

The Mystery of Ray McGovern's Arrest

Exclusive: On Oct. 30, ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern was arrested for trying to attend a public speech by retired Gen. David Petraeus. McGovern had hoped to ask Petraeus a critical question during Q-and-A but was instead trundled off to jail, another sign of a growing hostility toward dissent, McGovern says.

By Ray McGovern

Why, I asked myself, would the New York City police arrest me and put me in The Tombs overnight, simply because a security officer at the 92nd Street Y told them I was “not welcome” and should be denied entry to a talk by retired General David Petraeus? In my hand was a ticket for which I had reluctantly shelled out \$50.

I had hoped to hear the photogenic but inept Petraeus explain why the Iraqi troops, which he claimed to have trained so well, had fled northern Iraq leaving their weapons behind at the first whiff of Islamic State militants earlier this year. I even harbored some slight hope that the advertised Q & A might afford *hoi polloi* like me the chance to ask him a real question.

However rare the opportunity to ask real questions has become, it can happen. Witness my extended (four-minute) questioning of then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in Atlanta on May 4, 2006. The exchange wasn't exactly the oh-so-polite give-and-take of the Sunday talk shows but it represented what Americans should expect of democracy, a chance to confront senior government officials when they engage in deception or demonstrate incompetence especially on issues of war or peace.

It seems a safe guess that somebody wanted to protect Petraeus from even the possibility of such accountability on Oct. 30. Also, let me make clear that I had no intention of embarrassing the retired four-star general and ex-CIA director with a question about his extramarital affair with his admiring biographer Paula Broadwell, which precipitated his CIA resignation in November 2012.

Many an aging male ego has been massaged by the attentions of someone like Broadwell, and she seemed happy to do the massaging to expedite the research on *All In*, her biography of the fabled general. I had decided to resist the temptation to refer to the Biblical admonition against entrusting large matters to those who cannot be faithful in small things.

The affair may not have been a small thing to Mrs. Petraeus, but it pales in significance when compared to the death and destruction resulting from

Petraeus's self-aggrandizing disingenuousness and dissembling about prospects for eventual success in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Petraeus Agonistes

Assuming that Petraeus's expertise in counterinsurgency warfare was more than mere pretense, he knew both expeditions were doomed to failure. And he certainly now knows the inevitable answer to the question he famously posed to journalist Rick Atkinson in 2003 as U.S. forces troops began to get mired down in the sand of Iraq "Tell Me How This Ends."

The twin conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq "ended" if that's the right word for these late-stage fiascos with two additional stars pinned to Petraeus's uniform and with some 6,700 gold stars sent to the wives, husbands, or parents of U.S. troops killed, plus tens of thousands of purple hearts for those badly injured in both body and mind. A bad bargain for the American people and especially the dead and maimed U.S. troops not to mention the hundreds of thousands of dead and maimed Afghans and Iraqis but a pretty successful career move for Petraeus, if not for his fateful extramarital affair.

Surely, in the grim light of all the bloodshed, L'Affaire Broadwell can be seen as a minor peccadillo, the least of Petraeus's sins. But many of his ardent admirers view the sexual indiscretion as the only blot on his otherwise spotless dress uniform festooned with row after row of medals and ribbons.

It was my intent to put the spotlight, via a question or two, on Petraeus's far more consequentially dishonest behavior. And this seemed particularly important at this point in time, as his starry-eyed emulator generals seem no less willing than Petraeus to throw a new wave of youth from a poverty draft into a fool's-errand sequel in Iraq and Syria.

In any event, it seems reasonably clear why they did not let me enter the 92nd Street Y on Oct. 30. Someone thought that the thin-skinned ex-general might be discomforted by a less-than-admiring question. His speech was to be another moment for Petraeus to bathe in public adulation, not confront a citizen or two who might pose critical queries. [For more on Petraeus and his acolytes, see Consortiumnews.com's "[Petraeus Spared Ray McGovern's Question.](#)"]

Lingering Mystery

But one mystery lingers. The "organs of state security" (the words used by the Soviets to refer to their intelligence/security services) were lying in wait for me when I walked into the Y? Why? How on earth did they know I was coming?

