

Michael Moore on 'Occupy Oakland'

The Right got what it wanted when Bay Area police stormed the Occupy Oakland encampment touching off clashes that left one protester, Iraq War vet Scott Olsen, in critical condition. Filmmaker Michael Moore discussed the protests with Davey D and Dennis Bernstein.

By Davey D and Dennis Bernstein

In the early morning hours of Tuesday, Oct. 25, the heavily armed Oakland Police Department in conjunction, with 16 other police departments from all over Northern and Central California, stormed the Occupy Oakland Encampment.

The police were fully dressed in helmets, and riot gear, and armed with shotguns, "nonlethal pellet guns," teargas and concussion grenades.

The first attack on Frank Ogawa Plaza, in downtown Oakland, where about 200 men, women and children were camped came at about 4:45 a.m. Helicopters were circling and crisscrossing their spot-lights from above, and at least one armored personnel carrier was in the streets, turning downtown Oakland into an instant war-zone.

Within a half an hour or so, the police had roughed up, cuffed, and arrested over 100 of the protesters, and routed the rest away from the area. The police occupied the area all day, denying the public access.

The peaceful protesters were held on high bail, for several days, contrary to the cite-and-release policy usually employed during arrests at political demonstrations.

Police then proceeded to rip apart and shred the tent city, with people's belongings and personal items being scattered to the wind. Buses were rerouted and downtown Bay Area Rapid Transit stations (BART) were closed for hours, as city officials and police advised workers in that area to stay away.

On Tuesday night, hundreds of protesters took to the streets again, and heavily armed police cracked down again, firing chemical gas canisters right into the crowd. Scott Olsen, a young two-time veteran of the Iraq war, was struck at close range in the head by one the canisters, putting him in the hospital in Oakland in critical condition.

On Friday, early evening, over 1,000 people gathered in Oakland, reconstructed the camp and held a rally in protest of the police action. Mayor Jean Quan, who was out of town when the police assault occurred, defended the police actions as

necessary, citing health and safety concerns.

She claimed that the police were there to protect property and guarantee the safety of all Oakland's citizens, while also defending local banks that were under attack. However, eyewitness accounts and extensive video footage show that there was virtually no damage to property, and no indication of violent protesters attacking the police.

Among those in the Oakland downtown plaza on Friday night was radical filmmaker and political activist, Michael Moore. He spoke with KPFA/Pacifica Radio's Davey D and Dennis Bernstein, after he addressed the crowd.

DB: When you spoke here about a half hour ago, there were no helicopters in the air, now there are four circling around overhead. This is sort of the regular part of the police operations here. So maybe they are here to cheer for you as well.

MM: Actually they are up in the sky, are part of the occupy helicopter movement. This thing is not only happening on earth it's also happening up in the atmosphere

DD: [The police] attacked the demonstrators, when they were asleep to catch them off guard. Are you seeing this type of pattern, everywhere, you know, in New York and other places, which is militarized, brutal police tactics against ordinary folks.

MM: I think one thing that Oakland has gotten a lot of people talking about across the country is how since 9/11 untold billions of dollars have been spent on so-called Homeland Security. We don't know how much, because by law they don't have to tell us how much.

But what we do know is that local police forces across the country have applied for and received an enormous amount of money to buy armaments, tanks, spying apparatus, equipment things that we don't even know about. And it is, on some level, frightening that we have allowed this to get out of hand. And they have all done it under the guise of 9/11.

You know, if I had had a loved one die that day and I did have a friend in one of the planes, the plane from Boston, was a producer, that I had worked with the fact that he and the others who died, that their deaths, their names have been used to create so much harm across the country, it's really disgusting.

DD: Definitely. You know, what about the whole thing with New York, you have the white shirts police that are now being paid by Wall Street financial/banking institutions; we're seeing a privatization of police and do you see that maybe

spreading going to other cities?

MM: No, actually, well it has spread but the spreading is going to stop, because this movement is growing so fast, so wide, so far. It is amazing. I've had the good fortune of being able to travel the country in the last few weeks. I have seen it with my own eyes.

It would blow your mind if you just got on a bus now or got in the car and drove across the smallest of towns having little occupy movements. There's a little town where I live called Niles. There are only 10,000, 11,000 people who live there. They've got a hundred people camping out there, demonstrating and occupying Niles.

Now a hundred may not seem a lot, here in Oakland. But a hundred is one percent of the population there. If one percent of America showed up on the national mall to a demonstration that would be over three million people. So a hundred people in Niles is the equivalent of three million people showing up for a national demonstration on the mall there in D.C., now that's never happened

DD: Right.

MM: Just to give you an idea. And again, there's nobody organizing it in Niles. There's no national organization that they belong to. They don't pay dues, there's no leaders. It is just happening organically. And it is an amazing thing to see. It has lifted my spirits; it almost feels like drugs, if I knew what drugs felt like.

DD: Boot Riley just hit me up and he wants me to talk to you about some sanitation workers and for you to accompany him tomorrow, if you are in town. But also the other thing that Boots reminded us of there is a general strike going on in Oakland, next Wednesday. And then on the fifth, I guess, there is a national effort for people to start switching banks. Your thoughts on that, the fact that the city of Oakland is calling for a national strike

MM: Ultimately that is what's going to have to happen. Ultimately people are just going to have to say "Sorry we're not participating in the system any longer. We're/I/we are no longer cogs in this wheel, we are resigning from that." I think eventually this is one of the things that will happen, and I don't know when it's going to happen, I don't know how it's going to happen.

DD: Well, I know for us next Wednesday, there's a general strike planned

MM: Sounds like it's going to start here [in Oakland].

DB: Michael Moore, Dennis Bernstein here with Davey D. Can I ask you what was

your gut reaction when you heard this young, really peaceful vet, Scott Olsen, was hit hard at close range and sent to the hospital in critical condition by a police action in which 17 police departments were sent to arrest 100 sleeping people, with children, in the camp. What's your response to that kind of violence at that level?

MM: Well, obviously appalling. It's not just me, I mean they, they again, overplayed their hand just like Wall Street has overplayed their greed hand. The police here overplayed their brutal fascistic hand because people, all kinds of people across the country, saw what happened here in Oakland and were horrified by it.

Nobody wants to live in that country. Nobody wants to see the police that they pay taxes for, do this to fellow citizens. I mean I think what happened here I feel really bad for the harm that happened to those who were injured and certainly to Scott Olsen who is sitting in a hospital here, who is going probably to take a long time for him to go back to being normal, if ever.

I just think about, too, these kids that, you know, he and his roommate, or his roommate was talking on T.V. the other night about how when they were both in Iraq they turned against the war, they saw first hand how wrong this war was.

And that's a very brave thing to do when you are a soldier, when you are in the war zone and you become anti-war. Man, that's ah, it's already, you know to be a soldier first of all, in a volunteer army the implications is, that if you sign up to go into the Army you are basically saying "I'm willing to give my life so that others can live."

Assuming, you know, if the military was actually used for what it only should be used for which is pure self-defense, you are willing to die. What greater gift can a human give to another human than to be willing to give their life for another?

So that's who these kids are and to have had two tours over there and want to come back and want tell his fellow Americans, "I've been there and I know this war is wrong." That takes a lot of courage, on top of the courage he already had. And to find that the only people who were going to harm him were the people here where he lived, in Oakland, California.

And the difference between Oakland and Iraq in terms of what Scott Olsen had to face is this. In Iraq, your biggest threat driving down the road is what they call an improvised explosive device, an IED. Okay?

Scott Olsen is in the hospital tonight suffering from an [un]improvised explosive device. There was no improvisation going on. These devices that were

being fired are meant to control the people. This is really what Homeland Security is about. They are not worried about Al-Qaeda.

Al-Qaeda is just a joke right now. Even our own CIA says there are only 50 Al-Qaeda left in Afghanistan, okay? All right, that's the boogiemán. That's the boogiemán that they want to create to try and get everybody afraid so everybody will back a huge military budget and the militarization of the police forces.

DB: Seventeen police forces, 17 in the Bay Area, but we don't know who exactly shot Scott Olsen because they were all wearing the uniform and masks.

DD: Well, they are saying now that it was the Alameda Sheriff's Department that did it. I remember, what he looked like, I was on the front line.

MM: The officer in New York who put the pepper spray in those girls eyes, you know, they were able to find out who that was and he's had to go through a suspension, and now he's been moved to Staten Island. They will find who did this.

[At this point in the Moore interview, that was being broadcast right from the Plaza, a witness, and an Occupy Oakland activists offered this eyewitness account of the Tuesday night melee that sent Olsen to the hospital with a critical wound.]

Eyewitness: Scott was next to me, and the other guy with the hat that was the Marine and they hit him just a couple of minutes after we were all standing there. You know what I'm saying, cause we were there, it was going down, they shot three tear things, "Boom!" then they waited like another 30 seconds, "Boom!" and then they did another one "Boom!"

It was crazy; it was like we were in a war zone! It was old women, it was, the media didn't report this, and it was people that were there. [There were children there] that couldn't breathe. I was, I'm a little bit healthy so I was able to run about three blocks to eleventh or tenth. But it was people that were on the ground that was choked up.

DD: Right, and those are the stories that aren't being told.

MM: Well, there being told here on Pacifica Radio, this is where it starts and then others will start to cover it. And eventually justice is going to happen. The people who made the decisions to do this, to unarmed citizens who were acting peacefully, there's going to have to be justice here.

And ultimately the buck does stop on the mayor's desk no matter how progressive she is, no matter how nice she is, no matter how broken-hearted she is over what

happened. No matter how much she had to interrupt her vacation, or wherever the hell she was, and had to come back. The bottom line is the buck does stop with her, and the people of Oakland have had to suffer for long enough.

For crying out loud, how many years, how many times have I come to Oakland over the decades of what this town has had to go through. And talk about a town that has been abused by the policies of Corporate America and Wall Street. It is amazing though, the life that is still here and the resistance that is still here. That people have not given up. And that in some ways I'm not surprised that this watershed moment, in this movement, happened here in Oakland, this week.

And if it had to be here, then it was here, and it has inspired, it has inspired people all across the country.

DB: It is a bit different than the peace marches of the Sixties a bit of a different crowd.

MM: It's different. Those things were well organized. This wasn't organized. And it's so counter-intuitive that out of disorganization came already one of the best movements I've seen in my lifetime. With no structure, no discipline, no organization and, I'm saying that. I'm not like an anarchist really, but there is something, it just appeals to my inner core of and I think that we are probably all this way.

You know I said at the end of my last movie, "I refuse to live in a country like this. And I'm not leaving." So, I think that is shared by millions of people. We refuse to live in the way that they've constructed our America. We're not going anywhere, so that means it's gotta change. End of story. Thank you so much for having me.

DD: Michael, is there any last words that you want to pass along before you leave?

MM: Yes, everyone listening to this whose been participating in the Occupy Movement; please know that you have already changed the national debate and discourse. We've already a number of victories here, you have killed apathy across the country, you have removed despair from peoples' hearts.

So many people sitting at home thinking they were all alone "What can I do, I live in Debuque?" "What can I do, I live in Boise?" "I live in Salt Lake," "I live in Grass Valley, California." What can I do? What can I do? I can't do anything. So I will just sit here on the sofa.

