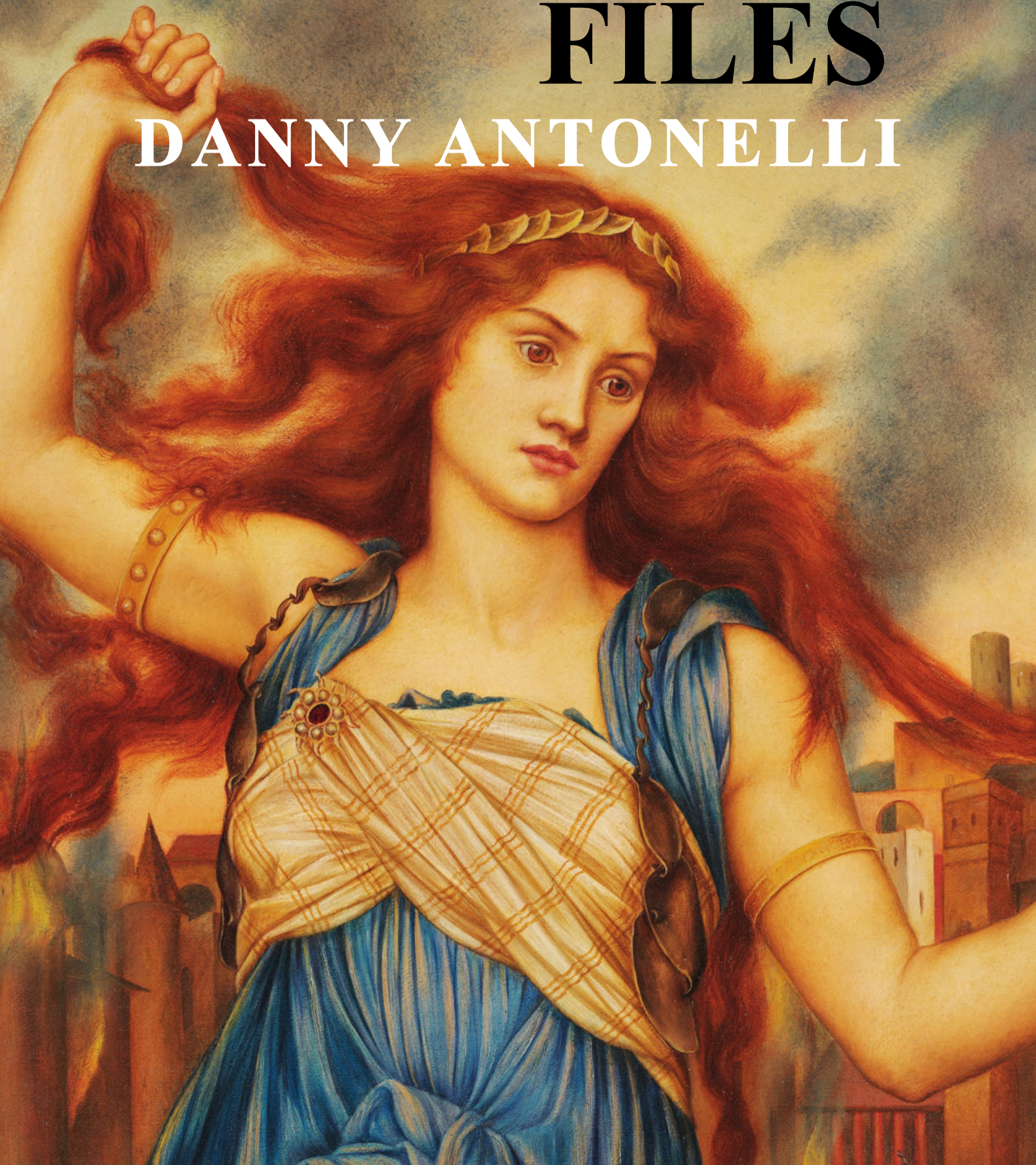


THE CASSANDRA FILES

DANNY ANTONELLI



THE CASSANDRA FILES

by

Danny Antonelli

Britannica: Cassandra was loved by the god Apollo, who promised her the power of prophecy if she would comply with his desires. Cassandra accepted the proposal, received the gift, and then refused the god her favors. Apollo revenged himself by ordaining that her prophecies should never be believed.

*

I have been warning about the dangers of neofascism for a while now, watching the world degenerate, one country after another, authoritarian Masters come to power who destroy all forms of democracy and take away individual freedoms. I'm not the only one screaming out warnings of course. But however many Cassandras there are in the world, nobody seems to be listening.

These writings have appeared in some publications such as CounterPunch, Cross-border Talks, and on Danny Antonelli.

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Despotism: A warning from 1946

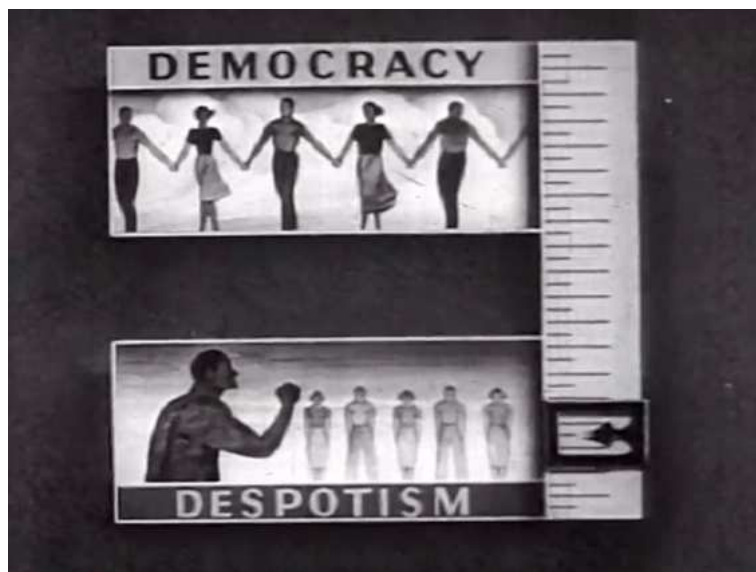
Archive dot org, which I'm sure many of you are already familiar with, has been able rescue films that record history, like the films shot during and after both of the World Wars, and of course it has rescued countless a-historical but highly entertaining Noir films from the 40s and 50s (some of my favorites among them!).

But probably one of the most important films for us today is a slightly damaged version of a film entitled *Despotism*. It was made by [Encyclopedia Britannica Films](#), in those days the top informational filmmaker for schools and universities. And it made the film *Despotism* to inform the upcoming generation of the perils that exist in the world we live in, and to show them how to recognize despotism when it is on its insidious path to take over the democratic system.

Unfortunately, as events in the present are showing us, this film has not been shown in enough schools since 1946, otherwise we might not be in the situation we are in today.

You can view *Despotism* yourself [here](#) and [here](#) – and I encourage you to do so. The first link is to the Prelinger Archive collection and has an extensive *shotlist* and transcript from which I have gathered some important shot and narration information for this article – which is, by the way, only written as a quick guide to the film, not intended as an exhaustive review. The Prelinger Archive version of the film has some sync problems, but is still OK to view. The second link is to the Community Video site, and it has a version of the film with no sync problems, but is bereft of the *shotlist*. So if you need to, you can copy the *shotlist* from the one site and watch the film on the other.

In a no-holds-barred beginning to the film we are shown a sliding scale (00:14) which slowly goes from top to bottom:



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And carefully chosen words follow from narrator James Brill, who stands in front of a wall chart with a big map of Europe behind him:

“Well for one thing, avoid the comfortable idea that the mere form of government can of itself safeguard a nation against despotism. Germany under President Hindenburg was a republic. [outline of Germany] And yet in this republic an aggressive despotism took root and flourished under Adolf Hitler. [maps, flags, swastika]

Because archive.org is an open system, many negative or near-negative comments about the film have been posted on the Prelinger Archive site by people who call it everything from “obvious

Jewish Marxist propaganda” to “accurate and frightening”. Why? Well, you have seen how the film begins, now look at the shocking follow-up to that beginning:

“When a competent observer looks for signs of despotism in a community, he looks beyond fine words and noble phrases.” (00:54) Then you see a picture of a group of people reciting the pledge of allegiance, saluting the flag, hands over hearts: “... for which it stands, one nation indivisible with liberty and justice for all.” And while they speak the words “with liberty and justice for all”, the crossfade comes and shows a hanged man. (00:58-01:09)



Public Domain

Many Americans were not and are still not able to emotionally deal with the juxtaposition of the American flag and the Pledge of Allegiance ritual with the picture of someone hanging from – perhaps – the branch of a tree that has an uncanny resemblance to a scaffold. And, if you study the picture of the shadow figure hanging from the rope (which undoubtedly has a hangman’s noose), you can discern the typical forelock that was so popular among young whites of post-war America. Does that forelock rescue the picture from a racist bent?

It’s a shocking juxtaposition in its own right, even if you are not American. And it comes so early on in the film that it sets a tone, a tone that will continue throughout.

Despotism is only a ten-minute film. It was meant to be shown in a History class or a Political Science class or in a class that in my day used to be called Civics. (I just had a look to see if Civics still exists, and it [does](#)!) Although Civics seems to be obligatory in the high schools of most states, it is hardly ever taught for more than half a year. Only 16 states require a Civics exam to graduate. One of those states is Colorado, which seems to have a rather comprehensive course for its students: “Because all Colorado high schools must teach one year of civics, teachers are expected to cover the origins of democracy, the structure of American government, methods of public participation, a comparison to foreign governments, and the responsibilities of citizenship.”

I wonder what effect it would have if some high school teachers in Colorado took 10 minutes to show their students *Despotism*. (What effect would it have on you if you were stoned while watching it?)

Pretty quickly after the shock, a quick explanation of how despotism can come about, once again using the sliding scales we have been introduced to, but this time with the titles RESPECT and POWER.

“A careful observer can use a respect scale to find how many citizens get an even break. As a community moves towards despotism, respect is restricted to fewer people. A community is low on a respect scale if common courtesy is withheld from large groups of people on account of their

political attitudes; if people are rude to others because they think their wealth and position gives them that right, or because they don't like a man's race or his religion." (01:26)

Skillfully woven into the narration is a short clip of two khaki-clad men in jackboots and military-style caps, strutting down a city street, guns on their hips and obviously harassing people on the street. That is followed by a boss entering his office and walking quickly past his employees without uttering a word of greeting before going into his office, which is marked *Private*. And then the clincher, an reservation form for a holiday resort:



RESERVATION BLANK

GENTLEMEN:
Enclosed please find \$ _____ deposit for my party of _____

NAME: _____ PLEASE PRINT DATE OF ARRIVAL: _____

ADDRESS: _____ STREET AND NUMBER CITY: _____

RELIGION: _____ WE SOLICIT GENTILE PATRONAGE ONLY

ARE THERE ANY HEBREWS IN YOUR PARTY? YES OR NO

I hereby swear that the above statements are true.

Signed _____

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And immediately we are at the heart of the matter of what is extremely relevant for us today, because our whole world is getting lower and lower on the RESPECT scale. Common courtesy is withheld from people all the time, and not only because of their political attitudes, their lack of wealth, their race or gender, but for any number of perceived travesties, in public spaces, on busses, subway trains, in traffic – too many horror videos to mention just one – and on social media. You've all seen the crappy moments that are filmed for likes or LOLs or just to elicit rage. And this rage spreads through social media channels and fuels acts of violence. And then the acts of violence are filmed and passed along as well.

Along with a graphic depiction of the POWER scale as it goes down from *shared* to *concentrated*, we get the following narration:

"A power scale is another important yardstick of despotism. It gauges the citizen's share in making the community's decisions. Communities which concentrate decision making in a few hands rate low on a power scale and are moving towards despotism. Like France under the Bourbon kings, one of whom said, 'The state – I am the state.' Today democracy can ebb away in communities whose citizens allow power to become concentrated in the hands of bosses. (03:13) 'What I say goes. See, I'm the law around here. Ha ha ha!' The test of despotic power is that it can disregard the will of the people. It rules without the consent of the governed." Does that *I'm the law around here. Ha ha ha!* sound familiar?



Public Domain (03:40)

The sequence that comes after, about voting and how votes are treated, has a cleverly crafted flag that adorns the wall, with the math symbol ($\neq$) in what we can assume – even though the film is in black and white – is a red circle. And here we also have the re-emergence of our khaki-clad keepers of order from a previous clip, with official armbands and eagles on their military/policeman caps.

Symbols of power are extremely important today, as they have always been. Some are external, like flags, badges, guns, vehicles, uniforms (brown, green, camouflaged, dark blue, black); some are only there if you look for them – watches, cell phones, jewelry, shoes – and some are kept hidden and shown only to the select few who are privy to the halls of power in whichever system they exist. Those are the people who are allowed to view TOP SECRET, EYES ONLY documents, and other such private and sensitive material (like the [photos of a dead Bin Laden](#)? or snapshots of a dead Khashoggi before he is disposed of?).

Voting is a process that even despotic regimes like to use to show the world that they are not so bad after all. Now whether or not your vote has any meaning is totally dependent on the form of government you are under. In nominally democratic societies, people have a tendency to believe their vote is meaningful. In some European countries turnout is high. And from time-to-time there is a change of direction away from despotism toward democracy. But these days, as Noam Chomsky once showed us, our consent to be governed is often manufactured through the power of advertising and propaganda perfected first by [Edward Bernays](#), the “double nephew” of Viennese psychoanalyst [Sigmund Freud](#), and then refined by Joseph Goebbels and later by the Mad Men on Madison Avenue.

The makers of *Despotism* are no slouches when it comes to giving maximum visual effect to the words that come after we have had a quick visual and aural dose of Hitler and his saluting minions.

“In a downright despotism, opposition is dangerous whether the despotism is official or whether it is unofficial.” [this all comes over a montage of pictures showing a sign which reads *Camp 33 for Political Offenders*, then a man with a hood over his head and a noose around his neck, which is followed by what are obviously Ku Klux Klan men backlit by the flames of a burning cross. (04:13-04:23)]

The film is around its halfway mark now. So to keep this readable, I’ll give you a quick run-through of what comes next.

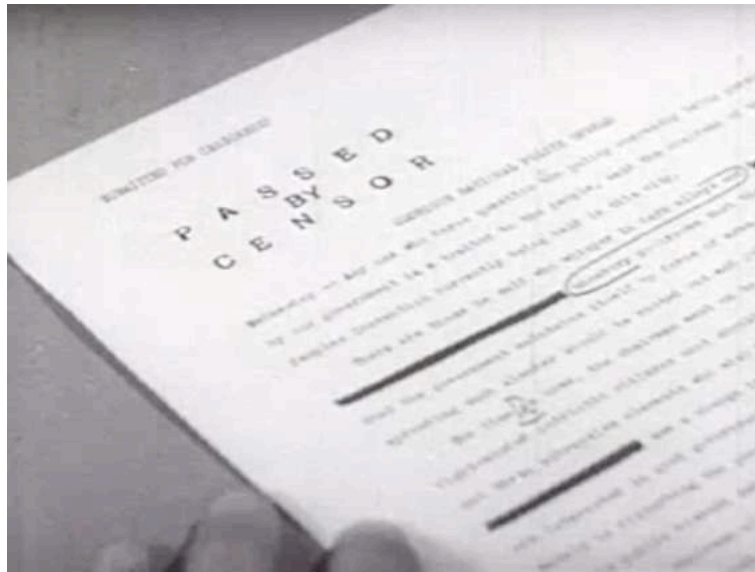
First we get the ECONOMIC DISTRIBUTION scale that can go from *balanced* to *slanted*. Income and land ownership are dealt with first: “Where land is privately owned, one sign of a poorly balanced economy is the concentration of land ownership in the hands of a very small number of people.” Taxation is also addressed: “Another sign of a poorly balanced economy is a

taxation system that presses heaviest on those least able to pay.” All of that illustrated by stacks of coins and pie charts. (04:48-06:30)

The INFORMATION scale comes in at 06:35 and goes from *uncontrolled* to *controlled* with these fine words: “A community rates low on an information scale when the press, radio, and other channels of communication are controlled by only a few people and when citizens have to accept what they are told.” And when these last few words are spoken, under *uncontrolled* a little subheading appears: *critical evaluation*. Next, we get the subheading for *controlled* which reads: *automatic acceptance*.

