formed Palestinian National Security Forces: "For the first time, I've heard top Israeli military officers say these new Palestinian troops are professional and for real."[24] No wonder: The new Palestinian N.S.F. are trained under a program headed by an American officer, Gen. Keith Dayton, residing in Tel Aviv.[25] Friedman does not mention Keith Dayton, nor does he find it pertinent to comment on the fact that an American general is responsible for training the elite Palestinian forces protecting Mahmoud Abbas and his Palestinian Authority. Probably this is of no relevance to Friedman, who further writes that the Israeli army has been so pleased by the performance of the new Palestinian N.S.F. that it "has backed that up by taking down roughly two-thirds of the 41 manned checkpoints Israel set up around the West Bank."

Only 41 manned checkpoints? Down by "roughly two-thirds," i.e., now down to 13 or 14? The information from B'tselem, the Israeli human rights organization, is quite different and gives a far gloomier picture of the Palestinians' lot.[26] As of June 30, 2009, there were:

- 60 permanent checkpoints inside the West Bank.
- 39 permanent checkpoints that are last control points between the West Bank and Israel proper. Most of these checkpoints are located well inside the West Bank, up to several kilometers from the Green Line.
- 63 gates in the so-called Separation Barrier. Only about half of these are open to Palestinian use and for only part of the day, provided those wanting to cross have a permit.
- Between 65 and 85 "surprise" or "flying" checkpoints, on average per week, inside the West Bank over the last two years. These are not permanent checkpoints and their locations vary from week to week.

In addition to the checkpoints, B'tselem reports that "the army has erected hundreds of physical obstructions (dirt piles, concrete blocks, boulders, trenches, fences, and iron gates) to block access to main roads and channel Palestinian traffic to checkpoints." In recent years, the number of these obstructions has gradually risen. In March 2009, there were 541 obstructions inside the West Bank.

Summing up the B'tselem information, as of June 30, 2009, there were between 227 and 247 manned checkpoints or gates, and at least 541 unmanned road obstacles, to control Palestinians' movement in the West Bank. These numbers are generally consistent with those reported by other sources, in particular by the United Nations.[27] So, how did Friedman come up with the figure of "41" manned checkpoints? Another way of belittling the hardships faced

by the beleaguered Palestinians?

There was a very limited removal of checkpoints, perhaps the “roughly two-thirds of 41,” but the larger picture is missing from Friedman’s account. A cosmetic removal could take place because the racist system of Israeli-only bypass highways — no Palestinians in sight — had been largely completed.[28]

After Thomas Friedman’s brazen dishonesty and hubris, Roger Cohen’s columns should be a relief — almost anything would be — but to what extent? Cohen is a strong proponent of the Oslo process started in 1993-95, notwithstanding its degeneration into the opposite of what it promised 15 years ago. This process gave Israel a free hand to pursue its policy of settlements and expropriation of the Palestinians. Among Cohen’s heroes is the late Yitzhak Rabin, one of this policy’s early architects, whom he elevates to sainthood.[29]

At the time of the Gaza war in January 2009, without abandoning any of his deep pro-Israel biases, Cohen expressed an unprecedented thought among Times editorialists and regular columnists: “What [Israel] does not have the right to do is delude its people into thinking that peace is achievable without coming to terms with the deeply entrenched Middle Eastern realities that are Hamas and Hezbollah.” And referring to the assault on Gaza, he added: “Those realities have been strengthened by Olmert’s last fling, the reckless foray of a failed leader.”[30]

Two months later, Cohen went a step further in welcoming Britain’s overtures to Hezbollah and recommending that the US do the same: “The United States should follow the British example. It should initiate diplomatic contacts with the political wing of Hezbollah. The Obama administration should also look carefully at how to reach moderate Hamas elements and engineer a Hamas-Fatah reconciliation.”[31] There is an element of wishful thinking that the Obama administration can “engineer” a Hamas-Fatah rapprochement; but whatever it may try in this direction, if ever, it will be quite a departure from the current unflinching US-Israeli policy to blackball or destroy Hamas and Hezbollah — a policy consistently encouraged by the Times editors in past years.[32] Is Cohen bringing some lucidity into the myopic views of Hamas and Hezbollah that are so prevalent in US ruling circles?

More recently, Cohen’s columns on Iran have been salutary. No matter that they also reflect his own biases, in particular his zeal to champion one side within the Iranian theocracy against the other. His columns have introduced a measure of sobriety in the mainstream debates, the latter typically laced with apocalyptic scenarios involving mushroom clouds over Jerusalem and Tel Aviv — or worse.[33] Among columnists, Cohen has been perhaps the most consistent in shunning the demonization of Iranians as fanatics and repeatedly warning that a military strike against Iran’s nuclear installations would be an absolute disaster for the entire region, from the Mediterranean to India, and far beyond.[34]

Is Cohen drifting to the left? How much will the Times let him? Cohen is still a firm believer in American exceptionalism: “America was born as an idea, and so it has to carry that idea

forward," he recently wrote, before extolling President Obama who "believes in American exceptionalism, albeit one based more on values than power."[35] And in this, Cohen is also as much part of the claque for Obama as the Times' editors and other columnists. But this is a time of turmoil and great uncertainty for the United States, now and for many years into the future. There is a deep economic crisis at home, overstretched resources abroad, and shrinking means to bring to heel many unyielding opponents in the Middle East and elsewhere. So, this is perhaps also a time when the Times is being forced — and with it the rest of the mainstream press — to restrain its impulses to cheer for empire and give a small opening to alternative views on foreign affairs.

===== 3 =====

Not only are the Times' editorials and regular columns influential in shaping public opinion, they also strictly define the bounds of the paper's internal contents, namely, that of the articles appearing elsewhere in its pages. Whatever editorializing journalists and guest columnists are allowed, they rarely transgress the lines set by the editors, even when an article title suggests otherwise.[36] Here is a telling example from the Times op-ed pages.

On August 10, 2009, the Times ran a guest column entitled "The Two-State Solution Doesn't Solve Anything" and written by two veteran commentators on Middle East affairs, Hussein Agha and Robert Malley. What is the point of printing an op-ed that seems to put in doubt the idea of a two-state solution? At least this is the impression conveyed by the title, which seems to contradict the Times' repeated editorials in favor of Two-State as well as attacks on One-State.[37]

The authors of the August 10 op-ed, Agha and Malley, are regular contributors to the New York Review of Books. Both have been staunch supporters of Two-State. The Review is perhaps the most prestigious forum of left-liberal intellectuals in the US. It is also a prominent forum where One-State versus Two-State has been debated, off and on since October 2003, when another of its regular contributors, Tony Judt, first broached the idea of a one-state solution — at least thirty years too late, one may add, but that's another chronicle (of confused priorities) worthy of examination.[38] Have Agha and Malley given up their earlier support of Two-State and now joined the One-State camp, along with Judt and others?[39]

Nothing of the sort. Agha and Malley are not questioning the wisdom of Two-State in their Times op-ed in any way. The thrust of their argument is that Two-State is indeed the solution and, if it stands a chance at all, then it must include a defined end result in a defined time frame. In this, the Agha-Malley article fits squarely within an on-going debate between groups inside the American political establishment. This is the debate regarding the extent to which the US should pressure Israel to cease its settlement activities and whether final-status issues should be a priority in negotiation.[40]

But that is not all. There are other aspects in the Agha-Malley op-ed, which have nothing to do with the intra-establishment debate and which reinforce misrepresentations shared by all sides

of the political elite in Washington. The two opening sentences of the op-ed are: “The two-state solution has welcomed two converts. In recent weeks, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, and Khaled Meshal, the head of Hamas’s political bureau, have indicated they now accept what they had long rejected.” That Meshal has just embraced Two-State is a falsehood. Meshal has been on record for several years, in English as well as in Arabic, for supporting an end to resistance and armed struggle against Israel if Israel withdrew to its pre-1967 borders. That is, Meshal is for Two-State — not the Two-State Netanyahu wants or on Netanyahu’s conditions, to be sure, but still a Two-State.

But there is far more important in the Agha-Malley op-ed that needs rectification. In an essay slightly over 1000 words, there are exactly two short references to the United States. Specifically, these are references to President Obama’s presumed role in inducing both Netanyahu and Meshal to moderate their positions and finally accept a two-state solution. The distortion here is not only about Obama’s professed good intentions, which deserve close examination to determine how well they match the reality of US actions (they don’t).[41] The most serious distortion is explicit omission of the historical context and the key role the US has played in prolonging the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This context is totally absent and perpetuates the fiction that the US has been an “honest broker” between Israel and the Palestinians — in perfect harmony with the Times’ editorial position.

===== 4 =====

Covering for junior partners who guard the empire’s outer defenses is very much part of the media’s function, which it does by failing to report on their misdeeds or whitewashing them. The Times does it routinely, just as well as the other major dailies. Israel, as chief enforcer in the Middle East, gets the most lenient treatment. Here is a recent example.

According to Israel’s President Shimon Peres, “There was not in the past nor is there now any reason for Lebanon to be Israel’s enemy or for Israel to be Lebanon’s enemy.” He made this declaration on August 13, 2009, at a ceremony in Kiryat Shmona, within shouting distance from Lebanese villages that had been repeatedly bombarded and destroyed by the Israeli military over the years. Peres went on to explain that the only problem with Lebanon is Hezbollah’s presence, whose “entire ideology is war and destruction … an organization thirsty for blood in a land yearning for peace. The land of the cedars is cursed by Hezbollah.”

Peres’ speech was not covered by the Times or any of the major dailies in the US. Perhaps it seemed innocuous, as Peres only repeated what is taken as common wisdom about Lebanon in respectable circles. Only a few of the wire services, as well as some of the Israeli newspapers, carried the story.[42] In nearby Beirut right to the north, on the other hand, all major newspapers across the political spectrum reported Peres’ speech. From long direct experience, Lebanese of all political tendencies have learned to take Israeli official pronouncements with deadly seriousness, as they know they will take the brunt of Israeli blows. Israel’s threats against its neighbors on trumped-up charges and falsifications of the record have often been the background preceding military actions.

The most blatant falsification in Peres' speech is that, if it were not for Hezbollah's presence, Israel would have no reason to attack Lebanon. The fact is that Israel attacked and terrorized Lebanon for years before Hezbollah even appeared on the scene. Hezbollah was only established after the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon which killed some 20,000 Lebanese and Palestinians and devastated the southern half of the country.[43] Hezbollah emerged in the mid-1980's in direct response to the 1982 invasion.

In the period between 1948 and 1982, dozens of Lebanese villages along the Israeli border were either occupied or raided, and thousands of civilians were killed. Before 1982, the UN Security Council had already issued nine resolutions condemning Israel's acts of aggression against Lebanon. Right across the border from Kiryat Shmona where Peres gave his speech, less than three miles away, the village of Houla is best known locally as the scene of a massacre of some 50 unarmed Lebanese farmers by Israeli forces in 1948. Were it not for the subsequent testimony of a courageous Israeli officer, Dov Yermiya, that ugly episode would have been confined to local lore — something to be dismissed as naked anti-Israel propaganda.[44]

Up until the 1970's Israel justified its actions by the necessity to root out Palestinian "saboteurs" and "terrorists" from the refugee camps north of its border, no matter that scores of Lebanese were "collateral damage" as a result. In the 1970's and later, that necessity now extended to also include elimination of the Lebanese "terrorists" who had harbored Palestinian "terrorists" and who had resorted to armed resistance themselves as a result of Israel's earlier actions.

That this historical context is never mentioned in the US media goes a long way to explain the half-truths and outright frauds that pass for objective commentaries on Lebanon and its relation to Israel. For a random example, consider Ethan Bronner's article in the Times of this past August 12.[45] Israel is said to have serious concerns about Hezbollah's violations of UN resolutions, in turn echoed by officials in Washington, particularly about "the group's continuing military buildup, now reaching 40,000 rockets." Nothing in the article suggests anything about the background for this buildup, reinforcing the perception of a fanatical, gratuitously violent, anti-Israel group. Nothing is said about the huge discrepancy between the 40,000 rockets and Israel's mighty military, the most powerful and the only one with a nuclear option in the Middle East. Nothing is said about Israel's far more frequent and serious violations of UN resolutions — the near-daily warplane incursions into Lebanese airspace, the abductions of Lebanese farmers and shepherds along the border, the uncharted minefields which Israeli troops left behind after their withdrawal in August 2006.[46]

If readers cannot check the facts elsewhere, they are left with the impression that Hezbollah is an evil band of blood-thirsty thugs — precisely the "curse" the Israeli president describes. The truth is simpler: The problem with Hezbollah is the problem of a scrappy and repeatedly bloodied little guy who is not cowed and refuses to submit to the dictates of the bully on the block.

===== 5 =====

Change is coming. We all know that the countries of South America (except for Colombia) have broken loose and that China, India, and other countries in East Asia are rising. These are all welcome changes towards a multipolar and, hopefully, less dangerous world.

Change is also coming to the world of information gathering and dissemination, which is also becoming multipolar and more difficult to censor. Less than two decades ago there was no Internet and no Web. Satellite television stations have proliferated and gained worldwide audiences in the last ten years. Online news outlets have grown exponentially and are able to attract an ever-wider range of publics. There are now multiple ways of getting alternative or unfiltered news that mainstream media will not transmit.

Al-Jazeera is perhaps the most famous satellite channel. It was founded in 1996 and gained international recognition after September 11, 2001, when it was the only channel to cover the war on Afghanistan live from Kabul. After the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Al-Jazeera became a bugaboo for US officials, who routinely blamed it for the failed occupation; President Bush was even reported to have considered bombing the station's headquarters in Qatar, because it was "nothing more than a mouthpiece for anti-American sentiments."[47] May Al-Jazeera never be muzzled.

Better still, for the purpose of writing an article such as this one, are the large archives stored online and the powerful search engines to mine them (not only Google). Online "data mining" — an area of ongoing research in computer science — is increasingly reliable and efficient, and has forever made manual archival research obsolete.

Our ability to break the mainstream media's stranglehold on information is all for the better and foretells the day when we will be able to more effectively challenge the powers that be and the hacks serving them.

Notes

1. Richard A. Oppel Jr, "Early Target of Offensive is a Hospital," New York Times, November 8, 2004.

2. BBC News, "US strikes raze Falluja hospital," November 6, 2004.

3. Dexter Filkins & Robert F. Worth, "Will Meets Resistance in Deadly Logic of War," NY Times, November 14, 2004.

4. Michael Janofsky, "Rights Lawyers See Possibility of a War Crime," NY Times, November 13, 2004. Edward Wong, "Breaking a City in Order to Fix It," NY Times, November 14, 2004. It takes effort to reconstruct some of the events, relying mostly on un-embedded journalists. In English, Dahr Jamail's dispatches were invaluable.

5. Thomas Friedman writes: “We left some shameful legacies [in Iraq] of torture and Abu Ghraib, but we also left a million acts of kindness and a profound example of how much people of different backgrounds can accomplish when they work together,” in “Goodbye Iraq, and Good Luck,” NY Times, July 14, 2009.

6. Notable exceptions in the US: Anthony Shadid and Dahr Jamail, and in the UK: Patrick Cockburn.

7. That shameful record is reviewed in a detailed report by FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting), “MEDIA ADVISORY: U.S. Media Applaud Bombing of Iraqi TV,” March 27, 2003.

8. A far longer list is given in “Tomgram: Icarus (Armed with Vipers) Over Iraq,” December 4, 2004.

9. Timothy Williams, “Idle Iraqi Date Farms Show Decline of Economy,” NY Times, August 15, 2009.

10. Among others, see the essay by Richard Sale, pp 192-195, and the essay by Roger Morris, pp 195-197, in R. Falk, I. Gendzier and R. J. Lifton, Crimes of War: Iraq, Nation Books, 2006. Even before the 1963 coup, spearheaded by the Baath party with CIA collusion, Saddam Hussein had been a twenty-two-year-old hired-gun for the CIA, involved in a 1959 botched-up assassination attempt on Iraq’s prime minister.

11. Political news and foreign affairs are mostly covered in Section 1 of the Times, its daily op-ed pages, and its Week in Review on Sunday. My comments do not apply to other parts of the paper, which are at some distance from politics, less biased and often very informative. Among the latter are its Tuesday Science section and its Thursday Home section. Or they can be entertaining, such as its daily Arts section. All the more reason to be alert when we turn back to Section 1.

12. By my last count of the Times archives on the web (August 31, 2009).

13. Frank Rich’s first reference ever to Hamas is in his column of November 23, 2002 (“Do We Have to Call You Al?”). He criticizes Democratic politicians for not being serious on matters of security, but exempts one, Senator Bob Graham of Florida, from his criticism. He mentions Graham approvingly, because Graham “warns that Hezbollah and Hamas are at least as threatening as Al Qaeda to Americans both at home and abroad” and because Graham “calls for the war on terror to be extended without further delay, whether by diplomacy or force, to Hezbollah training camps in Iran, Syria and the Syrian-controlled areas of Lebanon.” Note the snide (and false) portrayal of Hezbollah and Hamas as groups in al-Qaeda’s fanatical mold. Just as bad is Rich’s war-mongering, in full display here by agreeing with Senator Graham’s position, something at odds with Rich’s later opposition to the Iraq war.