Well, aint no sitting anymore, no more sofas. Peoples' ears are wide open as are

their eyes, and they are participating. This is going to grow, and you, Dennis, me, we don't really have to do anything. Nobody really has to do anything. We just have to just watch it happen.

These seeds have been planted by the abuse of Corporate America on its own people. And it is just sprouting now, and there's no way to stop it. They must rue the day they overplayed their hand and decided to kill the middle-class of this country, and give no hope to the poor. They must just completely rue that day.

So have heart, everyone who is listening this is a movement already with a number of victories. And there's only going to be more to come, because this thing is going to blossom throughout the winter.

DB: I also want to thank you very much for stopping by the Pacifica table, for coming to Oakland. We appreciate the time and we hope you'll come back soon.

MM: I will, and thank you very much. I'm sorry we are on radio; no I'm not sorry we're on radio but if you could see. We've got a little card table here set up in the middle of Occupy Oakland. There's the Wells Fargo Bank over there and thousands of people, all kinds of people, and all kinds of people are here.

This is the America we want to live in, what we see here now, this is the democracy as the way it should be. And so I'm very hopeful.

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Occupy Wall Street's Elegant Message

The mainstream news media still seems baffled by the Occupy protests, wanting them to spell out specific demands mostly likely, so experts and pundits can then tear the ideas down. So far, the protesters are getting their message across through their simple presence, Danny Schechter reports.

By Danny Schechter

One of the most frequently repeated, recycled and dismissive questions about Occupy Wall Street is its supposed lack of an "agenda." The "what do you people want" question has featured in media interviews almost to the exclusion of all others.

It's as if the movement won't be taken seriously by some, unless and until, it enunciates a list of "demands" and defines itself in a way that can allow others, especially a cynical media, to label and pigeonhole it. (So, it won't be taken seriously then either.)

Many are just frothing at the mouth for some political positions they can expose as shallow or absurd. Teams of pundits are being primed to go on the attack once they have some bullet points to refute.

Many police departments don't need bullet points to go on the attack. They have been having a field day arresting occupiers in many cities, while collecting overtime and readying their own bullets (rubber and otherwise) as needed.

Some on Wall Street already denounce these adversaries as "unsophisticated" for their formulation of the 99 percent versus the 1 percent. You'd expect the 1 percent to reject this way of seeing the world.

On the Right, there is no factual inaccuracy or bizarre incident they won't invoke to dismiss a movement they lack the mental tools to understand.

The Drudge Report was delighted to expose an incident involving public masturbation in one city.

Some gun nut wrote: "Don't be mistaken. The Wall Street protestors aren't peaceful hippies congregating about greed or social inequality. They are uniting to destroy America and everything we stand for. Their model is the 'Arab Spring' which discharged their Governments in favor of anti-Israel agitators and Muslim fundamentalists. They are NOT about freedom, but about World domination and total control. And Obama is supporting them fully."

Hmm.

Others like Reverend Jesse Jackson want more engagement with legislative issues and even the backing of candidates.

Democratic candidates, even progressive ones like Elizabeth Warren who's running for the U.S. Senate in Massachusetts, seem ambivalent about backing the occupations. Most are taking their cue from President Obama who only says he understands their "frustrations."

Some on the Left, including friends of mine, seem to suffer from undisguised vanguardism and want the Movement to raise the red flag right away, despite all the anarchists, libertarians and Democrats among them.

Here's Bill Bowles writing from London "Although many on the established Left are claiming OWS as their own, latching on to the anti-capitalist theme that

figures prominently, at least in some locations, it's clear that the focus of the OWS 'movement' varies greatly from place to place.

"Thus where it all started, in downtown Manhattan, the focus is very much on *capitalist criminals* rather than *criminal capitalism*. But little or no mention of the dreaded word – socialism, ironically for fear of alienating even those who occupy, never mind what the rabid corporate/state media does with that which shall remain nameless."

These are old and, in many instances, predictable debates but what they miss is what's new and so vital about this decentralized, mostly leaderless movement that has captured the world's imagination.

Judging by the media attention it has received and polls that show large numbers of supportive Americans, it is touching a global nerve and changing the national, even international conversation. It seems to be doing a lot that's right!

Not only have they survived mass arrests and continuing harassment, they showed they could brave what Mother Nature threw their way. They are in the best tradition of the post office which still projects this creed despite the specter of cutbacks: "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds"

Occupy's "couriers" have self-appointed rounds in self-managed occupations run by work groups and guided by participation in a daily General Assembly where activists listen to each other and disagree without being disagreeable.

They have raised a war chest of several hundred thousand dollars. They keep their sites clean with their own sanitation department. In New York, they feed their own with their own kitchen that also serves homeless people in the neighborhood. They even have their own "people's library."

In many ways, they are creating ways of cooperative living that they want society to be like. The key to it all is commitment and engagement on the individual level. This way of fusing pragmatism and idealism is what makes it so impressive.

Movements that function from the top-down are more controlled but not necessarily more effective.

At this point, the Occupy movements is still growing, and still spreading its aura more than its message. When you think of how many unemployed people there are and how many others are coping with foreclosures or student debt you can see its potential for organizing and outreach.

Already activists in Oakland, where attacks by police from 19 different jurisdictions have galvanized a mass reaction, are calling for a Nov. 2 “general strike.” Are they well organized enough to pull this off and to shut down a whole city?

This may be a case of overreaching in reaction to a brutal police action. But, bear in mind that since the attack occurred, no one is cheering. The city’s mayor says she now supports Occupy. The police are now supposedly investigating their own conduct, and the occupiers are back in the plaza they were forced to abandon.

Police attacks often boomerang with the public siding with citizens, not cops. There is a lot to be optimistic about.

Slavoj Žižek writes in *In These Times*, “The Western Left has come full circle: After abandoning the so-called ‘class struggle essentialism’ for the plurality of anti-racist, feminist, gay rights etc., struggles, ‘capitalism’ is now re-emerging as the name of THE problem.”

Let’s put the emphasis on words like “emerging” and “awakening,” Politics is always a process. Give people time to distinguish their friends from their enemies. Let’s trust the wisdom of the people. They seem to “get it” much more than the media or the pols.

It is significant that there has been talk of a national convention in Philadelphia on July Fourth next year. Right now, as for a definitive agenda, action always speaks louder than words.

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‘In Time,’ a Film for the 99%

Many Americans are accustomed to the top one percent on the economic pyramid getting the bulk of the benefits from society’s work and investments, as if that’s the natural order of things. But a new movie “In Time” presents a similar dilemma in a parallel reality, writes Lisa Pease.

By Lisa Pease

New Regency Pictures must be thrilled at the fortuitous timing of the launch of

their new film "In Time." The science fiction thriller revolves around a world in which time is the ultimate currency and most people can't get enough of it.

The world is divided into time zones, most of them poor, except for the zone of New Greenwich, where the richest 1 percent live.



The premise of the world of the film is this: All people stop aging genetically once they hit 25. They have to earn every minute over 25. If they run out of time, they die. And to earn time is difficult for the 99 percent. Caught in low-level jobs or, in some cases, resorting to crime, the scrappy ghetto inhabitants who populate the world of the film make difficult choices about what to do with the time they collect.

The story is propelled by Will Salas, played with appropriate action hero intensity by Justin Timberlake. Will is given a gift of time at the start of the film with an admonishment not to waste it by a man who has already lived more than 100 years. He shares information with Will that sends Will on a quest to see how the 1 percent live.

When Will's donor dies, the "timekeepers" – the police in this society – believe Will killed him to steal his time, a common occurrence among the 99 percent. As Will crosses into New Greenwich, he is pursued by one Timekeeper in particular who refuses to quit, playing Javert to Timberlake's Valjean.

In New Greenwich, Will meets one of the wealthiest men in the world, Philippe Weis, played (in a brilliant piece of casting) by Vincent Kartheiser, the rich young prick of *Mad Men*. Weis possesses untold millions of years of time, but he is poor in other areas that really matter.

Will befriends Philippe's caged bird of a daughter Sylvia (Amanda Seyfried), who longs for adventure and to be free of the bodyguards who protect her from others

who would steal her time.

Together they set off on an adventure that may cost them all the time they have left, a risk both are eventually willing to take, because society is broken, and they think they have a chance to fix it. They don't know if their plan will work. But they know they have to try.

This isn't a character study. This isn't an emotional drama. But it is a fascinating, fast-paced ride through a parallel reality that is fun, interesting, and strangely heartening.

As winter storms threaten to put a chill on the Occupy Wall Street group and its compatriots in other cities, this film has the potential to send flurries of new protesters into their camps. The film presents a compelling – if obvious – parable about what happens when some keep all the bounty for themselves and force the rest to support the excessive lifestyle choices of the few.

It's unfair. It's not right. And it must be changed. But change is never easy and requires the sacrifices of many.

As I left the theater, I felt like I was still in the movie. I was at The Grove, a fancy village-like mall in Los Angeles where the 1 percent shop.

Outside the theater, a Christmas tree was being rebuilt. Branches from a stately forest veteran that had been sheared off a couple of days ago were now being groomed and reattached, propped up by blocks of additional wood, because nature's own creation evidently isn't good enough for the 1 percent.

Near the tree sat diners eating \$50 steaks and drinking \$100 bottles of wine. I passed \$990 Prada pumps en route to my humble abode in a much lower rent district nearby. I put my worn-out shoes in the closet, opened the refrigerator and pulled out a bag of fading carrots.

But I'm not complaining. I'm grateful. I have time. And I have the keen realization that it is – by far – my most precious possession.

Lisa Pease is a writer who has examined issues ranging from the Kennedy assassination to voting irregularities in recent U.S. elections.

Unmasking October Surprise 'Debunker'

Special Report: The fake "debunking" of the 1980 October Surprise case in the early 1990s was driven by a few "journalists," including Steven Emerson, who has

been identified in a recent report as a “misinformation expert” spreading anti-Muslim propaganda, reports Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

In another blow to the crumbling cover-up surrounding Ronald Reagan’s secret dealings with Iran during the 1980 presidential campaign, a key “journalist” who “debunked” the October Surprise allegations in the early 1990s has now been identified by a recent study as a member of a right-wing “misinformation” network.

Entitled “Fear, Inc.,” the 129-page report by the Center for American Progress lists Steven Emerson as one of five “scholars” who act as “misinformation experts” to “generate the false facts and materials” that are then exploited by politicians and pundits to frighten Americans about the supposed threat posed by Muslims.

The report offers a rare glimpse into the right-wing propaganda network that has exploited America’s post-9/11 hysteria and transformed those fears into a powerful political movement to get millions of Christians and Jews to support legislation and policies that target Muslims and their communities.

But the historical significance of noting Emerson’s role in this “Islamophobia network” is that he is revealed to be a propagandist willing to distort information for ideological ends, not the serious journalist that he successfully posed as during the 1980s and 1990s.

In more recent years, followers of Emerson’s work have come to understand that he has very close ties to Israeli right-wingers in the Likud Party and that his “journalism” often has reflected their political needs and interests.

But Emerson also had those ties in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the Iran-Contra scandal and a precursor scandal known as the October Surprise threatened to expose Likud’s secretive actions in helping Republicans unseat President Jimmy Carter in the 1980 election and to entangle the Reagan administration in a clandestine foreign policy outside the view of the American people.