So now you can conclude for yourself what it means when we know that only [5 major corporations](#) control all the media in the USA. Not that other western democracies are that much better off.

A quick covering of how teachers are trained, how propaganda is woven into school systems and how the general public can be persuaded to believe what the government wants them to believe ends with a depiction of how official censorship works.

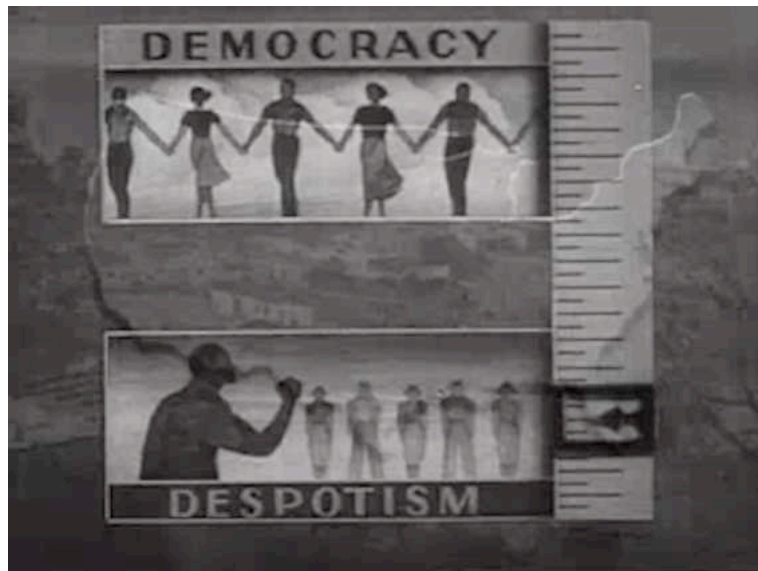


Public Domain

Today’s censorship works more subtly than that because it takes place in the head of the journalist and is linked to career opportunities and political affiliations. But the power of money was well-known in 1946 as well. “It is also possible for newspapers and other forms of communication to be controlled by private interests. ‘I thought I told you to kill that story. It’ll cost us a lot of advertising.’”

Then comes a final review of the most important points covered in the film, with the main question being: “What sort of community do you live in? Where would you place it on a democracy/despotism scale?” The RESPECT and POWER scales are next, followed by the ECONOMIC DISTRIBUTION and INFORMATION scales and we are told that the lower these are, the closer we come to despotism.

The end is a curious collage of images which begins with this crossfade:



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You see how the United States blends in as the scale reaches its nadir, toward despotism, in a perhaps not so subtle message that there is something wrong in a country which, even in 1946, is giving signs of concentrated wealth and power, concentrated land ownership, intolerance, and a voting system that does not conform to the important aspects of democracy: all discernible signs of a slow and steady march toward despotism.

So tell me: Where would you put the US and other western democracies in relation to despotism today?

Democracy, the companion film, is from 1945:

<https://archive.org/details/Democracy1945512kb>

P.E.D. – Post-Election Depression

Out of the trenches and into the What?

Yesterday there *was* a moment of euphoria when Biden was declared the winner of the presidential election. I'm not denying that moment. My *partigiano* endorphins celebrated their release from four years of political captivity, coursed through my body and I walked from room to room, up the stairs, down the stairs, with a new energy. My wife smiled at me (she does this sometimes), WhatsApp messages were coming in with funny gifs about the biggest loser. My brother in Saudi Arabia, who has gone through a number of cancer treatments and defeated the big C so far, was afraid he'd die without ever seeing the maniac in the shining house on the hill be evicted. He was celebrating with the most widely imbibed forbidden substance in the kingdom. Then I went out into the garden, filled the birdbaths with water, looked up into the late afternoon's gathering darkness and the euphoria was gone.

At first I thought it was because these autumn days get dark at 4:30 in the afternoon and the nights are colder and the pandemic has not relinquished its hold on the world, only gripped it tighter, somehow instinctively knowing that it was time to flourish again, to hit these ignorant arrogant humans with a sucker punch during the holiday season when they will once again want to gather in large family groups and in places of worship to celebrate their religious freedoms.

We were saved from pagan Halloween this year because of Corona, so it hasn't been all bad. And personally, I never go to church on Christmas Eve with the rest of the family to hear the choirs sing, which has been a family tradition since forever. The Hamburg churches are famous for their superb choirs and their pre-Christmas concerts, especially in [Hauptkirche St. Michaelis](#) (St. Michael's Church), it's tall bell tower and clock visible from everywhere in the city, because no building in Hamburg may be built so tall as to obscure it from view.

I consoled myself last night with a couple of Liam Neeson action films (*Run All Night*, *The Commuter*), had trouble getting to sleep because of them, but slept late into the morning. Perhaps my post-election depression infiltrated me again because today is the 9th of November, Kristallnacht, and once again, after dark, as every year, we will go to [Bornplatz](#) and put down some tealights on where the synagogue used to stand before the Nazis defaced it and then tore it down in 1939. The Jewish community in our neighborhood – Grindel – consisted of hard-working tradesmen, shopkeepers and manual workers and this was their synagogue. It was also the synagogue of the Jewish doctors, lawyers and businessmen who lived in the upscale neighborhood of Rotherbaum, which borders Grindel. As in every community of rich and not-so-rich, the political affiliations were split between far left and far right. Oh yes, there were Jews on the far right. Many Jews still could not believe that they would be targeted, after all they were staunch upholders of the status quo and it was the communists and socialists that were being removed.

Jewishness was only one aspect of the existence of these people, and unfortunately it was seen as the only aspect that had any relevance, so the Nazis focused on that and churned up wave after wave of hate against this invented internal enemy.



Bornplatz, Hamburg on 9 November where the Synagogue once stood

Monday is the one day in the week where I go out to teach English. It's a short 15-minute bike ride from home and it's quite invigorating, also because the damp air bites a bit and sharpens my perception of the world around me: the lines of cars still on their way somewhere even though it's almost noon, the few other full-time bike riders like me, most of them wearing helmets, many in bright yellow jackets. My excuse for not wearing a helmet is that it makes me more careful. It probably doesn't, because I landed on the road once – luckily no traffic – when my hand slipped off my grip during a rainstorm, and once I landed on my head when I tried to jump a curb and it was higher than I thought and my wheel didn't clear the edge. That got me a sizeable gash above my eye. The doctor who took X-rays wittingly told me that he had looked into it and could see nothing at all. We laughed together at that one. But I was able to secure the X-ray photos and use them as an album cover, which was a kind of consolation.

The sky looks like vaporous cement, the Alster lake is bereft of sailboats as I ride over Kennedy bridge, and I get to the company where I'm going to teach today just before noon. At noon the church bells in the city ring for 5 minutes to commemorate Kristallnacht, Germany's own 9/11. My lesson goes smoothly. We laugh a lot and my mood is good for a while, until, back at home again, I reflect on what the future may look like. At the moment we are in semi-lockdown here in Germany. Restaurants and bars and cafes are only allowed to sell takeaway during November. I suppose bars are actually just closed, because who wants to go and grab an overpriced drink and take it home?

It occurs to me that part of my problem could be that I was anticipating a stronger, more violent response from "He Who Must Not Be Named." In fact, last year at this time I was in the middle of writing the libretto for a musical about The Father of Lies in which violence and counter-violence results in a denouement that is both satirical, funny and profoundly disturbing. Throughout 2020, I felt like a Cassandra, dreading as well as relishing the fulfillment of my apocalyptic prophecy. The people who read the libretto laughed all the way through, but neither my publisher nor theatres were willing to get it on its way to the stage. Of course the pandemic was a big hurdle for the theatres that got the piece, but it was my publisher who kept saying "Let's wait until the election." Now the election has happened, the Beast and his malaficiers got their just deserts and my finale is like fireworks in a rainy sky: still colorful and explosive, but who is going to brave the rain to watch?

My composer is currently in bed at home with back trouble and under heavy medication. It looks like my only possibility is to release the libretto as an e-book on Amazon so that it can die neglected on a web page until some future generation decides to exhume it as a curiosity from a bygone era.

But that's just one aspect of the depression (or is it really just melancholia?). My *partigiano* endorphins crawled back into their hiding places quite quickly because they know the war on us simple people is in no way over. The oligarchs have pulled off another successful Bait and Switch.

We are once again the marks. They have given us a useless bundle of paper in a multicolored cloth and we are supposed to believe that wrapped up in there are the riches we have been waiting for so patiently over the past four years.

Immediately after the semi-debacle for the Democratic Party, the corporate hacks peered through their telescopic sights, flipped on their range finders, then zeroed their lasers on the few free-thinkers still left and the few newly elected. Murdoch's media machine will now have unbridled freedom to concentrate on anyone who wants a radical or even a modest change to ethic-less capitalism. Of course the other media outlets, owned by the other oligarchs will whittle patiently away at The Squad and the newbies until, like Jeremy Corbin, they are either defeated at the polls or removed from the party to which they currently adhere.

The con is back on. My P.E.D. has its hooks in me and I can't shake it off. So many years in the trenches and now What? I am not one for the streets. I saw what happened to that old guy, how he was knocked down by the cops and lay there bleeding as they marched over him. I'm in Germany. We don't have guns at home, ready to use on any person who comes unasked to our front door. My radio program is on a non-commercial channel that gets about as many listeners as a bar band on a Thursday night – before the pandemic. The articles and songs and stories I write are more like sessions used to be with my therapist, who I can no longer afford. All around me, my generation is dying off, memories of Woodstock and the 1968 almost-revolution in Europe all carefully reworked into novels and films so that it's now just a jumble of hallucinatory sex and mind-rotting drugs and idealistic illusions which terminated in Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and Helmut Kohl.

However, like Sisyphus, I know that stone has to be rolled back up the mountain in the perhaps vain belief that maybe next time it will reach the top and finally roll down the other side, into the Promised Land, where we will be able to live in peace and harmony like the Bonobos.

It's Only Talk

Now that the *transition*, like an old Model-T, has finally sputtered to a start and people are beginning to assume there are enough committed honest electors to guarantee Biden will be voted in on December 14th, progressives are protesting loudly at the choices that the president-elect is making for his cabinet. Nobody in the new regime, or in the media that supports it, is listening to their cries of woe and accusations of betrayal.

Betrayal? What betrayal? It was quite clear about one-minute after [Old Joe](#) was shoe-horned into the role of challenger that if he managed to slip through the cracks in the Unmentionable One's façade that it would be business as usual: Wall Street, War and Weasel Words about strengthening unions, bolstering green energy policies, saving the environment from exploitation by unscrupulous business interests. Reconstitution of anti-trust laws that would break up big tech firms and kill current monopolies are only the dreams of people living in Thatcher's *cloud cuckoo land*.

You can't say you didn't know that increased budgets for the military will continue, weapons will be sold to authoritarian regimes that can (or can't) afford to buy them, as long as they pledge due fealty to Uncle Sam's Dollar Emporium. New Cold Wars will be pushed along so that the enemy from without can supplant the current enemy from within (people of color and progressive individuals). But don't think that the enemy from within will slip out of focus. The state's protection of private ownership of productive resources through the use of its police apparatus, both local and federal, can be ratcheted up at will, and if it is being seen to be done by *reasonable* people like Biden or Harris, nobody will lift a finger to help the beleaguered progressive forces demanding change, be they milquetoast socialists of the Bernie and AOC type or street activists like the Occupy Wall Street masses who have been dispersed but have not been forgotten, for you can be sure the law enforcement databases are going to follow those unfortunates throughout their lives.

POLONIUS: What do you read my Lord?

HAMLET: Words, words, words.

So many wonderful words pour out from enlightened minds with rational arguments – e.g. Chomsky. If followed, even partially, their ideas put into action would promise a better future for mankind. Pearls before swine? It's more like diamonds dumped into the sewers to be mixed with all the shit emanating from the imbeciles who will, as usual, be speeding the world toward oblivion. The torrent of lies during the past four years has washed away truth as well, since no one seems to have an attention span long enough to pursue truth into the alley where it lurks or listen to it speak longer than it takes a TikTok clip to play. To the below-average thinkers who overwhelmingly populate our world, it's only talk. Noisy meaningless talk. It's not their fault they can't figure it out. The system has been re-constructed so as to deny people the education they need in order to be able to figure out what is true and what is not. All in the service of capitalism.

The American capitalist has slavishly adhered to Max Weber's [The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism](#) and intensified it into a neo-liberalism that has turned hyper-capitalism into the over-arching goal of every wannabe billionaire on the planet. Anyone who dares speak a word in criticism of the scourge of capitalism is immediately thrown into the company of the twin demons Marx and [Kropotkin](#), when in truth many of today's hyper-capitalists are more like [Max Stirner](#) and the anarchist proponents of [propaganda by deed](#) because they never ever shy away from direct action when it is in the interests of capitalism – with which they identify intimately. Must that not be the reason we have so many wars and why our planet is eager to choke its human inhabitants to death as soon as possible?



Statue of Pyotr Kropotkin
Russian scientist, philosopher, writer, economist, activist and communo-anarchist
[CC0 Public Domain](#)

Yes, I express my dismay like a pessimist would. However, a pessimist is not someone who thinks the glass is half empty. It's someone who realizes that when the water has been swallowed there will be no more water to drink. And our life-water is being swallowed, again, by those thirsty for power, thirsty for money, thirsty for domination. It's nothing new of course. This scratching and kicking to reach the top of the greased pole has been underway for millennia. Hieronymus Bosch depicted the consequences of the [7 deadly sins](#) so extremely well, and the torments awaiting those who over-indulge their lust – in the right-hand panel of his [Garden of Earthly Delights](#).

What seems quite clear to me is that no matter how loudly the pious rich proclaim their adherence to Weber's Protestant work ethic and to a religious faith, they cannot possibly believe in any kind of Christian deity or afterlife. Would a real Christian act like they do? Other religions – that I know less of – also have teachings that urge their followers to behave with humanity toward others. My only conclusion can be that we are dealing with a hard core group of non-believer narcissist sociopaths who are living in their own private version of [120 Days of Sodom](#) and are loving every minute of it!

King Crimson sums up very nicely the cacophony of complaints and recriminations – mine included – that echo over our progressive and regressive media landscape these days: *Elephant Talk*.

