

# Is 'Delegitimizing' Israel Anti-Semitic?

Israel and its backers are on the political offensive against critics who are putting non-violent pressure on the Likud government of Benjamin Netanyahu to address the legitimate needs of Palestinians and to recognize human rights for all people who live in Israel/Palestine. Israeli defenders equate this "delegitimizing" of Israel with anti-Semitism, but Lawrence Davidson disagrees.

By Lawrence Davidson

June 30, 2011

On June 23, MJ Rosenberg published an article in the Huffington Post entitled "Netanyahu Is the One 'Delegitimizing' Israel," referring to the term that, according to Israel's Haaretz newspaper, has become a "buzzword in the world of pro-Israel activism."

Rosenberg tries to turn the concept back on the Zionists by claiming it is their own actions that are actually eroding Israel's legitimacy. He is correct but there is more to be said on this topic. First, some additional background:

In 2010, the Zionists decided they would try to split what they considered their opposition by defining different categories of criticism of Israel. Those who are critical of just particulars, this or that Israel policy or tactic, were put in the category of acceptable critics.

I would point out that this was a big concession on their part for, if you think back ten years or so, any public criticism of Israel was assumed to be inspired by "anti-Semitism." In any case, that charge has now been narrowed down to those assigned to a second category the "delegitimizers."

These are the ones who, allegedly, are critical in a way that calls into question the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state. According to the Zionists, this delegitimizing approach is, so to speak, beyond the pale, or as the American Zionist leader William Daroff put it, a "cancerous growth."

The Zionists have gone to a lot of trouble to make this process of categorization appear well thought out and researched. In March 2010, the Tel Aviv-based Reut Institute issued a 92-page report which defines delegitimizing criticism as that which "exhibits blatant double standards, singles out Israel, denies its right to exist as the embodiment of the self-determination of the Jewish people, or demonizes the state."

In his Huffington Post article, Rosenberg says this effort on the part of the

Zionists is a gambit “to change the subject from the existence of the occupation to the existence of Israel. ... That is why Prime Minister Netanyahu routinely invokes Israel’s ‘right of self-defense’ every time he tries to explain away some Israeli attack on Palestinians. ...

“If the whole Israeli-Palestinian discussion is about Israel’s right to defend itself, Israel wins the argument. But if it is about the occupation which is, in fact, what the conflict has been about since 1993 when the PLO recognized Israel it loses.”

He concludes, “Israel [is] not being isolated because it is a Jewish state and hence illegitimate, but because of how it treat[s] the Palestinians.”

Rosenberg certainly has a point. However, one can draw a more general and troublesome message from the Zionist notion of delegitimizers. This more basic insight goes like this:

–The distinction drawn by the Zionists between acceptable and unacceptable criticism works only if one assumes that the policies and tactics of the Israeli state leading to, on the one hand, expansion into the Occupied Territories, and on the other, the segregation of its non-Jewish minorities, are not *structural*.

Or, to put it another way, that Israel’s imperial and discriminatory policies are not a *function of* the ethno/religious definition of the state. But what happens if Israel’s tactics and policies are not just opportunistic, but indeed structural? What if the behavior of the government flows from the very nature of a country designed first and foremost for a specific group?

If that is the case, you cannot separate out criticism of this or that policy from criticism of the very character of the Israeli polity. Policies and state ideology are all of one piece.

Please note that I am not singling out Israel in this regard (though, as we will see, I do single it out in other ways). Actually, it would not matter if Israel (or any other country) was Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, White, Black or created by and for little green men from Mars. If any state:

- a) is designed to first and foremost serve one specific group while
- b) having in its midst minorities which it systematically segregates by
- c) either structuring its laws in a discriminatory way, and/or purposely educating its citizenry to act in a discriminatory fashion
- d) then from the standpoint of civilized, modern democratic principles, one can justly question not only its tactics and policies, but the legitimacy of the

social/political structure that generates them.

This is so whether the country is expansionist or not. In other words, if Israel had never moved beyond its 1967 borders and never set up its wretched colonial regime in the Occupied Territories, there would still be a problem because of the way it treats Israeli Arabs.

Here is where I would take the Rosenberg argument one step further. It is not just the occupation, it is Zionism as a guiding socio-political ideology that is illegitimate.

–Given the ideological insistence that Israel must be a “Jewish” state, how does one argue against Zionist Israel without opening oneself to the charge of anti-Semitism?

The best way to do so is by generalizing out Rosenberg’s argument by taking the general position that *all governments* that use their laws to discriminate against minority groups *delegitimize themselves*.

In the case of Zionist Israel (which, we should keep in mind, does not represent all Jews) just ceasing to behave in an imperialist fashion may be necessary, but it is not a sufficient corrective. Israel must cease to structure its laws and social behavior in a discriminatory fashion and for that it has to get rid of its present Zionist governing ideology.

If Israel wants to be *both Jewish and a legitimate*, civilized, modern democratic state, it has to find a non-discriminatory way to do it. As long as it stays a Zionist state, it will constantly be hoisting itself with its own petard.

–Beyond Israel’s borders, it is the Zionist political and media efforts to convince world opinion that they must be considered both legitimate and be allowed to operate in a discriminatory fashion that are particularly corrupting.

To explain this let us address the Zionist charge that deligitimizers “single out Israel” by using “blatant double standards.”

This assertion has become so common that when one ventures into a public forum to discuss Israeli behavior, one is almost assured the following question: *Why are you singling out Israel?* How about all those other countries doing horrible things to people? How about the Russians slaughtering Chechens? How about the Chinese committing cultural genocide against Tibet? What about Darfur?

If you think about it, the question is an unfortunate one from the point of view of those asking because, implicitly (but accurately), it puts Israel into the

same category as all these other bad guys and that certainly is not what the questioner intends. In any case, there is a ready answer to the question and it goes like this:

*The fact that Zionist influence spreads far beyond Israel's area of dominion and has long influenced many of the policy-making institutions of Western governments, and particularly that of the United States, makes it imperative that Israel's oppressive behavior be singled out as a high priority case from among the many other oppressive regimes that may be candidates for pointed criticism and even boycott.*

In other words, unlike the Chinese, the Russians and other such governments, the Israelis and their supporters directly influence, in a corrupting fashion, the policymakers of Western democracies and this often makes these governments accomplices in Israel's abusive policies.

This being so, singling out Israel is not hypocrisy, but rather necessity. William Daroff, the Zionist leader mentioned above who appears on the look-out for "cancerous growths," might find this pathology in the on-going corruptive nature of his own organization's influence.

From the standpoint of intellectual debate, it is not difficult to defeat Zionist arguments. I have been doing it for years both in writing and in public forums. I humbly admit that (where they have not turned into bedlam) I have never lost one of these encounters.

However, international affairs and the fate of nations are not normally settled by intellectual debates. Nor, unfortunately, are they often settled by international law. Historically, they are settled by political intrigue and backroom lobbying (at which level Zionist influence works) and/or brute force.

Is there a way around this historical roadblock? I think so.

There is a growing, world-wide movement of civil society seeking the isolation of Israel at all levels. This is the same strategy that brought change to apartheid South Africa. And, toward the growth of this movement, intellectual debate is very useful and important.

It is no accident that the Zionists point to those who advocate boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel as the number-one enemies within their category of delegitimizers. I think they know, or at least sense, that the BDS movement is the very best long-term strategy for those who wish to force Israel to rid itself of what makes it truly illegitimate its Zionist ideology.

Lawrence Davidson is a history professor at West Chester University in Pennsylvania. He is the author of *Foreign Policy Inc.: Privatizing America's National Interest*; *America's Palestine: Popular and Official Perceptions from Balfour to Israeli Statehood*; and *Islamic Fundamentalism*.

---

## The NYT's Favor and Fear

**Exclusive:** A federal court opinion has revealed that the New York Times's 2004 spiking of the story about President George W. Bush's warrantless wiretapping of Americans didn't stand alone. A year earlier, the Times bowed to another White House demand to kill a sensitive story, one about Iran's nuclear program, Robert Parry reports.

By Robert Parry

June 30, 2011

The New York Times, like most U.S. newspapers, prides itself on its "objectivity." The Times even boasts about printing news "without fear or favor." But the reality is quite different, with the Times agreeing especially last decade to withhold newsworthy information that the Bush-43 administration considered too sensitive.

A new example of this pattern was buried in [a Times article](#) on Wednesday about a subpoena issued to Times reporter James Risen regarding his receipt of a leak about an apparently botched U.S. covert operation to sabotage Iran's nuclear research, a disclosure that Risen published in his 2006 book, *State of War*.

In Wednesday's article, the Times reported that its news executives agreed in 2003 to kill Risen's article about the covert operation at the request of George W. Bush's national security adviser Condoleezza Rice and CIA Director George Tenet.