In his column of July 30, 2006 (“The Peculiar Disappearance of the War in Iraq”), Rich mentions Moqtada al-Sadr’s solidarity with Hamas and Hezbollah as evidence that he is the

“most dangerous” person in Iraq: “The most dangerous figure in Iraq, the home-grown radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, is an acolyte of neither Osama bin Laden nor Saddam but an ally of Iran who has sworn solidarity to both Hezbollah and Hamas.”

Rich betrays the same ignorance of the Sadrist movement and its place in Iraqi politics in his column of January 7, 2007 (“The Timely Death of Gerald Ford”), where he writes: “Our principal achievement in Iraq over four years has been to empower a jihadist mini-Saddam in place of the secular original. The radical cleric Moktada al-Sadr, an ally of Hezbollah and Hamas, is a thug responsible for the deaths of untold Iraqis and Americans alike.” Richâ€™s overkill of calumnies (jihadist, mini-Saddam, radical cleric, thug) may be entertaining for the Sunday Times reader, but they also hide the fact that the Sadrist movement is the main political party in the shantytowns of Baghdad and the cities in the southern half of Iraq and that its popularity is mostly derived from the vast network of charities and social services it runs for the poor.

Rich has written 4 other columns where “Hamas” appears. In his columns of March 11, 2008, and June 1, 2008, Rich lambasts Senator John McCain for his smear tactics during the presidential campaign, by trying “to portray Mr. Obama as the man from Hamas” or as “the Hamas candidate.” Rich is right to censure McCain, but wrong in making of Hamas the bugaboo it isn’t.

In two further columns on January 4, 2009, and August 23, 2009, Rich makes a passing reference to Hamas as a terrorist organization and rebukes those who would allow “domestic fund-raising by foreign terrorist organizations like Hamas.”

14. Nicholas D. Kristof, On the Ground. Google provides the following self-description: “Nicholas D. Kristof blogs about human rights and the effects of globalization, focusing on third-world countries.”

15. Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, “The Women’s Crusade,” The NY Times Magazine, August 17, 2009. I quote the opening paragraph of the article in full.

16. In popular culture, the Civil War ended slavery in the US, but the history is far murkier. This is taken up in a recent book: Douglas A. Blackmon, Slavery by Another Name, Doubleday, 2008. Blackmon, a Wall Street Journal editor, retraces phases in the history of black Americans from the Civil War to World War II. While the Civil War ended slavery for the ten years of Reconstruction, slavery was later re-introduced by other means. Black life was effectively criminalized, yielding a huge slave labor force that had a primary role in the industrial revolution; in some respects, it was worse than slavery because this was capitalist slavery: The enslaved workers were not capital, so there was no need to care for them and more were always available. As Blackmon shows, this process of re-enslavement went on until World War II, when “free labor” was needed for war production.

That the US heroically defeated fascism is also part of the official mythology. Much has been written about the relative contributions of the US, the UK, and the Soviet Union to the war

effort against Nazi Germany, most recently by the military historian Max Hastings. See Hastings' book Finest Years, Harper Collins, 2009, where he carefully reviews the evidence showing that Hitler's army was defeated by the Soviet Union, with the US and the UK mostly staying in the background until the time to pick up some of the spoils. See also his article, "Man of War," Financial Times Weekend Supplement, September 5, 2009.

17. Here are other revealing statistics. As of August 31, 2009, the NY Times website posts a total of 4,937 columns by F. Rich, N. Kristof, T. Friedman and R. Cohen. In 524 of these 4,937 columns, there is a reference to a "communist" state, a "totalitarian" state, or to both, typically to censure or deplore some action by a state that is so qualified. In just 45 of these 4,937 columns, the word "imperialist" or "imperialism" occurs, where the intention is invariably either (1) to reject the claim that the US is an imperialist power or (2) to level the charge of imperialism to other states (not allied with the US) — the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, Syria in Lebanon, Iraq in Kuwait. In one column, T. Friedman dismisses the idea that corporate globalization is a new form of imperialism ("The Other Invasion," December 8, 1997).

18. This is the title of one of Friedman's books where he preaches the virtues of globalization.

19. Most recently, Obama was said to be reading and approvingly quoting from Friedman's book, Hot, Flat and Crowded, where Friedman exposes his prescriptions for globalization and the environment. See Jennifer Fermino, "Savoring That Book," New York Post, August 26, 2009. If true, an embarrassing testament to what passes for serious and meaningful commentary in the prevailing political culture.

20. Among others: Edward Herman, "The NYT's Thomas Friedman: The Geraldo Rivera of the NYT," Z Magazine, November 2003. Matt Taibbi, "Flathead: The peculiar genius of Thomas L. Friedman," New York Press, April 26, 2005. Media Advisory, "Tom Friedman's Flexible Deadlines Iraq's 'decisive' six months have lasted two and a half years," FAIR, May 16, 2006.

21. Thomas Friedman, "Ballots Over Bullets," NY Times, June 9, 2009.

22. Friedman is never averse to dropping names. He mentions Professor Albert Hourani of Oxford among his important academic influences, and also Professor Kemal Salibi of the American University of Beirut. "I sat down for coffee on Hamra Street in Beirut last week with my 80-year-old friend and mentor, Kemal Salibi …" ("Winds of Change?" June 13, 2009). Both Salibi and the late Hourani are highly influential professors of Middle Eastern history.

23. This is not the end of the story. On August 2, less than two months after the election, there was a new development that almost undid the majority in the Lebanese parliament, no doubt to Friedman's knowledge and chagrin. One of the most prominent members of the March 14 coalition, Walid Jumblatt, announced he was no longer in it, which in turn led to the defection of about 10 other parliamentarians allied with him; they are now all part of a centrist bloc in parliament. Other members of parliament, nominally independent but considered close to the March 14 coalition at the time of the elections, such as Najib Mikati, have since stressed their own independence from the two major blocs. What was a solid 71-to-57 majority for the March

14 coalition in June now looks more like a precarious 60-to-57 or perhaps 59-to-57 majority, with the remaining parliamentarians declaring their centrist position (wasatiyyah). There are 128 members in the Lebanese parliament. As a result, the formation of a new government has been far more complicated — none yet formed as of this writing (August 31, 2009). The US media has not reported any of the preceding developments and, compared to the many articles before and shortly after the June 7 election, Lebanon has conspicuously disappeared from the news since the exuberant June celebrations of Lebanese democracy.

24. Thomas Friedman, "Green Shoots in Palestine II," NY Times, August 8, 2009.

25. Gen. Keith Dayton's official designation is "U.S. Security Coordinator for the Israel-Palestinian Authority." He works "in close coordination with the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv and the Consulate General in Jerusalem," according to Dayton's presentation to the House Foreign Affairs Middle East and South Asia Sub-Committee, May 23, 2007. Dayton's program is described as having successfully turned the Palestinian Presidential Guard around, into one closely cooperating with the Israeli military — see Ethan Bronner, "US Helps Palestinians Build Force for Security," NY Times, February 26, 2009. That these Palestinian soldiers are being set up just like the sepoy soldiers in the British Raj and the harki soldiers in French Algeria, and may suffer the same ultimate ignominious fate, is totally lost on Bronner.

26. B'tselem. All the statistics on this website are worth pondering, a very graphic and succinct description of the Palestinians' abominable situation. For restrictions on movement, see in particular the statistics under the headings "Separation Barrier" and "Restrictions on movement."

27. At the end of 2007, for example, the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) was reported to have counted "as many as 573 permanent barriers and checkpoints around the West Bank at the end of last year, as well as an additional 69 'flying' checkpoints on an average week." See Joshua Mitnick, "How many West Bank barriers will Israel forgo?" Christian Science Monitor, April 16, 2008. Also, Associated Press, "UN: Number of checkpoints in West Bank up 40% in past year," Haaretz, December 10, 2006.

28. In fact, activists of Machsom-Watch, an anti-occupation Israeli group, have reported that Israel's practice has been to remove a few checkpoints and then reinstate a few others. Some of the details are in Philip Weiss, "Israel relaxes some checkpoints. But some are removed, then reinstated," Mondoweiss, June 28, 2009. Significantly, none of this is reported anywhere in the mainstream media.

29. Roger Cohen, "Her Jewish State," New York Times Magazine, July 8, 2007. The article is about the former Israeli foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, but also shows Cohen's strong pro-Israel and pro-Rabin sympathies. At the end, he recounts his visit to Rabin Square in Tel Aviv after interviewing Livni: "In one corner is a small shrine to Rabin at the spot where he was murdered on Nov. 4, 1995. An inscription says that here Yitzhak Rabin was murdered 'in the struggle for peace.' Another says, 'Peace shall be his legacy.' Alongside these words is a photograph,

seemingly from a faraway era, of Rabin shaking Arafat's hand beneath the sunny gaze of President Bill Clinton. I found myself fighting back tears: how much had been lost since then and how close Israelis and Palestinians had come." In the face of the evidence, Cohen shows an extraordinary faith in its opposite, also trumping his objectivity on other Israel-related matters.

30. Roger Cohen, "The Dominion of the Dead," NY Times, January 7, 2009.

31. Roger Cohen, "Middle East Reality Check," NY Times, March 8, 2009.

32. The Times editorial of January 27, 2006, "In the Mideast, a Giant Step Back," deplored Hamas' winning a parliamentary majority in January 2006 and looked forward to its demise and elimination: "Hamas has a choice between governing and terror. Is the party more interested in making sure that the electricity and water stay on …? Or is it more interested in continuing its campaign to destroy Israel? If Hamas chooses the latter, it's more than likely that it will not be around for long, and rightly so."

The Times editorial of March 4, 2006, "Underwriting Hamas," supported the tightening of the Gaza siege: "The United States would make a resounding diplomatic and moral point by cutting off aid [to a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority]. It would demonstrate in the clearest possible terms that the American people are not prepared to support governments, elected or unelected, that proclaim the annihilation of other nations as their goal and embrace terrorism as an acceptable tactic for achieving it."

The Times editorial of January 20, 2009, "The (Now Silent) Guns of January," portrayed Gaza as an armed fortress not a besieged prison of 1.5 million people: "Hamas used the last cease-fire to restock its arsenals with rockets and other weapons. That must not happen again. That means the United States, Europe, Egypt and other Arab nations must work quickly to place monitors along the Gaza-Egypt border to end the smuggling via hundreds of tunnels."

33. Here is a particularly shrill example: Jeffrey Goldberg, "Michael Oren at Aspen: Iran's Threat to Israel," The Atlantic, August 5, 2009. Goldberg reproduces the Israeli ambassador's unreason as thoughtful commentary: "The Iranians will have sufficient, highly enriched materials to create a bomb that could literally wipe Israel off the map in a matter of seconds, that they could accomplish, in a matter of seconds what they deny Hitler did, and kill 6 million Jews, literally. We have that clock. We are anxious also that Iran, in the course of this engagement, shows a change of policy in the region, in its support of terrorist groups like Hezbollah and Hamas that are also trying to wipe Israel off the map." Note the conflation of Hitler, Nazis and the Holocaust with Iranians, the bomb, Hezbollah and Hamas.

34. This has earned Cohen heaps of calumnies from pro-Israel apologists. One writer attributes Cohen's perfidy to "the worst of journalistic impulses: cynical attention-seeking" — see James Kirchick, "The Contradictions of Roger Cohen," Commentary Magazine, August 10, 2009. Another writer scathingly attacks Cohen as a mediocre journalist — see J.J. Goldberg, "Roger Cohen Digs Himself Deeper," Forward, August 14, 2009.

35. Roger Cohen, “America Unmasked,” NY Times Sunday Book Review, April 24, 2009. This is a review of a new book, The Myth of American Exceptionalism, by British journalist Geoffrey Hodgson.

36. In this respect, the Times is noticeably more consistent and homogeneous in its politics than other major dailies, such as The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, and others. While editorials in the Post and the Journal are often far more hawkish than in the Times, news articles and op-ed articles in the Post and the Journal are also more likely to include facts and opinions disagreeing with their own editorials’ position.

37. The Times has repeatedly issued its warning, the first time I can trace dates back to October 2003: “An insidious argument is gaining ground that the historic moment for the two-state solution has passed. … This is code for the end of Israel and must be strenuously opposed,” New York Times Editorial, October 31, 2003.

38. I have done this elsewhere. See Assaf Kfoury, “‘One-State or Two-State?’ — A Sterile Debate on False Alternatives,” CounterPunch, March 13, 2008, and also Assaf Kfoury, “Overcoming Zionism Without Getting Bogged Down in an Idle Debate,” ZNet, April 2, 2008.

39. It is interesting that some readers went beyond the text of the article, and concluded that Agha and Malley are supporters of One-State, explicitly or by implication. Three out of seven letters, which the Times published on August 13 from readers reacting to the Agha-Malley op-ed, understood it as an argument for One-State.

40. One end of the spectrum in this debate is represented by several top officials of previous administrations, who advocate immediate negotiations on final-status issues and a complete cessation of settlement activities. Among others, these include Jimmy Carter, James A. Baker, Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinski — see, for example, New Hope for Peace: What America Must Do To End The Israel-Palestine Conflict, DVD produced and presented by Landrum Bolling, August 2009, Foundation for Middle East Peace, Washington, D.C. The other end of the spectrum are the 77 US senators (out of 100) who agreed to send a letter to President Obama urging him to “press Arab leaders” to initiate “confidence-building measures” and upfront peace overtures towards Israel. For the latter group, the onus is on Arab governments; discussion of settlement activities should wait until confidence-building measures bear fruit.

41. Many critics have already pointed out the discrepancy. See, for example among many others, Noam Chomsky, “Turning Point?” ZNet, June 8, 2009.

42. Among wire services reporting the event: “Israel no enemy of Lebanon,” United Press International, August 14, 2009. Among English language newspapers: “Peres: We’ve no quarrel with Lebanon,” Jerusalem Post, August 13, 2009.

43. An account of the 1982 invasion of Lebanon is in Noam Chomsky, The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians, Second Updated Edition, South End Press, 1999.

44. A fairly detailed account of this episode made it as a separate entry into Wikipedia, Hula Massacre. It is interesting to follow the history of this Wikipedia article, first entered as a short paragraph in 2003, then repeatedly edited and counter-edited by sometimes very pro-Zionist contributors, but the basic facts remain and cannot be hidden, however sanitized. This little known episode is also discussed in Noam Chomsky, Towards A New Cold War, New Press, 2003, p. 333 and the footnote p. 463. The officer in charge of the massacre, Shmuel Lahis, later became Secretary-General of the Jewish Agency. Chomsky points out that "it is hardly possible to imagine that the history of this man, or the significance of the fact that he was appointed to the highest executive position in the [Jewish Agency], would be discussed in the American press or in the massive literature devoted to the country which is the prime recipient of US military and economic aid" (footnote 39, page 463).

45. Ethan Bronner, "Israel Is Wary Of Calm Days That May End In Turmoil," NY Times, August 12, 2009.

46. On August 12-14, 2006, "Israeli warplanes carpeted the south with cluster bombs, munitions designed to spread indiscriminate damage over a wide area. In three days, it is thought that Lebanese soil was showered with up to four million bomblets. Although each bomblet became armed the moment its housing shell disintegrated, up to 40 percent didn't explode on contact with the ground. Some were buried in the fertile soil, becoming de facto landmines. Others nestled in the scorched shrubbery, making any passage through the scrubland a potentially deadly pursuit" — from Patrick Galey's report, "Three years on, Israeli cluster bombs keep killing and maiming," Daily Star, August 15, 2009. Since August 2006, mines and unexploded cluster bombs killed 50 Lebanese farmers and seriously injured another 350. Overflights by Israeli warplanes, at low altitude and repeatedly breaking the sound barrier, are a frequent occurrence over southern Lebanon. These terrifying maneuvers are hardly reported in the US media. They deliberately terrorize the civilian population and are in direct violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 that brought the war of July-August 2006 to an end. See, for example, "Israel warplanes break sound barrier over Lebanon," Agence France Press, September 3, 2008.

47. NBC News and news services, "UK charges official with leaking Blair memo: Document allegedly says PM dissuaded Bush push for attack on Al-Jazeera," November. 22, 2005.

(This article polishes and expands the notes for a talk given on August 25, 2009, at the World Fellowship Center, Albany, New Hampshire.)