ELEPHANT TALK

King Crimson

Talk, it's only talk

Arguments, agreements

Advice, answers

Articulate announcements

It's only talk

Talk, it's only talk

Babble, burble, banter

Bicker, bicker, bicker

Brouhaha, balderdash, ballyhoo

It's only talk
Back talk
Talk talk talk, it's only talk
Comments, cliches, commentary, controversy
Chatter, chit-chat, chit-chat, chit-chat
Conversation, contradiction, criticism
It's only talk
Cheap talk
Talk, talk, it's only talk
Debates, discussions
These are words with a D this time
Dialog, duologue, diatribe
Dissention, declamation
Double talk, double talk

Talk, talk, it's all talk
Too much talk
Small talk
Talk that trash
Expressions, editorials
Explanations, exclamations, exaggerations
It's all talk
Elephant talk
Elephant talk
Elephant talk

NPD USA

Narcissistic personality disorder as a national trait

The Mayo Clinic describes NPD as:

a mental condition in which people have an inflated sense of their own importance, a deep need for excessive attention and admiration, troubled relationships, and a lack of empathy for others. But behind this mask of extreme confidence lies a fragile self-esteem that's vulnerable to the slightest criticism.

Describing the national character of the United States as narcissistic is nothing new. Kuni Miyake wrote an [insightful article](#) in the Japan Times back in 2018 in which he came up with NND (Narcissistic National Disorder) to describe the United States.

The *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* published a paper with the title: “[Narcissism and United States’ Culture: The View from Home and Around the World](#)” in which it is made quite clear that narcissism is a trait which is not only excessively prevalent among the people in the USA, but is actively encouraged throughout the culture, especially with its worship of the rich and famous and their extravagant lifestyles. In America this narcissistic plateau can be reached only if one is ruthlessly concerned with oneself and one’s own satisfaction. *Lack of empathy for others* plays a huge role in all this of course. Americans see this narcissism in themselves and their peers, and people from around the world regard the US as a nation of narcissists mainly due to this evident lack of empathy.



Color lithograph by J.S. Pughe

Library of Congress statement: No known restrictions on publication.

Since most people are not familiar with the political situation in 1899, a quick description of the cartoon might be helpful: Uncle Sam stands on a map of China, which Germany, Italy, England, Russia, and France (Austria in background sharpening shears) want to cut up; Uncle Sam clutches the *Trade Treaty with China* and says: “Gentleman, you may cut up this map as much as you like, but remember that I’m here to stay, and that you can’t divide *me* up into spheres of influence.”

Published in *Puck* on August 23, 1899, the cartoon emphasizes the role the United States played in enforcing what was known at that time as the *Open Door Policy*. It prevented any country from creating an exclusive territorial trade zone in China and ensured that all countries involved could trade on an equal footing. It saved China from being cut up into pieces like Africa had been, and the

Chinese were permitted to get tariffs for their goods, but they were not consulted on whether they were in favor of the policy. It was imposed upon them from above, with the United States once again making sure that its own national interests were protected.

Uncle Sam is “Putting His Foot Down” in an unmistakable gesture of authority, in the belief that he is the most important and the most powerful person in the world. The Mayo Clinic description of NPD fits so well, it’s uncanny. And, the operative narcissistic phrase here is in the caption: *I’m here to stay, and ... you can’t divide me up into spheres of influence*. In other words, *I’m the boss!* an attitude that has not changed since then and, after 4 years of the most brazen narcissism a president has ever shown to his people and to the world, it is even more prevalent among the “folk” of the US than ever before. A prime example of this is the racism that has now come out of the closet into the public sphere.

Racism has all the traits of narcissism listed by the Mayo Clinic, with the most important being: *a fragile self-esteem that’s vulnerable to the slightest criticism*. Every white supremacist has *fragile self-esteem* and hates any kind of criticism, especially if it’s true. Yes, it’s true that white people have enslaved and maltreated and exploited people who they deem to be *non-whites* for hundreds of years. Bring this truth to the ears or eyes of a white supremacist and their *fragile self-esteem* cracks open the protective shell and lets out the demon living inside. This demon has been released aplenty during the past and looks like it will continue to haunt us well into the future.

The governing capitalist elites of the United States are no different. They know that their positions of power are only attainable because they have acted with a complete lack of empathy for others, herding wage slaves into factories to produce goods which will enable an accumulation of enormous profits that will never be fairly distributed among the “folk” for the benefit of the many instead of the few. *Why should this profit be distributed anyway? It was capital that enabled it!* Capital may have been the yeast in the dough, but labor enabled the manufacture and distribution of the goods. Yeast does not grow the wheat, harvest it, grind it into flour, add the water, knead the dough or heat the oven or put the kneaded dough in the oven, nor take it out when it has reached the right consistency and is finally edible. Without the labor and the natural world the raw material comes from, no bread. Capital is, like yeast, an ingredient, but all it does is consume the sugar in the dough and burp out carbon dioxide gas and alcohol called ethanol. This gas gets trapped inside the bread dough due to the presence of gluten, thus making the dough rise. The alcohol gets evaporated in the baking process. Dough that uses yeast rises slowly and for a longer period of time. [The more gas that forms in the dough, the higher the dough will rise and thus, the fluffier your baked bread will be.](#)

So if capital is like yeast, why should we consider all the burped out holes in the bread as its right to an enormous return from the bread when it is sold. After all, the yeast only creates places where there is nothing present but air: i.e. *an inflated sense of their own importance*. And if you think about it, yeast is not a necessary ingredient at all. Bread can be baked without yeast. It’s called [no-yeast bread](#). And of course there is matzo as well. Flour and water.

The capitalist doesn’t distribute the profits from the sale of produced goods because that money is needed to buy up and control the natural world where the raw materials are hidden or available in plain sight, and to exploit the labor of the local population in order to get those raw materials and transport them so that the goods can be manufactured by labor at a profit for the people who have *a deep need for excessive attention and admiration*. The people living on the land to be exploited have no say in how the materials are mined or gathered – either they cooperate or they will be eliminated from the game. That’s what Uncle Sam is telling the Europeans in that political cartoon. The fact that the Chinese have absolutely no say in the matter doesn’t even need to be mentioned. It’s a given. After all, they don’t count. They are only the ones who will provide the labor and the raw materials. They belong to the *non-white* underclass. The Opium Wars of the 19th century, instigated by Britain and then Britain and France working together, reduced China to a country with absolutely no say in its own destiny. And they didn’t have a say until Mao went on his Long March (against the fascist Japanese) and took the land away from the colonial capitalists who would have liked to return after the ultimate defeat of Japan and Germany. Of course this liberation of China

from the grip of the western capitalists has been a long-lasting insult to the *fragile self-esteem* of Europeans and Americans, and a battle for revenge has been in progress ever since the establishment of the PRC (People's Republic of China).



The English Imperial Octopus (Public Domain)

Do other nations suffer from narcissistic personality disorder? Of course. Nations around the world act in their own self-interest all the time. Many nations believe they are special. And authoritarian leaders of countries cannot cease to exhibit their *deep need for excessive attention and admiration*. That includes Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. However, not since the demise of the great empires has there been a nation as powerful militarily and as narcissistic in its national policy as the United States. Americans actually believe they won the second world war all by themselves. They believe their ideals of freedom and democracy should be the political religion governing the world. The fact that their antiquated system of government was constructed to protect an oligarchic status quo is not even in the periphery of their consciousness. Other nations have crafted together more egalitarian forms of democracy, with less influence from the oligarchs sitting above. Eliminate the Wild West cowboy capitalists and egalitarian democracy should stand a better chance of success. Without Uncle Sam and his heavy boot stomping on the earth to tell us all who is boss, we might have a real chance at getting to a place where egalitarianism is possible.

Oh, but the narcissist will tell us: *It's for your own protection that I wield my power!* No, it's to protect profits and oligarch narcissists that stifling trade deals are crafted and countries like Bolivia are treated like vassal states, while countries like Cuba and Iran and Venezuela, who refuse to cooperate with the capitalist powers that be, are punished as renegades, and every attempt is made to force them to pay for their lack of respect. A complete *lack of empathy* for the people who live in those countries is part of the package of assertion of dominion. No wonder torture is back on the agenda in the USA, it has been used as national policy for decades: *You want the pain to stop? Cooperate!*

The French Communist Party got the message long ago and even created propaganda posters against US imperialism and its threat to colonize France. The current French government is, however, full of non-empathetic narcissists and continues to do all it can to thwart the will of the

people while allowing the American capitalist octopus to slide its menacing tentacles into the European Union.



No! France will not be a colonized country!
Americans stay in America! (Public Domain)

Frankly, like many people who no longer live in the United States and among Americans and the constant stream of nationalistic propaganda they are subjected to through their media channels, I have grown tired of the constant whining from American oligarchs that Europe has no right to force them to pay a fair share of taxes on the enormous profits they make from cyber business and franchise business in Europe. Google and Microsoft and Apple and Facebook demand to be recognized as the greatest thing that was ever given to mankind. Living here in Germany it reminds me of the *Deutschland Über Alles* that was once so prominent in the thinking of the people here and still finds expression in the national anthem, as well as in the way fans regard their national football team. [Aside: Why do you think *Uber* chose that name for its company? They most probably would have kept the umlauts over the U if they could have gotten away with it. After all, their business model is predicated on being *Über Alles*.]

Unfortunately, we are going to be stuck with American narcissists for a while yet. The German narcissistic personality disorder system collapsed rather quickly. The American NPD system is taking a bit longer to collapse. The hollow center will fold in on itself eventually and will cause disarray and chaos, but maybe that *inflated sense of their own importance* and that *deep need for excessive attention and admiration* will dissolve into a realization that cooperation for the good of all will save Americans from further destruction in the future.

Don't hold your breath!

Psychology Today gives us "[8 Ways to Handle a Narcissist](#)", but it's not going to be easy to get the United States to recognize that it can benefit from professional intervention.

The Secret History Redux

Comparing one Great with another Great



Although the comparison I'm going to make between the recent ruler of the Empire of the United States and an ancient ruler of the Roman Empire is mostly based on the *Anecdota* or, as it is more commonly known, *The Secret History* by [Procopius](#), "commonly classified as the last major historian of the ancient Western world," it is important to remind one and all that evil deeds perpetrated by (mostly) men have been recorded throughout history, and one of the people who did this marvelously not so long ago was Henry Fielding. Besides writing hit novels which were turned into hit films, Mr. Fielding also wrote a study of evil genius with the title: *The History of the Life of the Late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great*. I urge you all to read this wonderfully written history of a "Great" man. In fact, Mr. Fielding's explanation of just how great the "Great" are, is quite enlightening:

"... a set of simple fellows, called, in derision, sages or philosophers, have endeavoured, as much as possible, to confound the ideas of greatness and goodness; whereas no two things can possibly be more distinct from each other, for greatness consists in bringing all manner of mischief on mankind, and goodness in removing it from them. ... We hope our reader will have reason justly to acquit us of any such confounding ideas in the following pages; in which, as we are to record the actions of a great man, so we have nowhere mentioned any spark of goodness"

By the way, both of the precious histories mentioned are available from [Project Gutenberg](#).

Now, having established that there is no goodness in greatness, I shall proceed with my comparison between Justinian I, also known as Justinian The Great, and the former ruler of the current world empire, Trump I, also known to himself and his loyal followers as Trump The Great.

While we wait with bated breath for *The Secret History of the United States* to emerge from the pen (or rather these days from the keyboard) of a born-again Procopius or Fielding, I'll just make you aware of the superficial and yet most telling aspects that unite the two great men who are the subject of this comparison.

Justinian (real name Petrus Sabbatius), who was emperor from 527 to 565, actually started influencing the course of the empire during the reign of his predecessor Justin I, in a similar fashion to Trump (middle name John), who began influencing the political direction of the United States during the reign of Obama I. Both took advantage of the powerlessness of their predecessors, the one because Justin was not able to rule due to his lack of intelligence, the other because Obama was not able to escape the clutches of a Senate that would not let him rule for the good of the people – although there is no substantial proof, yet, to make us believe that Obama actually *wanted* to rule for the good of the common citizen.

The simple and obvious fact that both empires were, and had been for a long time, corrupted by money, is no longer a doubt in the thoughts of any rational person. And the fact that the corruption of the institutions of government were dramatically increased during the rule of Justinian and Trump, is also obvious. However, it is still instructional, for those who can be instructed by history, to make a comparison between the two great men, in which goodness never shows its face, or when it attempts to do so is slapped away by brutal anger.

Procopius begins his narrative with a preface which contains these lines:

“Who, among posterity, would have known of the licentious life of Semiramis, or of the madness of Sardanapalus or Nero, if no memorials of them had been left to us by contemporary writers? The description of such things, too, will not be entirely without value to such as hereafter may be so treated by tyrants; for unhappy people are wont to console themselves by the thought that they are not the only persons who have so suffered.” Hopefully this will be an impetus to whoever may write the new Secret History.

Procopius at first describes the weakness and corruption of Belisarius, the general who played such a major part in the wars of conquest of the empire. Belisarius was admired for his conquests (and reconquests), then disgraced, then returned to favor. “Belisarius, although none of the charges brought against him could be proved, was removed by the Emperor, at the instance of Theodora, from the command of the army in the East.” But then, as circumstances changed, he was able to get command of an army once again and tried his hand at reconquering Italy, which had fallen into the hands of the barbarians. His campaign there was unsuccessful and yet he didn’t go back to Constantinople in disgrace, as should have been the case.

The general closest to Trump, who also played a major part in the conquests (and reconquests) of the current empire, was Michael Flynn. Like Belisarius, Flynn was a successful general, disgraced because he lied to the FBI, then rehabilitated through a presidential pardon, which enabled him to become one of the key post-election advisors urging the use of military force to keep the loser of the election in power. Even though Flynn had a clean slate once again, he, like Belisarius, failed in his new mission of reconquest and, also not disgraced, has faded into shadows that may prove to be more dark and dangerous than the spotlight he was in before.

One of the basic tactics used by the Romans was “divide and conquer.” The United States, like the territories ripe for conquest, and like the Roman Empire during the time of Justinian, was (and has been for quite some time) in a similarly perilous state. Procopius writes: “In the former part of my history I have explained how the people had long been divided into two factions. Justinian associated himself with one of these, the Blues [the other faction in those days was the Greens], which had previously favoured him, and was thus enabled to upset everything and throw all into disorder.”

Trump associated himself with the current Red (not-communist) faction in the United States and was able, likewise to cause chaos and throw everything into disorder. And, as in the case of Justinian, not all members of the faction agreed with his methods. But, also as in the case of Justinian, Trump was able to terrorize the Red faction rebels into submission and thus gain dominance over the factions and impose his will. “Everything was everywhere thrown into disorder; nothing was left alone. The laws and the whole fabric of the State were altogether upset, and became the very opposite of what they had been.”

During the short, yet extremely destructive rule of Trump I, descriptions of the government such as those provided by Procopius were appearing in the writings of many in the opposition: “The

government resembled a despotism, not a securely established one, but one which was changed almost daily, and was ever beginning afresh.” And as regards judges appointed by the Red faction in accordance with the will of Trump I: “The judges gave sentence on disputed points not according to what they thought to be lawful and right, but according as each of the litigants was a friend or an enemy of the ruling faction”

The new ruler of the Empire of the United States, an old man who has a younger person waiting in the wings to take over should he die or his mind fail, has extremely limited power to change the course of the ruination of the empire. Although the presidency is imperial and has been so for a while, it still depends on the Senate in order to enact major changes in the laws disfigured and corrupted by the previous imperial president. It is also doubtful if the younger person waiting in the wings will be able to do anything at all worthy of the descriptive “goodness” should death or loss of reason afflict her current imperial master. According to the mindset of the Red faction, she is considered unclean because she does not belong to their idea of a perfect American as regards color of skin. That, in addition to the fact that she is a woman, makes her totally unacceptable to the Red faction, and of course to a significant number of the powerful men in the Blue faction as well, which somehow allowed her to be the heir apparent because they still needed to convince many Americans with her skin-tones to side with the Blue faction against Trump I.