And, it was not the only time in recent years when the Times bowed to White House pressure to conceal information in response to a claim of national security.

Before the presidential election in 2004, the Times editors had in their hands another Risen story, about Bush's warrantless wiretaps of Americans, but they spiked it at Bush's behest, again on national security grounds. The Times only published the wiretap story in December 2005, more than a year later, when it learned that Risen was also including that information in *State of War*.

The Times executives concluded that it was better to risk the wrath of the White House by publishing the wiretap disclosure than to suffer the embarrassment of getting caught sitting on a very newsworthy story, one that later won the Pulitzer Prize.

But the journalistic point in both these cases is that the Times was not acting "objectively," concerned only with the facts and the public's right to know. It was showing, without doubt, "favor" and quite possibly "fear" as well.

Whatever your personal feelings about Iran, the obvious truth is that if the identities of the nations involved in the nuclear-related covert action were reversed, the Times would not have hesitated to expose the treacherous behavior of Iran (in trying to sabotage a U.S. nuclear program). Indeed, the Times would likely have condemned Iran for reckless behavior if not an act of war.

By spiking the story when Iran was the target, the Times showed it was onboard for the White House's anti-Iran campaign, much as Times executives clambered onto Bush's bandwagon for war with Iraq. Then, too, the Times let its desire to look "patriotic" and "tough" overwhelm its journalistic principles.

### **Aluminum-Tube Hoax**

Infamously, the Times published a bogus front-page article in 2002 alleging that Iraq had acquired aluminum tubes for use in building nuclear centrifuges, when in reality the tubes were not suitable for that purpose.

Nevertheless, the false Times story gave great momentum to Bush's drive toward an unprovoked invasion of Iraq based on suspicions of secret WMD stockpiles. The aluminum-tube story was cited by national security adviser Rice and other senior officials as a warning that the U.S. must not let "the smoking gun be a mushroom cloud."

Rice played a role, too, in suppressing Risen's article about the covert operation to plant dysfunctional designs inside Iran's nuclear program, an operation that Risen suggests backfired when Iran detected the intentional errors but benefited from the real technology that was included.

This week, in a federal court opinion related to charges against former CIA employee Jeffrey Sterling that he leaked word of the Iran operation to Risen, Judge Leonie Brinkema wrote that in April 2003, Rice and Tenet met with Risen and then-Times Washington bureau chief Jill Abramson to request that the Times not write about the CIA's disruptions of Iran's nuclear program.

Just a month after Bush's invasion of Iraq with the President riding high in the polls and the United States awash in patriotic fervor the Times bowed to the

administration's request.

A similar request was made in 2004 when the White House appealed to the Times to suppress Risen's story about the Bush administration's warrantless wiretapping of Americans suspected of communicating with terror suspects abroad.

The major difference in the two cases was that the Times reversed itself more than a year later on the wiretap story, after learning that Risen would reveal the secret in his book.

However, the journalistic point remains the same for both instances. The Times was not behaving in an objective or neutral manner. It wasn't just reporting the news. It was taking sides.

The simple truth is that major U.S. news organizations, including the Times, routinely take sides in favor of U.S. foreign policy and against identified U.S. adversaries. The goal to appear "patriotic" or at least not "disloyal" trumps journalistic principles.

### **'Good for the Country'**

In my three-decades-plus career as a Washington-based journalist, I have seen this reality demonstrated repeatedly at mainstream news organizations where I worked, including the Associated Press and Newsweek. Senior editors often fancied themselves as doing what's "good for the country" in spinning a story in ways most favorable to the U.S. government, rather than simply writing what presented itself.

Double standards were common. For instance, it was an easy sell to get editors to approve a story accusing Nicaragua's Sandinista government of drug trafficking (although the evidence was thin to non-existent) but it required a pitched battle (and plenty of solid evidence) to convince editors to go with a story about cocaine smuggling by President Ronald Reagan's pet Nicaraguan Contra rebels.

The reason was obvious. Even if the allegations against the Sandinistas were completely bogus, there would be no meaningful repercussions for running the story. However, if there was even the slightest flaw in the Contra-cocaine evidence, the consequences would be severe. So, the smart career play was to go with the first accusation and avoid the second.

Other times, there are tough calls about whether to publish U.S. national security secrets and these can be very difficult decisions. The government will always insist that lives are at stake and will threaten to point the finger of blame if you publish a story and someone gets hurt or killed. Frankly, it's hard

for a reporter to assess exactly what the risks are.

But often the government exaggerates the dangers.

In 1985, I was the first reporter to publicly identify White House aide Oliver North as a key figure in arranging secret (and possibly illegal) support for the Nicaraguan Contras. However, when the Times did a follow-up on my AP story, the newspaper acquiesced to White House demands to leave out North's name for his safety. The Times story only referred to an unnamed U.S. government official.

That decision to shield North's identity was probably the safe political play for the Times, rather than join the AP in naming North. The Times editors and reporters surely earned some brownie points with Reagan's White House and likely drew praise for their "patriotism."

But the Times decision had consequences for the then-evolving Iran-Contra scandal in which North was a central figure. By excluding his name, the Times, in effect, protected his ability to continue operating outside the law and in the shadows, rather than put him on the spot for his dubious actions.

In the end, the United States and North's boss, President Reagan, were probably ill served by the Times's capitulation on naming North. The Iran-Contra scandal, which broke into the open in late 1986, represented the worst national security scandal of Reagan's presidency and brought the country close to another impeachment battle.

### **The Lockerbie Bombing**

Yet, to this day, the New York Times and other major U.S. news outlets continue to tilt their coverage of foreign policy and national security issues to fit within the general framework laid out by Official Washington. Rarely do mainstream journalists deviate too far.

It has been common, for instance, for the Times and other media outlets to state as flat fact that Libyan agents, presumably on orders from Col. Muammar Gaddafi, blew Pan Am 103 out of the skies over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988, killing 270 people.

However, anyone who has followed that case knows that the 2001 conviction of Libyan operative Ali al-Megrahi by a special Scottish court was highly dubious, more a political compromise than an act of justice. Another Libyan was found not guilty, and one of the Scottish judges told Dartmouth government professor Dirk Vandewalle about "enormous pressure put on the court to get a conviction."

In 2007, after the testimony of a key witness against Megrahi was discredited, the Scottish



Criminal Cases Review Commission agreed to reconsider the conviction as a grave miscarriage of justice. However, that review was proceeding slowly in 2009 when Scottish authorities released Megrahi on humanitarian grounds, after he was diagnosed with terminal prostate cancer.

Megrahi dropped his appeal in order to gain the early release, but that doesn't mean he was guilty. He has continued to assert his innocence and an objective press corps would reflect the doubts regarding his curious conviction. [For details, see Consortiumnews.com's "[Three Deadly War Myths](#)."] Three Deadly War Myths."]

After all, the Lockerbie case is not simply a historical mystery. It is one of the central reasons why the United States and its NATO allies are insisting that Gaddafi must be removed from power prior to any negotiated settlement of Libya's ongoing civil war.

In pressing this need to oust Gaddafi first, President Barack Obama made a reference to the Lockerbie bombing at his Wednesday news conference, a presumed "fact" that may have set the White House correspondents to nodding their heads but may well not be true.

Which brings us to a key problem regarding American journalists siding with U.S. officials in presenting information to the American people: Is it really "good for the country"?

By now, history should have taught us that it is often better for the American people to know what their government is doing than to be left in the dark where they can be led around by clever propagandists, aided and abetted by a complicit news media.

Indeed, when the Times and other U.S. news outlets act in that way, they may be causing more harm than the propaganda organs of a repressive regime would, since the "news" from those government mouthpieces is discounted by those who read and see it.

Back in the 1980s, I had a phone interview with Gen. Edward Lansdale, the famed CIA propagandist and model for a key character in *The Ugly American*. Lansdale told me that the real trick of propaganda was not to plant stories in an outlet that was known to be controlled (because then a person's defenses were up), but to get the false information into venues that the public thought to be independent.

That way, Lansdale said, the public's defenses would be down and the propaganda would be more effective.

**[For more on these topics, see Robert Parry's *Secrecy & Privilege* and *Neck Deep*, now available in a two-book set for the discount price of only \$19. For details, [click here](#).]**

**Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the**

Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at [neckdeepbook.com](http://neckdeepbook.com). His two previous books, *Secrecy & Privilege: The Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq* and *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth'* are also available there.

---

## Forgetting South Africa's Triumph

South Africa's heroic defeat of white supremacy made the country and its leader, Nelson Mandela, icons across the world. However, the nation's neoliberal economic policies have left many South Africans struggling in poverty and growing despair, as Danny Schechter reports from Durban, South Africa.