The Iran-Contra investigation exposed Israel’s hand in facilitating illicit arms shipments from the Reagan administration to Iran in 1985-86. But the inquiry also unearthed evidence that those Israeli-brokered arms sales dated back years earlier and may have emanated from treacherous contacts between Republicans and Iranians in 1980.

In 1980, as President Carter was trying desperately to free 52 Americans who

were being held hostage in Iran, Israel's Likud leaders were eager to see him defeated for reelection out of concern that he was too friendly to the Palestinians and might demand that Israel accept a Palestinian state. At the time, Likud was envisioning an expansion of Jewish settlements into that land.

Ronald Reagan's campaign, too, had an obvious interest in seeing Carter fail to gain a last-minute release of the hostages, what vice presidential candidate George H.W. Bush termed Carter's possible "October Surprise" to help his chances right before the election.

The Evidence

Over the years, about two dozen sources including officials from Iran, Europe, Israel, the United States and the Palestinian movement have asserted that Reagan's representatives went behind Carter's back to strike their own deal with Iran, ensuring that the hostages were not released until after the election.

After a full year of humiliation over the hostage crisis, American voters repudiated Carter on Nov. 4, 1980, giving Reagan a landslide victory. The hostages were kept in Iran until Reagan was sworn in as president on Jan. 20, 1981.

Then, after the secret Iran-Contra arms deals were exposed in 1986, it was discovered that the flow of U.S. weapons to Iran, via Israel, began not in 1985 as was then acknowledged but right after Reagan took office. However, the full story about those earlier shipments remained hidden.

It was not until the early 1990s that Iran-Contra investigators, including special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh, turned their attention to these initial shipments and whether they were approved by Reagan's team before the 1980 election, as some witnesses were alleging.

In April 1991, interest in the so-called October Surprise mystery also was spurred by a New York Times op-ed written by former National Security Council aide Gary Sick and a PBS "Frontline" documentary that I helped produce. A reluctant Congress grudgingly agreed to consider authorizing special House and Senate inquiries.

There was sudden alarm among Republicans who feared the investigation would expose then-President George H.W. Bush's role in illicit dealings with Iran and thus jeopardize his reelection prospects in 1992. The inquiry also threatened to implicate Israel's Likud leaders in a plot to unseat one U.S. president (Carter) and replace him with another (Reagan).

Other powerful figures faced potential danger, too, including icons of the U.S.

foreign policy establishment, such as former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and David Rockefeller, who mixed his banking interests at Chase Manhattan and his interest in international affairs through his Council on Foreign Relations.

Rockefeller had been the banker of the Shah of Iran and had brought his extraordinary influence to bear in 1979 by assigning Kissinger and other Rockefeller protégés to pressure Carter to allow the deposed Shah into the United States for cancer treatment, the event that triggered the seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and the capture of the American hostages.

In 1980, Kissinger viewed restoration of a Republican White House as a possible ticket for his own return trip to the center of world power, as he developed working relationships with vice presidential nominee George H.W. Bush and Reagan's campaign chief William Casey.

Plus, Chase Manhattan had huge financial exposure if the new Iranian regime succeeded in withdrawing \$6 billion that it claimed rightly belonged to Iran. Rockefeller put the total at \$1 billion. But a sudden loss of capital could have put the bank's future in jeopardy.

The October Surprise story also implicated several CIA officers, whose anger at Carter's downsizing of the spy agency had led them allegedly to join with former CIA director George H.W. Bush in a plot to unseat the then-president.

So, an array of important people not only had strong interests in blocking Carter's efforts to resolve the hostage impasse in 1980, but also had much to fear from a thorough October Surprise investigation in 1991-92. [For details on the mystery, see Robert Parry's [Secrecy & Privilege](#).]

The 'Debunking'

At that key juncture as Congress pondered how strong an inquiry to authorize two media outlets, the neoconservative New Republic and the Establishment-oriented Newsweek, stepped in with a fierce determination to stop the investigation in its tracks.

The New Republic, owned by Martin Peretz, a staunch defender of hard-line Israeli policies, assigned the October Surprise "debunking" project to Steven Emerson, who was known for his negative reporting about Israel's Muslim enemies and for his ties to the Israeli Right.

At Newsweek, executive editor Maynard Parker, a close associate of both David Rockefeller and Henry Kissinger, personally oversaw a similar "debunking" project.

Inside Newsweek, where I had worked for three years (from 1987 to 1990), Kissinger had remarkable influence. He was paid handsomely for his ponderous opinion columns and was close enough to top management that he could steer coverage of foreign-policy stories.

Parker was also a proud member of Rockefeller's CFR, viewing his role as Newsweek's executive editor more as protecting the image of the foreign policy establishment than exposing serious wrongdoing. During my time at Newsweek, Parker had been hostile to my efforts to push the Iran-Contra investigation into the darker corners of the scandal.

At one point, I was told by a long-time Newsweek researcher that I should watch my back with Parker because he was considered "CIA," having supposedly collaborated with the spy agency in his earlier journalism career.

So, the two magazines for somewhat different motives set out to bury the October Surprise investigation once and for all. Simultaneously, they both seized on some attendance records from a London historical conference in late July 1980 to insist that William Casey could not have attended two days of alleged meetings with Iranians in Madrid because he had been in London.

These records became the centerpiece for matching debunking stories that the two magazines were putting together. However, inside Newsweek, Craig Unger, an investigative reporter assigned to the project, realized that the attendance records didn't prove what Parker wanted them to prove.

Unger told me that he spotted how the attendance records were being misread and alerted Parker and others. "They told me, essentially, to fuck off," Unger said.

So, Newsweek and The New Republic rushed out their matching "debunking" stories in mid-November 1991, splashed across their covers declaring the October Surprise story to be a "myth." The impact of the two stories cannot be overstated. For the Republicans, the articles became the supposedly independent proof that no further investigation was needed.

Because of the stories, the Senate backed away from a full-scale investigation. The House agreed to conduct a probe, but it quickly became clear that it would be more a bipartisan effort to ratify the Newsweek/New Republic "debunking" than to pursue the truth.

An Enduring Cover-up

It, therefore, passed almost unnoticed when the cornerstone of the two magazines' articles crumbled. At "Frontline," we did what the two magazines didn't. We interviewed Americans who were at the London historical conference

with Casey, and they didn't recall seeing him at the key morning session that would have supposedly disproved the Madrid meetings.

But the conclusive proof that debunked the debunking was our interview with historian Robert Dallek who gave that morning's presentation to a small gathering of attendees sitting in a conference room at the British Imperial War Museum in London.

Dallek said he had been excited to learn that Casey, who was running Reagan's presidential campaign, would be there. So, Dallek looked for Casey, only to be disappointed that Casey was a no-show.

A closer examination of the attendance sheets also revealed that Unger was right, that the records didn't show Casey was there that morning. The records actually indicate that Casey arrived that afternoon, meaning that the "window" for the alleged Madrid meetings remained open.

Though I passed on our discovery to the House investigators and they quietly confirmed our findings the predetermined course of the inquiry, i.e. clearing the Republicans and their accomplices, didn't change.

Without saying anything that might embarrass Newsweek or The New Republic, the investigators simply slipped in a substitute alibi for Casey, claiming that he attended the Bohemian Grove retreat for rich men in northern California that last weekend of July 1980 and then flew directly to London, arriving in the afternoon.

If anything the Bohemian Grove alibi was even more absurd than the one from the magazines. The documentary record and interviews clearly showed that Casey attended the Grove on the first weekend of August, not the last weekend of July. [See *Secrecy & Privilege*.]

Still, this determination to create an alibi for Casey regarding the Madrid meetings enabled Bush's White House to keep under wraps its own evidence that Casey did travel to Spain.

Recently released documents from Bush's presidential library in College Station, Texas, reveal that in November 1991 as Newsweek and the New Republic were claiming that Casey could not have traveled to Madrid Bush's State Department had confirmed such a trip and had informed Bush's White House.

State Department legal adviser Edwin D. Williamson told associate White House counsel Chester Paul Beach Jr. that among the State Department "material potentially relevant to the October Surprise allegations [was] a cable from the Madrid embassy indicating that Bill Casey was in town, for purposes unknown,"

Beach noted in a "memorandum for record" dated Nov. 4, 1991. [See Consortiumnews.com's "October Surprise Evidence Revealed."]

Emerson's Jihad

Yet, when I tried to protest the various falsehoods and irrationalities being used to kill the October Surprise investigation, I was battered with insults.

At The New Republic, for instance, Emerson indicated that I had lied when I reported for "Frontline" that the Secret Service had only released redacted copies of Bush's travel records for another key date in the October Surprise mystery. Emerson said he had received copies of the Secret Service records under a Freedom of Information Act request without any redactions.

After talking to the Secret Service and being told that Emerson's records had redactions like everyone else's even Congress received redacted versions I challenged Emerson's account in letters to his editors, including one to CNN where he had been hired as an investigative reporter.

Emerson was subsequently dumped by CNN and I was promptly threatened by one of his law firms with a libel suit for having criticized him in letters to his editors. Apparently, I was supposed to apologize for saying that Emerson was lying when he claimed to have Bush's unredacted Secret Service records.

Faced with this legal threat, I had to dig into my children's college fund to hire a lawyer, who frankly seemed to doubt that the well-regarded Emerson could be in the wrong. My response was that if Emerson actually had the unredacted records, he could simply present them, but his lawyer said that would only be done in the midst of a costly trial.

As the abusive and threatening letters from Emerson's lawyers mounted, I decided to submit a FOIA to the Secret Service for Emerson's FOIA, i.e. I demanded exactly the same documents that the Secret Service had released to him.

When those records arrived, they showed that Emerson indeed had been lying. His copies of the Secret Service records were redacted, just like those released to me and other investigators.

Finally, the threatened lawsuit went away, and Emerson was forced to admit in an interview with the media watchdog group FAIR that he never had the records he claimed. He blamed a research assistant, but never apologized for the bullying legal strategy designed to financially bleed a journalist (myself) into confirming a lie as the truth. [For more details, see a report in FAIR's "Extra!," November-December 1993.]

Despite having blundered regarding Casey's Madrid alibi and having been caught in a fabrication over the Secret Service records, Emerson came out of the October Surprise case with a rising reputation as a star reporter.

Emerson had benefited from having a close friend inside the House task force, Michael Zeldin, the deputy chief counsel. And though the task force had to jettison Emerson's bogus Casey alibi, House investigators told me Emerson frequently visited the task force's offices and advised Zeldin and others how to read the October Surprise evidence.

Although more evidence of Republican guilt poured in to the House October Surprise task force in late 1992 so much so that chief counsel Lawrence Barcella later told me that he urged task force chairman Lee Hamilton to extend the probe for several months the task force instead simply decided to wrap up its business with a finding of Republican innocence.

To paper over all the holes in the findings, the task force deployed an array of absurd alibis such as one claiming that because Reagan's foreign policy adviser Richard Allen wrote down Casey's home phone number on one date, that meant Casey was at home even though Allen had no recollection of reaching Casey at his home. [See Consortiumnews.com's ["The Crazy October Surprise Debunking."](#)]

Rising Reputation

It was a sign of the times in Washington and inside U.S. journalism that Emerson's reputation got a boost from his October Surprise "debunking" work.