The Present State of Anti-Semitism

By | 2010: Vol.9, Issue 1

I) Ahmadinejad and Holocaust Denial

On September 18th 2009 the Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad gave a speech, in the form of a Friday sermon, on the occasion of Al-Quds, or Jerusalem Day in Iran. Based on a translation of the original radio broadcast (not the official Farsi version issued by the government) here is some of what he said,

> *Before the Second World War….a complicated show started which was called anti-Semitism. Of course, some governments and their peoples have always abhorred the Jews because of indecent behavior by some of the Jews and they were willing to evict the Jews out of Europe. However, some European governments and statesmen and the Zionist network did the main plot of anti-Semitism. They produced hundreds of films. They wrote hundreds of books and circulated rumors. They started a psychological war in order to make them [the Jews] escape to Palestine.*

Elsewhere, referencing the Holocaust, Ahmadinejad goes on to say,

> *The pretext used to establish the Zionist regime was a lie and a corrupt act. It was a lie based on a fabricated claim that cannot be proven. The occupation of Palestinian land had no connectionwith the issue of holocaust. The claim, the pretext, are all fraudulent and corrupt. They are all historical criminals. They [the Zionists and the imperialists] are responsible for plundering and colonizing the world for the past 500 years.*

In addition, the Iranian President says,

> *Four or five years after the Second World War, all of a sudden they [Western officials and historians] claimed that during this war, the Holocaust had occurred. They claimed that a few million Jews had been burned in the crematorium furnaces. They institutionalized two slogans. One was the innocence of the Jews. They used lies and very sophisticated propaganda and psychological ploys and created the illusion that they [the Jews] were innocent. The second goal was that they created the illusion that the Jews needed an independent state and government. They were so persuasive and convincing that many of the world's politicians and intellectuals were deceived and persuaded.*

What is Ahmadinejad telling the people of Iran? He appears to be asserting that: (1) Western imperialism for the last 500 years is the consequence of a conspiracy between Western governments and the Jews. (2) That when it came to European persecution, the Jews themselves were not "innocent." (3) That modern anti-Semitism was and is a conspiratorial plot hatched by the Jews and certain European governments in order to create conditions for the taking over of Palestine. (4) That the Holocaust is a "lie." He goes on to assert that research into the truth or falsehood of the Nazi genocide is being prevented. This, of course, flies in the face of the fact that the Holocaust is one of the most thoroughly researched historical tragedies in modern history. In all of this Ahmadinejad has taken a great leap beyond his previous suggestions that the death count of the concentration camps has been exaggerated. The present speech is also qualitatively different than his statement of October 26, 2005 predicting that Israel in the form of a Zionist state will "past from the pages of History." That statement (despite the inaccurate "wipe Israel off the face of the map" translations of it by the New York Times and others) was directed at a political program and not the Jewish people.

Now, however, there can be little doubt that the President of Iran, apparently continuing a policy of challenging select foundational paradigms of the West, has slipped over the edge into what Juan Cole calls the "weird and creepy world of anti-Semitic conspiracy theory." There is also little doubt this will deepen suspicion and fear of Iran in the West (despite the fact that most Iranians who publically demonstrated on Al-Quds Day clearly did not buy into their leader's pseudo-history). However, an equally important question is how well this harangue will play in the Muslim world?

The answer to that question might be that it will play well. Take, for instance, the recent adamant reaction of several Hamas members of the Palestinian Legislative Council to the possibility of teaching about the Holocaust in UN assisted schools in Gaza. According to Yunis al-Astal to teach this subject to Palestinian children would be "marketing a lie." Al-Astal has bought into Ahmadinejad's interpretation of history at least in reference to the Holocaust. Of course, one can find an equal level of Nakba denial on the Israeli side, but that does not lessen the damaging potential of Holocaust denial on the Muslim side. One can readily understand that there is an enormous amount of pent up anger and hatred toward Israel throughout the Muslim world. But why focus in on the Holocaust and attempt to deny the reality of such a seminal disaster? Here is a possible answer.

II) Understanding the Holocaust As a Western Event

For the West, the most disastrous event of the twentieth century is the Holocaust. Some six million European Jews and countless others as well died in the concentrations camps. But why is it so very seminal? The answer goes beyond the numbers involved. It was the industrial nature of this mass murder, where the technology of modernity that so characterized European civilization was turned into the genocidal killing of subsets of Europeans themselves. To use a present popular phrase, this was an "existential" shock to the European system that could not be rationalized away. Up until this point the Europeans, and their other Western counterparts, had not taken genocide seriously. As long as it did not impact their own local lives, as long as

the victims were non-Western, no official attention was paid to such organized slaughter. Distant geography and myriad rationalizations that ranged from the racial inferiority of the victims to the manifest destiny of the perpetrators, sufficed to bury the issue. This was so even when, as in the colonies, the murders were agents of the West.

However, by the 1930s the Nazis had, in effect, brought the racial stereotyping and prejudice that had made possible colonial slaughter back home to Europe. By inventing the latter day Aryan race and designating its primary area of activity to be Europe itself, the Nazis came to see not just the non-Western world, but Europe too as a land full of inferior peoples to be bullied, enslaved and murdered for the benefit of a superior people with its own overweening locally produced ideological view of things. If, under the new order, the Jews were to be slaughtered, then the Poles and Russians were to be enslaved. And what of Western Europeans such as the French? Well, ultimately, they were to be treated by the Nazis in the same manner as the French treated the native Algerians. Upon the defeat of the "master race" in 1945, the populations of the West were severely shaken and shocked by what they had experienced.

Yet, as horrible as the Holocaust was, it was also mainly a Western affair. One might with some justification argue that the lessons to be learned from the Holocaust were universal, but that does not negate the fact that in terms of worldwide consciousness, the Holocaust was something that concerned Europeans and not to Africans, Middle Easterners or Asians.

This is an important fact. If one goes to the Arab world today and asks people what is the greatest disaster of the 20th century you are not going to get the Holocaust as the most common answer. Rather, from a good number of Arabs the answer will be the Nakba, the massive dispossession of the Palestinian people by Zionist invaders. After all the Arabs were not running the show in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. There is no reason why Europe's tragedy has to be their tragedy. Unfortunately, since 1948 an added complication has crept into this equation. Because of the attitude taken by the leaders of Israel and their Zionist supporters, the two disasters, the Holocaust and the Nakba, have become inextricably intertwined.

III. The Israeli Holocaust Gambit

Despite the fact that modern Zionism predates the Holocaust by half a century, the disaster has been consistently used by the Zionists to justify the need for the Israeli state. The notion that Israeli stands as a defense against a new Holocaust is present in much of the propaganda that makes the West's Zionist lobbies so powerful. Within Israel this belief is literally enshrined at Yad Vashem, Israel's Museum in comme ration to the Jews who perished under the Nazi terror. There one finds the Pillar of Heroism, constructed following the 1967 Israeli-Arab war. According to Batya Brutin, the Director of the Holocaust Education Center at Beit Berl College in Israel, the 1967 victory saved Israel from just such a fate. "The war was perceived to be the antithesis of the Holocaust: Israel was in full control of its security, unlike the Jews of Nazi Europe." As a corollary to this stance, any criticism of Israeli behavior (particularly pointing out that they committed an act of widespread ethnic cleansing in the Nakba) weakens the

defenses against a new genocide of the Jews and is therefore de facto anti-Semitism. Thus, any Western gentiles, such as John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt who authored The Israel Lobby in 2007 or President Jimmy Carter who came out with Palestine: Peace, Not Apartheid in 2006, are excoriated by the Zionist in the most damning terms. Jews who are critical, such as the Israeli historian Ilan Pappe or the American activist Noam Chomsky are dismissed as "self hating Jews." Both groups are charged with unwittingly encouraging a new Holocaust. The attention directed to either group, however, cannot compare with the hateful and hysterical reaction of the Zionists toward the Palestinians who resist Israeli aggression. They are simply reduced to latter day Nazis. This claim was most recently made explicit by Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, in his September 25, 2009 speech before the United Nations General Assembly. In that speech Netanyahu compared Hamas to the Nazis and the firing of Qassam rockets with the London Blitz during World War II."

It is important to note that there are Israelis who have not and do not agree with, at least, the use of the Holocaust to garner support for Israel. The Israeli journalist Gideon Levy called Netanyahu's statements "propaganda." Indeed, one of the founding fathers of the Israeli state and a long-time president of the World Zionist Organization, Nachem Goldman, long ago criticized the use of the Holocaust images to sustain anti-Arab feelings in years following 1948. Goldman called it an act of "sacrilege." According to Israeli journalist Aluf Benn, many ordinary Israelis do not buy the Holocaust connection either. "Here we are taught that Zionist determination and struggle — not guilt over the Holocaust — bought Jews a homeland" he wrote in the New York Times. Leaving aside for the moment what that "determination and struggle" has wrought, it is clear that Israeli education has not stopped Mr Benn's elected leaders from consistently using the Holocaust to justify Israel's existence in the eyes of the outside world.

IV. Consequences of the Holocaust Gambit

No matter how one might feel about this connection between the Holocaust and Israel, its use as a justification for the Zionist state and its policies is a grave strategic mistake. For by underpinning their continued existence on preventing a second Holocaust, Israelis and Zionists invite some of their adversaries to call into doubt the first Holocaust. As we have seen, these opponents now led by Ahmadinejad, assert that the Zionists and their allies have, at best, exaggerated the victimhood of the Jews during World War II, or that they might be just making it all up to justify stealing Palestine. If you can establish doubt about your enemy's core argument you have struck that enemy a serious blow.

In this effort it is unlikely that the Iranian president is simply poking his finger into the proverbial Western eye. The populations to whom Ahmadinejad is really talking do not live in the West. They live in the non-Western world and more specifically the Muslim lands. Most of them have no more knowledge of modern European history than their Western counterparts have of Arab or Muslim history. Except, of course, that educated non-Westerners can readily identify the West with the history of modern imperialism. For many of them that is local historyâ€"the kind that stays in the collective memory for generations. On the other hand, this

is a history of which their Western counterparts are largely ignorant. So while the average citizen of the Muslim lands probably knows little about the reality of the Holocaust, they are likely to know a lot about Israel as a surviving symbol of their immediate ancestors imperialist experience. Under the circumstances, convincing them that the Holocaust is a Western ploy to justify an imperialist crime is not such a difficult task. That is just what Iranian president's anti-Holocaust rhetoric is all about, and millions may well have begun to take him seriously. Before righteous indignation sets in over this deception, keep in mind it is equally easy to convince an Israeli Jew born and raised within a Zionist environment that the Nakba was an act of "Zionist determination and struggle." That is what happens when people are raised within relatively closed information environments.

III. Stereotyping the Jews

It is not difficult to see where all this leads. Anti-Semitism is on the rise and the Zionists, at least publically, appear clueless as to their part in making this so. Of course, there is the standing argument that it is exactly a persistent and active level of anti-Semitism that allows Israel and Zionism to maintain their viability. Perhaps in recent years the Israeli leadership have become worried on this score, for more Jews have been leaving Israel than have been entering. A worldwide upsurge in hostility to the Jews could reverse that trend, and that would be seen as being in Israeli's national interest. However, there does not have to be some sort of conscious conspiracy on the part of Israeli and Zionist leaders to bring this scenario to life. The Zionists live in their own ideologically prescribed world. Their worldview makes all of Israeli policies and activities acts of self-defense in a world that is a priori anti-Semitic. What is being played out here is a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy. 1. The Zionists, always knew the world (not just pre-World War II Europe) was full of anti-Semites. 2. That is why we need Israel. 3. So what we do to expand and defend Eratz Israel is part of a never-ending war against genocidal foes. 4. The counter charge that what the Zionists do is actually a generator of anti-Semitism is dismissed by the Zionists as a form of blaming the victim..

For all intents and purposes the Zionist Holocaust gambit and the posturing of the likes of Amadinejad have now come together as, if you will, two sides of one coin. And, in the mass confusion of name calling and wild accusations that have resulted, it has become increasingly difficult for the audiences to whom both groups are pitching their propaganda to make any distinctions based on the actual positions taken by various constituencies. In other words, the mutual stereotyping is working to reduce the Palestinian-Israeli conflict of all nuances.

In the process one very important group of players, namely anti-Zionist Jews, have been cast into an undeserved oblivion. . And, of course, this is just where the Zionists want them. They have been literally wiped off the perceptual map for an increasing number of Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims. Take, for instance, the recent article by Hesham Tillawi entitled "The Israeli Occupation of America." What Tillawi wants to argue is that American Zionists have a commanding influence over US foreign policy in the Middle East and that this is not a unique historical situation. That it has happened before, particularly in Britain during and after World War I. But in doing so he drifts into generalizations that undermine the historical accuracy of

his argument and gives rise to unsupportable stereotypes. Here are a couple of examples:

(1) “The history of how the Zionists controlled England is not shrouded in mystery. Through Jewish control of the British government the Balfour Declaration was drafted that â€˜gave’ the land of Palestine to the Jews after WWI….” There are two things that are wrong with this sentence. First, Tillawi uses the terms Zionists and Jews interchangeably. This is just historically wrong. From the very beginning of the Zionist movement there was significant Jewish resistance to it. I have outlined this resistence in detail in my book America’s Palestine: Popular and Official Perceptions from Balfour to Israeli Statehood (University Press of Florida, 2001). Indeed, the fact is that prior to the Holocaust, Zionism was a minority movement among Jews, though a vocal, well organized and well connected one. Within the British War Cabinet that debated the Balfour Declaration in 1917 the most strident opposition came from Lord Edwin Montagu, who happened to be the Cabinet’s only Jewish member. Thus using Zionist and Jew to mean the same thing is inaccurate and contributes to dangerous stereotyping.

By the way, Tillawi, Ahamadinejad and an increasing number of other Middle Easterners are not the only ones to do this. This confusion is purposely and persistently foisted upon the public by the Zionists themselves. This helps account for Tillawi’s quote of Ariel Sharon attributing control of America to “the Jewish people.” Ariel Sharon and his ilk could no more accurately speak for all the Jewish people then could the Pope. However, it is truly the Zionist goal to meld these two different things into one. Tillawi and others like him are unwittingly helping the Zionists toward their goal.

(2) The second thing wrong with the sentence is the historically incorrect assertion that the Jews and/or Zionists controlled England and its government. Neither the Jews nor the Zionists controlled either one, nor even Britain’s Middle East foreign policy in 1917. The British leaders had their own strategic reasons for adding Palestine to the post-war British empire. And, those reasons had as much to do with the Suez Canal and the expected post war presence of France in Syria as it did with both Arthur Balfour and David Lloyd George’s romantic attitude toward the Old Testament. Balfour and Lloyd George’s sympathetic feelings for the Zionist cause certainly helped the latter get what they wanted, but to equate that with “control” of the government is a gross exaggeration.

Tillawi then moves on to the United States and attributes the same power to the American Zionists in recent times as he alleges was held by those in England at the beginning of the 20th century. He relates how President John Kennedy, Attorney General Robert Kennedy and Senator J. William Fulbright were all stymied in certain policy objectives by Israel and the power of the American Zionist lobby. At one point he quotes Fulbright as saying “I am aware how impossible it is in this country to carry out a foreign policy not approved by the Jews….” It is absolutely true that both American domestic and foreign policies are subject to lobby influence. And, in some cases, such as foreign policy in relation to Israel and Cuba, and before 1972, Communist China, these lobbies have used their political clout to obtain near veto power over policy formulation in areas of their interest. But there is nothing particularly conspiratorial about this. As I have demonstrated in my recent book Foreign Policy Inc

(University Press of Kentucky, 2009) the nature of U.S. politics has allowed the development of inordinate lobby power starting right from the founding of the nation. The Zionists (in this case both Jewish and Christian) have learned to play this game very well, as have the Cuban Americans. To equate this to the "Israeli [or for that matter the anti-Castro Cuban] occupation of America" is the sort of exaggeration that feeds into ethnic stereotyping. Lastly, as to the Fulbright quote, the Senator seems to have made the same mistake as Tillawi, confusing politically active Zionists with Jews in general, and Tallawi has used this as support for his own misjudgment.

The persistent confusion of Zionism with Judaism and the Jewish people by both Israeli leaders and their Zionist backers, as well as increasing numbers of Middle Easterners standing against Israel and Zionism, badly distorts reality. And, it is an insult to the tens of thousands of Jewish people around the world who have for so long fought against Zionism and horrible damage it has done and continues to do to both the Palestinians and the Jewish religion. Here is a short list of some of the present Jewish organizations in the United States, Europe and Israel which are either blatantly anti-Zionist or at least striving for a humanitarian reform of Israeli policies toward the Palestinians: Jewish Voices for Peace; Jews for Justice for Palestinians (UK); Tikkun (Jews for Justice); Brit Tzedek; The Shalom Center; Neturei Karta (Orthodox Jews against Zionism); Gush Shalom; Jews Against the Occupation; Rabbis for Human Rights; Another Jewish Voice (Netherlands); Union des Progressistes Juifs de Belgique (Belgium); Network for Jews Against Occupation (Italy); Jewish Manifesto (Sweden); Union Juive Francaise pour la paix (France); New Outlook (Denmark). In addition it should be noted that at least one fifth of the volunteers that have gone into the Occupied Territories with the ISM (International Solidarity Movement) have been Jewish. Finally, according to Esther Kaplan's account of "The Jewish Divide on Israel" which appeared in The Nation in June of 2004 the numbers of American Jews affiliated with Jewish groups seeking a just peace for the Palestinians and Israelis alike was "fast approaching AIPAC's 65,000 member and polls show that there is tremendous room for growth" within these organizations. Kaplan goes on to note that a petition in the United States calling for the relocation of all Israeli settlers on the West Bank was able to obtain the signatures of over 10,000 American Jews.