By Danny Schechter

June 29, 2011

I got to South Africa before I got there.

I did so through meeting a young woman whose given name was Pony in the tradition of South Africans who call their daughters, "Beautiful" or "Truth" or some other creative appellation.

She was on her way home to a small country town, after a year spent in Cuba where she is in a course teaching scientific sport. She was one of a number of scholarship students traveling on the plane with me from Madrid.

Cuba had adopted the systematic training system or sports institutes used in East Germany and put it to good advantage in its award-winning state-backed athletic program. Now they are sharing their knowledge with other Third World countries

Pony, in her late teens, was one of a large number of foreign students attracted to the idea, and was selected by the Cuban Embassy in Pretoria for the five-year opportunity beginning with a immersive Spanish language course.

She now speaks Spanish pretty well, and knows all the Cuban revolutionary songs and slogans like "Patria O' Muerte, Veneceremos," ("Fatherland or Death, We Will Win") that tens of thousands of Cubans echo at huge rallies.

She laughed when I chanted one at her as we unexpectedly sat next to each other on the large Iberia jet.

As it turned out, I knew more about Cuba's role in supporting South Africa's liberation struggle, a gesture of solidarity that led to Fidel Castro being cheered the loudest of all foreign heads of State who attended Nelson Mandela's inauguration as the first president of a democratic South Africa.

I covered the scene in a film, "Countdown To Freedom," that I made about the historic 1994

election.

Cuba's foreign policy has put a premium on backing revolutionary movements since 1960 and was the only country in the world to openly help South Africa militarily by sending its own troops – "internationalist volunteers" – to Angola where they defeated the apartheid army in a crucial battle that accelerated the process of political change in Southern Africa.

Many Cubans died alongside Angolan soldiers and South African liberation fighters in a war that has been largely forgotten.

Cuba has, in the years since, mellowed in its revolutionary ardor and is in the process of reforming its top-down Socialist economy.

After 19 years of "freedom," post-apartheid South Africa has also cooled its commitment to "struggle politics" and has become more of a "normal" African state, albeit an advanced one economically.

It is now battling corruption within the ranks of its government and the ruling African National Congress (ANC) while coping with enormous challenges to create a new society so that youngsters like Pony who are very ambitious and eager to learn will have a future.

She admitted to me she doesn't know as much about politics or her own history as she would like, and says that's true of many in her generation.

That's in part because the real history is not taught in any detail at the schools or shown with any regularity on South African TV stations that are more into selling than telling by endlessly pumping out sports and popular culture shows.

Kids know more about Mandela than the movement he led, an expression of the celebrity worship that dominates youth culture. On TV here, Oprah is better known than lionesses of the freedom fight, like Albertina Sisulu, revered by many as the Mother of the Nation. She died a month ago.

When I asked a young white South African girl who the ANC leader and Mandela law partner Oliver Tambo was, she said, "you mean the airport guy?"

Johannesburg's principal airport was renamed for Tambo after years of honoring Afrikaner leaders. (This is all more anecdotal evidence for why South Africa needs its own History Channel of the kind being proposed by producer Anant Singh.)

In Durban, where streets are being renamed for other liberation heroes, vandals have blacked out the new street names with paint to protest the change. I was told that people are pissed off in part because it screws up the GPS's in their cars.

(I was thrilled to see a highway named after my old friend and London School of Economics colleague, the South African journalist and feminist heroine Ruth First.)

As it turns out, Pony was flying home on June 16, the annual youth-day holiday marking the anniversary of the Soweto uprising of 1976 in which kids Pony's age and younger revolted against forced instruction in Afrikaans.

(South Africans were scandalized when an iconic picture of a young man carrying a victim of

that police massacre was mocked on Facebook. In the doctored photo, the child who had been shot in the original was portrayed smiling and carrying a bottle of beer,)

At least Youth Day is commemorated, as it was this year with concerts and hip-hop shows.

In Soweto, there was a riot this time when local kids felt excluded and fought their way into a stadium while private cops maced and beat them to the horror of many onlookers.

The event turned into chaos when all that many kids wanted to do was “krump.” the latest street dance craze.

South Africa’s President Jacob Zuma hardly made the ceremony a priority, showing up three hours late after most of the crowd had left in the company of Julius Malema, the controversial head of the ANC’s Youth League.

Malema claims to be a youth leader but he is more like a demagogic politician who has learned that the more outrageous his statements, the more “militant” his pose, the more publicity he gets. Sadly the media can’t get enough of his provocations.

He and his League are certainly not doing much of a practical sort to improve education or create jobs for tens of thousands of unemployed and perhaps unemployable young people who cheer his rhetoric while being stuck in lives of crime and desperation.

They are not visible in the fight against pervasive child abuse, youth homelessness and even starvation in South Africa.

Here in Durban, one newspaper says “the youth today mistake nastiness, name-calling. crass materialism and the sale of political office to the highest bidder for revolutionary thought.” Some of those demanding more youth leadership are being dismissed as “Gucci revolutionaries.”

Their agenda to nationalize the mines without compensation, a demand rejected by the ANC, is seen as radical to some but analysts think it is a ploy to shake down patronage payments out of worried business leaders, some of whom have already made “donations.”

Even if you agree with it ideologically, the government’s track record in poorly running industries so-called parastatals – does not inspire confidence.

A new book, *Zuma’s Own Goal*, (Africa World Press) picturing the president playing soccer on the cover, details the miserable failures of the ANC’s poverty-reduction strategies, arguing its continuing loyalty to neo-liberal policies are responsible for a still widening gap between rich and poor.

Another less academic work, Alexander Parker’s *50 People Who Have Stuffed Up South Africa*, is merciless in denouncing the pathetic job done by the electricity monopoly ESKOM.

Does the government have the chops to run the mines? Apparently not!

South Africa was rebranded globally though last year’s World Cup, which brought the country so much world attention and its people so much good cheer.

But now, the people are left with enormous debts to pay off for the construction of fancy

stadiums that are barely used. The global financial crisis has also now hit home with unemployment and poverty up and foreign investments down.

The “Rainbow Nation,” the hope of so many after the fall of apartheid, faces enormous challenges from structural economic issues that are increasingly intractable, even as waves of new protests mount against a lack of government services.

My new friend Pony seems oblivious to this swirl of contradictions but is bound to be affected by them. I did appreciate her gift of a Che Guevara key ring.

**News Dissector Danny Schechter produced the South Africa Now TV series and directed several films about Nelson Mandela. Comments to [dissector@mediachannel.org](mailto:dissector@mediachannel.org).**

---

## Make-or-Break Mid-Year Fund Drive

Several of our long-running journalistic projects from the October Surprise hostage/election scandal of 1980 to the ongoing wars in the Muslim world are at crucial stages, and we need your help to see them through. We are setting the goal for our mid-year fund drive at a minimum of \$25,000.

By Robert Parry

June 29, 2011

Regarding the October Surprise case allegations that Republicans set in motion Ronald Reagan’s landslide win in 1980 by undermining President Jimmy Carter’s efforts to free 52 American hostages then held in Iran I have just learned of two new promising avenues for resolving this important political mystery, once and for all.

As for the conflicts in the Muslim world, we have stepped up our examination of the propaganda and lies that have prolonged the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel/Palestine and Libya and that could touch off a new conflict with Iran. Currently, former CIA analyst Ray McGovern is providing first-hand accounts of the seaborne efforts to challenge Israel’s blockade of Gaza.

But this reporting costs money and we are dependent on you, our readers, for the continuation of what we do.

Here are the four ways you can help:

**First option:** You can make a donation [by credit card](#) at the Web site or [by check](#) to Consortium for Independent Journalism (CIJ); 2200 Wilson Blvd.; Suite 102-231; Arlington VA 22201. Or you can use PayPal (our account is named after our e-mail address “consortnew@aol.com”).

(Our parent organization, Consortium for Independent Journalism, is a 501-c-3 non-profit, so your contributions can be tax-deductible.)

**For donations of \$50 or more, we are also offering, as thank-you gifts, DVDs not available anywhere else.**

For donations of \$50 or more, you can select either a DVD of Robert Parry's FRONTLINE documentary, "The Election Held Hostage," or a two-DVD set of the closed-door congressional debriefing of Israeli intelligence officer Ari Ben-Menashe (never before seen publicly).

The DVDs date back two decades, to 1991 when there was a brief opportunity to pry loose important secrets about the Reagan-Bush era. Just e-mail us your choice at [consortnew@aol.com](mailto:consortnew@aol.com).

For a donation of \$100 or more, you can get both gifts. (For more on the historical significance of these DVDs, see "[A Two-Decade Detour into Empire](#).")