After the House task force report was issued in 1993, the American Journalism Review invited Emerson to ridicule me and other journalists for getting the October Surprise story "wrong," under the odd assumption that a government report must always be right.

Emerson's critique left out the fact that he and Newsweek's Parker had botched a crucial Casey alibi, arguably the biggest single journalistic error in the entire case. Nor did Emerson mention how he falsely claimed to have unredacted copies of Bush's Secret Service records.

(When I later asked top AJR editors how they could ignore the Secret Service fabrication issue, they simply responded that Emerson had made his false claim in a different publication, i.e. The New Republic, not AJR.)

Before long, Emerson was amassing journalism awards for his work targeting American Muslims as a particularly dangerous lot and he was raising large sums of money to support his work from sources, such as right-wing mogul Richard Mellon Scaife. Emerson's documentary, "Jihad in America," was broadcast by PBS.

Only gradually did a few brave reporters begin criticizing Emerson and his cozy ties to right-wing Israeli officials, including Israeli intelligence officers. Typically, Emerson would hit back by issuing legal threats from his vast stable of high-priced lawyers.

Emerson's use of lawyers to bully other journalists, which I had witnessed firsthand, became part of his modus operandi, as Nation reporter Robert I. Friedman discovered in 1995 after criticizing Emerson's "Jihad in America."

"Intellectual terrorism seems to be part of Emerson's standard repertoire," Friedman wrote. "So is his penchant for papering his critics with threatening lawyers' letters."

Friedman also reported that Emerson hosted right-wing Israeli intelligence officials when they were in Washington.

"[Yigal] Carmon, who was Likud Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's adviser on terrorism, and [Yoram] Ettinger, who was Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu's man in the Israeli Embassy, stay in Emerson's apartment on their frequent visits to Washington," Friedman wrote.

In 1999, a study of Emerson's history by John F. Sugg for FAIR's magazine "Extra!" quoted an Associated Press reporter who had worked with Emerson on a project as saying of Emerson and Carmon: "I have no doubt these guys are working together."

The Jerusalem Post reported that Emerson has "close ties to Israeli intelligence," and "Victor Ostrovsky, who defected from Israel's Mossad intelligence agency and has written books disclosing its secrets, calls Emerson 'the horn', because he trumpets Mossad claims," Sugg reported.

Bigotry Toward Muslims

Emerson's biases are better known today than they were when he was "debunking" the October Surprise allegations. He is now notorious for his Islamophobia and his "investigative journalism" that hammers away at purported dangers from "radicalized" American Muslims.

Last year, Emerson went on a national radio program and claimed that Islamic cleric Feisal Abdul Rauf would likely not "survive" Emerson's disclosure of supposedly radical comments that Rauf made a half decade ago.

Although acknowledging that his "investigation" was incomplete, Emerson offered the listeners to Bill Bennett's right-wing radio show "a little preview" of the allegedly offensive comments by Rauf, the cleric behind a planned Islamic center

in Lower Manhattan near the site of 9/11's "ground zero."

"We have found audiotapes of Imam Rauf defending Wahhabism, the puritanical version of Islam that governs Saudi Arabia; we have found him calling for the elimination of the state of Israel by claiming he wants a one-nation state meaning no more Jewish state; we found him defending bin Laden violence."

However, when Emerson's Investigative Project on Terrorism (IPT) released its evidence several days later, it fell far short of Emerson's lurid descriptions. Rauf actually made points that are shared by many mainstream analysts and none of the excerpted comments involved "defending Wahhabism."

As for Rauf "defending bin Laden violence," Emerson apparently was referring to remarks that Rauf made to an audience in Australia in 2005 about the history of U.S. and Western mistreatment of people in the Middle East.

"We tend to forget, in the West, that the United States has more Muslim blood on its hands than al-Qaeda has on its hands of innocent non-Muslims," Rauf said.

"You may remember that the U.S.-led sanctions against Iraq led to the death of over half a million Iraqi children. This has been documented by the United Nations. And when Madeleine Albright, who has become a friend of mine over the last couple of years, when she was Secretary of State and was asked whether this was worth it, [she] said it was worth it."

Emerson purported to "fact check" Rauf's statement on the death toll from the Iraq sanctions by claiming "a report by the British government said at most only 50,000 deaths could be attributed to the sanctions, which were brought on by the actions by former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein."

What Emerson's "fact check" ignored, however, was that Rauf was accurately recounting Leslie Stahl's questioning of Secretary of State Albright on CBS "60 Minutes" in 1996. Emerson also left out the fact that United Nations studies did conclude that those U.S.-led sanctions caused the deaths of more than 500,000 Iraqi children under the age of five.

In the 1996 interview, Stahl told Albright regarding the sanctions, "We have heard that a half million children have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?"

Albright responded, "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price we think the price is worth it."

Emerson doesn't identify the specific British report that contains the lower figure, although even that number "only 50,000" represents a stunning death toll

and doesn't contradict Rauf's chief point, that U.S.-British actions have killed many innocent Muslims over the years.

Also, by 2005, when Rauf made his remarks in Australia, the United States and Great Britain had invaded and occupied Iraq, with a death toll spiraling from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands with some estimates of war-related deaths in Iraq exceeding one million.

Far from "defending bin Laden violence," Rauf's comments simply reflected the truth about the indiscriminate killing inflicted on the Muslim world by U.S.-British military might over the years. Indeed, British imperialism in the region dates back several centuries, a point that Emerson also ignores.

Emerson next takes Rauf to task for asserting that the United States has supported authoritarian Middle Eastern regimes that have driven Muslims toward extremism.

"Collateral damage is a nice thing to put on a paper but when the collateral damage is your own uncle or cousin, what passions do these arouse?" Rauf is quoted as saying. "How do you negotiate? How do you tell people whose homes have been destroyed, whose lives have been destroyed, that this does not justify your actions of terrorism. It's hard.

"Yes, it is true that it does not justify the acts of bombing innocent civilians, that does not solve the problem, but after 50 years of, in many cases, oppression, of U.S. support of authoritarian regimes that have violated human rights in the most heinous of ways, how else do people get attention?"

Emerson "fact-checked" this comment by declaring, "This is justifying acts of terrorism by blaming the United States for the oppression of Islamic regimes of their own citizens. This also ignores U.S. aid of Muslim citizens in nations such as Kosovo and Kuwait."

However, any fair-minded observer would agree with Rauf that the United States has supported many brutal and undemocratic leaders of Muslim countries, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran under the Shah, and Saddam Hussein's Iraq during the 1980s.

Even President George W. Bush might agree with Rauf. A key Bush argument for "regime change" in the Middle East was the need for the United States to finally stop coddling dictators because their repressive practices were a central ingredient in the toxic brew that contributed to terrorism.

Other of Emerson's criticisms of Rauf are equally tendentious. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Islam Basher Claims to Unmask Cleric.](#)"]

Organizing Rep. King's Hearings

Early this year, Emerson took credit for helping to organize the controversial hearings by Rep. Peter King, R-New York, on the alleged radicalization of domestic Muslims.

Emerson boasted about his role but also lashed out at King for not including him on the witness list. In a particularly bizarre letter written last January, Emerson vowed to withhold further assistance as retaliation for the snub.

"I was even going to bring in a special guest today and a VERY informed and connected source, who could have been very useful, possibly even critical to your hearing, but he too will not attend unless I do," Emerson wrote. "You have caved in to the demands of radical Islamists in removing me as a witness."

In another weird twist, Emerson somehow envisioned himself as the victim of McCarthyism because he wasn't being allowed to go before the House Homeland Security Committee and accuse large segments of the American-Muslim community of being un-American. [[Politico, Jan. 19, 2011](#)]

Then, last summer, the Center for American Progress sponsored a report on Emerson and other Muslim-bashers. The context was the aftermath of a murderous rampage in Norway by Christian terrorist Anders Breivik. He cited their writings in a manifesto justifying his killing of 76 people on July 22 as the beginning of a war against "multiculturalists" who preach tolerance of Muslims.

CAP's report, "Fear, Inc.," noted a number of Emerson's falsehoods and exaggerations about American Muslims and examined the convoluted financing of Emerson's Investigative Project on Terrorism, which has drawn substantial support from right-wing foundations and funders whose political interests have benefited from a surging right-wing campaign against Muslims.

"Emerson's nonprofit organization IPT received a total of \$400,000 from Donors Capital Fund in 2007 and 2008, as well as \$100,000 from the Becker Foundation, and \$250,000 from Daniel Pipes' Middle East Forum, according to our research," the report said.

"Emerson's nonprofit organization, in turn, helps fund his for-profit company, SAE Productions. IPT paid SAE Productions \$3.33 million to enable the company to 'study alleged ties between American Muslims and overseas terrorism.' Emerson is SAE's sole employee.

"Even more intriguingly, a review of grants in November 2010 showed large sums of money contributed to the 'Investigative Project,' or 'IPT,' care of the Counterterrorism & Security Education and Research Foundation. An examination of

CTSERF's 990 forms [reports that non-profits file with the Internal Revenue Service] showed that, much like the Investigative Project, all grant revenue was transferred to a private, for-profit entity, the International Association of Counterterrorism and Security Professionals.

"Emerson did not respond to requests for comment by time of publication. The Russell Berrie Foundation has contributed \$2,736,000 to CTSERF, and Richard Scaife foundations contributed \$1,575,000. While neither the IPT, CTSERF, or IACSP websites make any mention of a link between CTSERF and the IPT, Ray Locker, the Investigative Project's managing director, told the LobeLog blog that a relationship 'exists' and 'it's all above board and passes muster with the IRS.'

"But in 2008, when Emerson was asked why the IACSP's Web address was listed at the bottom of an IPT press release on LexisNexis, he told LobeLog, '[I have] no idea how the IACSP website address got listed on the LexisNexis version of our press release. We are not a project of IACSP although we have frequently published material in their magazine.'

"He went on to say that 'as for funding questions, other than what we have stated on our website, that we take no funds from outside the U.S. or from governmental agencies or from religious and political groups, we have a long standing policy since we were founded not to discuss matters of funding (for security reasons).'"

"Fear, Inc." continued: "Steven Fustero, chief executive of CTSERF, told LobeLog, 'The research and education designated funds are [] transferred to IACSP, which in turn makes the research grants,' but would not discuss the relationship between CTSERF and IPT. An examination of CTSERF tax documents from 1999 to 2008 shows the group receiving \$11,108,332 in grant revenue and transferring \$12,206,900 to IACSP.

"This kind of action enrages Ken Berger, president of Charity Navigator, a nonprofit watchdog group. He argued that 'basically, you have a nonprofit acting as a front organization, and all that money going to a for-profit.'

"The increasing influence of Islamophobia donors to Emerson's nonprofit and for-profit work has focused more recently on anti-Islam, anti-Muslim expertise. Indeed, according to an investigation by *The Tennessean* newspaper, the Investigative Project now solicits money by telling donors they're in imminent danger from Muslims."

Who's Dangerous?

In the two decades since *The New Republic's* October Surprise "debunking"

article, the magazine also has revealed more about its commitment to quality “journalism,” through such debacles as the serial fraud of its correspondent Stephen Glass.