IV. Conclusion

One wonders if Ahmadinejad, Yunis al-Astal and Hesham Tillawi are truly ignorant of the extent of historical and contemporary Jewish resistence to Zionism and Israeli policies. With a little effort all of them could avail themselves of this history. For what it is worth, someone should tell Ahmadinejad that America's Palestine is published in Iran in Farsi. However, it is likely that these leaders and writers, like so many of their Zionist counterparts are encapsulated in a closed information environment within which they seek out only information, companions and advisers who will reinforce their established position. They have created a thought collective for themselves and it serves as umbilical cord sustaining a warped worldview. So strong is that warped worldview that it might make no difference at all to their position and statements even if they were fully aware of the existence of anti-Zionist Jews. They might simply dismiss them as irrelevant.

Thus, in the “weird and creepy world” of anti-Semitism the Israeli leaders who insist that all real Jews are Zionists and that a racist, aggressive and expansionist Israel is the only bulwark against a second Holocaust, have crawled into bed with anti-Semites who deny the Holocaust ever happened but are happy to lump all Jews into the category of enemy. The result is a very messy world of myth, lies and hypocrisy. Such a world cannot help but be increasingly dangerous. One should keep in mind the words of Voltaire, “Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities.” Both sides are peddling absurdities. They relish the absurdities as if they were divine truths and the atrocities as if they were commanded by God. And on it goes even to the present day, the air blissfully filled with lies and the ground littered with corpses.

https://heshamtillaw.wordpress.com/2009/09/13/the-israeli-occupation-of-america-how-israel-gained-control-of-american-foreign-policy-and-public-opinion/

Esther Kaplan at HYPERLINK https://www.thenation.com/doc20040712/kaplan.

These figures give the lie to Zionist claims, produced by bias polls sponsored by the Anti Defamation League that 79% of American Jews supported the Israeli slaughter of Palestinians in the recent Gaza War. Yet those bent on anti-Semitic stereotyping are quite ready to use their enemy’s own propaganda when it suits their purposes. Thus Joachim Martillo has asserted that “the American Jewish community is dominated by evil Jewish Nazis, who support the slaughter of women and children” on the basis of just such suspect “evidence.”

See HYPERLINK https://eaazi.blogspot.com/2009/02/decent-muslims-versus-evil-jews.html

Reflections on the Wall Twenty Years Later

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In October of 1985, as a twenty-five-year-old graduate student, I went to East Germany for a nine-month study visit. I stayed in East Germany until the end of July, 1986. My visit was made possible by an organization called the "Liga für Völkerfreundschaft," which can be roughly translated as "League for International Friendship." This was an organization financed by the East German government, and among other things it awarded scholarships to foreign students who wanted to study in the German Democratic Republic (GDR, the official English-language name for East Germany).

Not many American students wanted to study in East Germany back in the mid-1980s, and so it was relatively easy to get such a scholarship. The League for International Friendship consisted of a large number of so-called "friendship organizations" between the GDR and various other countries. The largest friendship organization was the one between the GDR and the Soviet Union; the friendship organization between the GDR and the United States was rather small. Whether I was able to get a scholarship to study in the GDR because of my own merits or because there was hardly any competition, I do not know for sure. At that time almost all American students who wanted to study in Germany went to study in West Germany, not in East Germany. When I ultimately arrived in Leipzig, the GDR's second biggest city, for my nine-month stay I found that there was precisely one other American student in the city, and that he was to be my roommate for the next nine months. Other than him, I saw virtually no Americans in Leipzig. Since I was living in an international dormitory, however, I regularly saw people from many different countries, especially Russians, North Koreans, Hungarians, Poles, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Cubans, and Nicaraguans. Among the few Western Europeans I saw were some British students who had come to study in Leipzig for several months.

Why did I want to go to the GDR? The answer is relatively simple. I was a graduate student in German Studies, and as a budding Germanist I wanted to get to know the other part of Germany. I had already lived in West Germany in 1980-1981, and I felt—probably prematurely—that I knew that country relatively well. But the Germany behind the Iron Curtain remained a mystery to me. In January of 1981, as part of a visit to West Berlin, I had spent a day wandering around East Berlin, and at Checkpoint Charlie the East German border guards had prevented me from carrying in a book of plays by the seventeenth-century French playwright Pierre Corneille, along with a number of other books and a newspaper or two. That fact impressed me; I had never before encountered a state that seemed so concerned about the printed word, let alone words by a French writer who had been dead for three centuries. The East German border guards and their sensitivity to printed matter piqued my curiosity and made me want to learn more about the other Germany.

Beyond that experience in 1981, I was also fascinated by the existence of two separate

Germanys. I found it quite interesting that there was not just one Germany but two, a capitalist and a socialist one, and that it was possible, at least for an American graduate student, to live in and study both of them. I thought that by living in East Germany I might come to understand more about the nature of socialism, and thus more about a world that, for many decades, had been characterized by a split between socialism and capitalism. I also thought that by learning more about the socialist system I might come to understand more about the nature of capitalism. And I hoped that I would come to know Germany better by studying and experiencing both of its postwar incarnations than I would know it if I limited my study and my experiences to just one part of the divided country. And so, with no particular expectations or specialized knowledge about East Germany or socialism, I simply applied for a scholarship from the GDR-USA friendship organization and in due course learned that my application had been successful.

I chose the city of Leipzig for two main reasons. The first is that I did not want to live in East Berlin, because I had an idea that East Berlin, because of its proximity to West Berlin, was somehow not authentically East German. I wanted to experience the real East Germany, no matter how bad it might be. The second, more scholarly reason, was that there was (and is) an important library in Leipzig, the Deutsche Bücherei, where I hoped to find a great deal of literature from the 1920s and 1930s; this was the period of German cultural history that I was then studying.

I entered East Germany by taking an S-Bahn trip from West Berlin to East Berlin's Friedrichsstrasse station, where, once I had passed through immigration and customs, I was met by a representative of the League for International Friendship and shown around the East German capital for a day. I remember being struck by two things about my tour guide: that she immediately addressed me with the familiar "du" rather than the formal "Sie" (German has two modes of address, one informal and one formal, just as English used to have centuries ago in the distinction between "you" [formal] and "thou" [informal]), as if I were a socialist comrade; and that, when I asked her whether she more or less supported the GDR's political system, she replied that she supported it 100%. I wasn't sure that I had ever met someone willing to declare 100% support for any political system. I had grown up and lived among people who tended to believe that most political systems were flawed, and who therefore only supported any particular system grudgingly, as the least unpalatable among a number of not-so-wonderful alternatives.

I arrived in Leipzig by train from East Berlin the following day and was met at the train station by my new American roommate, who was a graduate student at Cornell University. I remember that the city more or less met my stereotypical expectations that it would be drab and gray. East German cars—Trabants and Wartburgs—really were old-fashioned and rickety, the buildings were dirty and in bad shape, and there really were various propaganda signs around the city proclaiming undying support for the Socialist Unity Party (the East German ruling party) and the Soviet Union. What was noticeably missing from the cityscape, at least to my American eyes, was advertising. No big billboards proclaiming the virtues of jeans or underpants, but lots of signs extolling socialism and the Soviet Union. The room that was

allotted to my roommate and me—I was twenty-five, he was ten years older—was exceedingly small, and for most of the next year he and I slept in the bunk beds in that room. I actually had less room there than I had had in a room I shared with my two brothers when I was five years old. Not far from our dormitory there was a drab supermarket that sold not particularly interesting or colorful—but quite cheap—food, and where there were never bananas and rarely oranges. (There were mostly apples, as I recall.) The dorm was about a twenty-minute walk away from the university, and it was surrounded by other dorms full of mostly East German students; Leipzig's Karl-Marx-Universität was one of the GDR's biggest and most important universities.

In my first few days in Leipzig I did not think I would be able to stand it there for more than about a week. I was bothered by the small room I had to live in, by the intense air pollution throughout the city (which actually got even worse in the winter, once the heating season really got going, since almost all of the city's heat came from burning dirty soft coal strip-mined not far from Leipzig itself), and by a general sense, at the university and elsewhere, that open discussion was not taking place. I did not particularly like the food in the university's cafeteria (although it slowly grew on me over the course of the year), and when I started taking seminars at the university, I found the East German students, for the most part, to be closed-mouthed and uninformed. I still remember being struck by the fact that once, when a professor asked a fairly easy question in class about Marxist theory, I was the only student in the class who ventured to answer. Since I was and am an avid reader of newspapers, particularly when I am in Germany, my roommate and I subscribed to the main East German daily, Neues Deutschland, which, as it proclaimed on its masthead, was the "Central Organ of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany." (I occasionally day-dreamed about whether any American newspaper would ever have the guts to proclaim itself to be the "Central Organ of the Republican Party.") Every day I was struck anew by the sameness and uniformity of this newspaper, and by the lack of any sense of lively ideological debate in its pages. Whenever the East German leader, Erich Honecker, was first referred to in any article in this newspaper, he was always referred to with his full title, i.e. "General Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany and Chairman of the Council of State," etc., etc., as if regular readers of the newspaper did not know precisely who Erich Honecker was. This, along with many other things, struck me as exceedingly strange and stilted. It was the middle of the 1980s, and I was a young American graduate student used to intense debates between American liberals and conservatives, as well as to relatively combative op-ed pages, not to mention demonstrations against American policies and against the President of the United States himself, Ronald Reagan; in West Germany I had become used to lively debate among West German conservatives, Social Democrats, Greens, and various far-left groups, and also to demonstrations and protests. No such lively debates seemed to be happening anywhere at the university in Leipzig, and I found this deeply disappointing. And any demonstrations that happened in Leipzig or elsewhere in the GDR seemed inevitably to be organized not against the ruling party but by and for it. This struck me as bizarre: a kind of Alice-in-Wonderland world. It was as if the GDR were characterized by pretend demonstrations and pretend politics.

None of this changed in my nine months in Leipzig. The city remained polluted (although I

gradually learned to recognize some of the beauty of the buildings beneath the pollution), the newspaper remained boring, stilted, and predictable, most of the classes at the university were relatively uninteresting, and any public demonstrations were inevitably pro-, not anti-government. But what began to happen, and what made it possible for me to stay in Leipzig for an entire academic year and be relatively happy, was a gradual shift of emphasis from the public to the private. I got to know some very interesting people, mostly fellow students from Hungary, Slovakia, and the Soviet Union, and on a private level, with them, I became involved in fascinating political and historical discussions. My next-door neighbor was a Russian who happened to be the head of the Leipzig Komsomol, the Soviet Communist youth group, and he was a true believer in communism. But it was possible to talk openly with him, and I remember having a good many lively discussions about communism versus capitalism. For instance, he thought that Western Europe's regular destruction of mountains of butter and lakes of milk (in order to shore up commodity prices) was a sign of capitalism's failure; I (no doubt partly for the sake of argument) contended that the excessive production of commodities in the west was a sign of remarkable success, not failure, and I pointed out to him the obvious fact that there was more to buy in stores in the west than in stores in the east. (He, of course, could easily have pointed out that many people in the west could not afford to buy those commodities.) I don't think that I have ever, in my adult life, been more pro-capitalist and anti-communist than I was in my nine months in East Germany; during the last half of my stay there I even took to traveling to the American embassy in Berlin, going to the relatively well-stocked library there, and bringing back books by American right-wingers like Jeane Kirkpatrick, Ronald Reagan's ambassador to the United Nations (famous for her verbal attacks on communism) and copies of the right-wing magazine National Review. All of this seemed somehow a good antidote to my daily perusal of Neues Deutschland, and my voluntary attendance at university courses like "Scientific Communism" (wissenschaftlicher Kommunismus). I was probably the only student at the university who went to such courses voluntarily.

Many of the other Eastern Europeans whom I befriended turned out in private to be profoundly anti-Communist. This was particularly true of the Hungarians, four of whom became my good buddies. They were all interested in Germany and German culture and highly critical of the Soviet Union, at least in private. Two of them were of mixed German-Hungarian ethnic background. From these Hungarians I learned a great deal about the tensions that existed just below the surface in the East Bloc. One of the Hungarians was so anti-Communist that one day, as a joke, he turned up at the door of my dorm room in full, authentic SS regalia. This was a brave, albeit problematic, thing to do, because if he had been caught he could easily have been imprisoned or sent back to Hungary; all Nazi emblems were strictly illegal in East Germany, and the state made much of its antifascist raison d'être. It turned out that the SS uniform belonged to the grandfather of my Hungarian friend's East German girlfriend, and that it fit him perfectly. This little incident also clued me in to the hidden existence of East Germans and eastern Europeans with anti-Communist and even fascist sentiments; and it taught me that not all Eastern European resistance to Communism was necessarily based on liberal principles. I sometimes wondered just how tongue-in-cheek my Hungarian friend's donning of the SS uniform had been.

I also, slowly, began to make friends with some East Germans. The East Germans seemed much more reluctant to befriend an American graduate student than the other eastern Europeans, and I figured that this was probably because they were afraid for their careers as journalists, academics, or party officials. But one of the East German students in my literature seminar turned out to be at least as dissatisfied with the East German system as any of the Hungarians, and he and I wound up getting together regularly for coffee and cake at Leipzig's café Corso, the best café in town, with an almost Viennese atmosphere, where, beneath a huge portrait of Erich Honecker, the East German leader (my East German friend assured me that this was a tongue-in-cheek piece of interior decoration), we talked about art and politics. I also, quite by chance, met two young East German theology students, both of them future Lutheran ministers, and neither one of whom seemed to be afraid of getting to know a young American. And one day, out of the blue, two Leipzig high school students showed up at the door of our dorm room; they had heard the rumor that two Americans students were living in Leipzig, and they wanted to meet us. I ultimately became a good friend of one of these high school students, who introduced me to the non-academic, non-theological world of ordinary Leipzig citizens. I also befriended a young woman who worked at the Deutsche Bücherei, whose boyfriend was one of the Vietnamese students who lived in our dormitory. (His father had fought against the Americans in the Vietnam War, but we got along fine.) She was able to bring me books from the library, which was useful, because it meant that I did not always have to read my books there.

All of these relationships turned out to be quite important and close. I saw these people frequently, and they provided a social and intellectual network that made it possible for me to live a happy life in spite of the bad newspaper, the disappointing university, the polluted city, the pretend demonstrations, and the drab supermarkets. Like most people in East Germany, I did not have a telephone, and so I simply met people in the dormitory or in the university cafeteria or at their homes. Very little was planned; almost everything was spontaneous. It was not uncommon to have someone simply show up at my door, and I too got used to going over to other people's rooms and houses without an invitation. If someone had come to my door while I was gone, I would find a note on the door, often suggesting a get-together at a later time. Several nights a week I would end the day with my Hungarian friends at a local pub drinking beer and talking about politics. On these occasions I even began to smoke cigars like a stereotypical American capitalist or like Bertolt Brecht. The most important things I learned that year came from my friends and their families and from other private, often random meetings with individuals. As I became more comfortable with my surroundings, these meetings happened more frequently. By the final months of my stay in Leipzig I had become friends with one of the city's most important poets and been introduced into the city's rather lively literary scene. I became an avid reader of particular writers and poets and, like many East Germans, I grew adept at reading between the lines of published works for hidden meanings. I also took to going to the theater, to the opera, and to concerts relatively often. For a student, all of this was relatively cheap. My stipend was only three hundred marks a month (precisely one hundred marks more than the stipend of an ordinary East German student, and at the official exchange rate the equivalent of about $150), but my dorm room only cost ten marks (five dollars) a month, and food was cheap, particularly in the university cafeteria, so I

could afford to go to cultural events. Once or twice I also discreetly exchanged West German marks on the black market, which gave me some additional spending money; and once I even worked as a translator for one of the doctors who worked at the nearby medical institute.