During the time of Justinian there was a ruinous plague, which Justinian caught and then recovered from, just like Trump I, and there was the same disregard from both men for the lives of the citizens ravaged by the plague. In all sorts of ways the two men were similar. Even in physical appearance. Justinian was “neither tall nor too short, but of a medium height, not thin, but inclined to be fat. His face was round and not ill-favored, and showed color, even after a two days’ fast.” The orange face of Trump I is never going to be forgotten.

Procopius does drift at one point into the non-rational, describing Justinian as a demon made flesh: “During his control of the Empire, numerous disasters of various kinds occurred, which some attributed to the presence and artifices of his evil genius, while others declared that the Divinity, in detestation of his works, having turned away in disgust from the Roman Empire, had given permission to the avenging deities to inflict these misfortunes.” But what Procopius describes as the workings of an evil spirit incarnate is relevant to bringing the point across to the many who have always been rather superstitious and gullible, like the current crop of MAGA Christian followers of Trump I. In their case, however, they don’t see him as a demon incarnate but as a savior who will bring on the Rapture.

Luckily, for the world, the tyrant Trump I was limited to ravaging the world directly for only four years. His legacy of evil will endure for many years still, but his direct influence is, for the time being, halted. Had he survived as Emperor until he was 83, like Justinian, it is doubtful if the world would have been able to ever recover from the devastation he initiated.

Procopius really does go on and on with his enumeration of the excesses and corrupt activity of Justinian, and without a doubt you have already spent hours if not days reading and hearing about the corrupt activities of Trump I. So, although I really could continue to show you the parallels between these two tyrants, I recommend that you read *The Secret History* for yourself and find the commonalities between these two “Great” men (and their wives, by the way).

Before I finish, I would like to leave you with one more quote from Procopius. To my mind it describes both tyrants to perfection:

“These excesses took place not only in Byzantium, but in every city of the Empire: for these disorders were like bodily diseases, and spread from thence over the whole Roman Empire. But the Emperor cared not at all for what was going on, although he daily beheld what took place in the hippodrome [today: television], for he was exceedingly stupid, very much like a dull-witted ass, which follows whoever holds its bridle, shaking its ears the while. This behavior on the part of Justinian ruined everything.”

The White Tiger

*Revolution only begins when you eliminate
your corrupt masters and free yourself from the yoke of servitude.*

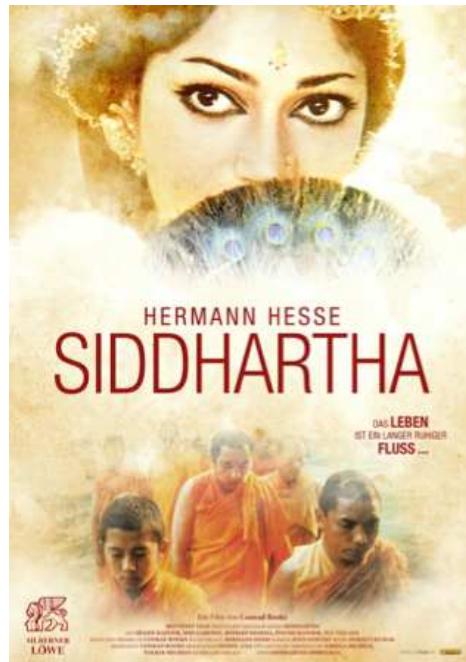


The White Tiger is a film with a message that could not be any clearer. Evil is everywhere. Even you, the goodhearted, have a portion of evil within. It all depends on how you wield that evil. Is your evil used for the greater good? Or is your evil used to perpetuate the servitude of millions in a system that is so corrupt that it can no longer be reformed through good laws and good deeds? Good laws can obviously never come to pass because the political process has been so corrupted that the mega-rich and the politicians work hand-in-hand to perpetuate servitude and corruption, which is in the end beneficial to both of these groups. Good deeds are like the proverbial farts in a hurricane. They dissipate before they can be in the least bit effective.

Based on the bestselling novel by Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger* is the story of a driver who works for a rich Indian couple. Attaining the position of driver is already quite a feat for him, since he is from one of the lower castes and is, like most of the people in his village, condemned to live in poverty and at the mercy of a landlord who has absolute control over the village. The system under which the protagonist lives is feudal. It is an evolved modern type of feudalism that allows the villagers to earn money in any way they can, but then, following the feudal/mafia playbook, the landlord gets a portion of whatever the villagers may be lucky enough to earn. Of course the landlord – through henchmen – is the ultimate arbiter of life and death as well. In fact, Yanis Varoufakis thinks we are currently entering the age of [techno-feudalism](#).

Corruption is a major theme throughout the film. Not only the corrupt landlord who pays off politicians to curry [no pun intended] their favor and avoid paying taxes, but the corruption of the main character as well, who weaponizes a rival driver's religion (Moslem) so that he can ensure his own rise to number one driver in the family. Thus ensuring his transfer to New Delhi as the driver of the landlord's eldest son.

In the early 1970s I lived in New Delhi, the lucky son of an Italian diplomat. In those days Italy had some juice because Indira Gandhi's son, Rajiv, was married to Sonia, an Italian he met at Cambridge. She wasn't politically engaged in those days, but the system worked then as it does now – it's *who* you know, not *what* you know. So I was privileged on two counts: one, I was a European resident; two, my mother was a diplomat. I played tennis on the grass courts of the exclusive Ashoka hotel; all my clothes were made by tailors who copied designs I gave them from magazines; our cook could prepare a meal for 8 people on very short notice. There were no supermarkets, there were no computers, nobody used credit cards. India was modern on the surface, in Delhi at least, but it was like it had always been once you left the metropolitan areas. That's why it was so easy to shoot the 1972 film [Siddhartha](#) there. They didn't have to look hard to find locations that looked exactly like they did during the Buddha's era. Nothing had changed since then. Not really.



Was I an evil part of the system back then? Am I still an evil part of the system now, even if I don't live there anymore? To both questions I'm afraid that I must answer: Yes. Now of course I measure my culpability according to how much of my participation was conscious back then and how much of my current participation is willful.

In 1970, I was barely conscious of the existence of a "system." My consciousness would have been like that joke about the old fish talking to the young fish:

*Old fish: Water's a bit chilly today, isn't it?
Young fish: What's water?*

Yes, I was unconsciously culpable. I had been dragged to the country from my mother's previous posting in Nairobi, Kenya. In our residence in Jor Bagh, next to the golf links, not far from the Oberoi (Hilton in those days) hotel, and just down the road from where the Italian Embassy was located, I had nothing to do all day except play the piano and read James Joyce. It took me three months of reading as much as I could each day to get through Ulysses. Because of the status of India as a "third world" country, books were incredibly cheap. From a book stall in Connaught circle (officially known as Connaught Place) I was able to buy my copy of Ulysses for 10 rupees. In those days that was less than a dollar, if you traded dollars on the black market. And everyone traded on the black market (except for the people from the American embassy who – under penalty of American law – had to exchange their dollars at the official rate). Many years later my mother explained the system used by the Italian embassy at that time. Before payday, near the end of every month, each employee would tell one of the commercial attachés in the embassy how many rupees they wanted for the next month. The attaché would tell them how many pounds they would have to transfer from their account – in London – to another account – in London. On the first of every month a man would arrive with a briefcase full of rupees and each employee would get the amount they had ordered. All of course at black market exchange rates.

In *The White Tiger* we see how corruption works at the village level, the local political level, and at the national level. We see who benefits from it directly and indirectly. And, yes, it is never the impoverished people at the bottom of the system.

In the USA (and here in Europe), the impoverished are in plain sight, everywhere; every day you see them but you look away because it makes you uncomfortable. You are part of the system that bestows certain benefits and you don't want those benefits to disappear. Does that make you evil?

Well, maybe. But probably, like your colleagues and neighbors, and like the protagonist of *The White Tiger*, you are trapped in servitude and don't know how to escape without losing everything that you have somehow, through hard work or cleverness or just dumb luck, gained. You might even be quite wealthy (not a billionaire of course), or a business owner. And yet you are still in servitude. You are both a servant to competition and to the whims of the rigged capitalist marketplace.

Our protagonist in the film, Balram, has an aptitude for learning. He can read well as a child and he has prospects, the possibility of a scholarship to a better school. But the system keeps him in servitude, first to his family, so that they have money to survive (of course a portion of his earnings must be paid in fealty to the landlord of the village). Being quick-witted, Balram sees an opportunity to become the second driver for the landlord's family, and he grabs that opportunity, at the same time thrusting his family deeper into debt to the landlord.

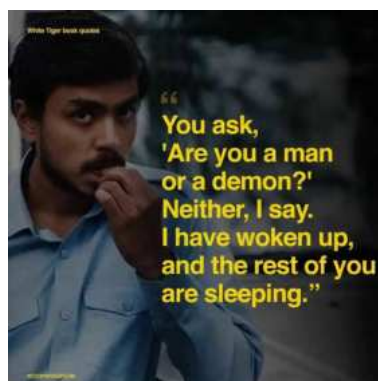
As driver number two, he is assigned to chauffeur the landlord's son and his wife. Both of them have recently returned to India from the United States, and both of them are very liberal in their treatment of Balram. However, Balram, trapped in his coop of servitude, tries to maintain the distance he knows is necessary for survival in the ancient system that traps him.

Let me just say at this point, without providing you with any spoilers so that the film has its proper impact on you when you watch it, that Balram is predominantly a good soul, doing what he thinks is right, for the reasons he thinks are right. Until, one day, he decides to free himself from the coop and no longer be a servant. Most reviews I've read about the film (after seeing it!) call him an "entrepreneur" instead of a revolutionary. Stuck in servitude to the capitalist system the review writers dare not speak the word: *revolution*.

Balram is a revolutionary of the best kind. He uses his power for evil in the best way he knows how, in a system that will allow him only one route to freedom for himself. He uses that route to benefit others and to free them from servitude as well.

Early on in the film, when his acumen as a young student is correctly ascertained, a teacher refers to him as a white tiger, an animal born rarely, only once in a generation. And when Balram goes to a zoo and for the first time actually sees a white tiger, trapped in a small cage, he faints. This is the moment in which he understands the meaning of *Samsāra* and has his *Moksha* (enlightenment); and from that moment on he has only one path to tread, the path toward liberation of himself and his fellow servant class from the endless chain of servitude that has fettered them for millennia. The fact that he uses the means at his disposal – the capitalist system – to initiate this liberation, makes him, yes, by current definition an "entrepreneur." But his entrepreneurship is in the service of a revolution which will free servants from their chains, not bind them eternally.

In that sense, in *The White Tiger* the message of Buddha and the message of Marx coincide: In order to throw off your worldly chains, you need to wake up and be a revolutionary in your own right.



In my opinion, the trailer gives away a bit too much, but if you must watch the trailer then:

<https://youtu.be/35jJNyFuYKQ>

Crisis! Crisis! All The Time!

It's a life or death situation!



News headlines, whether in print, online or on some form of TV, choose the crisis mode to deliver their message. Humans are conditioned to respond with high alert to situations which could possibly threaten their existence. And so if you want people to pay attention, make the message contain a crisis. This has been true since that famous shepherd boy cried “Wolf!” and since Chicken Little announced that “The sky is falling!”

But with me *crisis fatigue* has already kicked in.

Back during the days of the First World War, soldiers suffered from *battle fatigue*, which today has been transformed into PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). If you are a George Carlin fan, then you know his bit about how that transformation took place. Nevertheless, the operative word here is *fatigue*. I’m tired of living in crisis mode all day, all night – all the time. I sometimes dream of running outside maskless and hugging random strangers. That’s like standing on a bridge over the Mississippi and staring down at the muddy water and thinking: “I could dive in and swim all the way to the Gulf.” Those are suicidal thoughts. And that’s what battle fatigue and crisis fatigue induce; they induce suicidal thoughts. And many soldiers who suffer from battle fatigue (PTSD) actually carry those thoughts to their illogical conclusion – well, illogical as far as I’m concerned. I’ve been paying my dues for this shitty existence since I was born; I’m invested. I’m not going to cancel that investment now after all these years. Who knows? It might turn out to be worthwhile living after all. I’m curious.

I’m certainly not curious about an afterlife. Anybody with a small grain of logic knows that myth will not pan out. So as long as I’m conscious, let me see what happens next.

I’m just tired of the continual crisis. Some people want to use the plural, crises. But it has been just one long crisis since the dawn of people. Find food, fight off predators, move to another stretch of land because it has become untenable here... it never ends. Although, I must admit that there have been periods when I have been oblivious to the crisis that was constantly continuing in the background. It was real for adults and it was affecting my mother. Mostly, when I was growing up, until I was about 11 or so, I didn’t feel the pressure of crisis. But then my mother got married to a guy who turned out to be from the dark side of life. I guess that’s why I was sent to military school for a year; and boy did I learn about crisis while I was there! A permanent reign of crisis was all that made that place function. It was one year of horror for me – although I did have one bright moment in which I caused a crisis for someone else.

I loved baseball but was obviously too young to play for the school team (comprised of 16-18 year-olds). But for some reason, late in a losing game, the coach put me in as a pinch hitter against the pitcher who had been overwhelming everybody. I was so jacked up by the opportunity that I was

first-ball hitting and hit a fastball right up the middle, on the ground, through the pitcher's legs, over second base and into center field. The look on the pitcher's face was one of complete astonishment that was instantly replaced by anger, the "if looks could kill" kind of anger. Yeah, crisis for him, no doubt, as I stood on first base in my gray school trousers and a long-sleeved baseball undershirt and my no-spike school shoes, grinning from ear-to-ear.

Moments like that were rare. Soon afterwards the crisis of military school was over and the crisis began of who that man was that my mother had married. She separated from him. He went to jail. He died in jail soon after. My mother was a happy widow. I had no idea what had happened or how it had happened nor why it had happened. It was obviously none of my business, and it didn't seem to be a crisis anymore for my mother. She was pleased by how it had gone down.

Then one night we were awoken by jets breaking the sound barrier over our house and we were soon all sitting around the black and white television listening to President Kennedy announce what measures the United States would take if the Soviets didn't get their missiles out of Cuba. The Cuban missile crisis had broken into my consciousness.

That was it. Crisis became a permanent part of my conscious life. Of course when I got older I was able to wipe crisis away temporarily with alcohol or marijuana. But hangovers were always a crisis and moments of paranoia under weed were even more of a crisis. No, I never tried LSD or any of the addictive shit that was floating around. I would never have survived any crisis involving that stuff.

Leaving the United States helped a lot to lower the crisis level. It's amazing how being no longer exposed to the news media and to Americans helped me get a fresh perspective. In Africa I found out that people actually lived life on a daily basis, mostly happy. Africans smile a lot. At least they used to in the 60s before multinationals brought crisis, gutted their economies and displaced farmers into cities and made crime a worthy profession.

Recently, *Boris the Bozo* Prime Minister of Britain recited the creed in front of his ministers in a Zoom meeting: "[greed](#)" and "[capitalism](#)" helped UK's vaccine success. That's *Straight-Outta-Wall-Street*. [Gordon Gekko is named after the gecko: it has no eyelids, sheds its skin regularly and is a polyphyodont, like a crocodile.] Greed is *not* good.



Hieronymus Bosch should know. He depicted it perfectly in his painting of the Seven Deadly Sins. It's right there between Envy and Gluttony. And if you are praising one of those sins as something beneficial and accepting it as an important component of capitalism, then perhaps you have just exposed your dark side to the world.