And, publisher Martin Peretz has exposed more about his personal agenda. He now lives part time in Israel and – like Emerson – has taken to smearing Muslims, such as in [this TNR blog post](#) regarding the proposed Islamic community center in Lower Manhattan. He declared:

“Frankly, Muslim life is cheap, most notably to Muslims. And among those Muslims led by the Imam Rauf [the promoter of the Islamic center] there is hardly one who has raised a fuss about the routine and random bloodshed that defines their brotherhood.

“So, yes, I wonder whether I need honor these people and pretend that they are worthy of the privileges of the First Amendment which I have in my gut the sense that they will abuse.” (Facing accusations of racism, Peretz later issued a half-hearted apology which reiterated that his reference to Muslim life being cheap was “a statement of fact, not opinion.”)

A New York Times magazine [profile](#) of Peretz noted that Peretz’s hostility toward Muslims was nothing new. “As early as 1988, Peretz was courting danger in The New Republic with disturbing Arab stereotypes not terribly different from his 2010 remarks,” wrote Stephen Rodrick.

A common argument from the Islamophobe network is that Islam is a uniquely violent religion that seeks dominance over all others and therefore must be combated aggressively by Christians and Jews, explaining the American Right’s bizarre legislative obsession with banning Islamic Shariah law.

Though many Muslims dispute the depiction of their religion as violent and oppressive, there is another element to this Islamophobe argument that underscores its bigotry the history of Christianity, which ranks by far as the most violent religion ever, one that has engaged in genocide against “heathens” and unbelievers on multiple continents, including Muslim lands.

Christians also hold themselves out as believers in the one true faith, and many maintain as a fundamental tenet of the religion that non-Christians will be condemned to horrible deaths by fire once Judgment Day arrives. Simply read Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, if you’re not sure.

Similarly, the Old Testament boasts of genocidal conquests by the great Israelite kings in the so-called Golden Age. No one can read the Old Testament and come away thinking that the Jewish religion is entirely devoid of violent and supremacist thinking, either.

And, Christians far more than Muslims have persecuted and slaughtered Jews in modern times. The Holocaust was the work of Aryan/Christian supremacists, not that dissimilar in their beliefs from the Nordic/Christian terrorist Breivik.

Historically, Christians also have tortured and murdered many fellow Christians over doctrinal disputes, such as the Reformation. Despite Jesus's teachings in favor of peace and social justice and against violence and greed the religion that he inspired has managed to adapt quite well to violence and greed.

In America, over the past three decades, there has been an alliance of convenience between right-wing Christians and right-wing Jews, though the two groups may still look at the other with some level of suspicion. Their mutual enemy is the Muslim as well as the multiculturalist, whether Christian, Jewish or non-believer, who wants different religions to live peacefully side by side.

When Breivik went on his murderous rampage in July, he targeted young "multiculturalists" at a camp for aspiring political activists. His goal was to kill anyone who would show tolerance toward Muslims and to spark a religious/ethnic war against Muslims and their friends.

Though Emerson and the other "misinformation experts" cannot fully be blamed for the atrocity in Norway, it wasn't a mistake that Breivik cited their work as his inspiration.

[For more on related topics, see Robert Parry's *Lost History, Secrecy & Privilege* and *Neck Deep*, now available in a three-book set for the discount price of only \$29. 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. 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.

Sen. McCain's Libyan Two-Step

Exclusive: John McCain cheered the brutal slaying of Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi, but the Arizona senator was singing a different tune last decade when Gaddafi was an ally in the "war on terror." Then, McCain was eager to help Gaddafi strengthen his security apparatus, reports Morgan Strong.

By Morgan Strong

A delegation of U.S. senators, led by John McCain, visited Libya in early October to pledge American support for the new government, to praise the revolution, and perhaps most importantly to extract promises of favorable treatment for U.S. business interests.

The McCain gang including Republicans Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, Mark Kirk of Illinois, and Marco Rubio of Florida told the Libyan interim government, the Transitional National Council, that American investors were watching Libya with keen interest and wanted to do business as soon as the last remnants of Muammar Gaddafi's resistance were routed.

American firms are indeed watching Libya and have been for some time, but not simply in the context of promoting a new democratic society. Some large U.S. companies had been eager to profit as well from sales to Gaddafi's dictatorship with McCain helping to clear away political obstacles.

In August 2009, McCain visited Libya as part of another congressional delegation and, according to a confidential U.S. Embassy cable published by Wikileaks, regarded Gaddafi quite differently. Then, McCain viewed the dictator as an important collaborator in what President George W. Bush had dubbed the "war on terror."

McCain along with three other senators, Graham, Joe Lieberman of Connecticut and Susan Collins of Maine held meetings with Gaddafi and one of his sons, Muatassim, to discuss the dismantling of Libya's WMD programs and expanding Libya's cooperation on counterterrorism. According to the cable, McCain expressed a willingness to give Libya equipment to help with its security challenges.

"Senator McCain assured Muatassim that the United States wanted to provide Libya with the equipment it needs for its security," the cable read. "He stated that he understood Libya's requests regarding the rehabilitation of its eight C130s and pledged to see what he could do to move things forward in Congress.

"He described the bilateral military relationship as strong and pointed to Libyan officer training at U.S. Command, Staff, and War colleges as some of the best programs for Libyan military participation."

Lieberman, a leading neoconservative, also praised the new era of cooperation with Gaddafi's regime and marveled at the meeting.

"We never would have guessed ten years ago that we would be sitting in Tripoli, being welcomed by a son of Muammar al-Qadhafi," Lieberman said, according to the

cable, which added that Lieberman also called “Libya an important ally in the war on terrorism, noting that common enemies sometimes make better friends.”

Indeed, McCain’s entire delegation was effusive about the prospects for future ties between the U.S. government and Gaddafi. “The Senators recognized Libya’s cooperation on counterterrorism and conveyed that it was in the interest of both countries to make the relationship stronger,” the cable said.

“Senators McCain and Graham conveyed the U.S. interest in continuing the progress of the bilateral relationship and pledged to try to resolve the C130 issue with Congress and Defense Secretary [Robert] Gates. The Senators expressed appreciation for Libya’s counterterrorism cooperation in the region.”

Muattassim Gaddafi did mildly complain to the senators that “Libya has not been adequately rewarded for its decision to give up WMD and needed some sort of security assurance from the United States,” stressing “the need for Libya to purchase U.S. non-lethal equipment in order to enhance its defense posture,” the cable said.

During the conversations with the senators, the elder Gaddafi mostly listened quietly, though he “commented that friendship was better for the people of both countries and expressed his desire to see the relationship flourish,” according to the cable.

‘Interesting Man’

After the meetings, McCain gushed via Twitter about his impression of Gaddafi, “Late evening with Col. Qadhafi at his ‘ranch’ in Libya interesting meeting with an interesting man.”

As that congressional visit began, a “scene-setter” cable by the U.S. Embassy had reminded McCain and the other senators that “Libya’s decision to give up its WMD programs and to renounce its support for terrorism [during the Bush administration] opened the door for a wide range of cooperation in areas of mutual concern. Libya has acted as a critical ally in U.S. counterterrorism efforts, and Libya is considered one of our primary partners in combating the flow of foreign fighters.

“We have begun some successful training programs to assist Libya in improving its security capabilities, under the rubrics of anti-terrorism assistance and border security.”

That strong cooperation dated back to late 2003 when Gaddafi agreed to dismantle his nuclear and chemical weapons programs, a move that was hailed by the Bush administration as a key foreign policy success and a step that brought Libya in

as a partner in the “war on terror.” Libya soon was jailing and torturing suspected “terrorists,” including some turned over by the CIA’s rendition program.

Stephen Kappes, the second-in-command of CIA’s clandestine service, became chummy with his Libyan counterpart Moussa Koussa. A Kappes memo, discovered in the ruins of the Libyan intelligence bureau headquarters after Tripoli fell, begins, “Dear Moussa” and is hand-signed “Steve.”

Among the suspected terrorists handed over to Libya was Hakim Belhaj, who had been the commander of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, which was associated with al-Qaeda in the past, maintained training bases in Afghanistan before the 9/11 attacks, and was listed as a terrorist organization by the U.S. State Department.

This year, Belhaj told the New York Times that he was captured by the U.S. government in 2004 and was harshly interrogated by the CIA at a “black site” prison in Thailand before being handed over to Gaddafi’s government which imprisoned and Belhaj claims tortured him.

After his release from prison, Belhaj emerged as a military leader in the anti-Gaddafi rebellion, eventually commanding the forces that drove the Gaddafi regime from Tripoli. Belhaj and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group now deny any allegiance to al-Qaeda.

However, over the last decade, the Bush administration believed that the hotbed of anti-Gaddafi sentiment near Benghazi in eastern Libya was supplying many of the foreign fighters flocking to Iraq and Afghanistan to fight U.S. troops. So Gaddafi, who considered Belhaj and other Islamic militants not just “terrorists” but internal enemies, became one of Washington’s allies of convenience in the “war on terror.”

That cooperation with the United States made it possible for Gaddafi to have the Bush administration help him neutralize Islamic militants like Belhaj. Gaddafi also obtained a variety of surveillance equipment from international suppliers, strengthening his ability to crack down on internal dissent and surely costing the lives of many Libyans once the uprising against Gaddafi began earlier this year.

Confused Dictator

The cozy “counterterrorism” relationship between Gaddafi and the U.S. government also helps explain the dictator’s miscalculation in believing he could wipe out his opponents by force, simply by linking them to al-Qaeda and related terrorist groups.

In March, after President Barack Obama supported a United Nations-backed military intervention in Libya to “protect civilians,” Gaddafi sent the President a personal letter expressing confusion over why things had changed.

“We are confronting al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, nothing more,” Gaddafi wrote. “What would you do if you found them controlling American cities with the power of weapons? Tell me how would you behave so that I could follow your example?”

But Gaddafi had slipped from the ranks of America’s new “better friends” whom Sen. Lieberman had hailed two years earlier. Gaddafi was again demonized in the Western press and targeted for extinction.

The UN-approved operation to “protect civilians” soon evolved into a NATO air war to achieve “regime change” with European war planes and American drones enabling the Libyan rebels to eventually overthrow Gaddafi’s government. NATO air power also blocked Gaddafi’s escape from Surt on Oct. 20, allowing rebels to kill him and his son Muatassim.

Why Gaddafi was so surprised by the U.S. about-face in its security alliance with Libya was partly explained by the leaked U.S. Embassy cables and by secret Libyan files that reporters from Western publications obtained after Gaddafi lost control of the capital of Tripoli.

On Aug. 30, the Wall Street Journal reported that Gaddafi’s security officials, alarmed by the popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt early this year, held talks with the American firm, Narus, a division of Boeing Corporation, along with French, South African and Chinese technology firms.

Gaddafi’s regime sought to add more sophisticated Internet-filtering capabilities to existing monitoring operation of Libyan citizens phone and Internet use, though Libya’s capability to identify and spy on dissidents was already the most sophisticated in the Arab world.

However, the February uprising in Benghazi heightened the Gaddafi’s regime’s desire to acquire more intrusive technology. So, Libyan Telecom official Bashir Ejlabu held an urgent meeting with Boeing’s Narus division in Barcelona, Spain, in March in an attempt to have a comprehensive monitoring system put in place quickly.