My initial reaction was that the culprit could be a lingering B0L0, the "Be on

the Look-Out" warning that the State Department had issued against me earlier for my non-violent anti-war stances. In September, thanks to a civil rights lawsuit filed on my behalf by the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund (PCJF), the State Department rescinded that BOLO alert for me, under which State Department agents had been ordered to stop and question me on sight.

State Department documents acquired under the Freedom of Information Act showed that the damning evidence behind that draconian (and patently unconstitutional) order was "political activism, primarily anti-war."

The proximate cause was my standing silently with my back to then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Feb. 15, 2011, to protest the unconscionably violent policies she had promoted, including her vote for the Bush-Cheney war of aggression against Iraq (which she thought politically smart at the time) and her infamous suggestion during her political campaign that we could "obliterate" Iran.

In response to my silent protest, I was roughed up, cuffed, arrested, and jailed as Clinton delivered a major speech at George Washington University admonishing foreign governments not to stifle dissent. Heedless of the irony, Clinton did not miss a syllable, much less a word, as she watched me snatched directly in front of her and brutally removed. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Standing Up to War and Hillary Clinton.](#)"]

The charges were immediately dropped, since there were simply too many cameras recording what actually did happen to me. A State Department investigation into my background came up dry; but the words "political activism, primarily anti-war" were enough to get me BOLOed.

The State Department assured my pro bono lawyers at the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund that State not only had rescinded the BOLO but also had notified other law enforcement agencies that the BOLO was "non-operational." But I remained suspicious that, while the State Department's assurance may have been made in good faith, God only knows (and then only if God has the proper clearances) what other organs of state security had entered the "derogatory" information about the danger of my "political activism" into their data bases.

Had my "derog" been shared, perhaps, with the ever-proliferating number of "fusion centers" that were so effective in sharing information to track and thwart the activists of Occupy including subversives like Quakers and Catholic Workers? However, as I reflected on the circumstances of my arrest on Oct. 30, I came to discount the possible role of the BOLO.

Taken by Surprise

As I walked up the steps to the 92nd Street Y on Oct. 30, I had no idea there would be a reprise of the treatment accorded me three-and-a-half years ago at Hillary Clinton's speech.

My friend and associate in Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS) Bill Binney, a former Technical Director at the National Security Agency before he left in protest against NSA's unconstitutional eavesdropping on Americans, long since advised me to assume that I am one of several thousands subjected to post-Fourth-Amendment surveillance.

So I had taken the precaution of asking a friend, who was in no way linked to me via email or phone records, to order the ticket for me, just on the off-chance the organs of state security might learn I intended to hear Petraeus speak at the 92nd Street Y and might do something to prevent my attending.

Actually, it was pure coincidence that I happened to be in New York on the day of the Petraeus event. Months before, I had committed to teaching classes at Manhattan and Fordham universities on Oct. 30. I learned of the Petraeus event much later.

At that point, I chose what I thought would be a safe way to purchase a ticket. But I apparently failed to practice the kind of "tradecraft" in terms of limiting associations that is needed to function in today's democratic society.

How did the organs of state security learn I was coming? It is more likely to have been guilt by association than the residue from a BOLO. In short, when I travel to New York to teach, I normally email my friend Martha at Maryhouse in the Bowery the Catholic Worker house founded by her grandmother, Dorothy Day.

If there is a free bed, I gratefully receive Catholic Worker hospitality and have a chance to enjoy the company of those who have been placed at the margins of society, as well to witness the selfless kindness of those forming authentic relationships with them.

Here's the catch. Catholic Workers are involved not only in extending hospitality but also in activism, trying, as Dorothy Day did, to make the world a less violent, more caring place. It is primarily the activism, of course, that brings scrutiny from the organs of security, but you might call it "political activism, primarily anti-war," as the State Department did.