By the end of my stay in Leipzig I even began to have more contact with the North Koreans who also lived in my dormitory. There were all men—no women—and I imagine that they all came from the upper echelons of North Korean society. They generally kept to themselves. In every dormitory room occupied by North Koreans there was always a shrine to Kim Il Sung, the so-called "Great Leader." Once, on a group trip to the Buchenwald Concentration camp, I got into an argument with some of the North Koreans about the Korean War. They claimed that the United States had started the war, while I insisted that it was North Korea that had started it. By the time I left Leipzig, however, I was transcribing the words to American pop songs for one of the North Koreans. With my Vietnamese acquaintance I talked about the Vietnam War (although in this case I did not defend the United States), and with a young man from Cambodia I discussed the recent Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and its pluses and minuses (mostly pluses, in spite of official U.S. protests, since the invasion put a stop to the murderous regime of Pol Pot).

The great world of politics and international relations did not disappear from view in the face of my private friendships and mutual enthusiasms for particular books, authors, or films. During my nine months in East Germany the United States bombed Libya, killing an adoptive daughter of Muammar al-Gaddafi, and I remember that one of the leaders of the Free German Youth (the GDR's socialist youth organization) at the university came up to me the day afterwards and demanded to know why I and my country had done such a thing. I told him, quite truthfully, that the bombing had not been my decision, and that I had an alibi—my presence in Leipzig, and Ronald Reagan's ignorance thereof—for the entire event. I realized that, like it or not, in Leipzig I was a representative of the United States of America, even though my stay was being funded by the East German government, and even though I was not a fan of Ronald Reagan. Shortly before the bombing of Libya, terrorists bombed a West Berlin club called La Belle where American soldiers liked to go; three people died, including two American servicemen. In January of 1986, the US space shuttle Challenger exploded on takeoff, killing the seven people on board, and I remember that even some of the people whom I viewed as hard-line Communists expressed deep sympathy to me, almost as if the disaster had happened to me personally; this moved me greatly. Perhaps most important of all, in Chernobyl, Ukraine, about hundreds of miles away from Leipzig, a nuclear reactor exploded toward the end of April, 1986, spewing radioactivity into the air and throwing western Europe into a panic for weeks. I found out about this event several days after it happened; the news was buried on page four of Neues Deutschland (the page for foreign news stories) one day in late April. On May 1, several days after the explosion of the reactor in Chernobyl, the GDR celebrated International Workers Day with the usual canned parades and speeches. It was a beautiful spring day; as far as I can remember, no one publicly talked about Chernobyl. While West Germans were hunkering inside trying to stay away from the radioactivity, East Germans were marching in more pro-government demonstrations. In the subsequent weeks, lots of ordinarily unavailable fruit and vegetables turned up in Leipzig supermarkets. I quickly

realized that this was because it was no longer possible to sell these items in the west, because of fears of radiation. (In fact, as I learned much later, because of the winds in late April and early May, which were moving from the Ukraine up to Scandinavia and then back down to western Europe, West Germany was actually somewhat more affected than East Germany by the radiation from Chernobyl, at least in the short term.) My librarian friend, who by this time was pregnant with her first child, enjoyed the fresh produce; I generally stuck to canned food since I didn't trust the sudden superabundance of vegetables.

Every Monday evening, in Leipzig's Nikolaikirche, a beautiful baroque church in the middle of town, there was a peace prayer. This was the most public oppositional activity that took place on a regular basis in town, because the peace prayer was directed not just against American but also against Soviet nuclear weapons. It was out of these peace prayers, which began in the early 1980s, that the oppositional movement in Leipzig in 1989 emerged. When I went (I believe it was in the late fall of 1985, a month or two after my arrival in Leipzig), there were not more than fifteen people in the church, and probably one or two of those people worked for the Stasi, the East German state security service. Four years later, in the fall of 1989, this number went from hundreds to thousands, and on October 9, 1989, tends of thousands of people marched through the streets of Leipzig demanding nuclear disarmament and above all free elections and a change of government. But throughout most of the 1980s it was a very small minority of people who actually dared to voice public dissatisfaction with the status quo in East Germany.

When I left East Germany in July of 1986 I went from East Berlin's Friedrichsstrasse train station to West Berlin, reversing my journey of nine months earlier. My librarian friend, who accompanied me to the train station, was about six months pregnant, and I remember wondering if I would ever get to see her again or meet her soon-to-be-born child. Incredibly, I was very sad to leave the GDR. As unpleasant as I had found the political system and most of public life in the country, I had formed deep and lasting friendships, and I did not know when or whether I would ever be able to see my friends again. Neither I nor anyone else imagined that in less than four years the Wall would come crashing down and my eastern European friends would be able to travel freely to the west. The Cold War system that had divided Europe for four decades seemed as stable as ever in the summer of 1986. What I have learned from this experience is that change is something people rarely expect, in spite of a history that tells us that change is virtually inevitable.

On the night that the Wall fell in Berlin I was attending an event at Columbia University's School of International Affairs, where, as I recall, an American security expert was suggesting that the apparent revolution in eastern Europe generally, and in East Germany in particular, was simply a Trojan horse ploy on the part of Mikhail Gorbachev to catch the west off guard. I went home that night wondering how it was possible to be so blinkered, and when I picked up the New York Times the next day I learned that people were dancing on the streets of Berlin and standing on the Wall. Of course I wanted to go to Berlin as soon as possible, but I had to wait until the end of the semester before I had time. In the end I arrived in Berlin on New Year's Eve; I celebrated the new year, 1990, on the roof of a dilapidated apartment building in

Leipzig with some of my theologian friends, and on that same day, which happened to be a Monday, January 1, I joined the year's first Monday demonstration. Now it was not just a demonstration for peace, disarmament, free elections, and a better government; it was above all a demonstration for German reunification. And reunification is in fact what happened less than a year later. Within a period of about fourteen months the existence of the East German state had gone from seeming inevitable to being unimaginable, and German unification had gone from being unimaginable to seeming inevitable. Human beings are remarkably flexible creatures, but also remarkably forgetful. Perhaps that forgetfulness is a way of adapting to new circumstances.

The fall of the Wall, the collapse of East Germany, and the subsequent collapse of the entire eastern bloc, have radically changed the world over the last two decades, and they have certainly changed my own life. I can visit friends in the former east whenever I want, and anyone in the east can express political opinions in almost any way. When I went to live and study in East Germany, I hoped to learn about a real, existing social system; I have now become a witness to the end of an era, and one of relatively few Americans who actually experienced life in a now long-gone world. Because of the events of 1989, the world we live in today is very different from the world as it existed during the first three decades of my life. For this reason the fall of the Wall, with everything that it symbolizes, seems to me the most significant political event of my life. I do not believe that the fall of the Wall was inevitable; I believe that the Wall could easily have existed for many more decades, particularly given a different kind of leadership in the Soviet Union, or even in East Germany. History always acquires an aura of inevitability after the fact, but before it happens no one can really anticipate it. The strangest fact about German reunification is that it is not what the original protesters in Leipzig or the participants in the Monday-evening prayer meetings at Leipzig's Nikolaikirche wanted, and it is also not what most people in West Germany—who were relatively satisfied with the status quo ante—wanted. But it is what the great masses of East German people wanted, the ones who went out onto the streets to demonstrate once it became clear that demonstrating was no longer dangerous. And in the end they got what they wanted, for better and for worse, mostly for better. It is remarkable that this massive change happened largely without bloodshed, as a result of peaceful demonstrations. Reunification has not been an easy process, politically or economically, but Germany today strikes me as a better, happier, and more normal country than it was two decades ago. True, dreams of democratic socialism have died, and true, there is still massive unemployment, not to mention right-wing radicalism and xenophobia, in the former east. And true, substantial numbers of East Germans seem to idealize the now long-gone system, even if they can hardly remember it themselves. One disgruntled East German recently wrote a letter to a political scientist complaining that "When people used to show us movies in school or in the army showing people waiting in front of the unemployment office or old people searching through trash, we would scream with laughter. It's all propaganda, we thought. Today we know better: it was the truth, and now we're a part of it." Nevertheless most East Germans are materially better off now than they were two decades ago; and they are all free to express their opinions, including opposition to the current system. Almost everyone has a telephone and even a cell phone, and people don't show up at other people's doors unannounced. Money is more important and time is scarce. But Germany

is one of the great post-World War Two success stories: a prosperous, tolerant democracy with a strong social welfare system, a largely healthy population, and a lively cultural life. The success of German democracy is something that Americans can be genuinely proud of, because our country has been one of the central promoters—indeed, the central promoter—of it.

But it seems to me that we have only just begun to realize how radically the fall of the Wall has changed, and will continue to change all of our lives. At a recent reading in Berlin the prominent East German writer Christoph Hein, asked about what he thought of the Wende, i.e. the change that brought about German reunification, responded, “We’re only at the beginning of the changes.” I think Hein is right. Essentially, the fall of the Wall is what made possible the rapid globalization of the past two decades, and it is also what made possible the rise of Islamist terrorism and the so-called war against it. None of these things would have been possible in the Cold War system, at least not in the same way. The Cold War, as awful as it was, was predictable; one knew more or less where one stood, and more or less what the future would bring: more of the same. For this reason a friend of mine, a man who escaped Czechoslovakia in 1986 and ultimately settled in the United States, recently told me that he missed the Cold War. The years since the end of Cold War have been far less predictable than the years before. We are still groping to understand the nature of the world left behind by the collapse of the Cold War system and its most potent symbol, the Berlin Wall; and the world continues to change even after we thought we have begun to understand it. East Germans had many illusions about the west prior to 1989, of course: they did not understand the reality of unemployment, for instance, because in their system there was no such thing as unemployment. But West Germans, and westerners in general, had illusions too: that the fall of the Wall meant a change in the east, but not in the west, for instance. Instead what we are coming to realize is that, with the fall of the Wall, a profound process of global change started, change that has affected the former West Germany, western Europe, and the United States as well as the former East bloc countries. Twenty years on it is time for us to face up to this fact and to address these changes. We will not be able to prevent change, and that would not be desirable anyway, but with some luck, and with hard work, we may be able to channel it into a more productive path.

Laboratory of the Extreme: Spatial Warfare and the New Geography of Israel's Occupation

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Books under review:

- Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (New York: Verso, 2007)
- Saree Makdisi, *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008)
- Neve Gordon, *Israel's Occupation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008)

The use of spatial arrangements as strategies to control and even eradicate rebellious populations in warfare has a long history. Such practices can be traced as far back as the ancient Assyrian strategy of mass population deportation, which, according to archaeologist and art historian Zainab Bahrani, "insured that there was little opposition to Assyrian imperial territorial expansion, since the idea of a local population was systematically eradicated, not through the mass killing of the civilian population, but through these reorganizations of land and populace." Subsequent conquerors and colonizers throughout history have used various "reorganizations of land and populace" to quell rebellion and sometimes settle new populations. Pericles displaced the population of the island of Aegina to prepare room for Attic settlers, Rome carried out massive deportations of local populations, and the European colonization of North America came about through the violent displacement and reorganization of native populations into reservations.

In the more recent period, modern counterinsurgency warfare has often employed spatial strategies of population control to prevent insurgents from, in Mao's felicitous phrase, "swimming like fish in the sea of the population." Mass population resettlement schemes were used in such cases as the British-built "New Villages" in Malaya and mass internment camps in Kenya, the French "Douars" in the Algerian War and American "Strategic Hamlets" in Vietnam. However, due to the problem that population resettlement schemes, according to counterinsurgency theorist David Galula, are "bound to antagonize the population", contemporary counterinsurgency theory as reflected in the new U.S. Army / Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual advocates the less extreme spatial strategy of "clear, hold and build" in order to create pacified zones without population resettlement. The American erection of massive blast walls and sand berms to quarantine Iraqis within sealed enclaves as part of the 2007 "surge" strategy in Iraq reflects this latter approach, though political accommodation with the population called for by counterinsurgency theory remains a furtive prospect.

Bearing important similarities to previous spatial warfare strategies, over the past decade Israel has imposed a dramatic new spatial arrangement over the Palestinian territory and population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that it conquered in 1967. Since 2003, Israel has erected a nearly 680 km barrier of high-tech fences and massive concrete walls deep within the West Bank that now encloses Palestinian population centers within a fragmented archipelago of enclaves, separated from each other and from the nearly 150 illegal Israeli settlements and 500,000 settlers Israel has implanted on Palestinian land. This matrix-like spatial arrangement of fragmented Palestinian enclaves is bisected by a network of Israeli-only highways and checkpoints maintained under a blanket of aerial surveillance and deadly unmanned drones. In Gaza, some 1.5 million Palestinians are now living within an enclosed cage, while Israel controls access to the essentials of life through high-tech border terminals and unleashes violent aerial assaults when resistance is offered. Gaza is the most extreme version of the matrix-like spatial "reorganizations of land and populace" that characterizes the new geography of Israel's occupation.

Israeli officials and supporters frequently defend this new matrix-like spatial arrangement of fragmented and policed Palestinian enclaves as simply a temporary and defensive measure necessary to protect its citizens from Palestinian terrorism, especially the surge of bloody suicide bombings inside Israel that followed the renewed violence in 2000 known as the "Al-Aqsa Intifada."

By contrast, however, the three important books under review in this essay contend that Israel's new reorganization of Palestinian "land and populace" is neither temporary nor defensive in nature. Drawing upon significant historical research and novel theoretical approaches that reflect a new "spatial turn" in analysis of Israel's occupation, this work argues that Israel's new spatial arrangement of Palestinian "land and populace" actually represents the latest stage in Israel's attempt to colonize Palestinian land for Jewish settlement and suppress Palestinian resistance to its occupation. But the most serious claim leveled in these books, however, is that Israel's fragmentation of Palestinian space has likely become permanent by making territorial partition and the possibility of a two-state solution to the conflict a geographical impossibility. Hence, while Israel's new spatial regime may constitute a new chapter in the history of spatial strategies of warfare, it may also contain within it a fatal contradiction that may lead to a fundamentally new era of conflict between the two peoples.

The Israeli architect and theorist Eyal Weizman's Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation is the most innovative and comprehensive examination of Israel's construction of a matrix-like spatial arrangement of fragmented and policed Palestinian enclaves. With an architect's eye, Weizman's superbly illuminates the architectural design of Israel's occupation across three dimensions of space. Weizman illustrates in separate chapters how Israel's settlement planning schemes and architecture, its road networks and separation walls and its checkpoints have become fused together to both extend Israeli settlement and create a virtual social prison of spatial incarceration for Palestinians, resulting in what he terms a "laboratory of the extreme"(9). The effect of this laboratory has been that "Palestinian life, property and political rights are constantly violated not only by the frequent actions of the Israeli military,

but by a process in which their environment is unpredictably and continuously refashioned, tightening around them like a noose" (5).

One of Hollow Land's most important achievements is to show how Israel's civilian settlement project in the occupied territories has simultaneously served as mechanism of military control over the Palestinian population. Weizman traces the militarization of Israel's settlement project to the fierce debate between Israeli generals after the 1967 War over the most effective way to defend Israel's new territorial possessions against its Arab enemies. The Israeli military Chief of Staff Haim Bar Lev proposed a massive linear barrier of forts and trenches to be built along the Israeli side of Suez Canal while then-General Ariel Sharon opposed it in favor of a matrix-like system of "defense in depth" composed of a cluster of hilltop fortifications linked across the Sinai by roads rather than a single line.

Although Bar Lev's linear strategy was adopted in the Sinai, Sharon's strategic vision ultimately prevailed in the rest of the occupied territories when the Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin placed Sharon as minister in charge of expanding Jewish settlements in 1977. Sharon translated his military doctrine of "defense in depth" into a civilian settlement strategy across the heartland of Palestinian territory throughout the 1980's. Architects and urban planners worked with settlers and soldiers to construct every aspect of civilian settlement with an eye towards strategic domination of Palestinians. The strategy was to target Palestinian territorial contiguity by isolating Palestinian population centers within an overlapping network of Israeli settlements that simultaneously served as integral elements of Israel's military control and surveillance over the Palestinian population. As Weizman points out, "(f)or Sharon the architect/general, politics was war as much as war was political and both were exercises in space making" (84).

Israel's settlement expansion has since hardened into a vast mechanism of population control through Israel's erection of its massive high-tech barrier and permanent checkpoints around and between Palestinian enclaves following the Palestinian uprising in 2000. Although Israel's widely heralded withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005 led to partial withdrawals of Israeli soldiers and settlers from some Palestinian areas, Weizman contends that Israel has replaced its direct system of military domination with a new one that "seeks to control the Palestinians from beyond the envelopes of their wall-off spaces, by selectively opening and shutting the different enclosures, and by relying on the strike capacity of the Air Force over Palestinians areas" (11).

Weizman concludes that Israel's colossal transformation of the built environment has created an Escher-like geometry of vertically separate worldsâ€"Palestinian and Israeliâ€"in the occupied territories that extends Israeli colonial settlement while containing Palestinian life within a territorial patchwork of about 200 sealed islands dominated by Israel. Although some Israeli leaders have "generously" offered that Palestinians can build bridges and tunnels between these enclaves to make a "state," Weizman concludes that there is simply no way now to "separate the inseparable" created through Israel's spatial colonization no matter how sophisticated the architectural design. The ongoing "peace process" premised on spatial

partition into two states has become an empty illusion and must now give way to what Weizman terms a “political solution” hinting at, but never completely spelling out, some form of a one-state solution based on equality between the two peoples.