The Narus officials were told that they were expected to fly to Libya immediately to begin installation. They declined to go to Libya fearful of damaging Boeing’s reputation if discovered.

However, tech firms in the U.S., Canada, Europe, China and elsewhere had

already, for great profit, helped Gaddafi's regime block Web sites, intercept e-mail and eavesdrop on telephone conversations.

Although Gaddafi justified this repression as necessary to identify suspected "terrorists" while he served as one of America's "primary partners in combating the flow of foreign fighters" as the U.S. Embassy cable put it in 2009 the firms providing this technology also bolstered Gaddafi's ability to engage in internal repression, which included the torture and killing of Libyan dissidents.

The Journal reported that the Chinese telecom company ZTE corp. provided new technology for Libya's improved monitoring operation. Amesys, a French firm, equipped the regime's monitoring center with "deep packet inspection" technology, the most intrusive technique available for monitoring Libyans' online activities.

Libya also wanted to acquire the capability to control the encrypted online-phone service Skype, censor YouTube videos, and block Libyans from disguising their online activities by using proxy servers, according to documents the Journal said it reviewed. The Libyan dissidents relied on Skype extensively in coordinating demonstrations and for planning attacks on Gaddafi's security forces.

The Journal's reporters discovered dossiers of Libyans' online activities in a basement storage room of Gaddafi's former headquarters in Tripoli. The storage room was adjacent to detention cells where it is claimed those unlucky revolutionaries whose conversations or e-mails were intercepted and were subsequently arrested by Gaddafi's security forces spent their last hours.

The discovery of a mass grave, containing about 900 bodies, after the rebels captured Tripoli, and numerous other sites scattered around the capital including one within Gaddafi's sprawling headquarters, may have been the final resting place for dissidents whose messages were intercepted by the technology provided by these foreign firms.

Outmatching Gaddafi

As the uprising grew, Gaddafi shut down Libya's Internet system in early March, but his move came too late. Qatar had given the revolutionaries access to its satellites. The uprising's Western-trained Libyan engineers, with the apparent help of Western intelligence agencies, maintained effective communications between the rebel forces and their headquarters.

Although Gaddafi ultimately couldn't defeat the rebellion, his infrastructure of repression surely had benefited from his counterterrorism alliance with the Bush administration. Bush lifted economic sanctions on Libya in 2004 and removed the

country from the “state sponsor of terrorism” list in 2006, allowing Gaddafi to acquire communication monitoring equipment commercially from U.S. and other international firms.

In September 2008, a high-profile visit from Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice heightened Gaddafi’s international legitimacy, which was raised further by visits such as the one led by McCain in 2009. Last decade, in pursuit of the “war on terror,” the U.S. government essentially turned its back on Libyan dissidents and collaborated with Gaddafi.

After the Libyan uprising showed promise, however, McCain, the fabled straight-shooter, rushed to embrace the rebels and urged President Obama to commit more U.S. military assets to the battle. McCain also insisted that he hadn’t actually cleared the way for the release of Libya’s C-130s, despite his earlier promise to the Gaddafis that he would.

During his most recent visit to Libya after the fall of Tripoli McCain told a news conference that the Libyan people deserved all the credit for the success of the revolution. McCain also appeared to be assigning himself the role of U.S. point man on behalf of Libyan interests.

He spoke with vigor about the U.S. responsibility to care for wounded Libyan revolutionaries, as many as 30,000, by sending them to American military hospitals and utilizing Navy hospital ships, although the U.S. military health care system is already overburdened with casualties from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

(As a sometime patient within this system, I have witnessed first-hand the terrible struggle the military health care system must undertake to care for America’s wounded.)

Yet, McCain’s two-step dance regarding Libya from finding common cause with the “interesting” Gaddafi to embracing the forces that killed him – can perhaps best be understood by considering Libya’s billions of dollars in oil reserves and other commercial opportunities.

American oil companies and a variety of other business interests are now frantically attempting to secure contracts with Libya. McCain by positioning himself at the intersection of foreign affairs and international commerce could have a critical hand in those endeavors.

Shortly after McCain left Libya, the Transitional National Council reversed itself regarding a commitment to honor all existing contracts. Instead, the interim government announced that all contracts to foreign firms signed under Gaddafi’s rule would be reviewed for evidence of corruption and since corruption

was widespread, that could be an out on nearly every contract.

Voiding contracts and then renegotiating them also would mean hefty profits for Libya's new ruling elite and their foreign friends. In particular, U.S. firms now stand a much better chance to get lucrative oil deals than they did when Gaddafi was in power and set the rules on Libya's oil production.

While McCain and his congressional colleagues may be even more sanguine about securing business with Libya now than they were in 2009, their orations about the Libya's liberation do sound hypocritical when contrasted with their earlier praise for the odious Gaddafi family.

Morgan Strong is a former professor of Middle Eastern history, and was an adviser to CBS News "60 Minutes" on the Middle East.

Explaining Wayward Christianity

The core crisis of Christianity is how could a religion based on the teachings of Jesus, who called for peace through love and generosity to the poor and who disdained the rich have grown so tolerant of war, greed and inequality. The Rev. Howard Bess traces this conundrum to the Church's early days.

By the Rev. Howard Bess

Paul was Christianity's first theologian, with his writings making up about half of the entire New Testament. Indeed, though Paul did not become a believer until years after Jesus's crucifixion, Paul wrote before any of the four gospels describing Jesus's life and teachings were committed to the written word.

Thus, Paul more than anyone else set the standard for what is required to be a Christian. And, in the 10th chapter of his letter to the Romans, he wrote these words: "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

So, being a Christian was for Paul a matter of head and heart, not actions. By his standard, there is no amount of good deeds that can bring salvation. It is a matter of belief and belief only.

Paul's standard has been challenged by some Christians over the centuries and the New Testament's Book of James stresses the value of good works but never has

Paul's "head and heart" standard been dislodged as a central tenet of Christianity.

In the Fourth Century CE, under pressure from Roman rulers, the Church began to define what a Christian must believe, leading to the two dominant creeds, the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed, both based on Paul's standard.

Before the Council of Nicaea in 325, Christianity was incredibly diverse. However, even then, Paul's insistence that Christianity was defined by head and heart was dominant. The central issue of the two creeds was what was to be confessed by Christians as their core beliefs.

The Apostles' Creed, by tradition, has its roots in the 12 apostles of Jesus of Nazareth. However, there is no documented connection to first, second or third centuries CE. In the Fourth Century CE, the wording of the Apostles' Creed was set and remains the Catechism of the Catholic Church, beginning "I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth"

The Nicene Creed comes to us out of the Council of Nicaea, a gathering of Church leaders that was charged by Roman Emperor Constantine to settle once and for all what a person must believe to be saved and to be a full participant in the Kingdom of God. The key issue was the relationship between Jesus, the son, and God, the father.

It begins: "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God "

Both the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed have the same structure. Even some of the wording is identical. And they have remained central to Christian teaching ever since.

The Protestant Reformation of the Sixteenth Century was a serious jolt to the world of Christianity, with the meaning and the necessity of the Reformation still debated. My own understanding is that Martin Luther was convinced that the Roman Church in practice had strayed from the "head and heart" standard of the Apostle Paul.

During the Reformation, the content of the long-established creeds was never in question. Instead, Luther believed that the Roman Church was compromising Paul's formula for salvation through corrupt practices such as the selling of indulgences. Luther taught that salvation was a gift of God's grace received through faith in Jesus Christ.

The depth of Luther's convictions that salvation was by faith alone was made plain by his questioning of the inclusion of the Book of James in the Christian

New Testament. James raised the question, "Can a person be saved by faith without works?" Luther's response was to say the Book of James was unworthy to be included in the New Testament.

As a Baptist, my tradition is adamantly non-creedal, meaning every Baptist has the right to interpret the Christian faith. However, in the Baptist tradition, an individual dare not question Paul's understanding of salvation by head and heart without requirement of good works.

Believing that a person can become acceptable to God by good works or charity is the most offensive heresy imaginable. Yet, as far as we know, Jesus of Nazareth taught and lived a very moral and ethical life. He also called for peace and justice through love.

Though Christians with our lips confess that Jesus is Lord and pledge to follow his path, there are profound contradictions between the teachings of Jesus and the actions of many Christians.

How is it that our behavior is so out of step with the one we call "Lord?" With immunity of conscience, we fight and kill one another. We are motivated by greed and unbridled desire. Truth-telling is not honored. Hoarding material goods triumphs over generosity. Locks and high fences abound as though they can insure safety.

There are over 2 billion Christians in the world. Together, we have the power in numbers to bring peace, love, generosity and justice to the world. Collectively, we have the resources to make the world a much better place.

On Sunday, many Christians will recite in unison the Apostles' Creed. Yet, nothing new and positive will happen on Monday since salvation is not tied to deeds, but only to faith.

Is it possible that Paul, Christianity's first theologian, led us terribly astray?

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Limbaugh Disdains Anything Obama

When a Republican is in the White House, the Right is all for military interventions and decries critics as un-American. But now, even a small-scale

operation in Africa encouraged by human rights groups is denounced by Rush Limbaugh and others, as Michael Winship recounts.

By Michael Winship

If you blinked, you might have missed a recent movie called *Machine Gun Preacher*.

The film hasn't burned up the box office and the title may have kept you away from your local picture palace in the mistaken belief that it was some kind of exploitation flick or the latest Quentin Tarantino exercise in post-modernism and ironic bloodbaths. In which case, who could blame you?

In fact, *Machine Gun Preacher* is the improbable but true story of Sam Childers (played by the improbable but true Gerard Butler, the shiny, muscle-bound Spartan king of 300 fame).

After a misbegotten life as a violent biker/drug dealer/ex-con, Childers had a come-to-Jesus epiphany and became a born-again Christian with his own congregation in rural Pennsylvania.

But it was when he heard a missionary speak about church work in East Africa that he found his true calling, building an orphanage in the Sudan and protecting the kids there by becoming a vigilante fighting alongside the ill-equipped and undermanned local militia. That's where the machine gun part comes in.

Apparently, Rush Limbaugh didn't see *Machine Gun Preacher* either. If he had, he might have known a thing or two about the enemy Sam Childers was battling against: the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a rabid rebel group that for some 25 years has made simple, day-to-day existence a living hell for civilians – especially children – in Uganda, Southern Sudan, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Instead, as is his usual way – in other words, not having any idea what he's talking about – Old Motormouth Limbaugh recently defended the Lord's Resistance Army on his radio program because they “are Christians. They are fighting the Muslims in Sudan.”

His defense came solely because anything or anyone Barack Obama is against must *ipso facto* be okay. President Obama has sent 100 military advisers to Africa to try to help end the LRA's atrocities once and for all. But in the Gospel According to Rush, the enemy of my enemy is my friend, even if said friend engages in murder and mutilation.

"That's a new war," Limbaugh declared, "a hundred troops to wipe out Christians in Sudan, Uganda." Yet just last Thursday the Lord's Resistance Army was described by the evangelical *Christian Post* as "East Africa's greatest evil ... the region's most malicious militia group."

The paper quoted Jedidiah Jenkins of the non-profit group Invisible Children: "The LRA is an abuse of the Christian religion a small, vicious cult."