Moreover, the Catholic Worker Movement is an international organization widely looked upon as subversive of the Establishment, and this adds to the suspicion. In recent years, many of my Catholic Worker friends have been arrested for protesting the use of drones to kill foreigners dubbed "militants," most of whom don't look like most of us.

But the targets can now include American citizens, as President Barack Obama turns the Constitution upside down and takes it upon himself to act as judge, jury and executioner. Yes, the Fifth Amendment has gone the way of the Fourth, and the First has become an endangered species. Worth protesting before it too is extinct, would you not agree?

At The Tombs

In a kind of poetic justice, it turns out my friend Martha has the same court date as I have the morning of Dec. 8 at the New York City Criminal Court building (aka "The Tombs") at 100 Centre Street in New York, where I spent the night/morning of Oct. 30/31. She was arrested with about 100 others at a Sept. 22 action dubbed "Flood Wall Street," protesting the important role of the financial industry in facilitating air pollution and global warming.

In an aside, Martha told me that the police had as much trouble getting handcuffs on the "polar bear" sitting next to her that day as they did on Oct. 30 trying to bend my injured left shoulder back far enough to get the cuffs on me. I look forward to standing at the same dock where Martha will be defending her action which was very much in the tradition of "Grannie."

My Catholic Worker friends comfort the afflicted, while in no way shying away from afflicting the comfortable, as the saying goes. And for that, they often pay a price, including being snooped upon, in violation of the Fourth Amendment, for exercising their rights under the First.

I am not making this up: In the fall of 2010, Justice Department Inspector General Glenn Fine criticized the FBI for conducting "anti-terrorism" spy operations against the Catholic Worker Movement and even the Thomas Merton Center in Pittsburgh. According to Fine, spies were sent into the Merton Center to "look for international terrorists." One of the informers photographed a woman he thought was of "Middle Eastern descent" to have her checked out by "terrorism analysts."

So my possible tradecraft lapse may have been contacting my Catholic Worker friends. On Oct. 26, I sent Martha an email with the innocuous title, "Room in the Inn?" It contained the usual request for simple lodging at the Catholic Worker together with details regarding my classes at Fordham and Manhattan and the Petraeus event.

While the title and other metadata accompanying that message might seem singularly unsuspecting, eavesdroppers covering Martha's or my email addresses (or both) would have had no trouble ferreting out an email exchange following an earlier attempt to attend an event at the 92nd Street Y, three years ago.

On Sept. 8, 2011, a group of Catholic Workers, together with others all of us with valid tickets were summarily expelled, most of us 10 minutes *before* an event sponsored by the Jewish Policy Center. That event bore the title “9/11 a Decade Later: Lessons Learned and Future Challenges” and featured former Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, ex-Attorney General Michael Mukasey, and George W. Bush’s press spokesman Ari Fleisher. It was moderated by neoconservative talk show host Michael Medved.

Since I was not among those subjected to Y security’s preventive strike before the performance, I sat quietly for Medved’s opening rant about radical, fundamentalist Muslim terrorists, but then stood up in silent witness against the right-wing invective. I was unceremoniously, violently thrown out after a mere two minutes.

More relevant here: I still have in my email inbox a message of encouragement dated Sept. 12, 2011, in which Martha reminded me that every action, “successful” or not, is important; adding, “We of the Catholic Worker are ‘fools for Christ,’ as the saying goes.”

Only Metadata

You are perhaps thinking that the National Security Agency stores only metadata; and, if so, you would be wrong. Content is saved. So if the government wants to access the content of emails from the past, no problem.

As Bill Binney reminded me, former FBI director Robert Mueller let that particular cat out of the bag three-and-a-half years ago. In his testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 30, 2011, Mueller bragged about having access to “past emails and future ones as they come in.”

Binney explains that the metadata is used to access the content. And, thanks to the documents provided by Edward Snowden, we know that under NSA’s PRISM operation, data is routinely collected directly from Google, Microsoft, Yahoo, Facebook, PalTalk, AOL, Skype, YouTube, Apple (and God knows where else, again assuming God is cleared).