Or you can ask for an autographed copy of one of my last three books *Lost History*, *Secrecy & Privilege* or *Neck Deep*. Just follow up your donation with an e-mail expressing your choice.

**Second:** if you'd rather spread out your support in smaller amounts, you can sign up for a monthly donation. With contributions of \$10 or more a month, you can qualify for war correspondent Don North's DVD, "Yesterday's Enemies" about the lives of former Salvadoran guerrillas. For details, [click here](#).

(If you sign up for a monthly donation and want to get Don's DVD, remember to contact us at [consortnew@aol.com](mailto:consortnew@aol.com). If you prefer, we can substitute Robert Parry's "The Election Held Hostage," also on DVD. Just ask.)

**Third option:** you can take advantage of our deep discount for the two-book set of Robert Parry's *Secrecy & Privilege* and *Neck Deep* (co-authored with Sam and Nat Parry). The sale price for the set is only \$19, postage included. For details, [click here](#).

**Fourth:** you can help us close out our warehouse space by buying full boxes of *Secrecy & Privilege* or *Neck Deep* for only \$59. Each carton contains 28 paperbacks, or you can ask that we give you a mix of half and half, 14 of each.

You can give the books away as gifts or resell them for your own fundraiser. (One reader placed an order for her book club, a great idea since each book costs only about \$2.)

For details about this bulk book order, [click here](#) and scroll down to the \$59 offer. (If we can move just 15 more cartons, we can put the remainder in my basement and save nearly \$200 a month on warehouse space.)

As always, thanks for your support.

Robert Parry, Editor

**Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. He founded Consortiumnews.com in 1995 as the Internet's first investigative magazine. He saw it as a way to combine modern technology and old-fashioned journalism to counter the increasing triviality of the mainstream U.S. news media.**

---

---

# The Torturers' Memoirs

The banality of evil is a common way of explaining why non-descript bureaucrats let their careerism and cowardice lead them into the practice of torture and other human rights crimes endorsed by their superiors. Yet, if these banal operatives are American, they don't expect to get punished, as David Swanson notes in this guest essay.

By David Swanson

June 29, 2011

On Sept. 18, 2009, seven former heads of the CIA publicly told President Barack Obama not to prosecute CIA torturers. Obama had already told Attorney General Eric Holder not to prosecute CIA torturers on April 16, 2009. On Sept. 18, Holder publicly reassured the CIA.

Thus, the coast was clear. The books started flowing. George W. Bush and John Yoo put their books out in 2010, Donald Rumsfeld in 2011, and Dick Cheney's later this summer.

Just as the torture techniques drifted down the chain of command from these dealers in death to the rank-and-file, so too the book contracts. The cogs in the machine are now documenting their bit parts in the past decade's torture epidemic with pride and publishing deals.

Witness *The Interrogator: An Education* by Glenn L. Carle, the story of how a none-too-bright, self-centered, insecure, careerist bureaucrat with weak principles, a fragile ego, a troubled marriage, and no interrogation experience, but the ability to actually speak Arabic, was chosen to lead the interrogating (or "interviewing") of an innocent man the CIA bone-headedly believed to be a "top al Qaeda terrorist" when they kidnapped him off a street and flew him to an undisclosed location outside any rule of law.

As to who got an education in the process of living, writing or reading this book, your guess is as good as mine.

You may have spotted the author in the media last week, since he managed to get James Risen at the New York Times to print his revelation that the Bush White House had asked the CIA to investigate American blogger Juan Cole.

That story is not in the book, but was apparently timed to boost the book's sales. Who knows what other nasty anecdotes Carle is sitting on in hopes of productively producing them when and if he writes a sequel. Even with that

prospect, let's hope fervently that he does not.

What an awful book! What an awful example of how to live!

Yes, Carle asserts what all of the experts agree on: torture and abuse are not useful interrogation techniques. The most effective tools for eliciting useful information are the legal ones. But Carle simply asserts this. He provides no new evidence to back it up – not that there was a shortage.

Carle is like a veteran soldier joining in demonstrations against the war he was part of but still talking about how he “served” his country.

“I made it possible for American children to sleep safe at night,” he brags. How exactly did he do this? Why, by participating in criminal operations that enraged billions of people against the United States of America. Good going, Glenn!

Carle discusses, by way of background, the “victims of the Iran-Contra scandal,” by which he means not the men, women and children illegally killed, but the criminals prosecuted or otherwise inconvenienced.

When Carle was yanked out of his cubicle to employ his linguistic skills in interrogating a kidnapping victim, he was not long in coming to view himself as the victim of most concern to the reader. He had concerns about what he was being sent into, but he “was not about to question the apparent basis for my involvement in a very important case.”

“Suppose our partners do something to CAPTUS [the kidnapped man] that I consider unacceptable?” he asked a superior.

“Well, then, you just walk out of the room, if you feel you should. Then you won't have to see anything, will you? You will not have been party to anything.”

Wow, with that defense, get-away drivers aren't guilty of robberies anymore. And that defense was plenty good enough for Carle. He was largely interested in venting his own emotions, he tells us, just as he must have been when composing the book:

“Every American – and perhaps we in the CIA more than anyone – was outraged and determined to destroy the jihadists who had killed our countrymen [on 9-11] and had been attacking our countrymen for years. I was being sent to the front lines, as it were. I was going to be part of the avenging and protective hidden hand of the CIA, striking al Qaeda for us all. I WANTED to interrogate the S.O.B. and play a key role in our counter-terrorism operations.”

I for one would prefer he had settled for tweeting a photo of his penis.



Carle presented himself with the important moral dilemma of whether to screw up this immoral operation or do it right:

“This conversation – this case – was clearly one of the key moments in my career; I needed to GET IT RIGHT, to exercise refined judgment, to see and act clearly where values and goals conflicted, in the murky areas where there might be no right choice, but one had to choose and act nonetheless.”

Why was resigning and going public at any moment not always an available option?

Carle read one of John Yoo’s torture memos, thought it was illegal, and went along anyway:

“I recall thinking when I read it (a view shared by many colleagues at the time [yet, not a one of whom said a damn word to the American people about it]) that it was tendentious and intellectually shoddy, an obvious bit of hack work, a bit of legal sophistry to justify what the administration wanted done, not a guideline and interpretation of the spirit and intention of the laws and statutes that had guided the Agency for decades. . . .

“Challenging a finding, though, was, as the expression goes, way beyond my pay grade, and in any event, would be viewed as presumptuous and out of place at the moment.”

God forbid!

“We were talking about what some, what I, might consider the torture of a helpless man,” Carle recalls.

“What about the Geneva Convention?” he asked his superior.

“Which flag do you serve?” was the reply.

“I flew out of Dulles two days later,” Carle recounts. He had chosen knowingly and inexcusably to become a cog in a machine of kidnapping, torture and death.

Was it really rage over 9-11 that drove Carle onward? He tells us that when the planes hit the towers, he was too busy being petty and self-centered on the telephone to be bothered to watch. He then tried to go shopping and couldn’t get clerks in stores to stop obsessing over 9-11 long enough to help him.

Carle’s wife inexplicably became an alcoholic, resulting in this touching scene:

“One evening I was working on the computer in the bedroom, not wanting to think about work, or home; I just wanted to turn off my brain [how would one tell?]. Sally was cooking in the kitchen. I heard a plate crash. I paid no

attention and was barely aware of it.

“Ten minutes later I wandered into the kitchen to get a soda from the refrigerator. Sally lay unconscious on the floor. I was angry, disdainful. I decided to leave her there to sleep it off. I stepped over her into a huge and growing pool of blood. It covered half the kitchen floor. ‘Oh no! Sally! What have you done?’”

Carle describes his interrogation of “CAPTUS,” whom he knew to have been kidnapped and who he knew was being held outside of any legal system. Carle repeatedly threatened him with harsh treatment by others.

The interrogation was helped by Carle’s preference for humane tactics, even while threatening others, as well as by his openness to recognizing the man’s innocence. But it was hampered by the CIA’s incredibly incompetent failure to get Carle access to the documents that had been seized along with his victim, and by the CIA’s refusal to consider the possibility that CAPTUS was not who they thought he was.

Carle took a “don’t ask/don’t tell” approach to the question of whether CAPTUS was being tortured in between periods of interrogation at the first location where Carle interrogated him. Carle did ask, but the CIA blacked out in the book whatever he tried to tell us, about what was done to CAPTUS upon relocating him to a different lawless prison.

When Bush gave a speech pretending to oppose torture, Carle “found this speech infuriating. I knew what we were doing; our actions soiled what it meant to be an American, perverted our oath, and betrayed our flag. Lawyers could argue our actions were legal. But I had lived what we were doing. I knew otherwise.”

Did Carle quit and go public? Of course not.