The New York Times has called the LRA "a notorious renegade group that has terrorized villagers in at least four countries with marauding bands that kill, rape, maim and kidnap with impunity," and Reuters reports, "Over the years the LRA became known for chilling violence including what human rights groups say were the abductions of thousands for use as child soldiers or sex slaves, [and] brutal club and machete attacks on victims."

Just ask former Bush White House chief speechwriter Michael Gerson. "The LRA is a brutal rebel group headed by a messianic madman," he wrote in *The Washington Post*. "Its victims ... have been the focus of activism by Christian organizations and human rights groups for decades."

Presented with the inconvenient facts, Rush harrumphed, "Well, we just found out about this today. We're gonna do, of course, our due diligence research on it." A couple of days later Limbaugh admitted that he had been "misinformed," then proceeded to laugh the whole thing off.

This lethal combination of ignorance and abject dismissal typifies the Republican Right's current approach to foreign policy, as evidenced by everything from Michele Bachmann's suggestion that the Iraqi people reimburse the United States for the privilege of having had their country invaded to Herman Cain's declaration that, "When they ask me who is the president of Ubeki-beki-beki-beki-stan-stan I'm going to say, 'You know, I don't know. Do you know?' ... Knowing who is the head of some of these small insignificant states around the world I don't think that is something that is critical to focusing on national security and getting this economy going."

That jobs and the economy should be our first priority is a no-brainer, but in its zeal to simplistically reject all things governmental, the GOP is turning its back on decades of the experience, craft and skill essential to an effective, bipartisan foreign policy.

Nowhere is that more evident than the dilemma currently confronted by five-term Republican Sen. Dick Lugar of Indiana, a venerated and respected, conservative expert on global affairs now facing a serious primary challenge from Tea Party candidate Richard Mourdock, the state treasurer.

Mourdock's making political hay over Lugar's mentoring of Barack Obama in the world of international relations when Obama was a freshman senator, a partnership brayingly portrayed in a Mourdock campaign video titled, "Dick and Barry: The Unforgettable Bromance."

Jacob Heilbrunn, senior fellow at the public policy Center for the National Interest (formerly The Nixon Center) wrote on the website of *Foreign Policy* magazine, "It isn't just the career of the Senate's senior-most Republican that is at stake here; it is an entire tradition of Republican foreign policy that is being repudiated by the party faithful."

This, he continues, "should evoke apprehension in anyone who thinks that America's leading role in the world has, by and large, been a force for good."

Whether you agree with the decision or not, it is that perception of the American role as a force for good that partially informs Obama's dispatch of military advisors to East Africa, a move that not only is consonant – so far – with Congress' 2010 passage of the Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act, but also the Bush administration's Operation Lightning Thunder in December 2008, when American military intelligence assisted African troops in an unsuccessful attempt to corner LRA leader Joseph Kony in eastern Congo.

(According to Human Rights Watch, in retaliation after that failure, "the LRA attacked villages and towns in northern Congo and southern Sudan, killing more than 865 civilians during the Christmas 2008 holiday season and in the weeks thereafter.")

President Obama's new move in Africa jibes with the National Security Strategy he presented last year: "The burdens of a young century cannot fall on American shoulders alone," he wrote, but "democracy does not merely represent our better angels, it stands in opposition to aggression and injustice, and our support for human rights is both fundamental to American leadership and a source of our strength in the world."

Yet as Adam Serwer of *Mother Jones* points out, "The atrocities committed by the LRA aside, nations don't use military force out of altruism. Uganda provides a substantial number of troops for the African Union Force in Somalia, where the al-Qaeda linked group al-Shabaab has control over a significant part of that country.

"I have no doubt that Barack Obama believes that the world would be better off without Kony and the LRA. But although it hasn't been explicitly said, it's a good bet the Obama administration feels obligated to assist Uganda because

Uganda is helping the US fight a proxy war against an al-Qaeda affiliate, a mission that hasn't been without cost for Uganda."

Meanwhile, Rush Limbaugh and his right-wing cohort emptily natter on, chattering, as my old man used to say, just to hear their heads rattle.

Michael Winship, senior writing fellow at Demos and president of the Writers Guild of America, East, is senior writer of the new public television series "Moyers & Company," premiering in January 2012.

Why OWS Has Already Prevailed

With a few exceptions, the initial reception of the "Occupy" movement across America was fairly benign. But authorities in Oakland and elsewhere are now turning aggressive, sending in police to shut down encampments and disperse protesters, as Phil Rockstroh observes.

By Phil Rockstroh

Until recent events proved otherwise, the hyper-commercialized surface of the corporate state gave the appearance of being too diffuse – too devoid of a center to pose a threat of totalitarian excess.

Accordingly, as of late, due to the violent response to OWS protesters by local police departments in Oakland, Atlanta, Chicago, and in other U.S. cities, the repressive nature of the faux republic is beginning to be revealed.

Behind the bland face of the political establishment (purchased by the bloated profits of the plundering class) are riot cops, outfitted and armed with the accoutrements of oppression, who are ready and willing to enforce the dictates of the elitist beneficiaries of the degraded status quo.

In deed and action, as of late, the police state embedded within neo-liberal economic oligarchy is showing its hyper-authoritarian proclivities to the world.

In general, existence within the present societal structure inflicts on the individual a sense of atomization and its concomitant feelings of alienation, vague unease, free floating anxiety and anomie. The coercion is implicit and internalized.

Because of its mundane, ubiquitous nature, the system is reliant on an individual's sense of isolation (even ignorance of the existence of the

structure itself) to remain in place. In short, the exploitive system continues to exist because its denizens are bereft of other models of comparison.

The public commons inherent in the OWS movement provides a model of comparison. Apropos, that is why we are beginning to receive reports such as the following:

On Tuesday Oct. 25, the Oakland Tribune reported that police raided and demolished the local OWS encampment after declaring the area a "crime scene."

This is revelatory regarding the character of the enforcers of the present order: Those in positions of power within a police state view freedom of assembly and freedom of expression as a punishable offense.

It is a given that: Authoritarian personality types take particular umbrage when citizens are expressing their displeasure with official abuses of power and begin to do so in an effective manner.

Too many in the U.S. have bought the fiction that the nation was, is and will remain a democratic republic. Therefore, by drawing its brutal operatives and mendacious apologist into the open, the state will reveal itself in all its ugliness.

As a result, all concerned will be able to observe the true nature of the police/national security/oligarchic state in place in the U.S. Ideally, few illusions will remain intact regarding the ruthless, brutal forces against which we struggle.

Moreover, the actions of the police in regard to public protest are premeditated tactics aimed at the suppression of the right to public assembly. The goal of the power brokers, their political operatives and police enforcers is to render one's (allegedly) constitutionally guaranteed right to dissent too prohibitive to be practiced.

The economically dispossessed and members of minority communities have known for many years what OWSers are suffering, presently, at the hands of official power and its enforcers.

In turn, individual police officers are well aware of whom they are sworn to protect (and it isn't those who desire to exercise their rights to free assembly and free speech).

In most cases, if an individual police officer ever refused an order to make an unconstitutional arrest, he/she would be committing an act of careericide; their chance of advancement within the department would have to be scraped off the sidewalk on the spot and transported to the city morgue.

Are you willing to leave the confines of your comfort zone and go to jail for justice?

Rarely, does reform arrive without the arrest of frontline agitators. Power does not yield without a fight, without attempting to silence dissent by brutality and forced detention. The powerful demand that those of us who notice their excesses and crimes be placed out of sight and out of mind.

Hence, in Oakland, the local corporate news affiliates, to their shame, turned off their cameras when the violent attacks and mass arrest of protesters began.

Are you willing to risk injury to body and reputation to bear witness? The survival of the OWS movement depends on having bodies on the ground and eyes (as well as cameras) on the thugs in uniform.

True to form, a servile corporate media will proclaim how unsightly dissenters are, inferring that sensible folk, simply as a matter of good taste and public propriety should disregard the protesters' entreaties and that these malcontents and cranks should be denied entrance into the realm of legitimate discourse, that these disheveled interlopers be barred by walls of silence.

To be in the world is to be confronted with walls. How we respond to these barriers is called character and art. Many brave souls have confronted walls such as these.

Often, as I gaze upon the blue wall of mindless repression surrounding Zuccotti Park and reflect on other OWS sites nationwide, I am induced to feel the sadness and longing of the repressed souls of the earth, of those throughout time who have met walls of blind hatred, of economic exploitation, of institutional repression.

I empathize with all of those who faced walls of smug indifference, walls of internalized shame and walls of official lies – those who stood powerless before the stark reality of seemingly implacable circumstances.

I reflect upon the lives and work of itinerate blues musicians of the U.S. Deep South and the manner they met walls of both official repression and collective blind, ignorant fear and hatred, and how they transformed those prison walls into the numinous architecture of The Blues. How they alchemicalized the barriers into guitar technique.

Musical instruments, like word meeting meter to a poet, serve as both barrier and salvation; the limits of the self are tested, explored, and by effort, failure and moments of elation are transformed by confrontation and union with the instrument, personal circumstance and audience.

As is the case with those on the front lines of OWS encampments, millions of people throughout history have met seemingly implacable barriers in the form of walls of human brutality e.g., Jim Crow laws, union busting management goon squads, the Zionist apartheid wall, various secret police and public bullies – but they weren't going to let the bastards "turn them 'round"

If you choose to resist entrenched power, when confronted by mindless authority, your heart will know the drill; it will guide you – its natural trajectory is towards freedom. Hence, you will know what to do when the moment arrives – and will gain the knowledge that your predecessors discovered in their struggle for justice that the cry arose forth from deep in their souls, "We shall not be moved."

The practitioners of the Delta Blues came upon walls of oppression walls of raging hatred, and responded by passing through those walls to inhabit a landscape more alive, more resonant, more ensouled than their oppressors will ever know possible.

They occupied their own hearts and draw us still into the immediacy of the world by their victory over their degraded circumstances by their appropriating the very barriers that were placed in their path by their oppressors and transforming the criteria of their oppression into the living architecture of the soul.

Those who know this – have already won have already overcome.

Lorca limned the situation (one extant as well in the enfolding OWS movement) in his theory of "the duende." His concept of the duende reveals why people, when faced by the ossified order of an inhuman system, either become caught up – even compelled – by the challenge to begin to make the world anew – while others are seized with mortification, indifference, resignation and hostility.

In which direction does your soul wend?

"The arrival of the duende always presupposes a transformation on every plane. It produces a feeling of totally unedited freshness. It bears the quality of a newly created rose, of a miracle that produces an almost religious enthusiasm." – from The Havana Lectures, Federico Garcia Lorca.

When I witness police harassing, arresting and brutalizing those exercising their rights to free assembly, I find myself gripped by a surge of rage. The rage rises in me in an animalistic fury – an urge to fight tooth and nail, to tear at the throats of these vicious intruders into the territory of authentic social discourse.

As of late, instead of pushing down the fury rising from within me or acting upon it, I let it inundate my being. As a result, the coursing rage transforms into a penetrating, powerful force – enveloping and demarcating the geography of my convictions arriving to bring acceptance and to define and defend the contours of my true self.

Rage can appear as an angel of self-definition, the protector of one's authentic nature and a source of personal power "ain't gonna let nobody turn me around, turn me 'round "

One's anger is vital to one's existence; it is a valuable gift; therefore, it should not be squandered no need to waste it on fools and idiots.