So my best guess is that I can blame the “subversive” activities of the Catholic Workers and the monitoring of them by the organs of state security, for my recent arrest and overnight accommodations in The Tombs.

The people at the World Can’t Wait in New York, who were also aware of my plan to take in the Petraeus performance, are known to have been targets of eavesdropping, too. With the surfeit of people sorting through emails from suspicious folks, it may be that both the Catholic Workers and the World Can’t Wait were monitored all to keep us safe, of course.

It seems the height of irony that it may have been NSA's eavesdropping that enabled the White House to get rid of Petraeus, when he was getting too big for his britches (and I allude here not only to his dalliance with Broadwell). To Bill Binney, it is clear as day that the President was ready to move against Petraeus right after Obama's re-election in November 2012.

A Final, Sad Irony

A couple of days after my arrest and jailing, I received a sympathetic email from "George" in Germany, who described himself as a national security whistleblower in his own right. George strongly suggested I ditch my Gmail account.

"Before Edward Snowden's revelations last spring," he said, "I too was using Gmail as my primary address. I was dismayed to learn that Google was an NSA PRISM partner." George strongly suggested that I switch to a more trustworthy email provider outside the U.S. and actually suggested one in particular.

Why ironic? In the years after my birth in 1939, Germany was widely considered the cutting edge on matters of eavesdropping and enhanced interrogation techniques, and most Germans didn't challenge these forms of oppression even when it touched them personally. Perhaps saddest of all, those with some pretense to moral leadership first and foremost the Catholic and Lutheran Churches could not find their voice. Is that history repeating itself in the U.S.?

In *Defying Hitler*, Sebastian Haffner's journal of his life as a lawyer in training to become a judge in Berlin in the early 1930s, the author (whose real name was Raimund Pretzel) provides an eerily reminiscent account of what ensued after Berlin's equivalent of the attacks of 9/11 the burning of the Reichstag.

"I do not see that one can blame the majority of Germans who, in 1933, believed that the Reichstag fire was the work of the Communists. What one can blame them for, and what shows their terrible collective weakness of character ... is that this settled the matter.

"With sheepish submissiveness, the German people accepted that, as a result of the fire, each one of them lost what little personal freedom and dignity was guaranteed by the constitution, as though it followed as a necessary consequence. If the Communists had burned down the Reichstag, it was perfectly in order that the government took 'decisive measures.' ... from now on, one's telephone would be tapped, one's letters opened, and one's desk might be broken into." (pp. 121-122).

Substitute Americans for Germans, terrorists for Communists, September 11, 2001,

for 1933, and give some thought to where we seem to be headed. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. warned that “there is such a thing as being too late,” a quotation that, ironically, President Obama is fond of citing. It would be a good thing if we Americans woke from our lethargy before it is too late.

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Is Arlington County, VA, Racist?

Exclusive: Many Southerners get outraged at the suggestion that racism persists these days, but residues of segregation continue in laws discouraging black voting and in the casual neglect of minority communities, even in places like Arlington, Virginia, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Surely, the upwardly mobile white professionals who live in the stylish neighborhoods of North Arlington, a close Metro commute to Washington DC, don't consider themselves racist. Nor does Arlington County in general, believing that it left behind the bad old days of racial segregation in the 1960s.

But Arlington, Virginia, is like many communities in the South, unwilling to confront both the vestiges of slavery/segregation and always susceptible to new packaging for racial divisions. This reality was apparent in a hard-fought contest for the County Board in which the central issue was whether to build a light-rail commuter line to service the poorer and more racially diverse part of the county.

The Republican/Tea Party candidate John Vihstadt, running as an “independent,” made opposition to the Columbia Pike Streetcar the centerpiece of his campaign and he received strong support from wealthier, whiter North Arlington, where there is much resistance to investing in infrastructure for the historically black part of the county, south of Arlington Boulevard (also known as U.S. Route 50).

Vihstadt had the backing of the local newspaper, the Sun-Gazette, which doesn't even bother to distribute in much of South Arlington because its residents aren't the newspaper's desired demographic. Vihstadt also won the support of the

neoconservative Washington Post.