The dark side of capitalism (and of *Bozo Boris*) has been evident from the very beginning. In fact, capitalism feeds on crisis and greed. It needs crisis in order to "grow" and greed to keep its acolytes busy accumulating more and more and more. In other words, it encourages greed because that is the driving force behind its existence. Temperance, equality and justice are anathema to

capitalism. A person dominated by greed (aka: avarice) is in a constant state of crisis. No matter how much that person has, it is never enough. It can never be enough. It's the quintessential need with a bottomless cup. The classic old diners and American cafes knew how to push that greed button that is in each one of us. Seems though, that with the current price of coffee, the bottomless cup of coffee is disappearing. Not so the bottomless cola cup. Many fast food outlets rush you toward diabetes with offers of endless cola refills. Basically the bottomless cup syndrome, but with deadly sugar-based junk.

OK, so if crisis is at the heart of capitalist greed, does that mean I have to get greedy, just greedy enough to cross into the realm of being set up for life, so that one day I will emerge without any more need for greed and crisis? Those are two really powerful drugs. Much stronger than alcohol and weed. It's really no wonder that Wall Street has so many cocaine and speed and even crack addicts. Greed feeds on need. Greed addicts are so needy they are never allowed to go to rehab. Greed becomes such an essential part of the personality and lifestyle that if it is eradicated or the flame somehow gets extinguished, the addict shrivels up like a prune and wastes away.

Without torturing logic too much, I can come to the conclusion that if capitalism is eliminated, then greed will for the most part go with it. It might prove to be more difficult to eliminate greed before capitalism is eliminated, but the result would be the same: temperance, equality and justice. Reasonableness and equanimity. That's what I need in my life. Especially equanimity. Being constantly under the pressure of crisis only pushes me toward suicidal thoughts and physical illness, like the proverbial stomach ulcer brought on by constant worry. Who needs that shit? Not me.

Unfortunately we are all wedged into the capitalist world empire which is dominated by greed and crisis that seems to function like a perpetual motion machine. Does the second Law of Thermodynamics apply to greed and crisis? Of course. The kinetic energy for crisis diminishes over time and so the machine must be fueled with an even greater sense of crisis (thus increasing the fuel used). Eventually the fuel needed is so great that it is no longer obtainable. Then, either this human machine self-destructs (atomic war to end all human life) or fatigue (aka: entropy) enters to such a degree that greed is conquered by temperance, equality and justice so that reasonableness and equanimity can take over. Once that happens, we are in a state of equilibrium. And equilibrium can last a long, long time because entropy is minimal in a system that has attained equilibrium.

I'm suffering from crisis fatigue. So that is where I want to be. In a world that has attained equilibrium, full of people who have attained equilibrium.*



Jean Hélion • Equilibrium (Equilibre)

*No, not like the [2002 Sci-Fi film](#) with Christian Bale and Emily Watson!

Forever Lockdown

The best days we've had on the planet for the past 100 years (at least) were during the first few weeks of the world-wide lockdown, with almost no [airplanes flying](#), people ensconced in their little boxes, no traffic, no human interference with the environment – well at least not as brazenly as before and after the lockdown.



2020

2021

I'm not a great fan of human beings. Most of them are filthy and loud and captured by magical thinking of one kind or another. Many are besotted by brutality and view cruelty as part of the natural order. Of course there are people who have empathy and are altruistic to a certain extent and strive to make the world we live in a better place. I've met plenty of them. They are usually the ones who get herded into football stadiums in Chile, get thrown out of helicopters into the sea in Argentina and get murdered by gun worshipers and police in the USA. Empathy and altruistic thinking are seen as fatal weaknesses in character these days by the rising tide of authoritarians around the world.



[https://youtu.be/ P1wIpu0ITc](https://youtu.be/P1wIpu0ITc)

So, what do we do? Is there a way to maintain empathy and altruistic behavior and still resist the darkness of fascism? It happened in France and in Italy during the second world war. The Resistance in those countries took up arms to fight the evil that had risen to power. The same in Spain during the war against Franco. Read Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*. Many good people were there to fight. Many good people lost their lives. In Italy and France the resisters returned to family life, despite their losses, after the war was over. They didn't expect utopia, though most of them did support the communist parties that flourished in the post-war period in both of those countries. In

Spain they had to wait until the beast expired in 1975 – “[Generalissimo Francisco Franco is still dead!](#)”

The lockdown in 2020 was a period of calm and meditative peace imposed on everyone, not with an iron hand, with troops patrolling the streets, but through a worldwide lightning flash of reasonable caution. Of course you had the usual gaggle of complainers, but even they stayed out of the public sphere, somehow knowing that during this moment of general caution it would be foolhardy to step out of line. And for what seemed like an endlessly wonderful moment in time the dolphins returned to the canals of Venice, ducks took over the streets with their long line of babies trailing behind them, the green world crawled back quickly in the most unexpected places to give us a glimpse of how easily nature will wipe out all traces of humankind once we eliminate ourselves from the planet.



Summer 2021 has now hit the northern hemisphere and here in Europe people are getting ready to go on vacation. They will be traversing from north to south and east to west and reveling in their ability to travel – by car and by plane mostly, as before – to the same old hot and crowded destinations to do the same old sunbathing on humanity-drenched beaches, dance in packed hotel discos, eat what they regard as exotic food (unless they’re Brits, who eat the same old crap they eat back on their island home). And COVID-19 variant Delta is already weaving its way through Europe. Lisbon was on lockdown once again a few days ago; antivaxers, mixed in with the partially vaccinated, are triumphantly spitting out their droplets at the European Championship public viewing locations; masks are seen less and less in public; caution is knowingly or unknowingly being thrown to the wind. American baseball stadiums are at full capacity. The CDC is spinning its wheels in the deep sand of controversy. The Old Joe pot is calling the Putin kettle a killer while pretending the USA is still the shining beacon of democracy in the world.



Denver

It feels to me like I have a front row seat in the theater, watching a play so absurd that Ionesco would have had to acknowledge he could never have ever written anything more baffling. It was

only a few weeks ago that I watched [Rhinoceros](#) (1974), with Zero Mostel, Gene Wilder and Karen Black. Wilder was as wild as he was supposed to be and Mostel the epitome of the absurd, and yet, it made much more sense to me than what is afoot in the world today. The text that appears at the beginning of the film could apply perfectly to the political absurdities being carefully woven in the present by those who abhor critical thinking and the application of logic to discourse.

“What you are about to see could never take place.
Several eminent scientists have assured us of this fact.
For, as they are quick to point out ... the world is flat.”
—*Eugène Ionesco*

The tragedy of the absurd in our terrestrial society is that what we are seeing *is* taking place. The country that used [Operation Paperclip](#) to build up its military might with Nazi scientists, has succumbed – or is succumbing quickly – to the ideology that enabled those scientists to throw ethics in the trash when pursuing their deadly projects for the Old Reich. The New Reich, financed by the same types of oligarchs who financed the previous one, actually has people in the core of its military and political system who believe that a nuclear war can remain limited and can actually be successfully carried through to victory. MAD – Mutually Assured Destruction – has disappeared from the political vocabulary. War is the new perpetual profit machine, but a slight flash of reason was exhibited by [General Martin Dempsey](#), despite his normally belligerent mien, when he was able to pull the US back from getting mired in another sand trap in Syria back in 2013.

What a beautiful breathing moment for the earth when the lockdown started. One week in and I felt the tension release in all the muscles of my body. Two weeks in and my Buddha nature was awakening. Three weeks in and I felt as if this would finally turn out to be Satori for humanity. Then the lockdown eroded, slowly but surely people found ways to make work possible again. Here in Hamburg the infrastructure, roads, bridges, rails, were the first things targeted. A good idea actually, since traffic had practically disappeared. But then came Zoom work and conferences and cars returned and now, here we are, back to summer vacation with pollution rising, forests burning, oil still being sucked out of the earth for profit, and the authoritarian pea-brainers sitting in the catbird seat ready to dictate the dystopian future to mankind.

The next lockdown will not be so wonderful I fear. Our names have been gathered by big data, our political predilections have been profiled, we are all targets now, for industry as consumers and as potential converts or victims for the new batch of Grand Inquisitors.



Auschwitz of course!

Forever Lockdown is on the horizon,
but not the kind of lockdown
I was so happy to have experienced in 2020.

Slamming The Slam

**Poetry requires contemplation,
not instant praise or instant damnation**

I've never been to a poetry slam. I was invited to participate in one by my university students. They liked my work and wanted me to take part in a "slam" to bring the words to a wider public. I appreciated their admiration, and I understood their purpose, but as I told them at the time: "It's not a proper forum for poetry." Why? Because a poetry slam is a type of competition. It takes place before a vociferous audience that wants to see a knockout, like in a boxing match. They are not there to contemplate, ruminate on the words, savor the syllables and let the visions play within their own brains to evoke new pictures, pictures they have perhaps never thought they could see in that particular way.

Under the greenwood tree
Who loves to lie with me,
And turn his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither:
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather.
Who doth ambition shun
And loves to live i' the sun,
Seeking the food he eats,
And pleased with what he gets,
Come hither, come hither, come hither:
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather.

William Shakespeare,

Song: [Under The Greenwood Tree \(from As You Like It\)](#)

I've seen bits and pieces of poetry slams on video or in films and each time I've been disgusted by the atmosphere surrounding the performance. And that's what a slam poet is engaging in, a performance. I can understand that some people would like to hear the poet read, to hear the poet's voice. But not all poets are great performers, and though their material may be good, it gets punched and kicked by less skilled and yet better performing people who enter the fray in a slam so that they may wear the mantle of "poet." Slams are not about the material per se, they are about how the material is presented, how the performer uses the time and place and the predilections of the audience to make the stage a focal point for gestures, for screams and whispers, for the same kind of display that a clown makes in order to constantly grab the (decreasing) attention span of the audience, which has come to see a spectacle, not to sit quietly and contemplate the words.



Poetry slam judges

That is, however, not my greatest argument against poetry slams. The worst thing about poetry slams is the fact that they play directly into the capitalist need to make everything a competition. You are either a winner or a loser. The loser retreats shamefully into the shadows, the winner is crowned with glory or, if available, money! Competition at every level justifies the obviously murderous qualities of capitalism, its constant and never-ending obsession with “more.” More of this, more of that, and especially more profit. So, in order to feed this need, competition is seen as the Social Darwinist method best suited to instill the greedy itch of capitalism at every level of society. No more quiet contemplation of what the words might signify, and at how many different levels they may resonate ([7 Types of Ambiguity](#)), just loud rowdy crowds and blood on the floor so that a winner may emerge and wear the crown. If the crown can be worn by the performers at these spectacles (similar to the last gladiator standing in the Colosseum), then the captains of industry and the politicians at the top can wear crowns as well and they will be accepted as winners in society. After all, Britain and some of the European countries still have actual kings and queens wearing crowns.

The chasm of inequality that is a trademark of neo-liberal capitalism today is what made feudalism so great for the few who murdered their way to the top to become feudal lords and monarchs. And yet, in those societies poets were able to somehow woo and subdue the gentry. Among the poorer people, poets wrote lyrics that became popular songs that the underclass could sing when in their cups or in gatherings that would eventually turn political and cause the fall of the feudal system. There was no copyright on the words, no large companies gathering the profits, no distribution network owned from top to bottom by a corporation that had worldwide tentacles that gathered pennies from anyone wanting to sing the song or recite the ditty.



‘Of every kinnë tre’ is a simple song or medieval poem about desire. A rough (and inferior) paraphrase is: ‘Every kind of tree, the hawthorn blossoms sweetest; she shall be my lover, the fairest of every kind.’

As an artist, I’m a member of GEMA and of VG WORT, two non-profits that collect royalties for me. Once upon a time I wrote for bands and artists who were under the control of corporate music firms. OK. I have worked inside the system. I’m not special. If I write a song or the lyrics of a song, the corporate publisher takes 50% of my earnings. If I am clever and powerful enough to make an administration deal, they get only 10%, like an agent, for enabling the distribution of my work. But hell, the big corporations own the distribution channels from top to bottom. It’s not like they have to ask somebody to “please play the song” or “please publish the words”. And we all know that if you play a song often enough, people will get used to it and think they like it. They may even like it. It may even be a good song or a nice piece of writing. But that doesn’t justify the 50% take. And I’m talking now about the percentage taken here in Germany. In other countries, you can actually sell

the song and never have any of the profits from its distribution. A little like the predicament that painters are suffering from. Sell the painting once and it's gone. You see nothing further, even if it sells for \$100 million two years later.

Poetry slams prop up rapacious capitalism at the infrastructure level of culture, at the level where people should be encouraging each other to grow as artists, to get better at their word construction, at their images, at their tone, and at providing each piece of work with the ambiguity that enables it to resonate through time. Poetry slams are like the happenings of the 60s, a one-off performance moment that may or may not have some artistic value.



When The Revolution Comes...

Slamming slams probably also has something to do with my dislike of rap music. Don't get me wrong, I love the work of The Last Poets. Jason Ankeny wrote: "With their [politically charged raps](#), taut rhythms, and dedication to raising African-American consciousness, The Last Poets almost single-handedly laid the groundwork for the emergence of hip-hop." And the early hip hop artists managed to maintain some interesting imagery and a decent cadence to their rap. For me, the final epic performance of rap was *Straight Outta Compton* from N.W.A. It was a masterful and electric performance which brought to an explosive end the politically active generation which started with The Last Poets in 1969 and finished with N.W.A in 1988. After that, rap just comes across like diarrhea of the mouth, a spewing of as many words as possible while following the monotonous beat of a drum machine. Maybe something is being said in there, but from what I can gather from the bits and pieces I've heard, it's mostly just boasting about sex, violence and drugs. Who cares? I certainly don't.



Fuck The Police...

The celebration of wealth and fame that passes for rap poetry today is disappointing. The fact that you can have “influencers” taking up space in the media world makes it obvious to what a degree of degenerated culture we have descended. It reminds me of that [scene that was edited out of Roma](#) by Fellini. Alberto Sordi is in a restaurant, enjoying a meal with other upper middle class patrons, and a wedding party, while out in the piazza a demonstration turns into a riot, with the police whacking anybody within reach of their truncheons. A blind man stands in front of the little fence behind which the restaurant is located and blocks Sordi’s view of the riot, and so Sordi yells at him: “Get out of the way blind man! Let me see! Go!” [My translation from the original Italian.] The fact is that all those privileged patrons in the restaurant can’t really see what is going on. Not the real politically charged trouble behind the demonstration and the obvious police brutality. And so it is with rap after Compton. People seem to be blind to the true political nature of oppression. There may be a little shining light here and there, and once in a while the word “freedom” crops up, but mostly it is a celebration of capitalism at its very worst, placed on a stage covered in gyrating bodies pierced by rings and studs and draped in tons of bling. These are the glittering rewards of rapacious capitalism that we should all strive to possess.

You may have some good and relevant arguments about the evolution of poetry through the ages. And you may have earned a Masters or a PhD explaining these arguments to the academic world. Please continue to do so, and if you like, send me links to your sound and logical arguments. Maybe they will enlighten me. I’m not interested in disputing these claims. During my studies I read all sorts of analysis and comment on poetry. In the end, I went to the poem and let it work its magic (or not magic) on me. For example, I fell in love with *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798). *Paradise Lost* (1667) bored me to tears. Except the parts with Satan, who is the only real character in the story. All I can go from is my personal experience and my visceral reaction. As regards a poetry slam, it just makes me nauseous to contemplate it as a forum for poetry. “Slam” and “Poem” are contradictions in terms. You can slam a door. You have to open a poem.