The question of how this regime impacts Palestinian lives is largely left out of the picture in Hollow Land. It is precisely here that Saree Makdisi, a Palestinian-American professor of literature at UCLA, makes an important contribution to the new “spatial turn” in his book Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation. Whereas Weizman’s account emphasizes the view from the panoptical heights of Israel’s occupation, Makdisi provides a view from the cracked rear-view mirror of the fragmented zones of life inhabited by Palestinians. Although Palestine Inside Out is aimed at a more general audience and lacks the theoretical innovations of Weizman’s book, it utilizes thick description based on interviews, anecdotes, and various human rights reports to illustrate how Israel’s matrix of spatial control invades all aspects of Palestinian life creating a social prison of spatial incarceration. The result is one of the most comprehensive guides to the Palestinian experience of this passage to a new and possibly irreversible spatial system of domination in Israel’s occupation.

Palestine Inside Out is organized around four spatial themesâ€”Outsides, Insides, Inside Out and Outside Inâ€”which allow Makdisi to construct a composite and graphic evocation of the way in which Israel’s matrix-like spatial regime has resulted in a virtual state of siege across various spatial dimensions of Palestinian life. Like Weizman, Makdisi documents how Israel’s barrier, road networks, and checkpoints have created new outsides that confine Palestinians to ghetto-like enclaves and severely disrupt economic activity. Yet Makdisi’s most important contribution to the new “spatial turn” is his emphasis on how Israel’s spatial regime has penetrated the most intimate inside spaces of Palestinian lives. Israel has imposed an entire classification and permit regime upon Palestinians that affects their ability to conduct even the most mundane daily activities and severely restricts their rights to residency, travel, housing and security of person.

As a result, Makdisi emphasizes that another goal of this new spatial regime, in addition to those of colonization and population control highlighted by Weizman, is population transfer. Israel’s new spatial regime has had both the direct and indirect effect of inducing a growing number of Palestinians to leave or emigrate from the occupied territories over the past decade, turning these spaces inside out, the key concept in the title of his book. Since the beginning of the second Intifada in 2000, some 100,000 Palestinians, or 3.3 percent of the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza, have already left the territory. Moreover, Israel has created new laws that place onerous conditions upon Palestinians who live in certain areas. In 2006, for example, Israel stripped 1,363 Jerusalem Palestinians of the right to live in the city on the grounds that they could not prove to Israel’s satisfaction that Jerusalem has continuously been their “center of life.” As Makdisi points out, “But what had been possible in 1948â€”large-scale forcible expulsionâ€”has seemed more difficult to carry out since 1967; hence the shift in Israeli strategy from outright expulsion to the ‘voluntary transfer’ of the Palestinian population” (10).

Like Weizman, Makdisi also concludes that Israel's colonization of Palestinian space has advanced to such a stage as to make territorial partition and thus, a contiguous Palestinian state with meaningful sovereignty, a "geophysical impossibility" (280). But unlike Weizman, Makdisi explicitly endorses what is known as a "one-state solution" in which Israelis and Palestinians would have full and equal rights in the historic land of Palestine and Israel. One of the virtues of such an outcome, Makdisi contends, is that it may, ironically, be the most easy to implement because it already exists. As Makdisi points out, "The one-state solution is not, however, something that has to be worked out in advance, with a series of 'interim agreement' negotiated by armies of committees and subcommittees over a period of decades. It is the present reality" (294).

Both Weizman and Makdisi, however, tend to portray Israel's new spatial arrangement of fragmented and policed Palestinian enclaves as the product of an evolutionary extension of Israel's efforts to colonize Palestinian land. This assumption is challenged by the Israeli political scientist Neve Gordon in his perspicacious and theoretically innovative book Israel's Occupation. Gordon argues that the actual structure and aims of Israel's occupation have profoundly shifted over the past four decades, primarily in response to Israel's failures to normalize the occupation and suppress Palestinian resistance. Israel's weakness and Palestinian resilience, not Israeli omnipotence, have driven fundamental changes in Israel's occupation.

Gordon's primary claim is that the underlying structure of Israel's occupation has fundamentally shifted from the colonization principle, in which Israel attempted to administer and control the lives of the Palestinians while colonizing its land to the separation principle, in which Israel abandoned efforts to administer the lives of the colonized population while still maintaining its control over the land. Drawing upon Michel Foucault's three different notions of modern power, Gordon demonstrates how Israel originally sought to maintain its occupation through the use of disciplinary power, which is a form of power directed at the daily practices of individuals to render them docile and useful, and biopower, which is power applied across the population to maximize and extract forces from the population, often in productive ways. Hence, Israel's occupation authorities initially encouraged health, education and economic programs in order to increase Palestinian economic productivity and encourage self-rule while simultaneously controlling their political lives through coercive modes of sovereign power such as the violent suppression of Palestinian political activity.

But Israel's attempt to normalize its occupation was gradually undone by a combination of excesses and contradictions, such as its invasive settlement expansion and its vast restrictions on Palestinian economic life, which revealed the aggressive and exploitative nature of the occupation and triggered the first Intifada in 1987 and then the second Intifada that broke out in 2000.

As a result, the underlying structure of Israel's occupation has shifted to the principle of separation, resulting in the new strategy of spatial incarceration that constitutes the core of Weizman and Makdisi's books. On the one hand, Gordon contends that the principle of

separation is illustrated through Israel's emphasis on more brutal forms of sovereign power through its lethal application of violence and collective punishment as methods of control across the entire population, which illustrates Israel's abandonment of concern for individual Palestinian lives. But the most dramatic illustration of the shift to the separation principle is Israel's reorganization of Palestinian space into ever shrinking and policed enclaves which signifies the application of biopower to contain and pacify Palestinian rebellion by reducing the overall quality of their lives. "The barrier is a good example of a bio mode of power (in the sense of operating on the population as opposed to the individual), yet unlike biopower it is uninterested in life" (214). Gordon claims that Israel's fragmentation of Palestinian life has enabled Israel to keep the occupied territories in a state of permanent crisis but without reaching the point of total collapse which might trigger international intervention, possibly under a UN mandate (208).

In sum, Gordon contends that Israel is attempting to forge a permanent spatial arrangement that will enable it to extend its internationally recognized territory while abandoning Palestinians to tiny self-governing enclaves under complete Israeli control. The fact that Israel's barrier is not being built on the internationally recognized border between Israel and the West bank underscores that "its major objective is to redraw the border between Israel and the West Bank" (215). Yet Weizman notes the paradox this generates whereby "the very idea of Israel as a Jewish state, where Jews are the majority has been underminedâ€¦The barrier should be considered both as an effect of this contradiction and as a new form of control that aims to overcome it" (215). Gordon does not call for two states or one state, but stresses that the new spatial regime is in contradiction with both. Any possibility for peace will have to undo Israel's spatial Gordian knot and reunite the Palestinian people with its territory.

Taken together, these three books illustrate how Israel may be forging a new strategy in the history of spatial control over rebellious and unwanted populations. While European colonialism widely used mass spatial displacement of indigenous groups to enable Europeans to freely exploit their land, Israel is displacing Palestinians by building over, around and under them, while leaving them in place. And while counterinsurgents have frequently applied spatial discipline to isolate insurgents from the population in order to obtain a political solution, Israel has simply abandoned Palestinians behind walls where they will live and interact without ever crossing into Israeli space yet remain under Israeli control. In other words, Israel's use of spatial methods to wall-in Palestinians appears to be an attempt to enact the permanent disappearance of an unwanted population without outright ethnic cleansing, and an attempt to suppress resistance without political compromise.

In this context, the Israeli scholar and activist Jeff Halper argues that Israel has now embarked on a strategy of "warehousing" its surplus (Palestinian) population by enclosing it within sealed enclaves and abandoning any political efforts to resolve the conflict. Halper notes that this goes a long way towards explaining why Israel is unconcerned about entering into a genuine peace process or resolving its conflict with the Palestinians: "By warehousing them it has the best of both worlds: complete freedom to expand its settlements and control without ever having to compromise, as a political solution would require."

This strategy of “warehousing” also goes a long way to explaining why Israel’s occupation has served as a laboratory of innovation and emulation for many governments and counterinsurgents around the world, leading Naomi Klein to refer to Israel as a “laboratory for a fortressed world.” In 2006 Israel exported $3.4 billion in defense products making it the fourth-largest arms dealer in the world, largely in such products as high-tech fences, unmanned drones, biometric IDs and surveillance systems, precisely, according to Klein, “the tools and technologies Israel has used to lock-in the occupied territories.” The explosion of walls and enclaves reinforced by aerial surveillance across Iraq as part of the 2007 “surge” strategy clearly bears the imprint of Israel’s urban warfare laboratory in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Yet the demand for Israeli techniques and technology also stems from the spatial challenges that now confront many states with growing numbers of unwanted or “dangerous” internal populations such as illegal immigrants, slum dwellers and those with ethnically or religious “other” identities. Many states and locales are turning into fortified gated communities surrounded by locked-out people living in permanently excluded red zones.

Despite the growing emulation of Israeli strategies of spatial containment through the export of its techniques around the world, what most fail to recognize is that Israel is both a unique and problematic exemplar of counterinsurgency and population control. All of the books under review point to a potentially fatal paradox confronting Israel today. Israel may appear to have virtually unlimited power over Palestinian land and life, but Israel’s spatial colonization of Palestinian land has lead to a situation in which there is now only one state between the Jordan and the sea, composed of roughly equal numbers of Palestinians and Jews. As Israel’s Prime Minster Ehud Olmert warned while still in office, “If the day comes when the two-state solution collapses, and we face a South African-style struggle for equal voting rights (also for the Palestinians in the territories), then, as soon as that happens, the State of Israel is finished.” As more Palestinians embrace the one-state solution advocated by Makdisi, Israel may soon confront a truly existential threat of its own making.

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Zainab Bahrani, Rituals of War: The Body and Violence in Mesopotamia (New York: Zone Books, 2008), p. 180.

For a critical discussion of all of these cases of spatial containment in counterinsurgency warfare, see William Polk, Violent Politics: A History of Insurgency, Terrorism and Guerilla War, From the American Revolution to Iraq (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

David Galula, Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), p. 78.

See The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 5-51â€”5-80.

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Naomi Klein, “Laboratory for a Fortressed World,” The Nation, June 14, 2007.

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John le Carre’s: A Most Wanted Man

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(New York: Scribner)

John Le Carré has resisted writing about the war on terror, unlike the other mass market thriller novelists, focusing instead on the seldom reported crimes of big business (*The Constant Gardener*) and intrusive Northern governments (*The Mission Song*). In *A Most Wanted Man* he tackles it head on, but from the victim’s perspective with the express objective of exposing the mix of vested interests, nearsightedness and bureaucratic incompetence that go into ‘intelligence’ work, something he knows a thing or two about as a former British spy himself.

The novel, nominally, is about a manhunt for an illegal Russian Muslim immigrant — Issa Karpov — hiding out in Hamburg. He escaped from political prison in Russia through the gangster contacts of his reprehensible illegitimate father, Grigori Borisovich Karpov, a Colonel in the Red Army no less. Hamburg’s the location of Brue Frères, a Scottish Bank run by a miserable sixty year old named Tommy Brue, where the elder Karpov stashed his ill-gotten post-Soviet gains.

In reality the story’s about how human rights and migrant relations in Europe, in the form of the German theatre, have been turned upside down by the neo-conservative war on terror. The British are quite glad to go along with American designs. The Germans are a bit more reluctant given their constitutional safeguards, circa WWII, and have to be hoodwinked into nabbing Issa for the CIA’s secret prisons. They also have to contend with Annabel Richter, Issa’s lawyer, who works for Sanctuary North, a charity specialising in cases like his.

To be honest the novel isn’t that good. Much like his *The Night Manager*, very little actually happens and with the story ending rather abruptly once the action starts, after 300 or so pages, and with a depressingly tragic anti-climax. Still, it’s a pleasure to read and highly informative, and more entertaining and textually innovative than *The Mission Song*. And it turns out than German intelligence is even more bureaucratic and less ‘intelligent’ than the American variety!

Literary leftovers?

What interests me about this latest le Carré novel, actually, isn’t so much the politics as the stylistics, how he’s updating the way he handles worn themes. Scots often pop up in his novels as the cooperative Celts who’ve thrown their lot in with the ‘British’ empire, unlike the Irish; hence Brue, despite his quip about Scots feeling closer to France than England. Obstinant cops pop here as in other le Carré novels and Germany is often the hub of European civilization for him. Don’t ask me why! (He’s Zurich-educated and practically a native speaker of German).

Nonetheless, le Carré breaks new literary ground. There is his trademark 'bad meal' here, in a passing humorous scene involving Brue — "On Sunday he had played bad golf, lost a thousand euros and afterwards been forced to eat liver dumplings and drink Obstler with an elderly shipping baron" (pp. 117) — only to be followed by a luxurious fish banquet with British clients, who turn out to be intelligence. They're fattening him up for the slaughter, which is what also happens to Issa when he's fed 'exotic' breakfasts by Annabel, after she's strong-armed into working with the German authorities.

The Brits want Brue to 'convince' Issa to take Karpov's dirty money — it's usurious and stolen from Chechens — and hand it over to a Muslim charity run by a reformed extremist, the Egyptian Dr. Abdullah, to prove that this charity is funding international terrorism. But even that doesn't happen. The whole thing was a ruse by the Americans to kidnap Dr. Abdullah. Issa gets caught in the crossfire.

Note that both Brue and Issa are very tall, but Brue is old and can't make it with his woman — a Austrian whore than openly cheats on him — while Issa is bruised and battered all over. In other words, 'crippled giants', post-empire Britain, and Issa embodying the current status of the Muslims umma (nation). Issa's also the bastard son of West bloc-East bloc cooperation against Muslims, given that his father was working for the British all along, selling his country's secrets in exchange for his Brue bank deposits.

There are language games here too, another le Carré tactic, given than Issa means 'Jesus' in Arabic; the Abrahamic heritage common between Muslims and Christians. He has nothing against Westerns and wants to enjoy the fruits of democracy and live a useful life there. Unlike the Muslim stereotype he is white, very well read with an aristocratic demeanour, wanting to study everything from medicine to aeronautics. And while he gave himself the name Issa, instead of his Christened name 'Ivan'. He chose to be a Muslim, but he understands Islam in intellectually productive terms.

Issa can't tell a Sunni from a Shi'ite mosque and doesn't even know how to handle the Quran. As he says: "Like Sartre, I have a nostalgia for the future. When I have a future, I shall have no past. I shall have only God and my future" (pp. 95). Likewise the Turkish family — Melik (who is quite tall himself) and his mother Leyla — that take him in and put him in touch with Annabel get their residence revoked, and all they wanted was to be full German citizens. Melik even reformatted his personality, giving up Sunni extremist for rap music and rock bands, while Leyla unstereotypically is blonde.

And how does the West respond to this? Retributive justice, as the Americans in the novel call it, forgetting Gandhi's quip about an eye-for-eye making the whole world blind!

Future fast-forward

Here Turks and Muslims in general have taken the place of the Jews and the Irish as the loyal-and-yet-castigated minority for le Carré. Something else a bit new here is how case files and surveillance reports create threats out of thin air. Melik and Leyla get ratted out by nosey

xenophobic neighbours and money-grubbing Turkish informants, transforming Issa into a seasoned terrorist. (He was thrown into prison originally for being in the wrong place at the wrong time; a Russian oil pipeline going up in flames through negligence, with the neighbouring Chechen's being blamed and tortured into confessing). In other le Carré novels it's the paper trail that exposes the double agents in our midst.

After finishing the novel I began to wonder about the various anti-terrorist sting operations in the UK, most notably the disgraceful arrest of Egyptian architect Mamdouh Hamza. He got released in the end with an apology from the judge trying the case!

Le Carré's also exceptionally good at mapping developments in German personality and politics. I conferred once with an Egyptian friend who speaks German, talking about Marwa Shirbini — the Egyptian girl slaughtered by a Russian-German neo-Nazi — and he told me German's going through an identity crisis of sorts thanks to the growing need for migrant labour. Not enough red-blooded Germans are being born, which is why Russians are so eager to prove their Germaness through picking on other migrants, more so the non-European, non-Christian variety.

Also, Germans are surprisingly naïve and cooperative people. If you're nice to them you can easily persuade them it's their duty to spy on each other, like in the olden Nazi days. Le Carré seems to be sniffing a German retreat to form. Oh dear! But, again, it's the stylistics that intrigue me.