When rage arrives, invite him in; his presence will fill the room with alacrity, and his surging vitality will allow you to push farther and deeper into the unexplored regions of your soul.

In contrast, the world of the neoliberal oligarchs, the duopolistic political class and of the cops has been called into question. They have grown accustomed to having their way, of having a compliant and complicit peasantry.

In this they are not unique; what they are experiencing is universal: The world we know (or at least believe we do) and struggle to maintain, from time to time, is apt to reveal an aspect of itself that seems alien and unmanageable e.g., the growing dissent across the nation, perhaps too vast and potent to be kettled, penned, tear gassed, cuffed and detained.

The otherness of the world seems too large has become an army of aggrieved angels.

I once saw a Great Dane on Second Avenue attempt to engage in canine communion with his fellows. In order to display his intentions were benign, friendly, he crouched down on the sidewalk, making his massive frame as small as possible, even placing his large head on the concrete doing all he could to produce the artifice of submission, to even the smallest dog that approached him.

In other words, to enlarge his world he created the illusion of smallness. He did not reduce his essence; he created the artifice of smallness so he could grow larger than himself by his union with the otherness of the world.

We are not requesting that cops crouch before us. They just need not bristle so. To grow in each other's presence, we are required to meet the other at eye level, even if one has to descend a bit from a habitual position of power and authority.

Officers, your guns, rubber bullets, nightsticks, pepper spray – the looming wall of blue intimidation that you brandish merely creates the illusion of strength. If you truly want to grow strong, meet us on these sidewalks, sans the display of empty power.

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'Occupy' Protests Grow in Philadelphia

As the "Occupy" movement spreads to scores of American cities, some encampments are encountering challenges, from sanitation woes to chilly weather to hostility from local authorities. But the occupation in Philadelphia appears determined to persevere, as photo-journalist Ted Lieverman reports.

By Ted Lieverman

Now three weeks old, the occupation outside Philadelphia's City Hall is going strong. The rows of tents have grown longer, the donations are pouring in, and the demonstrators have a relatively good relationship with the police and the city administration so far.

Despite the cooling weather and a few days of drizzling rain, morale is high. And while everyone else tries to figure out what it means, the protesters of Occupy Philadelphia seem to be ready for an indefinite stay.

On Oct. 4, some 1,000 Philadelphians met at a local church and voted to occupy City Hall, angered by the unfairness of current economic policy, and inspired by the ongoing demonstrations on Wall Street.

Two days later, at 9 a.m., demonstrators converged on Dilworth Plaza, the west side of Philadelphia's ornate City Hall. By 10 o'clock, there were several hundred demonstrators. They set about establishing their turf with a giddy spirit, observed by dozens of reporters, photographers, and video teams.

An estimated 50 to 100 slept in the Plaza on the first night. By the second night, there were more than 50 tents, with many other demonstrators sleeping under the stars. By Day 7, there were 148 residential tents, including big ones capable of housing three to eight people. By Day 16, there were 227 residential

tents, plus another 20 or so tents storing food and medical supplies, media, and a library.

Having spent a couple hours or so most days at the occupation since the beginning, I can offer some observations that may or may not run counter to some of the pundit presumptions:

–There is no one political line or one official set of demands for the group. The most commonly heard political idea is taken from New York that the wealth and power in the country is largely controlled by a small elite.

“We are the 99 percent!” is commonly heard as demonstrators dance across the big intersection at Market and 15th Streets during red lights, prompting drivers to honk their horns in support. Many do.

Beyond that, it’s hard to generalize about the protesters. Some are students, but many have jobs ranging from teachers, scientists and software marketers to pizza servers. Some are middle-aged or retired. A significant number are African-American.

–They are not politically predictable. They are not creatures of traditional political groups, either the Old Left, the New Left, the labor unions, and certainly not the Democratic Party. They bring a variety of political and social beliefs to the project.

Don’t be fooled by outlier signs; while some outside groups want to influence the political orientation of the occupation, the Occupy protesters are decidedly independent and free-thinking.

Although many of the demonstrators referred to themselves as non-ideological and non- and anti-authoritarian, they have a surprisingly good instinct for organization and self-discipline.

Organizers quickly established committees to run security, first aid, education and media outreach, and to receive donations. They established a lending library and a free book table. They set up a tent with a wireless connection and a charging station.

–They are not a clone of New York. While the Philadelphia protesters draw inspiration from Occupy Wall Street, they also follow their own path on organizing their activities.

Unlike New York, organizers in Philadelphia have successfully maintained good relations with the City, even receiving two friendly visits from the mayor. The organizers generally cooperate with the police, consulting them frequently and

following police instructions when they leave the Plaza to march (as they generally do at least once a day).

When some outsiders denounced the protesters over their friendly relations with the police, organizers and protesters responded promptly to defuse any provocation and to maintain their nonviolent tactics.

Members of the police Civil Affairs team have privately spoken approvingly of the demonstrators and their commitment to peaceful activities, even in the face of provocation.

"I'm glad they didn't fall for that other stuff," said one longtime police veteran during the first week. Another proclaimed them the best group of protesters he's worked with in a long time. He even approved of their message:

"I mean, pretty soon, five individuals are going to own the whole world. That's not going to be good."

—They are mindful of the need for more definition. Many of the questions about the movement seem to focus on the endgame: what is your specific objective? How long will you stay out here? What is victory?

There are no answers common to the group as a whole. They are a heterogeneous group with potentially very different ideas about what a victory would look like and how to parlay their strengths into achieving it, either in the short-term or long-term.

But they are working on it. A special committee is aggressively canvassing all of the occupiers about what the goals and message of their movement should be. There appears to be a shared sense that coalescing around a unified message is desirable but has to happen within the experience of the occupation itself.

In the meantime, the protesters exhibit a passion for social justice and a fairer distribution of the country's wealth and power. They are not stupid: they understand greed, vacillation, and empty promises when they see them. They seem to practice what they preach, running the encampment openly and with respect for all the participants.

—Contrary to a right-wing attack line that the protesters are anti-Semitic the opposite appears to be true. On Friday night, Oct. 7, more than 100 protesters and supporters attended a *Kol Nidre* service in the well of the Plaza to welcome Yom Kippur. Seven facilitators wearing *tallits* chanted the service in Hebrew and sang the ancient songs of repentance and redemption.

I remembered that just three weeks before that, I had observed Friday night

Sabbath services at both the Nordau Avenue and Habima Square tent city encampments in Tel Aviv, photographing the occupiers singing the traditional *Kiddush*.

Surprisingly, virtually no one at the Philadelphia protests had heard of the tent city protests in Tel Aviv and other Israeli cities that lasted months and brought out as many as 400,000 demonstrators for social justice in Tel Aviv in September.

–Difficult decisions lie ahead. On Sunday, Oct. 23, a small contingent decided to march to the police administration building, where a number of them sat in the street and refused to leave despite the usual police warnings to leave. Fifteen were peacefully arrested and released from jail early Monday morning.

Some members of the safety committee applauded this action and thought it was appropriate. A police official, however, saw it as a bad sign; that agitators with their own agenda were set to whip up the crowd and engage in ever-more extreme conduct.

As the cold weather and the boredom of sitting on concrete all day sets in, it will be a test for the occupation to retain cohesion and their focus on appealing to the population on the broader issue of economic justice.

The Philadelphia protesters are a long way from redemption, but their spirit and determination serve as a reminder that the path to something better sometimes ends in Washington but seldom starts there. As one sign in Dilworth Plaza put it, "The Beginning Is Near."

Ted Lieverman is a free-lance photographer in Philadelphia.

Vatican Decries Financial Excesses

The Christian Right talks about applying Biblical tenets to political issues, but ignores the most central of Jesus's teachings standing with the poor, opposing financial elites and abhorring violence. The Vatican has now issued a reminder of those principles, as Daniel C. Maguire notes.

By Daniel C. Maguire

Medical alert: Right-wing Catholics, and that includes everyone from Reps. Paul Ryan and John Boehner to the majority of the U.S. Supreme Court, it is urgent that you stay on your meds because Pope Benedict's Pontifical Council for

Justice and Peace has just issued a stroke-precipitating document that will break your conservative hearts.

What right-wing Catholics piously desire is a Pelvic Zone Papacy, one that will rail against contraception, abortion, same-sex marriage and would you believe it even masturbation, but will leave the greedy to their grasping ways.

This narrow focus studiously ignores a whole tradition of left-wing Catholic social doctrine, espoused by popes and general councils of the church, which is well-grounded in the Bible.

Right-wing Catholics run from pronouncements about social justice just as they ran from "Blessed" Pope John Paul II when he presciently sent a Cardinal to tell President George W. Bush that an invasion of Iraq would be a "defeat for humanity."

With the release of this new document, with the unwieldy title "Towards Reforming the International Financial and Monetary Systems in the Context of Global Political Authority," the right-wingers are now running for cover again.

They're claiming the document is not official. "The pope didn't say it," just some little old Vatican group off on a left-wing bender, as if one word of this document (which is filled with papal quotations) could slip out of the Vatican by night without the pope's full blessing.

What this document does is to "carry forward the work of Jesus," which he himself defined as "good news for the poor" (Luke 4:18). When the neocons in Nazareth heard that they wanted to throw him off a cliff.

But this new document is true to that Jesus mission. Nowhere did Jesus say, "by this shall people know you are my disciples, that you do not contracept!" No he said, if you love justice and peace as I do, if you are good news to the poor as I am, "then all will know that you are my disciples" (John 13:35).

This document is good news for the poor and bad news for the Tea Party.

It says we need globalized solutions for globalized problems; it favors a market economy but not this one; it calls for "supranational authority," a healthy, non-tyrannical "world political authority" to tame the greed games that strip the poor and gorge the rich; it calls names, deriding "neoliberalism," the neocons' credo, as devoid of "moral perspective" and a writ for "collective greed." It seeks to tax financial transactions to create a "world reserve fund." Yes! Tax!

It moves beyond the tribal, selfish assumptions of "Westphalian" nation states

and calls for a world community where differences would be respected and honored for the common good. The alternative to this is chaos and the gross inequalities that people are finally cluing into around the world and taking to the streets in response to.

There is nothing weird or radical about all this. What is radical is the status quo where the blood sweat and tears of the poor are on our clothes made in slave shops, and on our iPhones where thousands of Chinese in Shenzhen assemble them working 11-hour days for 83 cents an hour under brutal conditions. The wages are even lower in Vietnam, Cambodia and elsewhere.

Certainly, the popes and the Vatican are not without fault. They have squandered much of their moral authority by binging on issues where they have no privileged expertise, i.e. sexual and reproductive issues for which a life of real or purported celibacy is not the best preparation.

They have had their say there. Now is the time to declare a solemn moratorium on papal sex talk. Leave masturbation to the masturbators. Leave pregnancy decisions to pregnant women, women have a better track record on life issues. And leave those whom God has made gay free to bond in love. (They also have a lot more penance to do regarding the pedophilia scandal.)

But this Vatican document is a gem of moral reasoning. It is hard-nosed justice theory applied to real life.

A final suggestion: along with the moratorium on sex talk, the Vatican should consider closing its bank, which has some issues of its own.

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