Did any of his colleagues? Of course not.

Carle sat in on meetings discussing blatantly false propaganda aimed at launching the 2003 invasion of Iraq. He saw through the lies.

Did he then, in that moment when a million lives could be spared, quit and go public? Of course not.

Carle concludes his book by opposing prosecuting anyone involved in the crimes he was involved in. “Punishment metes out no justice,” he claims.

Justice, these days, is presumably measured in book sales.

**David Swanson is the author of *War Is A Lie* at <http://warisalie.org>**

---

---

# A Land of Haves and Have-Nots

Like much of the U.S. news media, the Washington press corps likes a good diversion from the real problems facing the country, such as having to deal with new research confirming that the United States is dividing into a land of a few haves and many have-nots, a crisis that Michael Winship addresses in this guest essay.

By Michael Winship

June 28, 2011

Washington, D.C., is a Potemkin village of alabaster and marble where the perpetually stalled and broken escalators of the city's subway system are a perfect metaphor for the government's inability to generate positive, upward movement.

Yet with all the calumnies that are committed on an hourly basis behind the facade of our nation's capital, what had local media there outraged a few days ago? Lemonade.

Seems a TV news cameraman caught a county inspector in an affluent Washington suburb trying to shut down a kid's lemonade stand just outside the Congressional Country Club during the recent US Open.

And if that wasn't bad enough, he slapped the enterprising tikes – who were raising money to fight pediatric cancer – with a \$500 fine.

As the June 18 *Washington Post* reported, for a while it seemed “the all-American rite of passage might instead become a master class in government overreach,” yet public anger was so immediate and vociferous the fine was quickly revoked and the youngsters permitted to reopen down a side street a few yards away.

But these weren't your garden variety, neighborhood moppets, selling drinks from Mom's Tupperware pitcher on a card table near the sidewalk.

For one thing, according to the *Post*, “There was a tent for shade, five plastic coolers, and a couple of industrial steel ones packed with ice and cans of Coke and Diet Coke. For the fundraiser, the kids' parents had also secured cases of bottled lemonade wholesale..”

For another, among those helping out and defending their boys and girls were the former head of Lockheed Martin and the Red Cross and members of the Marriott

family.

“When something’s right you stand up for your beliefs,” Carrie Marriott, wife of the hotel heir, said. “That’s what America’s about. It’s about free enterprise. It’s about taking an idea, making it happen, and making it successful.”

Coincidentally, the very next day, the *Post* reported that total compensation was up an average of more than 20 percent last year for the Washington area’s highest paid executives.

Among them, Ms. Marriott’s father-in-law, J. Willard Marriott, Jr., who in 2010 earned nearly \$10 million. The report was part of the newspaper’s investigation of so-called “breakaway wealth” among the nation’s richest.

“The evolution of executive grandeur – from very comfortable to jet setting – reflects one of the primary reasons that the gap between those with the highest incomes and everyone else is widening,” according to the *Post*.

“For years, statistics have depicted growing income disparity in the United States, and it has reached levels not seen since the Great Depression.

“In 2008, the last year for which data are available, for example, the top 0.1 percent of earners took in more than 10 percent of the personal income in the United States, including capital gains, and the top 1 percent took in more than 20 percent...

“Other recent research, moreover, indicates that executive compensation at the nation’s largest firms has roughly quadrupled in real terms since the 1970s, even as pay for 90 percent of America has stalled.”

The reasons? “Defenders of executive pay argue, among other things, that the rising compensation is deserved because firms are larger today. Moreover, this group says, more packages today are based on stock and options, which pay more when the chief executive is successful.

“Critics, on other hand, argue that executive salaries have jumped because corporate boards were simply too generous, or more broadly, because greed became more socially acceptable.”

The enormity of this increase in executive compensation is reinforced by a new study that examines the proxy statements and financial filings of the companies that make up the Standard & Poor’s 500-stock index.

Issued by the independent research firm R.G. Associates and titled “S. & P. 500 Executive Pay: Bigger Than... Whatever You Think It is,” the report finds that among the 483 companies they were able to analyze, the pay of 2,591 executives

was up 13.9 percent in 2010.

Total, before taxes: \$14.3 billion, almost equal to the GDP of Tajikistan, population: more than seven million.

At 158 of the companies, more was paid to those in charge than was shelled out for outside audit fees. And 32 of them paid more in top salaries than they paid in corporate income taxes.

As it turns out, this is not a uniquely American phenomenon.

Despite the ongoing, international financial malaise, the British newspaper *The Guardian* notes that, "The globe's richest have now recouped the losses they suffered after the 2008 banking crisis. They are richer than ever, and there are more of them – nearly 11 million – than before the recession struck.

The annual wealth report by Merrill Lynch and Capgemini finds that the assets of these so-called "high net worth individuals" reached \$42.7 trillion in 2010, a rise of nearly ten percent from the previous year at a time when, as *The Guardian* observed, "austerity budgets were implemented by many governments in the developed world."

More than half of the world's richest live in Japan, Germany and here in the United States.

The annual "Executive Excess" survey from the progressive Institute for Policy Studies last September found that back in the Seventies, only a handful of top American executives earned more than 30 times what their workers made.

In 2009, "CEO's of major U.S. corporations averaged 263 times the average compensation of American workers."

And a *USA Today* analysis earlier this year found that while median CEO pay jumped 27 percent last year, workers in private industry saw their salaries grow by just 2.1 percent.

So how are many of those corporations addressing this gross inequity? By trying to cover it up.

Last year's Dodd-Frank financial reform legislation requires publicly traded companies to report the median of annual total compensation for workers, the total compensation of the CEO, and the ratio between the two.

Big business has lobbied loudly against the reporting requirement, and on Wednesday, the House Financial Services Committee voted 33-21 to repeal it.

The bill to repeal is sponsored by rookie Congresswoman Nan Hayworth, R-New York, whose official biography cites “reducing regulatory burdens on businesses” as one of her top priorities.

Among her leading 2010 campaign contributors: leveraged buyout specialists Vestar Capital Partners, distressed debt investors Elliott Management and financial services giant Credit Suisse. Not to mention the anti-taxation Club for Growth.

Ernest Hemingway claimed that when F. Scott Fitzgerald once said to him, “The rich are different from you and me,” he archly replied, “Yes, they have more money.”

Whether it’s true or not, the Hemingway in the story got it wrong. The rich not only have more money, they have more power, more clout – and more to hide.

**Michael Winship is senior writing fellow at Demos, president of the Writers Guild of America, East, and former senior writer of “Bill Moyers Journal” on PBS.**

---

## Gaza and Thoughts of a Starving Ireland

**Exclusive:** Former CIA analyst Ray McGovern has joined with other humanitarians in a small flotilla determined to sail from Athens to Gaza in a challenge to Israel’s embargo of 1.5 million Palestinians trapped on that narrow strip of land. Awaiting departure, McGovern contemplates the forces of past and present that brought him to his decision.

By Ray McGovern

June 28, 2011

Thinking further here in Athens about how it came to be that I joined the passengers on “The Audacity of Hope” and why I feel so strongly about the oppression in Gaza, it struck me that my Irish genes (as well as my theology) may be playing a role.

During the mid-19th Century potato famine, when the starving Irish were being treated in much the same way as Gazans are today, how much my ancestors must have wished for some sign that someone abroad actually cared about them.

Did no one know how the Irish were being deliberately left to starve to death, while the English were making a killing by exporting Irish meat and produce? Did

no one care?

How much in need of support, if only moral support, were they? How few had the money to sail from Queenstown (Kobh) or Belfast in the hope of living, and perhaps even coming to live well, in America?

How they must have longed to see sails of a different spelling or flags of a people committed to Justice voyaging to show the emaciated Irish that someone from abroad cared about their plight. Lacking then was any meaningful expression of international solidarity.

A century and a half later, Israeli officials have actually bragged about “putting Gazans on a strict diet” – in other words, condemning them to a subsistence living just barely above the point where they would starve and perhaps subject Israel to charges of ethnic cleansing by starvation. But this attitude must not stand today in Gaza.

### **Letter Carriers**

Thankfully, four of my great-grandfathers survived the Irish famine. And both my grandfathers – as well as my grandmothers – had the audacity of hope, so to speak, to leave Ireland for America. My grandfathers found work in the U.S. Post Office – both of them.

My mother’s father, Lawrence Gough, eventually became a supervisor in one of the branches in the Bronx. My father’s father, Philip McGovern, became a proud letter carrier in the central Bronx neighborhood into which my father, my five siblings, and I were eventually born – and where I spent my first 22 years.

Phil McGovern, the letter carrier. It struck me that, in carrying letters of support to Gaza, I am trying to be faithful not only to a faith tradition with the inescapable mandate that we “Do Justice,” but also to the Post Office and letter-carrier tradition that I inherited from my grandfathers.