Most le Carré novels are third person and some are multi-perspective, most notably his masterpiece *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, but this novel works differently. It fuses narrative with the intent of his novel, something I haven't seen in his previous writings. It does dawdle on the sorry details of the pathetic existence of many of the central characters — Brue is divorced, now married to an aging Austrian whore who openly cheats on him, has a rebellious new age daughter, Annabel Richter comes from a wealthy but self-indulgent family too — and does look at their worlds from their perspectives.

But only in snapshots, whisking you along with the narrative, giving you a constant sense that many of the central characters are not in control of what happens to them, that there are hidden hands behind the scenes who are really in charge.

And that's precisely what does happen, in the end. Annabel tries to prevent the CIA team, to no avail, and is consoled by Tommy Brue who puts his arm around her. She doesn't notice. The British lion isn't what it was once and so much for the special relationship. Grim, even for le Carré. But he does it so nicely you can't help but admire him. That's hope the Obama era perks him up a bit and forces him to update once last thing about his novellic style — having a happy ending where the good guys do once in a while win!

NOTES:

Please see Justus Leicht, "German Interior Ministry plans to expand the powers of the secret

police", 30 September 2009, HYPERLINK "https://www.wsws.org/articles/2009/sep2009/germ-s30.shtml".

Please see Justus Leicht, "Arab woman stabbed to death in German courtroom", 24 July 2009, HYPERLINK "https://www.wsws.org/articles/2009/jul2009/dres-j24.shtml".

Please see Ibrahim El-Houdaiby, "Western media bias continues in Marwa El-Sherbini's case", July 8, 2009, HYPERLINK "https://www.thedailynewsegypt.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=22957".

Mark Wolverton’s A Life in Twilight: The Final Years of J. Robert Oppenheimer

By | 2010: Vol.9, Issue 1

(New York: Saint Martins Press)

Over the last decade, at least nine books have appeared with the name ‘J. Robert Oppenheimer’ in the title, and no doubt the trend will continue. Some are biographies, covering Oppenheimer’s life as family man, as physicist, as ‘father of the atomic bomb’, as victim of a witch hunt during the McCarthy era, and as Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton. Amongst them a clear winner emerged: Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin’s American Prometheus: the Triumph and tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer, 25 years in the making and with the paperback version weighing in at 1lb 14oz. Marvellously researched and beautifully written, it likely will remain the definitive biography. Abraham Pais, who, with the help of Robert P. Crease, wrote *J. Robert Oppenheimer: A Life*, was a theoretical physicist who was Oppenheimer’s friend and colleague at the Princeton Institute. One of his aims was to write of ‘his major role as teacher of quantum field theory […] as well as his own scientific contributions, many of them brilliant.’ In this Pais succeeded, especially in respect to the many physics publications Oppenheimer produced during his pre-Los Alamos period at Caltech and Berkeley.

As a biography (note the title), however, it falls far short of the mark with Oppenheimer’s early life described in a cursory way. On specific aspects of Oppenheimer’s life: Sylvan S. Schweber at the beginning of the decade published In the Shadow of the Bomb: Oppenheimer, Bethe, and the Moral Responsibility of the Scientist, and, more recently, Einstein and Oppenheimer: the meaning of Genius — both comparative studies of the contrasting personalities of two complex people, and therefore rather limited in the light they shine on Oppenheimer. Now comes Mark Wolverton’s *A Life in Twilight: The Final Years of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, which although confined to Oppenheimer’s last years, covers this period in greater detail than other works and throws an interesting light on his slow and painful return to the public stage.

All these books agree on one thing: Oppenheimer was an enigma. His complexity was such that he is variously seen as mystical and pragmatic, brilliant and naïve, transparent and opaque, a great leader and a maker of enemies, a security risk and a patriot. I had intended to write a review essay drawing on all the books mentioned above, but the task proved to be beyond me: the more I read, the more, well, enigmatic Oppenheimer became. It seemed impossible to do justice to his whole life and works. I was, though, attracted to Wolverton’s *A Life in Twilight*. Wolverton had the advantage of being able to draw on Bird and Sherwin’s excellent biography and so knew which gaps to fill. Taking a fresh look at Oppenheimer’s life after the removal of his security clearance by the Atomic Energy Commission in 1954, Wolverton takes us beyond

the mistaken image of Oppenheimer as a broken, guilt-ridden man and sees ‘an example of grace, courage, and basic human dignity in the face of injustice, contempt, and exile.’ Wolverton writes with an engaging journalistic ease. Many of the chapters are prefaced by a facsimile of a short FBI document, tellingly revealing the paranoia of J. Edgar Hoover, the agents who kept Oppenheimer under surveillance until his dying day, and of members of the general public.

In early 1943 Oppenheimer was appointed scientific director of the Los Alamos Laboratory, charged with the development of an atomic bomb. Some thought it a strange choice. Although Oppenheimer was a brilliant scientist and a leading light in quantum mechanics, he had scant experience of administration. Now he had to build from scratch a massive organisation of scientists and engineers. The doubts soon faded. Thanks to Oppenheimer’s leadership two types of atomic weapons were developed in a little over two years. A uranium bomb, Little Boy, exploded over Hiroshima on August 6 1945; a plutonium bomb, Fat Man, was dropped on Nagasaki 3 days later. On August 10 a Japanese conditional surrender reached Washington. Oppenheimer became headline news. On August 8 the New York Times quoted a colleague as saying “Oppie is smart…he is the smartest of the lot in everything”. Oppenheimer received the United States Medal for Merit for “his great scientific experience and ability, his inexhaustible energy, his initiative and resourcefulness, his unswerving devotion to duty.” These words were soon to ring dismayingly hollow.

Oppenheimer returned briefly to academic life in California. When the Atomic Energy Commission was created in late 1946 he accepted a part-time appointment to its General Advisory Committee and soon became its chairman. Almost simultaneously he was approached by Lewis Strauss, acting as a trustee of the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton, to see if he would become the Institute’s director. After some delay, which greatly annoyed Strauss, Oppenheimer moved to Princeton in July 1947. Strauss was a self-made millionaire and ardent opponent of the New Deal. During the war he served as a special assistant to the Navy Secretary. With his far-flung connections he carved out a powerful position in Washington. And he soon came to despise Oppenheimer.

Inconsistencies in Oppenheimer’s security record, predating his arrival at Los Alamos, followed him into new appointments. The AEC, under the McMahon Act, was obliged to carry out strict reviews of all staff. Oppenheimer’s thick files were pored over but it was decided after long deliberation that there was nothing new and he was given top clearance. Oppenheimer emerged from the war a famous man but now problems were accumulating too. The GAC, for example, favored distribution of isotopes to Europe, and Oppenheimer made a presentation on these lines to the AEC. Most AEC commissioners favored the measure too, but Strauss vehemently disagreed. Strauss testified that the export of isotopes might be of military value to recipients. Oppenheimer dismissed this argument ‘with a swift rapier thrust’, but this, and similar displays of arrogance, ensured that he made very powerful enemies, perhaps unnecessarily.

In September 1949, the Soviet exploded their atomic bomb. Strauss instantly called for a crash

programme to develop a hydrogen bomb. Oppenheimer and all other members of the GAC — the most informed and experienced atomic scientists in America — agreed that weapons of mass destruction could not be discussed in a military vacuum; moral considerations were as relevant as technical ones. They also argued that that accelerating production of fissionable material for small tactical atomic weapons, combined with a build up of conventional forces, would be a better deterrent against the Soviets. Early in 1951 Strauss told the AEC chairman that Oppenheimer was sabotaging the hydrogen bomb project and 'something must be done.' Strauss had been told by J. Edgar Hoover that Klaus Fuchs, a scientist in the British Scientific Mission who had joined Los Alamos in 1944, had confessed to espionage. Although Oppenheimer had had no hand in his appointment both Strauss and Hoover believed this nasty revelation demanded renewed scrutiny of Oppenheimer's left-wing past. Oppenheimer believed that matters of nuclear strategy should be publicly debated, Strauss strongly disagreed. In January 1953, Strauss was appointed atomic adviser to the incoming president Eisenhower and in July he was elevated to chairman of the AEC.

Strauss obtained White House approval to conduct an administrative review of Oppenheimer's security clearance. Oppenheimer would be offered a choice. He could quietly leave or he could appeal the suspension of his clearance before a panel to be appointed by Strauss. When Strauss put this to Oppenheimer he refused to resign. The AEC's inquiry "in the matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer" (the Gray Board) began on April 12, 1954 and sittings continued for three weeks, and it is here that the 'Twilight Years' of Wolverton's book kicks in. The proceedings, which were later published, are long and complicated and it is not possible to go into detail here. Wolverton summarises the manner of the inquisition:

For three weeks…every detail of Oppenheimer's life, both public and personal would be subjected to the most painful scrutiny. Oppenheimer himself would spend hours in a witness chair grilled as ruthlessly as a murder suspect, despite the insistence of the hearing's chairman that process was "an inquiry, and not in the nature of a trial". The chairman was right. In a trial Oppenheimer would have been allowed to examine and question the evidence and witnesses against him. Instead, during the hearings, "Oppenheimer and his attorneys were deprived of vital documents freely available to the other side, denied the names of hostile witnesses, and forced to refute anonymous and hearsay evidence. In the name of national security, the internationally renowned and respected Oppenheimer was deprived of the basic rights enjoyed by the lowliest criminal in open court. According to one witness, former AEC director David Lilienthal, "There hadn't been a proceeding like this since the Spanish Inquisition."

Two members of the Board voted against clearing Oppenheimer, one voted in favour. When the report went to the AEC commissioners the majority decided against Oppenheimer. Oppenheimer would never again serve the United States in any official capacity. One solace for Oppenheimer was that the Institute for Advanced Studies kept him as director. It provided a refuge where he could feel secure, and was still free to do science. Still, his life after the hearing was one of ups and downs. He had been invited by the physics department of the University of Washington to deliver physics lectures. Those plans were cancelled by the

university president on the grounds that the visit ‘would not be in the best interest of the university.’ An uproar followed both within the university and the wider scientific community. But the protests petered out largely because Oppenheimer refused to be drawn into it. The Oregon State Board of Higher Education sponsored lectures by Oppenheimer. They were enthusiastically received throughout the state; at Oregon State University the talks had to be moved from the home economics auditorium to the university’s coliseum. The audiences were captivated. There was strong, orchestrated opposition however when he was invited to serve as guest lecturer at Harvard — a prestigious appointment — but the Board of Overseers held firm and the series of lectures went ahead and were well received.

And then, Wolverton writes, ‘a 187-pound metal sphere came hurtling out of the steppes of Kazakhstan to change everything.’ Everyone knew that the United States would launch the first satellite, and believed it until the Soviet Union launched Sputnik into space on October 4 1957. It was a nasty shock to American self-confidence. “It is time to ask ourselves whether preoccupation with our ‘scientific secrets’ instead of science itself has not resulted in impairing the real sources of our strength and loss of supremacy we once could claim,” declared The Washington Post. “We have driven out of our laboratories a great many pre-eminent men of science; J Robert Oppenheimer and Edward U. Condon among them.” The point was driven home when at the beginning of November the Soviets launched a much bigger craft with a dog on board.

Calls for action from newspapers was one thing, criticism from a former Air Force assistant secretary of that same administration was another. He told reporters that the White House should consider bringing Oppenheimer back into the fold. Imperturbable as ever Oppenheimer played it cool. Strauss continued to oppose him but in mid-1958 Strauss retired from the AEC and his successor had the files re-examined. He realised that what supporters of Oppenheimer had claimed was true. But the AEC could not act on its own initiative; Oppenheimer would have to request a new hearing. Oppenheimer, however, had no wish to go through that wringer again. Strauss himself was in trouble; he had made many enemies and in a manner of the downfall he had engineered for Oppenheimer, he was about to face a public and humiliating reckoning.

John F. Kennedy became the thirty-fifth president of the United States on January 20, 1961. Although there were now many Oppenheimer supporters in high places. A small gesture was made by inviting Oppenheimer to one of the distinguished guests at a White House gala state dinner and reception for American Nobel Prize winners. It was sure sign that in Washington he was no longer persona non grata. Oppenheimer was nominated for the prestigious Enrico Fermi Award presented annually to an individual who had made noteworthy contributions to nuclear physics or otherwise benefited humankind through the development and promotion of atomic science and technology. Recipients had to be formally nominated by the GAC and the White House quietly told the CAC that the award would meet with no resistance. The GAC unanimously nominated Oppenheimer. The award was to be presented by Kennedy on December 2. On November 22 Kennedy was assassinated. President Lyndon Johnson announced that he would be giving Oppenheimer the award on December 2 as planned.

Standing next to the tall LBJ Oppenheimer appeared to look frail, small and humble. Oppenheimer concluded his short speech by saying “I think it is just possible, Mr President, that it has taken some charity and some courage for you to make this award today. That would seem to be a good augury for all our futures.”

J. Robert Oppenheimer died on February 18, 1967.

Meera Nanda, The Wrongs of the Religious Right: Reflections on Science, Secularism and Hindutva (Gurgaon (Haryana), India: Three Essays Collective)

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The three essays comprising this book are (1) Secularism without Secularization: Reflections on the Religious Right in America and India, (2) Hindu Ecology in the Age of Hindutva: The Dangers of Religious Environmentalism, (3) Making Science Sacred: How Postmodernism Aids Vedic Science. In her introduction Nanda is gratified that the Hindutva party in India recently suffered an electoral setback, but is now worried by the 1984 U.S. election, which "woke me out of my intellectual complacency about the country that I have called home for many years." Nanda had not imagined the American wall of separation of church and state to be so fragile. Herein lies a problem: how could Nanda have been so naïve about her adopted homeland for so long? Could India be so bad it makes America look good?

The first essay is a comparative study of Indian and American secularism and religiosity. Both countries have official secular governments and highly religious populations. Indian and American secular governments are founded on entirely different principles. The Indian approach is based, not on separation of government and religion as in the United States, but on the principle of equal treatment of all religions. The state may subsidize religious institutions as long as it doesn't play favorites, and it also has the right to intervene in the practice of religion.

Secular government in the U.S. resulted from an alliance between politically disadvantaged churches and the supporters of the Enlightenment they otherwise disdained. American Protestantism was split. Those with a modernist bent gravitated toward more liberal, deistic, rationalist and scientific thinking. This tendency had political impact; however, it tended to be limited to highbrow, well-educated, and well-off congregations. Today, the fundamentalist Right leads a backlash against them.

Indian secularism was born of the need to keep the peace among rival religious groups, neutralize the caste system, and reform barbaric social practices associated with a variety of religious practices. The state took on the role of religious reform. The downside is that state interference in religion has made religion a battleground for political manipulation and power plays.

Hindu revivalism outmaneuvered the secular forces within the Indian independence movement.

Hindu ideologues sanitized the past, proffering a 'purified' Hinduism as consistent with modern needs. This is reactionary modernism: the incorporation of modernizing impulses into an atavistic anti-modernist ideology. Secularization amounted to an endorsement of Hinduism, compounded by the hypocritical claim of essential Hindu 'tolerance'. As in the United States, a rupture with the past was passed off as continuity with the past. India's trajectory was far worse. The secularist, deistical, naturalistic and scientific tendencies of the American Enlightenment at least had some institutional impact, but there was no counterpart in India. No 'disenchantment of nature' took root among a decisive contingent of Indian intellectuals; instead, modern science was incorporated into Vedic superstition.

Nanda argues that the pragmatic maneuvers establishing secular states prior to the formation of secular cultures created the conditions for the right-wing religious populism that menaces both countries today. Secular states cannot ultimately survive without the secularization of their inhabitants.

Why do some countries engender religious fundamentalist movements while others at a comparable level of social development do not? Nikki Keddie sees the explanation in a fusion of high levels of religiosity and nationalism. Traditional religiosity has mushroomed in the United States, accompanied by political conservatism and increasing activism. Incredibly, Nanda sees Hindu nationalism as even worse. While American nationalism is at least in theory non-ethnic and universalistic, all you have to do is scratch the veneer of Hindu liberal tolerance and you will find blood-and-soil 'Aryan' nationalism. Secular Indian intellectuals can absolve Hinduism from reactionary Hindutva all they like, but they are digging their own graves; good, liberal Hinduism is a fiction.

Conservative religiosity goes hand in hand with aggressive nationalism: "societies with higher levels of religiosity and nationalism have tended to reinforce each other." Why is this trend growing in the United States? Nanda provides a hint: "it is quite likely that this intensification of religiosity coincides with the intensification of poverty and insecurity in America in recent decades." (51) Yet there is a glaring omission in her summary of American religious and political trends (49-52): the religion and politics of black America. The black population partakes of a fundamentalist religious culture as culturally conservative and dangerously authoritarian as that of their white counterparts, yet their political instinct for self-preservation disposes black Americans towards overwhelming support for the Democratic Party. Clearly, a more refined explanatory model is needed.