I’m not going to be pontifical about this. Perhaps from time to time something good emerges from these performances, but if the root is poisoned then I’m afraid the fruit may be poisoned as well.



Where has my smooth brow gone:
My arching lashes, yellow hair,
Wide-eyed glances, pretty ones,
That took in the cleverest there:
Nose not too big or small: a pair
Of delicate little ears, the chin
Dimpled: a face oval and fair,
Lovely lips with crimson skin?

Poetry is not a competition.

Satan Doesn't Exist

شیطان وجود ندارد

Aka (German): Doch das Böse gibt es nicht

Aka (English): There Is No Evil



This past weekend I attended the [Fünf Seen Filmfestival](#) which is held every year — this is the 15th year — at various little towns around the Starnberg Lake (Starnberger See) in southern Bavaria, about 25 kilometers from Munich. It's a summer resort for both the rich elite and the proletarian masses that live and work in Munich. For the proles, it's easily reached by S-Bahn #6 (surface train) that travels every 20 minutes both out to the lake and back into the city.

Starnberg's fame is derived from Ludwig II of Bavaria (of the Disney castle fame) and "Sisi" the Austrian Empress Elisabeth. Ludwig was engaged to Sisi's younger sister Sophie, but the marriage never happened. Sisi's castle in Possenhofen is where all the action was in those days and the tragedy and comedy of these members of the aristocracy has been described in numerous books and films, the most notable films being those directed by Ernst Marischka. He gave the starring role to a teenage [Romy Schneider](#) and it made her famous worldwide.



Sisi's castle in Possenhofen
seen through a hole in the hedge

I was there because I was invited to come and see the premier of an oratorio film of which I am the librettist: [Our World is On Fire](#). As is the custom at these events, the composer and I did a Q&A

after the showing of the film and, speaking on behalf of all the librettists through the ages, like the ones who worked for Mozart and Verdi and numerous other famous composers, I can report that the two questions I was asked, and the 30 seconds I used to answer them, went down extremely well in an audience that at least understood the meaning of the word “libretto.” My previous experience with a much younger crowd, after I mentioned the fact that I wrote the libretto, was: “Uh, huh. What’s a libretto?” And I suppose that’s not an unfair question to ask in this day and age, since not one of the older people at the premier could actually name a librettist attached to any of the opera composers. I know, because I asked them.

But this isn’t about me, though I seem to have smoothly made it partially about me. It’s about a film I saw on Friday evening, a film that I knew absolutely nothing about and was curious to see because, well, I am a fan of Persian culture, I like the people, I traveled through Iran twice back in 1971, by bus and train, and I heard that this film had raised the hackles of the ayatollahs and that the director had been jailed because of it. “Ha,” I thought, “sounds like something that will happen soon in the USA when the Christian Taliban take control.” Let me have a look.

So, with the memory of the black and white jiggling camera of the film about the Chilean coup, *The Battle of Chile*, which I saw at a midnight screening in Los Angeles at the [Nuart](#), I went into *Doch das Böse gibt es nicht* with patience and the expectation of having to sit through some rather sneaky camera angles and dangerous situations on the street with soldiers and police.

I was very wrong. The camera work is professionally excellent, the lighting in the interior shots, the technical aspects, the shots in public, the framing, the acting, everything was flawless and was of the highest standard for a contemporary film. The exteriors were remarkable, the midnight streets of the capital, the extraordinarily beautiful countryside, the forested hill country, nature in its unadulterated beauty. It was simply full of beautiful pictures. And the atmosphere, with sparse musical accompaniment, was kept thick with tension and foreboding.

If you know the Italian singer, [Milva](#), and her version of [Bella Ciao](#) (text in translation [here](#)), then you can imagine how well that song fit into the various scenes in which it was the main theme.

And the actors? Superb. I had to read the German subtitles because my knowledge of Persian is non-existent. However, since it is an Indo-European language I was able to hear some familiar phonemes from time to time and so my auditory comfort level was assuaged. Although the writing now used in Iran is an Arabic script, the language doesn’t have harsh guttural sounds common to Arabic and German or, for instance, Dutch.

Both the men and women acting in the film made me feel that what they were saying and feeling was absolutely real. Their facial expressions, their tone, their gestures, perfect, not at all artificial. Not “acting.” It didn’t have the documentary feel of *The Battle of Chile*, but I was and still am convinced that everyone in the film had either been directly in the situation on view or had experienced the situation from an extremely near perspective.

The film is about the death penalty in Iran. It was directed by Mohammad Rasoulof and won the Golden Bear at the 70th Berlin International Film Festival in 2020. I didn’t know any of that beforehand. And I’m glad I didn’t. In fact, if you’ve read this far and really want to see the film, then I suggest you go now and try and find a place where it’s possible to see it, either in a cinema or online.

It’s a combination of four short films on the theme of the death penalty and its effect on people. There are some almost-spoilers coming, so beware.

Because I went in without preconceptions, the first of the four films (at the time I didn’t know there would be four) got a bit boring. I was waiting for something to happen. There was this middle-aged man, balding, a greying beard, going home from where he worked in this walled place, with sliding metal gates and an underground parking garage. He gets home with the huge bag of rice they gave him from work, goes out to the mall to do some more shopping with his wife and small daughter, their conversation limited to the banalities of everyday life. I kept waiting for the point, the action, my American film nature demanding a car chase or an explosion. But nothing. His daughter falls asleep in his arms at home. His wife sleeps quietly next to him in bed.

At 4 a.m. his alarm rings, he gets up, washes, gets in his car and goes to work in this strange place with the huge metal doors and the underground garage. He walks down some narrow corridors to a small room where he makes tea and has a sparse breakfast while behind him on the wall a row of lights turns red and a buzzer sounds. He looks through a small window in the wall next to the row of lights. He pours his tea and drinks and eats and then the row of red lights goes off and a row of green lights beneath them comes on and the buzzer sounds again. He looks through the small window again and then his hand moves to a large button under the rows of lights. He presses it.

This is where I have to digress to Hannah Arendt for a moment. In her long report and discussion of the Eichmann trial in Israel, she brings up some very interesting questions regarding guilt and the feeling of being guilty. How did Eichmann feel about what he had done?

Eichmann's own attitude, it appeared, was different. First of all, the indictment for murder was wrong: "But I had nothing to do with the killing of the Jews. I never killed a Jew, or, for that matter, I never killed a non-Jew—I never killed any human being. I never gave an order to kill a Jew nor an order to kill a non-Jew; I just did not do it." Or, as he was later to qualify this statement, "It so happened . . . that I had not once to do it" — for he said explicitly that he would have killed his own father if he had received an order to that effect. Thus, he repeated over and over a statement that he had first made in the so-called Sassen documents — an interview that he had given in 1955 in Argentina to the Dutch journalist Willem S. Sassen, a former S.S. man who was also a fugitive from justice, and that, after Eichmann's capture, was published, in part, by Life in this country and by Der Stern in West Germany. He said that he could be accused only of "aiding and abetting" the almost successful annihilation of the Jews, and in Jerusalem he declared this annihilation to have been "one of the greatest crimes in the history of humanity." The defense paid no attention to Eichmann's own theory, but the prosecution wasted much time on an unsuccessful effort to prove that Eichmann had once, at least, killed with his own hands (he was supposed to have beaten to death a Jewish boy in Hungary). It spent more time, more successfully, on a note that Franz Rademacher, the Jewish expert in the German Foreign Office, had scribbled on a document dealing with Yugoslavia, made during a telephone conversation, which read, "Eichmann proposes shooting." This turned out to be the only "order to kill," if that is what it was, for which there existed a shred of evidence.

Eichmann in Jerusalem

By [*Hannah Arendt*](#)

February 8, 1963

In *Doch das Böse gibt es nicht* one must question whether guilt should be felt if someone is forced to actually carry out the death penalty. In the film there are at least two instances where guilt is such an overriding factor that it induces actions that are in themselves extreme and which we, as observers (or at least I, as an observer) felt were completely justified. One action involves a soldier trying to escape his predicament, and another involves a woman who breaks off true love because of the predicament a soldier was in.

In the final story of the four we are shown how a young girl, about 20 years old, who has grown up in modern Germany, tied to her cell phone and happy to be visiting her "uncle" in Iran, reacts to the truth of the predicament her "uncle" was in and his reaction to that predicament. She cannot understand, cannot forgive, and yet one has the feeling that perhaps understanding will come to her in the end because of her strong connection to the life of animals in the natural world. She reminded me of all the "Eco" people and "vegans" here in Germany who are so self-righteous in their indignation at anyone who doesn't live according to their standards. And yet, they cannot dispose of

their mobile phones or give up their holidays on “Malle” (Majorca), not to mention all the other trappings of a comfortable 21st Century life.

By the way, *Doch das Böse gibt es nicht* could be translated into English as *Of Course There is No Evil*. But the actual transliteration of the Persian title *Satan Doesn't Exist* is to my mind better than the titles crafted to sell the film to the western audience. Because of course Satan doesn't exist, even though in Iran the United States is always referred to in the state-run press as *The Great Satan*.

The film deals with real people like you and me and with the state's hold over us and how we react to this hold over us. The system is so large and so all-powerful that it is practically impossible to escape its demands. In Iran military service is obligatory if you want a job or to get travel documents. While you are in the military you must follow orders, no matter how gruesome they may be. It's no different for us here in the democracies that tout freedom of speech and freedom of action. The United States has the largest military in the world, incarcerates more people than any country on earth and its soldiers can face dire consequences if they bring injustices to light (Bradley Manning, Reality Winner, etc.). Besides that, the United States also carries out the death penalty whenever possible. Here in Europe the death penalty has been eliminated, but our economies are absolutely dependent on selling armaments to despots all around the world. And our comfortable lifestyles depend on those arms sales, and the chemicals used to destroy the planet, etc., etc.

How guilty do you feel? Is the fact that I ride a bike instead of drive a car OK and should make me feel less guilty of destroying the environment? Why haven't we, over 7 billion people on this planet, forced the relatively few thousand billionaires to give it all up and change the system so that there is no war profiteering and no destruction of the environment for profit? Is there a difference between a Dick Cheney or a Bush or an Obama and an Eichmann? What about the people who give the legally approved lethal injections to prisoners on death row? What about policemen who kill? What about all those wonderful “thank you for your service” guys who kick down doors and destroy families and take home fingers or ears as souvenirs? Are they that much more guilty than the administrators of the system?

Satan Doesn't Exist.

Or...?

Seriously Funny: Die PARTEI

Party politics satirized with panache



Democracy without hooks
(in German the swastika is called the “Hackenkreuz” – a cross with hooks!)

Germany goes to the polls on September 26. It's a Sunday. Shops are closed. Nobody works except bus drivers and train drivers and airline pilots and bakery staff (half-day) and of course police and firefighters. After all, Germans love fresh bread rolls and sweet buns for Sunday breakfast!

Welcome to Germany. Rational and serious, and yet there is a registered political party that you can actually vote for if you are so inclined – [Die PARTEI](#) – that satirizes the whole process and the other political parties with incredibly intelligent posters and internet campaigns. In the spirit of the late great George Carlin (who in my opinion would appreciate their humor greatly) they deliver truth wrapped in motley (as did Shakespeare BTW).

A sober (and for Americans, sobering) fact is that ballot information and your invitation to vote is delivered to each individual over 18 who has citizenship. It comes automatically for the first election after your 18th birthday. You don't need to register with any party or as an independent. Voting is a basic right. Since your address is registered at your local community administration office – a process you (or your parents) go through when you rent an apartment or buy a house – the voting information is delivered to your mailbox at least a month before the election. The letter tells you that if you want a mail-in ballot, please inform the authorities now and they will send you one right away. And it really arrives within a day or two after you apply for a mail-in ballot. And all voting is by paper ballot. No electronic voting!



Hope is the last to die. But it dies.
Nico is a real candidate in Berlin.

The political landscape in Germany is as fragmented and dangerously tilted to the right as everywhere else in the world at the moment. And so, the existence of the Die PARTEI is a breath of fresh air in the debate which has lately turned into a bland imitation of Corporate Democrat policies from the SPD and Greens, to neo-liberal hardline capitalist policies from the FDP, and shrill anti-democratic yelling coming from the CDU, CSU and AfD about the dangers of the socialist communist immigration policies of the so-called leftists (SPD & Greens) who are more center-right than anything else. But since the Overton Window has shifted so far to the right, even the Linke (nominally a Leftist party) is included at the leftmost edge of the window. In actuality, though they do have some genuinely leftist members, the bulk of the party espouses the program of the 1960s SPD, social-welfare and inclusiveness. Over the years the Linke have shed most of their image as leftovers from the old DDR (German Democratic Republic). But they are still shouted down as radical revolutionaries who would lead us all back to Soviet-style slavery.



Don't do any bad shit with your "cross" (your X)

Die PARTEI cannot take the other parties seriously because they can see, as we can all see, that the capitalism these parties worship has brought us to the edge of ruin. War, pestilence and poverty are on the horizon for everyone, and the policies espoused by the toadies of the corporations will not hold back the imminent destruction of rational society.

And so the posters and the program of Die PARTEI. They are serious, like George Carlin was serious. But like George Carlin, they are intelligently funny as well.



Nazis kill. (However, if instead of the period there had been an exclamation point, the whole meaning would have changed to "Kill Nazis!" which of course would have enabled criminal charges for "inveigling to murder". This way, it's just, as noted at the bottom of the poster, "Friendly information from Die PARTEI".

Die PARTEI [program](#) for the Bundestag elections 2021

1. Wirecard for everyone!

People without income & assets can use it to pay for whatever they want. We finance the project through reserves, which of course do not exist. This works, because balance control by the federal authorities does not take place.

2. Existence maximum 10 million

Wealth above the 7th zero is systematically capped. And redistributed from the top 1% to the 99% of the social underclass (congratulations, you are one of them!). If you don't enjoy life with 10 million, you don't deserve life.

3. 2% target for education

53,030,000,000.00 for the broken Bundeswehr (armed forces). Every year. We don't want to put the money into steel helmets (or like the Greens, into environmentally friendly killer drones), but into the minds of young people. Nothing could boost our "resilience" (Annegret Scheiß double name) more!

4. Fare evasion must remain affordable

The "crime" of fare evasion is reduced to a misdemeanor (€1.99). Every year, around 7,000 German citizens go to jail for "fare evasion," some of them on foot. The 200,000 proceedings per year keep our courts from more important matters: bribery of CDU politicians, mask affairs of CDU politicians, illegal possession of weapons by CDU politicians.

5. Promoting the elite

Bologna, Bachelor, Master? Will become history. We feel more committed to the educational ideals of European intellectual history than to the exploitation interests of European industry. Students should again study for 15 semesters in peace and have time to take an interest in politics and society. Note: Under the age of 30, one should avoid regular work!

6. Unconditional basic income? Yep!

A welfare state instrument whose time has come. 70% of EU citizens are for it, us too. Two members of the PARTEI in the Bundestag & EU-Parliament have been testing a BGE (basic income) for years at a significant level – and so far have not been able to discover a single disadvantage.

7. Shut down Amazon!

Unfortunately, we have to shut down Amazon due to sustained market failure. In 2020, the losers, with 44 billion euros in record sales (EU) generated a loss of 1.2 billion euros (but only in their tax haven Luxembourg, smiley!). Tax due: 0 billion.

8. Photoshop ban now!

Anyone who knows Volker Bouffier – known through the PARTEI poster "[How sexy can politics be?](#)" –, Annalena Baerbock, Frau von Storch or Philipp Amthor only from posters, could, upon a surprise meeting in reality, be fatally frightened. Especially in the case of Amthor, [who actually looks like he does on his posters](#).