So, it wasn't entirely a surprise when Vihstadt soundly defeated the Democratic nominee, Alan Howze, who supported the Streetcar as a necessary step toward balanced development in Arlington County and toward strengthening the community's tax base.

But this local race said a lot about the issue of race that still percolates just below the surface in the Old Confederacy. It is a topic that I have witnessed up close since moving to Arlington in the 1970s, what might be called the post-segregation period.

'The Schools'

In 1977, after being transferred to Washington by the Associated Press, I rented a house in North Arlington and as I looked around for where to buy I was warned by neighbors that I should avoid South Arlington because of "the schools." It soon became clear to me that "the schools" was code for South Arlington's racial diversity.

So, I decided to buy a house in South Arlington and all four of my children attended "the schools." But what I hadn't expected was that Arlington County, which had long neglected the black and brown neighborhoods of South Arlington, would not only continue that segregation-era behavior, but escalate it.

While one might have hoped that Arlington County would want to respond to the end of segregation by pouring more public monies into South Arlington to equalize the infrastructure of the county's two halves, the local governments (county, state and regional) did the opposite. They poured billions upon billions of dollars into the whiter, wealthier North Arlington, particularly around the Metro's Orange Line.

Meanwhile, the neglect continued for South Arlington. One of the few major county projects for South Arlington was to expand the sewer treatment plant to handle the increased sewage flow from North Arlington. Other spending on South Arlington always seemed to get slow-rolled or killed outright.

The original Metro plan had called for a subway line going down Columbia Pike, the shabby commercial corridor through South Arlington. But that was eliminated for cost reasons. So, a decade ago, the Columbia Pike neighborhoods accepted a much cheaper light-rail commuter line as a consolation prize, but it was delayed for years before finally getting green-lighted by Democrats on the County Board.

Tea Party Opposition

However, once the Columbia Pike Streetcar became a real possibility, well-funded opposition much of it from North Arlington and from Northern Virginia's Republican/Tea Party elements took aim at the project as too expensive and at members of the County Board who okayed it.

The issue played perfectly into the Tea Party formula: hostility to government projects in general mixed with a slight odor of racism. The Streetcar was a project that would primarily make it easier for racial minorities living near Columbia Pike to go shopping or get to work. There was an attitude among some North Arlingtonians that those people should be satisfied with buses.

Pitching himself as an "independent" even with support from Arlington's small anti-development Green Party Vihstadt cleverly exploited North Arlington's resentment toward spending money on South Arlington. Indeed, his first County Board campaign only highlighted attacks on capital improvements in South Arlington, particularly the Streetcar which he parodied with a photo of a Rice-a-Roni-style trolley.

The irony, however, is that Arlington County has continued lavishing spending on North Arlington, especially on the glittering neighborhoods along the Orange Line. Some \$55 million was spent to install three new elevators at the Metro entrance at Rosslyn and nearly \$2 million went to renovate a dog park at Clarendon. Billions of dollars more have gone into the Silver Line, which when completed will connect North Arlington to Dulles Airport.

But there was this fierce opposition to the Columbia Pike Streetcar, whose costs have escalated due to the years of delays to around \$300 million with about one-third of the money coming from the state and much of the rest picked up by special taxes on businesses that would benefit from the improved transit.

Though the state money would presumably be lost if the Streetcar is killed, North Arlington residents may well be eying other parts of the funding for more improvements to the Orange and Silver lines. So, some of the opposition can be explained as simply the richer, more powerful part of Arlington County grabbing money away from the poorer, weaker part of the county. But there is the troubling back story of Arlington's history of slavery and segregation.

Understanding Arlington

Arlington County, which was originally the southwest corner of Washington D.C. that spilled across the Potomac into Virginia, was ceded back to the Commonwealth in 1846. Then, the land was home to slaveholding plantations, particularly in South Arlington, the less hilly and less forested part of the county. One of those plantations belonged to Gen. Robert E. Lee.