As our Irish cousins like to say: “Yes, I do believe so.”

My theology can be summed up in the words of Dean Brackley, S.J., now in El Salvador:

“Everything depends on who you think God is, and how God feels when little people are pushed around.”

**Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He served as an Army officer and intelligence analyst for 30 years, and is co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).**

---

# How Greed Destroys America

**Exclusive:** New studies show that America's corporate chieftains are living like kings while the middle class stagnates and shrivels. Yet, the Tea Party and other anti-tax forces remain determined to protect the historically low tax rates of the rich and push the burden of reducing the federal debt onto the rest of society, a curious approach explored by Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

June 28, 2011

If the "free-market" theories of Ayn Rand and Milton Friedman were correct, the United States of the last three decades should have experienced a golden age in which the lavish rewards flowing to the titans of industry would have transformed the society into a vibrant force for beneficial progress.

After all, it has been faith in "free-market economics" as a kind of secular religion that has driven U.S. government policies from the emergence of Ronald Reagan through the neo-liberalism of Bill Clinton into the brave new world of House Republican budget chairman Paul Ryan.

By slashing income tax rates to historically low levels and only slightly boosting them under President Clinton before dropping them again under George W. Bush the U.S. government essentially incentivized greed or what Ayn Rand liked to call "the virtue of selfishness."

Further, by encouraging global "free trade" and removing regulations like the New Deal's Glass-Steagall separation of commercial and investment banks, the government also got out of the way of "progress," even if that "progress" has had crushing results for many middle-class Americans.

True, not all the extreme concepts of author/philosopher Ayn Rand and economist Milton Friedman have been implemented there are still programs like Social Security and Medicare to get rid of but their "magic of the market" should be glowing by now.

We should be able to assess whether laissez-faire capitalism is superior to the mixed public-private economy that dominated much of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The old notion was that a relatively affluent middle class would contribute to the creation of profitable businesses because average people could afford to buy



consumer goods, own their own homes and take an annual vacation with the kids. That “middle-class system,” however, required intervention by the government as the representative of the everyman.

Beyond building a strong infrastructure for growth highways, airports, schools, research programs, a safe banking system, a common defense, etc. the government imposed a progressive tax structure that helped pay for these priorities and also discouraged the accumulation of massive wealth.

After all, the threat to a healthy democracy from concentrated wealth had been known to American leaders for generations.

A century ago, it was Republican President Theodore Roosevelt who advocated for a progressive income tax and an estate tax. In the 1930s, it was Democratic President Franklin Roosevelt, who dealt with the economic and societal carnage that under-regulated financial markets inflicted on the nation during the Great Depression.

With those hard lessons learned, the federal government acted on behalf of the common citizen to limit Wall Street’s freewheeling ways and to impose high tax rates on excessive wealth.

So, during Dwight Eisenhower’s presidency of the 1950s, the marginal tax rate on the top tranche of earnings for the richest Americans was about 90 percent. When Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, the top rate was still around 70 percent.

### **Discouraging Greed**

Greed was not simply frowned upon; it was discouraged.

Put differently, government policy was to maintain some degree of egalitarianism within the U.S. political-economic system. And to a remarkable degree, the strategy worked.

The American middle class became the envy of the world, with otherwise average folk earning enough money to support their families comfortably and enjoy some pleasures of life that historically had been reserved only for the rich.

Without doubt, there were serious flaws in the U.S. system, especially due to the legacies of racism and sexism. And it was when the federal government responded to powerful social movements that demanded those injustices be addressed in the 1960s and 1970s, that an opening was created for right-wing politicians to exploit resentments among white men, particularly in the South.

By posing as populists hostile to “government social engineering,” the Right succeeded in duping large numbers of middle-class Americans into seeing their

own interests and their “freedom” as in line with corporate titans who also decried federal regulations, including those meant to protect average citizens, like requiring seat belts in cars and discouraging cigarette smoking.

Amid the sluggish economy of the 1970s, the door swung open wider for the transformation of American society that had been favored by the likes of Ayn Rand and Milton Friedman, putting the supermen of industry over the everyman of democracy.

Friedman tested out his “free-market” theories in the socio-economic laboratories of brutal military dictatorships in Latin America, most famously collaborating with Chile’s Gen. Augusto Pinochet who crushed political opponents with torture and assassinations.

Ayn Rand became the darling of the American Right with her books, such as *Atlas Shrugged*, promoting the elitist notion that brilliant individuals represented the engine of society and that government efforts to lessen social inequality or help the average citizen were unjust and unwise.

### **The Pied Piper**

Yet, while Rand and Friedman gave some intellectual heft to “free-market” theories, Ronald Reagan proved to be the perfect pied piper for guiding millions of working Americans in a happy dance toward their own serfdom.

In his first inaugural address, Reagan declared that “government is the problem” and many middle-class whites cheered.

However, what Reagan’s policies meant in practice was a sustained assault on the middle class: the busting of unions, the export of millions of decent-paying jobs, and the transfer of enormous wealth to the already rich. The tax rates for the wealthiest were slashed about in half. Greed was incentivized.

Ironically, the Reagan era came just as technology much of it created by government-funded research was on the cusp of creating extraordinary wealth that could have been shared with average Americans. Those benefits instead accrued to the top one or two percent.

The rich also benefited from the off-shoring of jobs, exploiting cheap foreign labor and maximizing profits. The only viable way for the super-profits of “free trade” to be shared with the broader U.S. population was through taxes on the rich. However, Reagan and his anti-government true-believers made sure that those taxes were kept at historically low levels.

The Ayn Rand/Milton Friedman theories may have purported to believe that the

“free market” would somehow generate benefits for the society as a whole, but their ideas really represented a moralistic frame which held that it was somehow right that the wealth of the society should go to its “most productive” members and that the rest of us were essentially “parasites.”

Apparently, special people like Rand also didn't need to be encumbered by philosophical consistency. Though a fierce opponent of the welfare state, Rand secretly accepted the benefits of Medicare after she was diagnosed with lung cancer, according to one of her assistants.

She connived to have Evva Pryor, an employee of Rand's law firm, arrange Social Security and Medicare benefits for Ann O'Connor, Ayn Rand using an altered spelling of her first name and her husband's last name.

In *100 Voices: An Oral History of Ayn Rand*, Scott McConnell, founder of the Ayn Rand Institute's media department, quoted Pryor as justifying Rand's move by saying: “Doctors cost a lot more money than books earn and she could be totally wiped out.” Yet, it didn't seem to matter much if “average” Americans were wiped out.

Essentially, the Right was promoting the Social Darwinism of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, albeit in chic new clothes. The Gilded Age from a century ago was being recreated behind Reagan's crooked smile, Clinton's good-ole-boy charm and George W. Bush's Texas twang.

Whenever the political descendants of Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt tried to steer the nation back toward programs that would benefit the middle class and demand greater sacrifice from the super-rich, the wheel was grabbed again by politicians and pundits shouting the epithets, “tax-and-spend” and “class warfare.”

Many average Americans were pacified by reminders of how Reagan made them feel good with his rhetoric about “the shining city on the hill.”

The Rand/Friedman elitism also remains alive with today's arguments from Republicans who protest the idea of raising taxes on businessmen and entrepreneurs because they are the ones who “create the jobs,” even if there is little evidence that they are actually creating American jobs.

Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wisconsin, who is leading the fight to replace Medicare with a voucher system that envisions senior citizens buying health insurance from profit-making companies, cites Ayn Rand as his political inspiration.

## **A Land for Billionaires**

The consequences of several decades of Reaganism and its related ideas are now apparent. Wealth has been concentrated at the top with billionaires living extravagant lives that not even monarchs could have envisioned, while the middle class shrinks and struggles, with one everyman after another being shoved down into the lower classes and into poverty.

Millions of Americans forego needed medical care because they can't afford health insurance; millions of young people, burdened by college loans, crowd back in with their parents; millions of trained workers settle for low-paying jobs; millions of families skip vacations and other simple pleasures of life.

Beyond the unfairness, there is the macro-economic problem which comes from massive income disparity. A healthy economy is one where the vast majority people can buy products, which can then be manufactured more cheaply, creating a positive cycle of profits and prosperity.

With Americans unable to afford the new car or the new refrigerator, American corporations see their domestic profit margins squeezed. So they are compensating for the struggling U.S. economy by expanding their businesses abroad in developing markets, but they also keep their profits there.

There are now economic studies that confirm what Americans have been sensing in their own lives, though the mainstream U.S. news media tends to attribute these trends to cultural changes, rather than political choices.

For instance, the Washington Post published a lengthy front-page article on June 19, describing the findings of researchers who gained access to economic data from the Internal Revenue Service which revealed which categories of taxpayers were making the high incomes.