Another minor quibble: In her final plea for the Enlightenment and scientific reason, Nanda also cautions the secular left to respect religion. (57) I find her effort to give faith its due weak and unconvincing given the unequivocal condemnations of religious superstition in the rest of the book, including a scant two pages later. What is faith due? The answer would seem to be: nothing. The only tolerable religion seems to be a liberal religion so watered down there's little left of it to interfere with rational processes.

In the second essay Nanda documents how Indian environmentalism taps into Hindu religiosity

(which habitually sanctifies every aspect of nature), and argues why social movements should not do this. The dangers of religious environmentalism are: (1) nurturing Hindu nationalism, (2) relinquishing secular spaces in public life, including the spaces of social movements themselves, (3) perpetuating the irrational, inegalitarian aspects of tradition. Further danger lurks in an alliance of Hindu nationalists with Western neo-pagans and the infiltration of right-wing organicism and traditionalism into the left. As Nanda sees it, all eco-spirituality shares these characteristics: (1) localism, anti-universalism; (2) nondualism, anti-humanism, reenchantment of nature; (3) anti-anthropocentrism. There is already a significant collusion of Western New Age, pagan, and deep ecology environmentalists with Hinduism and other manifestations of 'eastern' spirituality. Apologists in East and West alike gloss over the dark side of nature mysticism—its support of social hierarchy, with the implication, sometimes overtly stated, that egalitarianism is unnatural.

The Chipko movement provides an example of religious environmentalist (and feminist) apologetics in practice. Supportive intellectuals generated a rosy mythology of traditional spirituality as exemplar of ecological consciousness, which entailed a monstrous rewriting of history, eclipsing the evils of the caste system connected with religion. However, researchers have shown that the Chipko movement was motivated by material interests having nothing to do with high principle or the assertion of traditional values. In addition, ecological protection was used as a pretext by government officials for the funding of Hindu institutions.

Meanwhile, neo-paganism in Europe, proselytizing the re-enchantment of nature, harbors localist, particularistic, chauvinist proclivities. Here, the danger of cross-fertilization of ideas between the European new right and Hindutva intellectuals is manifest, especially as both have learned to camouflage themselves with the language of pluralist tolerance and multiculturalism. Egalitarianism, materialism, and 'Semitic monotheism' are excoriated in these circles. This is fascism with a pluralist face, and the left should have no part of it.

Finally, Nana notes that studies show that "nature worship plays a highly ambiguous role in how people relate to nature." Traditionally religious people do not take better care of nature, and poor people involve themselves in environmental movements for secular reasons.

"Making Science Sacred" is a powerful essay that effectively exposes the mendacity underlying the euphemistic language of pluralism, diversity, and localism. Nanda works a central theme of her previous book Prophets Facing Backward: the malignant collusion of western postmodernists, feminists, and anti-imperialists with reactionary Hindutva.

While there are at least voices within the mainline liberal churches as well as scientists in the West who speak out against creationism, a comparable presence is lacking in Indian public life to oppose the superstitious deceit of Vedic Science. Worse, government agencies have subsidized all kinds of traditional pseudoscience, while Vedic Science credits itself for fostering modern discoveries such as quantum mechanics. Reactionary modernism is at work: ideologues champion science while condemning secularism, naturalism, reductionism, the disenchantment of nature, the West, and even the Semitic mentality. Incredibly, Nanda sees this as even worse

than American Christian fundamentalist support for creationism. “But while Christian fundamentalists in America indulge in creationism primarily to get past the First Amendment, Hinduization of science in India is motivated by a deeply chauvinistic nationalism.” (97) Surely Nanda once again sees the U.S. in a more favorable light than it deserves.

Postmodernism plays into this agenda with its condemnation of Enlightenment rationality, universalism, and objectivity, and hence the universalism of modern science, in their stead proffering social constructivism, standpoint epistemology, and local and situated knowledges. Deep ecologists and prominent feminists rail against the bias of the western scientific world view. All this has been a great boon for the panderers of Vedic Science. Not only can the history of ideas be rewritten, but secular Indian modernizers can be accused of succumbing to mental colonization.

Now comes the crux of the argument. While Christian and Islamic conservatives are manifestly exclusionary of external ideas and beliefs, Hinduism tends to be ‘inclusive’, with a great deal of pluralism and eclecticism, wherein lies the deception. Hinduism possesses non-negotiable core beliefs, but there is much play for relativism. In contradistinction to Western liberalism, Hindu relativism presupposes innate human inequality, and hence different paths to truth are hierarchically ranked. “The inclusiveness of Hinduism is a mask of its hubris and self-aggrandization.”

Nanda compares Hinduism to Christianity by comparing Manu to St. Augustine. (106-108) While Augustine condemned pagan knowledge, he nevertheless admitted pagans into the realm of rational discourse and even allowed for the revision of scriptural claims via metaphorical re-interpretation. By contrast, Manu denied the rational unity of mankind, and not only defamed heretics but compared them with lower castes and animals. Other sacred Hindu texts were just as vicious towards materialists and rationalists. All manifestations of Hindu relativism and its cardinal epistemological principles were predicated on the hierarchical logic of caste, and the condescending tolerance granted others was predicated on the unquestionable eternal truths of the Vedas guarded by an exclusionary elite. (108-109)

When the Hindu renaissance encountered modern science via the British empire, its thinkers eclectically incorporated it as a lower grade knowledge. Thus the Enlightenment bypassed India.

If local knowledges are valid within their limited contexts, Vedic ideology dovetails quite nicely with social constructivism, the advocacy of ethnoscience and other alternative ‘ways of knowing’ among women and non-western cultures. The language of relativism endemic to postmodernism, postcolonialism, and bourgeois feminism is also the duplicitous language of Hindu metaphysics, and there is growing collusion between the two camps.

In her zeal to criticize India’s deplorable ideological heritage, Nanda seems here to be overly generous towards Augustine as she often seems to be towards the West. This is a minor objection. Her overall argument is solid, particularly her analysis of what is dangerous about

the Hindu exploitation of pluralism and how its logic meshes with the logic of postmodernism. Relativism is no cure for absolutism; it is a manifestation of the same disease. When you reject universalism, however it has been misused in the past for exclusionary purposes, you open up the door to the worst despotism. Nanda convincingly argues that there is nothing edifying about the enchantment of nature, polytheism, pantheism, or syncretism, and thus strikes an effective blow against New Age ideology in the West. She demonstrates that New Age thought, neo-traditionalism, and relativism pave the road to fascism, and thus she condemns the 'treason of the intellectuals' against universality and reason. That's why you should own this book.

Robert Fisk's Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East

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(New York: Alfred A. Knopf)

The name "Robert Fisk" has become synonymous with dangerous truth-telling in his reporting about the Middle East—truth-telling of a kind so rare in journalistic circles that those seeking to suppress the facts about what the Western powers have done to the region and its people usually resort to the usual defamation about how Fisk is anti-American and anti-Semitic. Fisk's truth-telling is of a sort that must be shunned and avoided by the cowardly corporate media and its host of watchdogs who seek to make the likes of Fisk ancient history. If telling the truth is considered a revolutionary act in deceitful times Fisk has consistently violated the central taboos on Middle East reporting, repeatedly putting U.S. journalists to shame for their participation in a large-scale cover-up. His example needs to be learned from and emulated. What does it mean that truth-telling has become such an anomaly, such a dangerous act, that Fisk is part of a small handful of alternatives to the U.S. media's perversion of reality? Fisk's persistent and dogged example forces us to ask that question.

It would be a terrific understatement to claim that Robert Fisk has written an impressive book with his The Great War for Civilisation. The book is more than impressive—it is daunting and intimidating in its display of utter mastery of the modern history of the Middle East. Writing Middle East history, or at least the kind of history that most Western journalists have found themselves unable to tell, has been Fisk's specialty for nearly fifty years.

"Journalists," according to Fisk, are charged "with writing the first page of history." Or to borrow from Ha'aretz reporter, Amira Hass, the journalist is supposed "to monitor the centers of power." Fisk has established a reputation for telling the world the truth, in all its gory details, in his reporting on Middle East politics for The Independent. This has made him a rare commodity—someone who is willing to tell the truth, no matter how unpopular, about U.S., British, and Israeli neocolonialism in Iraq, Iran, Palestine, etc. His is a voice that is trusted because it will not accommodate itself to the dictates of Realpolitick, something most mainstream media sources capitulated to long ago. "I am neither a lion nor a mouse, but I can be a tough dog, and when I get a rope between my teeth I won't let go until I shake it and tug it something rotten to see what lies at the other end. That, after all, is what journalists are supposed to do" (270).

> *When we journalists fail to get across the reality of events to our readers, we have not only failed in our job; we have also become a party to the bloody events that we are supposed to be reporting. If we cannot tell the truth about the shooting down of*

> *a civilian airliner—because this will harm "our" side in a war or because it will cast one of our "hate" countries in the role of victim or because it might upset the owner of our newspaper—then we contribute to the very prejudices that provoke wars in the first place…. Journalism can be lethal (271).*

In this 1100-page book, where he includes thirty years of reporting on everything from the Armenian Holocaust denial in Turkey, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, the rise of Osama bin Laden in the aftermath of that war, the first Gulf war, the last ten years of the Israel-Palestine conflict, the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and the aftermath of 9/11, we obtain a glimpse of Fisk's deep commitment to humanity, his belief in human morality, and human decency. No Western reporter knows the politics of the Middle East better than Robert Fisk, but Fisk represents more than just a seasoned and knowledgeable reporter—his reporting represents a stentorian voice beckoning us to look closely at the major players and events in the Middle East. He is in the league of intellectuals such as I.F. Stone, Hannah Arendt, Edward Said, and Noam Chomsky in his determination to tell the truth the consequences be damned. He has been the target of abuse and vilification, including among those he presumably was defending in print.

Fisk not only narrates the great dramas of the region over the last several years, but provides the detailed historical context for those events, enabling his readers to really understand the basis for the indigenous population's grievances against the great powers. His knowledge of the political landscape in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine makes his narration seem nearly effortless. However, Fisk is a more than a mere storyteller; indeed, he is also a chronicler of grave injustices. Along with a few intrepid Israeli journalists (Amira Hass, the late Tanya Reinhart, and Gideon Levy) he has reported on the imperial plundering of the region with an unmatchable eloquence and passion. For example, his Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon is the most moving journalistic account we have of the 1982 Lebanon War and is considered by many the quintessential history of Israel's invasion, euphemistically dubbed "Peace for Galilee," and its aftermath.

Fisk has a unique ability to recuperate the lost voices of those who have suffered at the hands of imperial violence, voices drowned out by the patriotic fervor and the denials accompanying the lame excuses of those who refuse to stand up against the abuses of power. In his eloquence and the thoroughness of his prose, once catches a glimpse of the desperation within the human condition, the extraordinary acts of courage emerging out of humiliation and injustice. He helps his readers to understand why Palestinian men and women living in the occupied territories become suicide bombers, who are willing to die as martyrs and leave their families behind, rather than to live as caged animals for the amusement of Israeli colons. Fisk refuses the facile formulations of the media pundits who speak of "homicide bombers," a perverse reversal of cause and effect, a shift in emphasis from the oppressive conditions of occupation that produce a suicide to the status of the innocents, who may have prospered and enjoyed a good life as a result of the oppressive conditions that produced the suicide itself. Fisk fully exposes the extent of Israel's utter destruction of the Palestinian biopolitical.

As the prospects for something called “Middle East peace” become increasingly elusive, with escalating violence a near certainty in the Israel-Palestine conflict and Iraq, and a possible U.S.-Israeli strike against purported nuclear targets in Iran, the region is posed for the kind of cataclysmic violence prophetic voices like Noam Chomsky and the late Israel Shahak warned us about sometime ago. That Fisk has taken on about the formidable task of warning Western readers of the coming firestorm out of the Middle East with such single-mindedness is a testament to his journalistic integrity, as well as an indication of how power conditions both the production and reception of the news.

Fisk forces his readers to dig deep within themselves to explore the depths of this region’s tragedy, which places the entire world on a dangerous precipice. “This is a book about torture and humiliation,” and I would add, greed and betrayal. To what should we attribute the deep psychological Western resistance to understanding the conditions under which Arabs live in the Middle East, particularly the seemingly inexplicable intransigence to exploring the possibility that many of the Arab world’s grievances against the West have some basis in actually historical events, and are not simply the figments of a few extremists’ imaginations? It is to this predicament that Robert Fisk has turned in his journalistic coverage of the Middle East. Why do people turn away from the horrific suffering, avoidable suffering, produced by their governments, when that suffering is so easily avoidable? Perhaps, as Fisk, points out “Much of the violence throughout the world comes back ‘Made in the U.S.A.’” (529).

In 1996, when Fisk delivered the hell fire missiles used by an American-made Israeli Apache against a Lebanese ambulance (killing four children and two women) to the Boeing executives in Seattle, Washington who were far removed from the violence of the human corpses produced by U.S. and Israeli military adventurism—Fisk is told, “We just sell missiles. We can’t be responsible for what’s done with them?” “Whatever you do…,” implored these powerful men at Boeing, do not mention the use of these missiles in relation to Israel. This is how the Israel Lobby has made even grown men afraid for their “careers.” That perceptions have to be structured so as to disable critical thought on crucial questions about the current state of affairs in the Middle East should given one pause. How, for example, can one avoid facing 1) the legitimacy of the grievances of those Palestinian Arabs living in the Occupied Territories who are on the receiving end of the well-honed U.S. military machine; 2) the complicity of those who speak of the U.S. brokering a peace process between Israel and the Palestinians; 3) and the gross distortion of the historical and diplomatic record by the U.S. press.

> *The use of American armaments against Arabs by Israel has been one of the most provocative sources of anger in the Middle East, and the narrative of their use is almost as important as the political conflict between Israel and its enemies. For it is one thing to know that Washington claims to be a “neutral partner” in Middle East peace negotiations while supporting one side—Israel—in all its demands; it is quite another when the armaments Israel employs to enforce its will—weapons that kill and tear apart Arabs—carry the engraved evidence of their manufacture in the United States (762).*

Fisk will not allow us to so easily avoid this unpleasantness, these facts of history, and, yes, the price of occupation and brutality. He takes us straight into the eyes of those who terrorize "us".

We are able to obtain a direct path into Osama Bin Laden's thinking in the opening chapter of The Great War for Civilisation where Fisk provides us with a glimpse of Bin Laden's egomania, as well as some insight into his justified outrage at U.S. and Israeli policy in the region:

Bin Laden was speaking slowly and with precision, an Egyptian taking notes in a large exercise book by the lamplight like a Middle Ages scribe. "This doesn't mean declaring war against the West and Western people—but against the American regime which is against every American." I interrupted bin Laden.

Unlike Arab regimes, I said, the people in the United States elected their government. They would say that their government represents them. He disregarded my comment. I hope he did. For in the years to come, his war would embrace the deaths of thousands of American civilians.

Fisk explains the depths of Arab anger against the West and its colonial wars since 1917, when the Balfour Declaration offered to create a Jewish national home in Palestine. One-time Jewish terrorists are now Israeli war heroes and prime ministers, feted heads of state, and much-revered spokesmen for the "War on Terror". Begin, Shamir, Dayan, Sharon, Netanyahu, Barak, Rabin, and many others have sown as much terror as they have sought to eradicate—each has been on both sides of state terror. While the phrase "Jewish terrorist" is unheard of in contemporary media discourse, as the racial privilege Israelis enjoy over their Palestinian adversaries is never mentioned, it is important to remember that Israel was born out of Jewish terror and the place of this terror in Bin Laden's seething anger against the Western powers:

Looking back now, knowing what we know, understanding the monstrous beast-figure he would become in the collective imagination of the world, I search for some clue, the tiniest piece of evidence, that this man would inspire an act that would change the world forever—or, more to the point, allow an American president to persuade his people that the world has changed forever (7).

One can look back now, nearly eight years later, at the 2001 publication of "Rebuilding America's Defenses" and remember Walter Benjamin's famous statement in his "Seventh Thesis on Philosophy" that "There is no document of culture that is not at the same time a document of barbarism" and conclude that barbarism indeed begins with the military planners who express their will-for-domination on paper even before the firing of the first missile or the slaying of the first victim.

Fisk was nearly stoned to death by the Afghani refuges of Kila Abdullah shortly after 9/11at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, an event which many of his critics in the United States greeted with more than a little joy. See Fisk's "If I Was an Afghan I Too Might Have Attacked Robert Fisk" (accessed on September 20th, 2009). As Fisk writes, "And — I realised — there were all the Afghan men and boys who had attacked me who should never have done so but whose brutality was entirely the product of others, of us — of we who had armed their struggle

against the Russians and ignored their pain and laughed at their civil war and then armed and paid them again for the “War for Civilisation” just a few miles away and then bombed their homes and ripped up their families and called them “collateral damage.”

See Chomsky’s *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians and Shahak’s Open Secrets*.