9. Compensate [Deutsche Wohnen](#)!

Article 15 of the Basic Law requires appropriate compensation for the socialization of housing. Vonovia and Deutsche Wohnen each receive 1 pack of [Merci](#), 1 extended middle finger and 1 short, honest applause from their former tenants (8 pm, balcony). Apartments are there to live in, not to generate dividends for ominous asset managers in the Caymans.

10. Postpone war with Russia & China

In times of a global pandemic & global ecocide, we really don't have any capacities for such nonsense as bloc formation, enemy image constructions and trench rhetoric. Those who are keen on confrontation (Stoltenberg, USA, Greens, Spiegel, SZ, Sascha Lobotomie, etc.): Free-fire on Erdogan, Bolsonaro, dictator Orban or [baby-Hitler Sebastian Kurz](#).

11. Beer price freeze

The PARTEI supports a nationwide beer price freeze and the strengthening of the "Bestellerprinzip" (customer principle). For this purpose, a beer price index is to be established. The cap will come into effect as soon as two indicators occur simultaneously somewhere in the

economy: a great thirst and a verifiable glass-empty rate. In preparation: kebab price freeze (3 euros)

12. Fuck-off bounty for SUVs

The ugly city tanks are not only an aesthetic imposition, they also make the second largest contribution to the increase in global CO2 emissions. (In Berlin-Kreuzberg alternatively: “Abfuckelprämie” fuck-off reward).

13. Green Point for nuclear waste

Nuclear power plants are included in the Dual System. Operators are obliged to take back fuel rods and packaging and to pay for the disposal of the waste produced.

14. Climate

Global warming must not exceed 1.5° Celsius per year under any circumstances. To this end, Die PARTEI will call on all relevant branches of industry to consider a voluntary commitment within the scope of their respective possibilities.

15. Peace, order, health

To protect the public, road crossings, high-voltage pylons, cliffs, construction & bathing sites, train platform edges, bike paths and banana peels will be secured nationwide by effective signs with the inscription “[Karl Lauterbach warns...](#)”.

16. Gendering will become mandatory...

...for all age groups born after 2000. For the others, a transition period until 2090 applies. RepresentatiX of both groups are recommended to be a little more tolerant in the discussion. (After the election: “by decree”). Smiley!

17. Commitment to justice

The PARTEI demands the implementation of all-embracing universal total justice, or at least twice as much justice as the SPD. Complaints about alleged injustices are to be suppressed with all force. In order to underline the social importance of justice, Hamburger SV (soccer team) will be relegated every year in the future, to wherever.

18. Animal welfare

Animal testing will be stopped. Animals are there to be found cute and eaten up. Lip gloss, ass make-up, organic jam and drug cocktails are now to be tested on top athletes, who are used to all kinds of substances. Or in Bibi’s Beauty Palace. Beer testing remains free.

19. Medical care in rural areas

In view of a genetic match of over 90% between pigs and humans in rural areas, it is only natural to transfer medical care in Germany’s manure belt to veterinarians.

20. Moderate [Epistocracy](#)

In referendums to leave the EU, referendums to introduce a presidential system, and presidential elections in the U.S., three general knowledge questions will precede them on the ballot. E.g., “What is the name of the capital of Paris?” Ballots with less than one correct answer will be considered “invalid.”

21. Upper limit for refugees

The refugee ceiling will – in keeping with the wishes of the CDU/CSU parties – be redefined every year: Germany may not take in more refugees than the Mediterranean.

22. G1 school system

School-leaving certificate preparations and examinations are far too time-consuming, which is why we are calling for the reintroduction of the emergency school-leaving certificate: students will be tested at the blackboard for half an hour at the beginning of June, and the solutions will be published on the Internet beforehand. Afterwards: chill.

23. Ending the Care Crisis

The shortage of nursing care and the consequences of overwork among professional nurses will be regulated by a rotation model: Nurses who have become incapacitated due to overwork become patients and then nurses again, and then patients again, and then nurses again ... Thanks to the ingenious financing system for new nurse positions via health insurance funds, the affected nurses

also generate an appropriate share of their salary, which they can then immediately return to the health insurance funds.

24. Corruption & Lobbying

Corrupt parties will no longer be allowed to profit from donations & sponsoring, corrupt politicians will be deported to Azerbaijan. Income from secondary activities for members of parliament will be deducted from their assets – as is the case with Hartz IV [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hartz_concept]. The 290 deputies of the PARTEI in the Bundestag, the EU parliament and the municipalities will sign the politics code of [Plattform Pro](#). Incidentally, we are of the opinion that “profit from lobbying must be destroyed” ([Marco Bülow, MdB](#)).



CDU: not Christ-like;
SPD: not social;
Greens: not ecological
FDP: not liberal;
Afd: Not an alternative;
Die PARTEI: Not funny!

They Lurk Among Us

The anti-vaxxers in our midst

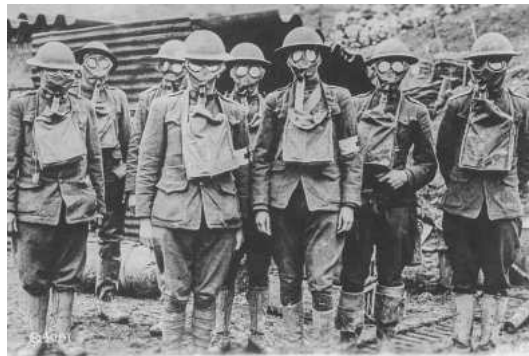


Women wearing surgical masks during the influenza epidemic, Brisbane (1919).

Since leaving Los Angeles and coming to Europe in the 1980s, I have been very active working in the music business as a lyricist, librettist and songwriter. Working often in the studio as a lyricist in the late 80s and 90s with heavy metal bands, I discovered that these guys (and girls BTW), who let it all hang out on stage and through their music, are really for the most part extremely polite and excellently trained musicians. On a visit to the home of one of the guitarists I saw his classical guitars and Bach sheet music in a corner. “Oh yes,” he said, “I practice Bach and the classics all the time. It’s how I stay fit with my fingers.”

Over time I have gathered respect for musicians and composers because most all of them that I have met and worked with were people you could talk with about all sorts of interesting things, not just music. So when I started working remotely (because of the pandemic and lockdown) with the composer whose name I will not mention, I had no reason at all *not to believe* he was also one of the OK people. He gave me no cause to think otherwise. Actually, because the project we were working on had a positive message for the world, I thought he belonged more to the category of the good guys than anything else. And the work was fine. I did my job well, there was no friction. The usual give-and-take between composer and words-man took place, and my work was praised and recognized, so all that was good.

The pandemic kept rolling along and I and my family and my friends here in Hamburg all got vaccinated, and though life hasn’t really returned to normal again, it is taking on a semblance of normality. We show our vaccination certificates when we enter a restaurant – masked-up – and we still step aside when people approach us on the sidewalk out of respect for their space and ours. All these common courtesies are becoming normal now. And I thought they were normal most everywhere.



The American Soldiers in Presence of Gas during World War I (1918).

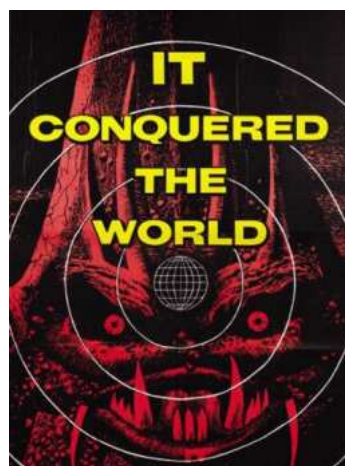
News began filtering through about anti-vaxxers in Berlin going into the streets and people being arrested at big events where they mingled without masks and without vaccinations. At first I thought: “Well, idiots are everywhere.” Then I read about how the right-wing was joining the demonstrations and in many cases actually driving the demonstrations and I started putting two and two together. The warning lights started flashing in my brain. In the US the Trumpistas were amping up their messaging, the uproar was spreading through their Red State strongholds and even the normally passive mainstream media was sounding (somewhat muted) alarm bells, which always had a codicil of false equivalence between the violent gun-toters on the right and the unarmed antifascist protesters on the left.

Then I got invited to visit the composer because our project was now going public and I should be there to claim my 30-seconds of fame. So I traveled for 7 hours by train – masked-up all the way – and on the next day met the guy and his wife. The first thing he told me was that in the area where he lived not many people were strict about wearing masks and that he and his family had not been vaccinated.

And then the grooming started.

Being a tolerant type of person, I let him talk. The more he talked, the more I retreated into myself and began to observe. He wasn’t just explaining his own point of view to me, he was subtly trying to convince me that his beliefs were founded in fact, founded in science, and that because he was such a brilliant person and had studied chemistry for a semester in college that he was qualified to judge the overwhelmingly positive results of vaccination as bogus and as the hideous manipulation of Bill Gates and his billionaire cronies who own all the governments around the world and want us to be digital slaves to their empire.

Now I am not a Bill Gates fan or an apologist for billionaires or Big Pharma. My personal opinion is that, like Jonas Salk once did with the polio vaccine, the COVID-19 vaccines should be patent-free and be distributed where needed for the actual low cost of their production, or just distributed for free to the people that need it. Why not? It’s not as if the Big Pharma companies are going to go bankrupt because of it. They screw people (especially in the USA) out of billions each year with the jacked-up prices they charge for drugs that were developed with government subsidies in university settings and then sucked up by pharmaceutical companies for private profit-making.



These are no doubt greedy and nasty people, but Bill Gates and his cronies are not putting nanobots into your bloodstream so that you can be tracked and given commands to obey their wishes. That’s completely unnecessary. Public relations, aka. advertising, as developed by Edward Louis Bernays and the Madison Avenue crew has been changing people’s minds very effectively since before the first World War.

It came as a shock to me when I realized the guy was an anti-vaxxer. Then he started spouting other conspiracy theories and I began to get really angry. Angry at him. Angry at myself. How could I have misjudged him so terribly? Why didn’t I see this coming? And then, with more reflection

came more clarity. I had missed the telltale signs that had been there all the time. He might as well have told me directly soon after I came into contact with him; maybe he was telling me in his own surreptitious way. I remembered the bits and pieces he told me about his childhood, his studies, his activism. I realized he had always been on that unsteady fringe of people who see chimera in events that are not paranormal at all. And, after meeting him and spending some real time with him, I got the impression that maybe he is not just a wrong-thinking nut-job, maybe he is actually a very calculating manipulator who wants to get as many people into his net as possible so that he can push them into doing what in the end will lead to his own self-aggrandizement.

I can't be 100% sure, but now I suspect he was fabulizing when he told me that in high school he took up a cause: to save a forest in his district. He went to a meeting of the local administration and, according to him, harangued them for 3 hours with facts and figures and other material in an attempt to convince them to reverse certain decisions that they had already made. The more I think about it, the more I am convinced that no group of administrators anywhere in the world would sit patiently for 3 hours and listen to a high school kid spout facts and figures about anything.

So why did he tell me this story? Was he building a myth about himself, about his supernatural ability to get things done? His indefatigable work on our project was an example of his willpower and stamina. He raised money through crowdfunding, he organized online support, he got people from the USA to come on board, he was able to get newspapers to write favorable reviews, to get the project into the public sphere so that it is recognized as a worthy event. And my name was mentioned of course – fleetingly – but mentioned, so I was not being denied as a contributor. But he did fail in one major part of his campaign, and that was his attempt to get himself recognized and become allied with a group of people who belong to a major internationally supported movement. They turned him down flat. Wanted nothing to do with him. And now I wonder: What do they know that I don't know?

In our most recent telephone conversation he expanded his anti-vaxxer stance to now include a radical political stance. He joined the new *dieBasis*, a German political party peppered with *Querdenker* (lateral-thinkers), *Reichsbürger* (almost identical with Sovereign Citizens in the USA), former aficionados of the proto-fascist AfD, and even some who would consider themselves on the Left of the political spectrum. Why would he do this? Because, he said, he wants to help get rid of the illegitimate government that rules his German state. Like the federal government, his state government needs to change the way it governs and allow people to not be vaccinated, not have to participate in lockdowns, and to not follow any rules that limit his own personal freedom.



Das Weib (De Sfinx) (1899) by Edvard Munch.

This is of course allied with the same talking points that are popular with the international right-wing racist and anti-Semitic elements: bailouts for the Jewish bankers, refugees being let in to dilute the racial dominance of the tribe that has lived here longest, licentiousness tolerated through gay marriage and support for transgender people... The same war cry heard from the governments of Hungary and now Poland. And of course it has been amplified by the right-wing echo chamber in the USA.

My last, and what proved to be futile interaction with him was when I sent him a link from a very interesting piece in the Intercept on how right wing pharma companies are cashing in hundreds of millions by getting their deluded minions to buy what they tout as cures for Covid. [The article](#) mentioned a group called Frontline Doctors who shill for the pharma companies. I thought that if, as he told me, he is interested in finding out some truth about it all, this article would open the door for him.

He wrote to me and said: “The article you sent me doesn’t really fit to what I do know about Ivermectin.” So, instead of giving him an opportunity to gain knowledge about how he and millions of others were being exploited, he actually tried to find the right-wing Frontline Doctors and strengthen his confirmation bias with their propaganda. “The website of the frontline doctors first seemed to be blocked, so it was difficult to get to know what the frontline doctors think about themselves, but finally I managed to read it.”

This experience has taught me a few important lessons:

#1. Just because someone has a skill set that you respect, it doesn’t mean they have an open mind.

#2. The pretzel logic these people are entangled in is nothing new, it has always been here, it’s just that we are inundated with its visibility due to the social media landscape that has come to dominate our lives.

#3. Getting angry and verbally abusive – which I did not do – only strengthens their confirmation bias.

#4. Laughing out loud at some of the ridiculous ideas that he proposed – which I did do to his face – didn’t faze him at all.

My conclusion is that in the best case scenario I am dealing with a deluded guy who is just trying to get people to like him and so he joins these groups that have weird ideas because they are all like him. The worst case scenario is that he is a manipulative psychopath who is using various popular movements to grab attention and fame and power to himself so that he can stand above the crowd and be admired as a mythical hero, no matter how twisted his motives and means of getting to the top.

Actually, the more I think of my time spent in his company, the more I am relieved that I was able to escape unscathed and get back home without any lasting damage. And yes, I’m done communicating with him on this subject. I don’t want to alienate him completely because of the project, which I pray will have a positive effect on people, but you can bet that I will be very careful in how I interact with him in the future. It will be strictly limited to business and the project.

After all: No use throwing out the baby with the bathwater.



Emergency hospital during influenza epidemic, Camp Funston, Kansas (1918).

Angry Old Man

A sorry religious zealot of the left



Dachau

I got blocked!

“Sadly nothing but ranting and bitterness. I’ve had enough and have blocked you.”

A guy I called a friend and a mentor, someone I’ve known since the early 1970s, someone I have lots of respect for because of his skills, someone who now spends his retirement days reading philosophy, from Plato to Hannah Arendt, someone who seemed to me to have an open mind has now confirmed what I suspect is really at the core of his being: his admiration for the power of the strong leader, the kind of strong leader he always tried to show himself to be and which, to a certain extent, because of his professional duties, made him successful in his field. In certain fields and situations leadership must be clear and strong in order to get the job done because you are dealing with a group of people who need to be able to work together as a harmonious whole in order for the result to be esthetically satisfactory. That does take determined leadership and a certain strength of character to be able to assume the mantle.