To the surprise of some observers, the big bucks were not flowing primarily to athletes or actors or even stock market speculators. America's new super-rich were mostly corporate chieftains.

As the Post's Peter Whoriskey framed the story, U.S. business underwent a cultural transformation from the 1970s when chief executives believed more in sharing the wealth than they do today.

The article cites a U.S. dairy company CEO from the 1970s, Kenneth J. Douglas, who earned the equivalent of about \$1 million a year. He lived comfortably but not ostentatiously. Douglas had an office on the second floor of a milk distribution center, and he turned down raises because he felt it would hurt morale at the plant, Whoriskey reported.

However, just a few decades later, Gregg L. Engles, the current CEO of the same

company, Dean Foods, averages about 10 times what Douglas made. Engles works in a glittering high-rise office building in Dallas; owns a vacation estate in Vail, Colorado; belongs to four golf clubs; and travels in a \$10 million corporate jet. He apparently has little concern about what his workers think.

“The evolution of executive grandeur – from very comfortable to jet-setting – reflects one of the primary reasons that the gap between those with the highest incomes and everyone else is widening,” Whoriskey reported.

“For years, statistics have depicted growing income disparity in the United States, and it has reached levels not seen since the Great Depression. In 2008, the last year for which data are available, for example, the top 0.1 percent of earners took in more than 10 percent of the personal income in the United States, including capital gains, and the top 1 percent took in more than 20 percent.

“But economists had little idea who these people were. How many were Wall Street financiers? Sports stars? Entrepreneurs? Economists could only speculate, and debates over what is fair stalled. Now a mounting body of economic research indicates that the rise in pay for company executives is a critical feature in the widening income gap.”

### **Jet-Setting Execs**

The Post article continued: “The largest single chunk of the highest-income earners, it turns out, are executives and other managers in firms, according to a landmark analysis of tax returns by economists Jon Bakija, Adam Cole and Bradley T. Heim. These are not just executives from Wall Street, either, but from companies in even relatively mundane fields such as the milk business.

“The top 0.1 percent of earners make about \$1.7 million or more, including capital gains. Of those, 41 percent were executives, managers and supervisors at non-financial companies, according to the analysis, with nearly half of them deriving most of their income from their ownership in privately-held firms.

“An additional 18 percent were managers at financial firms or financial professionals at any sort of firm. In all, nearly 60 percent fell into one of those two categories. Other recent research, moreover, indicates that executive compensation at the nation’s largest firms has roughly quadrupled in real terms since the 1970s, even as pay for 90 percent of America has stalled.”

While these new statistics are striking suggesting a broader problem with high-level greed than might have been believed the Post ducked any political analysis that would have laid blame on Ronald Reagan and various right-wing economic theories.

In a follow-up [editorial](#) on June 26, the Post lamented the nation's growing income inequality but shied away from proposing higher marginal tax rates on the rich or faulting the past several decades of low tax rates. Instead, the Post suggested perhaps going after deductions on employer-provided health insurance and mortgage interest, tax breaks that also help middle-class families.

It appears that in Official Washington and inside the major U.S. news media the idea of learning from past presidents, including the Roosevelts and Dwight Eisenhower, is a non-starter. Instead there's an unapologetic embrace of the theories of Ayn Rand and Milton Friedman, an affection that can pop out at unusual moments.

Addressing a CNBC "Fast Money" panel last year, movie director Oliver Stone was taken aback when one CNBC talking head gushed how Stone's "Wall Street" character Gordon Gecko had been an inspiration, known for his famous comment, "Greed is good." A perplexed Stone responded that Gecko, who made money by breaking up companies and eliminating jobs, was meant to be a villain.

However, the smug attitude of the CNBC stock picker represented a typical tribute to Ronald Reagan's legacy. After all, greed did not simply evolve from some vague shift in societal attitudes, as the Post suggests. Rather, it was stimulated and rewarded by Reagan's tax policies.

Reagan's continued popularity also makes it easier for today's "no-tax-increase" crowd to demand only spending cuts as a route to reducing the federal debt, an ocean of red ink largely created by the tax cuts of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush.

Tea Partiers, in demanding even more cuts in government help for average citizens and even more tax cuts for the rich, represent only the most deluded part of middle-class America. A recent poll of Americans rated Reagan the greatest U.S. president ever, further enshrining his anti-government message in the minds of many Americans, even those in the battered middle class.

When a majority of Americans voted for Republicans in Election 2010 and with early polls pointing toward a likely GOP victory in the presidential race of 2012 it's obvious that large swaths of the population have no sense of what's in store for them as they position their own necks under the boots of corporate masters.

The only answer to this American crisis would seem to be a reenergized and democratized federal government fighting for average citizens and against the greedy elites. But after several decades of Reaganism, with the "free market" religion the new gospel of the political/media classes that seems a difficult

outcome to achieve.

[For more on these topics, see Robert Parry's *Secrecy & Privilege* and *Neck Deep*, now available in a two-book set for the discount price of only \$19. For details, [click here.](#)]

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at [neckdeepbook.com](http://neckdeepbook.com). His two previous books, *Secrecy & Privilege: The Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq* and *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth'* are also available there.

---

## The Siege Tour of Sarajevo

As summer comes and tourists again flock to Europe to explore its elegant cities with their ancient culture and their histories of brutal conflicts, Sarajevo offers a unique look into the madness of modern war, something many Europeans had hoped they left behind more than a half century ago. As photo-journalist Ted Lieverman reports, one entrepreneur has turned curiosity about the brutal Yugoslav civil war into a special tour.

By Ted Lieverman

June 27, 2011

We look down from the hills on the intersection of Zmaja od Bosne and one of the broad cross-streets, framed between multistoried buildings.

"That's Sniper Alley," says Skender. "From up here, the Serbs shot civilians trying to cross the open space." It looks like an easy shot for a trained sniper with a scope.



Skender Hatibovic is giving me a special tour of Sarajevo, his home city, which he calls the Siege Tour. Instead of churches and museums, we visit the spots made memorable by the 1992-1995 siege of this capital city of Bosnia-Herzegovina during the Balkan War in which Yugoslavia imploded and expired.

During that war, Sarajevo, nestled in the valley, was exposed to the military force created by ethnic Serbs living in Bosnia, who held the surrounding hills and poured artillery, mortar and sniper fire onto the civilian population. As many as 10,000 were killed during the siege, 50,000 wounded.

I meet Skender in his office in Bascarsija, the heart of the oldest part of the city. For the next 3 ½ hours, we travel in his SUV while he gives me a detailed account of the siege. He points out the sites usually skipped over in the Chamber of Commerce tours.



Here is the Markale Market, where 68 died during a shelling in February 1994 and another 38 died in the market across the street in August 1995, he says. Here is the innocuous little house which hid the start of the tunnel built under the airport to smuggle arms to the ragtag Bosnian army defending the city.

Here is the Jewish cemetery in the hills south of the city, where defenders held one edge of the graveyard, Bosnian Serbs the other, and the center was mined (Skender assures me it has been completely cleared of munitions).





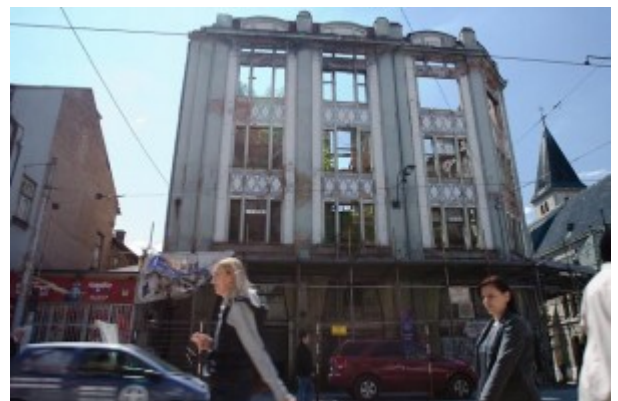
Looking down from the cemetery, Skender points out how precarious life was in the city, how vulnerable they were to the almost continuous shelling. Skender was 8 year old at the time, living with his family in the city.

Some residents foresaw war and left in convoys; his family stayed. Too many people, he says, never imagined a real war could come, and so few preparations were made. For many months after the shelling started, Skender slept in the basement.

Years later, he started running a group of youth hostels, and his guests would ask about the siege. Almost four years ago, he started offering tours to his guests.

The tours became successful and he founded [Sarajevo Funky Tours](#) to provide his services to the public at large. He estimates he's given about 500 tours so far.

Sarajevo itself has been transformed since the war, its reconstruction fueled by international donations. Most buildings have been repaired or rebuilt, the tourists fill the old city cafes and restaurants. One might think the war was a distant memory – except that the aftershocks still reverberate throughout the country.