After Virginia joined the Confederacy in 1861 and Lee deserted the U.S. Army to command Confederate forces, his plantation was seized, with part of it becoming a cemetery for Union troops killed in the Civil War, what is now known as Arlington Cemetery.

After President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on Jan. 1, 1863, the former Lee plantation also became home to freed slaves, both his and others who flocked northward arriving via Columbia Pike.

Thousands of ex-slaves were settled in a large refugee camp known as Freedman's Village along Columbia Pike (near the current site of the Air Force Memorial and the Pentagon). Freedman's Village remained there for decades after the Civil War, finally closed in 1900. But many of the African-Americans stayed in the area, some settling in South Arlington's historic black neighborhoods.

However, after Reconstruction ended, Arlington County like the rest of Virginia and the Old Confederacy continued to persecute African-Americans while honoring the legacy of the pro-slavery secessionists. In the 1920s, at the height of the Jim Crow era when blacks were being lynched and terrorized, a stretch of Route One through South Arlington was named in honor of Confederate President Jefferson Davis who wanted to keep African-Americans in slavery for perpetuity. The highway skirted several black neighborhoods.

Around the two world wars as the number of U.S. government bureaucrats increased, many settled in newly developed neighborhoods in North Arlington, which were largely off limits to blacks. So, when the era of segregation ended in the 1960s, Arlington like many Southern communities was divided largely along racial lines. That was the time frame when I first arrived, having grown up in New England and moving from Providence, Rhode Island.

More Imbalance

In the 1970s, despite Arlington's racial divisions and wealth disparities, the truth was that the main commercial thoroughfares through the two parts of the county – Wilson Boulevard in North Arlington and Columbia Pike in South Arlington were both dumpy and depressing.

But that was about to change. The massive public investments in the Orange Line transformed Wilson Boulevard into a glittering showplace, a hotspot for young, mostly white professionals. Yet, Columbia Pike remained pretty much the same, an eyesore of strip malls, car congestion and slow-moving buses servicing a racially diverse population, now with many Latinos and Asians as well as blacks and whites.

Indeed, the shameful reality of Arlington County was that the gap between

predominantly white North Arlington and racially diverse South Arlington actually *grew wider after segregation ended* in the 1960s, rather than narrowing.

To add injury to this insult, the people of South Arlington ended up subsidizing wealthier North Arlington because much of the money for the Metro system comes from a gas surtax that falls most heavily on people who rely on their cars for transportation, i.e., people with inferior public transit. There's also the financial benefit for North Arlington families who can get by with one or no car and thus save more money.

Yet, Tea Party-style politicians have learned that – whatever the reality – they can exploit the Old Confederacy's subterranean racial divisions for political gain. As we've seen in Arlington County, the strategy works not only in the rural Deep South but in relatively sophisticated communities in Northern Virginia.

And, as for Jefferson Davis Highway honoring a dyed-in-the-wool white supremacist I did urge the County Board to appeal to the Republican-controlled Virginia legislature to end this vestige of racial bigotry. My proposal drew mostly derisive attention from the local media and hate mail from one resident of North Arlington who wrote: "I am very proud of my Commonwealth's history, but not of the current times, as I'm sure many others are." [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Shameful History of Jeff Davis Highway.](#)"]

That minor public furor caused a senior elected Democrat to approach me at a public meeting and urge me to back off the Jefferson Davis proposal for fear of complicating Arlington County's relations with the politicians in the state capital of Richmond. The county official told me that the notion of removing Jefferson Davis's name would be viewed as crazy by many state legislators.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his new book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). For a limited time, you also can order Robert Parry's trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America's Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).

Christians Who Ignore the Real Jesus

Many American Christians see themselves as devout followers of the theological

Jesus but don't want to know much about the historical Jesus, the nonviolent radical who called on his followers to resist social injustice, writes Rev. Howard Bess.

By the Rev. Howard Bess

At one time in the study of Jesus from Nazareth, the Bible particularly the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were our most fruitful sources. They are still basic to the search for the real Jesus, but the study has recently expanded into the surrounding context of his life and teachings.