The Serb sector of Bosnia, which styles itself the Republic Srpska, does not cooperate with the federal government, and wants instead to hold a referendum among its population to declare the Bosnian government lacks the authority to prosecute Bosnian Serbs for war crimes.

Only the strongest threats from the UN's High Representative and the European Union finally dissuaded the Bosnian Serbs from creating a new crisis. In the meantime, the government seems unable to combat corruption and unemployment.

Two weeks after I left Sarajevo, the Serbian government arrested Ratko Mladic, the Bosnian Serb general who is alleged to be responsible for many of the atrocities during the war, including the massacre in Srebrenica and the civilian deaths during the siege of Sarajevo.

Several thousand ultranationalists rioted in Belgrade against the Serbian government's intention to hand Mladic over to the war crimes tribunal in The Hague. In the meantime, the trial of former Serb leader Radovan Karadzic goes forward as witnesses at The Hague continue to document the bloody deeds of that period.

The passions that led to the Balkans wars in the 1990s are not yet fully dissipated.

Still, Skender, who is finishing a masters degree in economics, says he and his friends are staying in Sarajevo. It's one more hopeful sign for a city that lived on little more than hope for a long time.

**Ted Lieverman is a free-lance photographer based in Philadelphia. (All rights reserved by author.)**

---

## How Gates Boxed in Panetta

Departing Defense Secretary Robert Gates is winning hosannas around Washington as a straight-talking "wise man" who reined in wasteful spending. However, the reality is much different, with Gates having spoken out of both sides of his mouth in a way that has created a dilemma for his successor, writes ex-CIA analyst Melvin A. Goodman.

By Melvin A. Goodman

June 26, 2011

CIA Director Leon Panetta soon will become Secretary of Defense, taking over Washington's largest and most powerful bureaucracy with a budget that amounts to nearly 60 percent of discretionary federal spending.

Panetta will be stepping into the shoes of the most influential member of the Obama administration, Robert M. Gates, who has been canonized for his performance over the past five years.

For the past two months, however, Secretary of Defense Gates has been on a farewell tour of U.S. think tanks, universities and military academies, advocating policies that will make Panetta's job extremely difficult.

In 2006, Secretary of Defense Gates had easy shoes to fill. His predecessor, Donald Rumsfeld, had become unpopular in the Pentagon, on Capitol Hill and even in the White House. Rumsfeld was particularly uncivil in dealings with subordinates.

The confirmation process for Gates was not a grilling, but a love fest. He faced no questions about his politicization of intelligence at the Central Intelligence Agency in the 1980s; his knowledge of the Iran-Contra scandal, which was documented in the independent counsel's

investigation; or his lack of experience on vital matters such as weapons acquisition and the need for military reform.

To key members of the Senate, particularly members of the Senate Armed Forces Committee, Gates was the "morning-after" pill who would abort Don Rumsfeld. They had forgotten Gates, the Cold War ideologue who had suppressed objective intelligence in order to advocate for policy.

Recently, Gates has been on a duplicitous one-man mission that will complicate the Obama administration's efforts to withdraw forces from Iraq and Afghanistan and make significant cuts in the defense budget.

On the one hand, he concedes that the military budget is bloated, winning praise for his toughness. On the other hand, he fights actual reductions, winning the praise of the military.

At Kansas State University in 2009, Gates became the first Secretary of Defense to acknowledge that the United States was spending too much on defense and needed to spend more on diplomacy.

But soon after, he gave a blunt "no" to the idea of transferring funds to the State Department from the budget of the Defense Department, which is more than ten times the budget for diplomacy.

At the Eisenhower Library in May 2010, Gates proclaimed that the massive federal deficit required an examination of the "gusher" of defense spending. In May 2011, however, at the American Enterprise Institute, Gates emphasized that defense spending did not contribute to the deficit and should not be a part of any deficit-reduction program.

Gates has argued successfully for annual increases in defense spending, which has climbed to nearly \$690 billion, exceeding the total cost of defense spending in the rest of the world. (The mainstream media consistently refers to a 2012 defense budget of \$553 billion, but this figure does not include \$118 billion for military operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya and \$18 billion for nuclear weapons programs.)

Defense Secretary Gates has been particularly devious about his claims of achieving savings in weapons procurement. He takes credit for cutting \$300 billion in spending on defense programs and eliminating waste in the amount of \$178 billion.

But the \$300 billion in savings was garnered from platforms, such as the F-22, that were eliminated, or programs, such as the Army's Future Combat System, that were canceled. These so-called savings were invested in other programs, however, and not returned to the Treasury.

Gates asked the annual Navy League convention in 2010 why the Navy needed 11 carrier battle groups; he then gave an emphatic "no" in Congressional testimony to the possibility of eliminating even one carrier battle group.

On his farewell tour of college campuses and right-wing think tanks, Gates consistently warned against reducing defense spending to the levels recommended by President Obama and his deficit commission.

Gates made "false comparisons" to reductions after the Korean and Vietnam Wars as well as those made at the end of the Cold War.

He never mentioned that the "hollow force" that he described at the end of the Cold War managed to win the 1991 Iraqi war in less than three weeks, and evicted the Taliban government and al-Qaeda from Afghanistan in 2001 in less than a month.

Gates' recent advocacy will complicate the tasks of his successor. These tasks include completing the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq; beginning the withdrawal from Afghanistan; significantly reducing the defense budget; and reforming the Pentagon's weapons acquisition process.

In recent weeks, however, Gates has traveled to Baghdad and Kabul; in both capitals he contradicted the positions taken by President Obama, calling for a continued U.S. presence in Iraq, a token withdrawal from Afghanistan and no cuts in the defense budget.

Now, Panetta will have to grapple with the challenge of tying strategy to force plans and bringing the budget back into balance with current resources.

Gates favors a continuation of current force levels in Afghanistan in order to move the Taliban to the negotiating table. He ignores the fact that the Taliban has demonstrated limited if any interest in negotiations.

He chooses to ignore the signing of an unprecedented accord at the White House in November 2009 that committed the Obama team to significant withdrawals from Afghanistan. President Obama prepared this unusual "Terms Sheet" to ensure that the principals would honor the "conditions for accelerated transition" to Afghan authorities in July 2011.

The document was designed both to limit the ability of the Pentagon to drag its heels on withdrawal and to reduce the power and influence of the uniformed military. Panetta, having been undercut by Gates, will have to deal with continuing tension between the White House and the uniformed military on troop withdrawals.

In his lectures at Notre Dame University and the American Enterprise Institute in May, Gates warned against any freeze in defense spending, leaving Panetta to deal with procurement policies and military missions that the United States can no longer afford.

As the former director of the Office of Management and Budget, Panetta presumably understands that the United States, with less than 25 percent of the world's economic output and more than 50 percent of the world's military expenditures, will have to curtail certain weapons and missions.

The defense budget has grown over 50 percent in the past ten years and now exceeds the pace of spending of the Cold War era as well as the peacetime buildup of President Ronald Reagan.

Gates has left Panetta with the task of shaping deployment plans.

A re-examination of current troop deployments must include the tens of thousands of U.S. troops stationed in Europe and Asia, more than six decades after the end of World War II; hundreds of bases and facilities the world over; and excessive U.S. willingness to project power in areas such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya where vital national interests are not at

stake.

The United States also needs to abandon the chimera of national missile defense at home and the need for a regional missile defense in East Europe.

Panetta will have to reform the weapons acquisition process that Gates has ignored for the past five years. This process has been beset with military mismanagement, huge cost overruns and little Congressional scrutiny.

Gates, who labels himself a cost cutter, will leave the Pentagon with more defense acquisition programs at a greater cost than those existing at the time he become the Obama administration's Secretary of Defense.

Panetta will have to deal with increasingly expensive (and some even dubious) weapons systems such as the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, a new class of ballistic missile submarine and a new fleet of aerial refueling tankers for the Air Force.

The Marines want a new amphibious vehicle even though they haven't conducted an amphibious landing since 1951.

Gates calls all these systems "absolutely critical" for the nation's defense, but these weapons no longer reflect a balance between cost effectiveness and our national security.

Fifty years after President Dwight D. Eisenhower's warning about the "military-industrial complex," it is time to address the "undue influence" of the Pentagon and the "misplaced power" of the military-industrial-Congressional lobby.

**Melvin A. Goodman had a 42-year government career including service with the CIA, the State Department, the Defense Department and the U.S. Army. His latest book was *Failure of Intelligence: The Decline and Fall of the CIA*. He is the author of the forthcoming *National Insecurity: The Threat of American Militarism*. This story previously appeared at [Truthout.org](http://Truthout.org).**

---