For centuries, Christians had only a theological Jesus defined in creeds and confessions of faith. According to this tradition, Jesus was sent by God to die for the sins of the world with an eventual destiny to rule the world from the holy city of Jerusalem where he would sit on the throne of the great King David.

However, in the Nineteenth Century, scholars began the search for the historical Jesus. That first search effectively ended when Albert Schweitzer wrote a book entitled *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, published in 1906 and translated into English in 1910. Schweitzer's conclusion was clear: No historical Jesus can be found in the New Testament.

Thus, the issue of the Jesus of history lay dormant until the mid-1950s when under the leadership of Rudolph Bultmann and his students another search for the real Jesus was pursued for some 15 to 20 years. But Bultmann and his colleagues came to the same conclusion as Schweitzer: No historical Jesus could be found in Matthew, Mark, Luke or John.

Still, the subject would not go away and a big breakthrough occurred in the 1970s when scholars using sources other than the Bible began reconstructing the social and political realities of First Century Palestine, particularly the Zealot movement whose seeds were in Galilee, Jesus's backyard.

The Zealot movement was dedicated to overthrowing the entire authority structure that controlled Palestine, including the Romans, all their retainers and enforcers, and the entire religious hierarchy. The Zealot movement was based in the peasant class, a majority of the people who lived in the Galilee in what scholars call "an advanced agrarian society."

Life for most people in an advanced agrarian society was not a pretty picture, filled with inequality, poverty and despair for most. Ownership and control of land and farming was held by about 2 per cent of the population, a class of rich owners who lived in luxury in cities.

In Northern Palestine, the rich owners lived primarily in Sepphoris and Tiberius

and seldom, if ever, visited the farms they owned. They controlled their land empires through a system of retainers and enforcers who extracted maximum wealth from the peasant workers.

Below the peasants on the socio-economic ladder were people who were considered unclean or degraded along with a sizeable population of expendables, primarily excess children of peasants who were turned out and left on their own.

Artisans were a separate class from peasants and also were considered below peasants in status. Joseph, the father of Jesus, was one such artisan. So, at best, Jesus and his family lived at a subsistence level. Opportunities for education were non-existent. This was the world of Jesus.

The great eye-opener for me was a book published in 1994 by New Testament scholar William Herzog II, who spent his scholarly career studying, teaching and writing about the parables of Jesus. The title of the book is *Parables as Subversive Speech*, with the subtitle, "Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed."

The book placed Jesus in the role of a brilliant but untrained teacher who was shaped by his commitment to God and to Jewish Old Testament law (Torah). His teaching tool was his parables through which he demanded justice. I have not read the parables in the same way since reading Herzog's volume.

The Jesus parables that we have in the Gospels and the movement of the Zealots dovetail into a scathing denunciation of the economic, political, social and religious conditions of the day. But there was one huge difference between Jesus and the Zealots. Zealots were committed to overthrowing by violence. Jesus was calling for revolution through non-violent justice. Nearly every Zealot man carried a large hidden knife and was ready to use it. Jesus told Zealots "Put up your sword."

Putting together the puzzle pieces of an historical Jesus is not complete. It is a work still in process. But enough has been done to show that there was a Jesus of history who vigorously attacked the religious, economic, social and political powers of his day in the name of justice.

The tragedy is that most people in the pews are completely unaware of the historical Jesus and its implications for what it means to be a Christian and to be a follower of Jesus. Why are they ignorant of this information? Their pastors have not told them.

Why have they not told them? I can think of at least three reasons. First, many American churches are led by untrained, poorly educated clergy who simply don't know the facts. Second, even those with quality seminary training have neglected their responsibility to continue reading and studying.

Third, there are a huge number of clergy who know the truth about Jesus but are afraid to tell their congregations because the clergy are not willing to ask their parish members to become involved in the real world and its issues. They are fearful of being involved themselves in the justice issues of our own day and they are fearful of losing their jobs

Clergy are too comfortable with a sweet Jesus who waits to take people to heaven.

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