But when does strong leadership morph into the autocratic reign of a dictator who has no tolerance for dissent? Dissent is seen as disobedience, rebellion which has to be quashed. Blocked. Cancelled. Remain unheard. Outside the castle wall the peasants may yell and scream, but within the king can hear nothing and the feasting goes on unabated. Outside the plague can rage and people may die. Inside the serenity is unbroken and the servants continue to serve the master.

Once, a long time ago, I asked this onetime friend who he would like to work for if he had the chance. “The King,” he said with a grin.



Serving the King

Am I an “angry old man”? Sometimes, yes, I am. My anger runs hot for a while and then cools off. Most of the time I’m not angry. Sometimes I am just confused. Right now I am bewildered. I cannot understand how I could once again be so naive as to not realize that just because someone has a skill that I respect it doesn’t necessarily mean they have an open mind.

This guy, who purports to be steeped in philosophy, cannot see how the political situation which now confronts us around the world is in need of urgent attention, in need of a reset to the basic tenets of humanism. Did not the message of Hannah Arendt resound in his brain – the dangers of fascism and authoritarianism? How can you read anything that she wrote without wanting to stop the renewed onset of authoritarianism? Or is he only reading her work to better be able to tear apart her arguments against the onset of authoritarianism? That is a possibility.

Am I “a sorry religious zealot”?

How did he come to that description of me? Read part of the email text I sent him before he blocked me:

Samuel Fuller was there at the liberation of Falkenau: <https://youtu.be/DujN3Aj8qpY>

Your father and my father fought to end the Nazis.

My father was at a camp liberation.

I went to Dachau and I sat and cried because the dead speak to the human inside.

The Murdochs and their ilk want this to come back. Listen to them and you can hear them repeat the slogans.

If there is fear, then it is justified if this is the result.

In a previous email, after he had sent me an article from the New York Post which ranted that “The left is pushing fear to advance its agenda”, I answered by saying that the Post was a Murdoch rag and that Rupert was a protofascist. Perhaps that, combined with the images I sent him from my visit to Dachau made him uncomfortable and thus I must somehow now be a religious zealot.

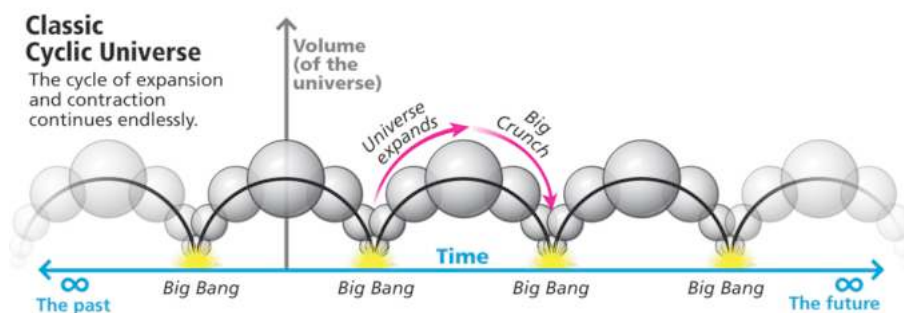


(Sitting on the edge) Crying at Dachau:
Does that make me a religious zealot?

Truth of the matter is that I went to Catholic schools for about 10 years altogether. I was never a True Believer because there was nothing that ever happened after prayer or confession that changed things for the better. Though I must admit that confession is a wonderful exercise in psychological house-cleaning. But I never had a mystical experience brought on by prayer. (Later with drugs there were some interesting moments – but I digress.) And basically I’m an atheist at heart. Or maybe you could say I’m one who tends toward the pulsating, or cyclic universe theory. Big Bang. Expansion. Cooling to almost absolute zero (nobody has gotten there yet or shown that it can be gotten to in reality) and then contraction until the next Big Bang. Then it continues like that. Bang. Expand. Contract. Bang. Everything gets reconstituted. Maybe consciousness returns. Maybe it doesn’t. No

matter... or rather matter, dark matter, energy. All that stuff mixed in the blender over and over again.

When I lived in New Delhi I remember reading a book that had a wonderful illustration explaining the creation and dissolution of the universe. The first picture was of the head of a dragon, in profile, looking right, its mouth wide, spitting flames. The next picture was of the flames spinning and forming a ball which, it was explained, is the universe. Then along comes the dragon again, opens his mouth and swallows the flaming ball. And this repeats endlessly. I remember thinking at the time: “That’s an illustration of the [pulsating universe theory](#).” It is linked to Vedic thought, but I’m not a Hindu, and not a Buddhist (which grew from Hinduism).



Graphic of the oscillating or cyclic universe (from Discovery magazine)

It’s all speculation as far as I’m concerned. Death wipes all knowledge from your brain so you will never know. No afterlife. But I guess the pulsating universe theory kind of gives me some consolation.

“of the left” I can agree with to a certain extent. I am definitely anti-capitalist. Capitalism evolved from feudalism, so I guess it’s a bit better, given the Enlightenment and freedom and democracy getting revived. However, the Overton Window has shifted so far toward authoritarianism that even Social Democrat and Green political parties, both of which support capitalism, are considered to be “of the left.” Communists don’t get any respect these days, not even from parties like the Linke in Germany, and anarchists are seen as jokers or madmen who are in “cloud-cuckoo land” as Mad Maggie used to say.

[<https://youtu.be/K-BZIWSI5UQ> – Elvis Costello – *Tramp The Dirt Down*]

What bothers me most about capitalism is the inherent cruelty that is woven into its doctrine of profit maximization. Social Darwinism is at its core. Here in Hamburg the trade ethic of the Hanseatic businessmen was to arrive at a win-win game not a zero-sum game. Why? Because they want the trade to continue. It can only continue when both parties win. Modern neoliberal capitalism has evolved into a zero-sum game. I win. You lose. “The Winner Takes It All” as ABBA melodically put it. But if the winner does take it all, where does that leave the loser? With nothing of course. Add to that the doctrine of self-responsibility for everything, and not only are you a capital L “Loser,” you are also now responsible to make something out of the nothing you have been left with.

The guy who used to be my friend uses Social Darwinism as a prop. He would like me to think of him as “the King of the beasts.” Trouble is that if you really want to use Darwin’s model to explain your success in the neo-liberal capitalist system, then you should revise your pictographic reference because the most successful beasts these days are rats and cockroaches and sharks, and recently, viruses. [Lions are being shot](#) by the little Trumpensteins of this world and will soon be extinct in the wild.

Germany hasn’t gone as far down the road into radical Social Darwinism as the United States. The elite are still educated well enough to heed the warnings that Bismarck issued, urging his fellow elites to remember how things went in the French Revolution. Share with the underclass and your head will remain attached. Let’s hope that the elites continue to act with that in mind.

Maybe [the basic cruelty that inhabits the soul of the capitalist](#) is what motivates “my friend” to admire strength and to adhere to a belief that because of success in his career, the material reward and honors it has supplied him with, it makes him the better person. He is skilled in his profession. He is intelligent. I sincerely admire his abilities. And his function as a mentor for my own development has always been appreciated. Through work and complements his role as mentor has been repaid in various ways and I know that made him realize that his presence was appreciated. It is certainly not his abilities that I find discomfoting.

Despite all the friendly exchanges through the years, I know much about his life that, well, is not what I would want to talk about in a public forum. Once, I asked him about success: “Can’t you be successful if you are moral?” “Sure,” he said with that same sly grin, “it just takes longer.” His personality enables him to deal with the system in a way I could never deal with it.

My personality is such that I knew I would never survive in Los Angeles, in the Hollywood that is at the center of the city. I’m not a rat, cockroach or shark. I’m also not good at discerning what is façade and what is the real face that is presented to me. I’m much too naive. You need to understand the system and be able to navigate through it, use your skills for the profit of others and not be sorry. There are hundreds, probably thousands of supremely creative people in Tinseltown, and I’m sure that many of them have been able to create and survive well without adhering to the dogma of Social Darwinism. I couldn’t do that, so I left the city and I left the country and found a home in a place that still adheres more or less to the win-win game. It’s been good for me. I’ve been able to have some modest success and live in peace.

I’m not rich. But that was never my goal. The freedom to create what I want to create has been at the core of my being. Almost a hundred radio plays, lots of albums, and plenty of work as a wordsman for the entertainment industry. “Oh,” you say, “he sold his talents as well.” Yes, just like my “friend” I am for hire and I can work very well as a professional. That’s not a problem. In fact I admire the professional, whatever the field. And that was one of the reasons I admired my once-upon-a-time friend. It’s what surrounds the professional, the shark-infested waters the professional has to swim through in the entertainment Mecca of the world that I, personally, cannot abide. Here, the waters are also filled with sharks, but there are shark nets to keep them away from us bathers.

Being blocked has been, in one way, a liberating experience. Many years ago, when I left Hotel California and got away from the direct influence of “my friend” I felt happy to not be under what I had already discerned was his rather authoritarian regime. I needed my freedom and leaving was how I found it. First Lisbon, then Hamburg. A couple of times I went back to visit, renewed my direct contact, but was no longer under a spell. My old mentor, like the statue in [the dream interpreted by a previous Daniel \(31-35\)](#), has revealed himself to have a heart of stone and feet of clay.

More the pity.

The Bottom Line

<https://vimeo.com/82489902>

Oligarchs United vs. Atomized Civilians



Dr. Medford: “When Man entered the Atomic Age,
he opened the door to a new world.
What we may eventually find in that new world,
nobody can predict.”

If you haven't seen [Them!](#), a black and white masterpiece of horror from 1954, then you should. Is it outdated? Probably, if you are a fan of [CGI](#)-saturated modern sci-fi films. Is it still relevant? Only if you believe in the danger that nuclear weapons pose for humankind. And of course if you have ingested William Empson's [7 Types of Ambiguity](#), you will be able to find in the film many resonances with our society today and specifically with the symbolism presented by the giant ants.

Humor me. Watch the movie (again) and imagine that the giant ants are the oligarchs we have created since the beginning of the atomic age. Then ask yourself if you empathize with ***Them!*** or if you find the conclusion justified and necessary in order to save humanity.

It has become increasingly clear to me that since the war in Ukraine began in February that although the western powers are going after the Russian oligarchs with a vengeance, our own oligarchs continue to make money hand-over-fist and normal people are paying for the war and its consequences of wheat shortage, oil shortage and a shortage of human empathy. Oh yes, we are being nice to the Ukrainian refugees here in Europe, while at the same time making asylum and life in general difficult for any refugees from countries the western powers have destroyed in the past 30 years. Besides continuing to feed the war in Yemen and not feed the people of Afghanistan.

You must remember that the oligarchs, like the giant ants, are all born from the queen and their only reason for existing is to serve the queen. They are united in that endeavor. Now, in case you are ready to understand the queen as a symbol for capitalism, then you can surmise that the only reason oligarchs exist is to serve the capitalist system. The system is competitive, brutal and hierarchical. Capitalism (the queen) is at the top and all must serve to keep her fed and keep the system alive. And, everything goes to maintain the system. Which is why we are in the predicament we are now in. There is an inherent belief that by feeding the queen, the colony will survive. Which may be functional in the case of ants, but when transferred to the reality of capitalism, we see that this type of behavior is self-defeating and probably suicidal. You cannot rape the earth and imagine that you will survive when all you need to feed upon is gone.

I'm not a politician (thank you!) and my powers of divination are not perfect, but I have been close to achieving the Casandra effect on myself after I wrote the libretto for [Trump, The Musical](#) back in 2019 and more or less described the result of that monster losing the election. Of course because people were scared and then had the excuse in early 2020 of the pandemic coming along,

the musical never hit the boards. But at least it was written and published before the January 6th fiasco, which proved that I was looking at Trump and his cronies from the correct angle.

Since the end of WW2, the propaganda machines both East and West have been working overtime to destroy any glimmer of solidarity which might arise among the working people. And I include the petite bourgeois among the working people as well because they don't really have the luxury of decades of inherited wealth to relax on so that they can rise to the class of "idle rich."

Advertising, or public relations as Bernays liked to call it, has only one basic purpose, and that is to inject you with envy and to make you act on that envy to purchase a product. Which product you purchase doesn't matter, as long as you purchase one. Your job is to be a consumer. After 9/11 Bush II ordered Americans to fly to Disney World and enjoy themselves. Consume! Be entertained! And even the semi-rational economist Robert Reich wrote: "The theory is that we demonstrate our resolve to the rest of the world by investing and consuming at least as much as we did before, preferably more."

And now, with mask mandates and other COVID-19 restrictions being lifted here in Germany and around the world, we are expected to once again go out there and consume as much as possible to keep the pennies from heaven falling into the pockets of the oligarchs.

They are united against us. And we are envious of each other and atomized into little ineffective groups, little right wing hate groups, little liberal love groups, little reformer groups, little groups of conservatives, or conservationists. It doesn't matter which group you belong to, you are in a small ineffectual fringe group that will never have any real impact on policy or on the stranglehold that the oligarchs have on society. However, if by some mischance your little group grows beyond its fringe character and starts to have an effect (e.g. Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter), then you can be certain that the whole system will focus all its energy on ridding itself of the growing opposition. Ruthlessly.

Now the oligarchs are having a war so that we can be afraid once again and forget what is really dangerous to our survival: ***Them!*** The giant ants (oligarchs) that rapaciously destroy everything in their path.

The comments I have made lately on my radio program, FREE WHEEL, are things I had to get out into the world. They're not earth-shaking and certainly won't change reality for the better, but they had to be said. And you can be sure that I will continue to speak my mind in the future.

[FREE WHEEL](#) is a radio show I produce and host twice a month on FSK in Hamburg, and on Radio StHoerfunk in Schwäbisch Hall and Crailsheim. Both stations are local commercial-free public broadcasters.

At the beginning of each show, after the first song has played, I provide a short intro where I talk about what is moving me that week and outline what is coming on the show. Below are the latest intros to the shows following the invasion and the beginning of the war on 24 February 2022.

[FREE WHEEL StHoerfunk 2022 02 24](#)

NOTE: This program aired on Thursday, 24 February, just as hostilities between Ukraine and Russia got underway. The news items in the program have become swiftly outdated, as is all news during a war.

But I did choose the right kind of music: EVERYTHING IS BROKEN!

Well, I am genuinely surprised that Putin has decided to move troops into Ukraine. I'm not shocked, because politicians have stopped shocking me. But I really thought that Putin was smarter than that. He just blew all his deals for energy transfer to the west. OK, the price of oil is through the roof again, so the oil oligarchs east and west are set to make huge windfall profits again. But all the other trade stuff that was going on is now being swept away. How stupid.

Tonight you'll get some information about the current political situation from Democracy Now and Al Jazeera. Before the radio play Bill Hicks lightens up the mood a little with his humor. The radio play is Audio Diaries. And all the music this evening is about things that are broken.

[FREE WHEEL 2022 03 17](#)

As the war drags on and the news gets worse each day, maybe we should all be thinking about the consequences of war, all war, no matter who starts it or who wins it, because us, we, the people, we are the ones who always lose. Normal people always lose every war that has ever been fought. Normal civilians die in greater numbers than any of the soldiers in the front lines. Towns and cities are bombed into rubble. The soldiers escape, or are taken prisoner, the people die, either from the bombs and bullets or from starvation and neglect.

The kings, the oligarchs and their super-rich cousins are heading for their shelters, for their hideaways, anticipating the nuclear end of life on this planet. They assume they will survive to begin anew. Once the cataclysm begins, it's lights out for everyone. The fact that the privileged feel immortal is a symptom of the insanity of our time and the past times, when kings and queens actually believed in their "divine right" to rule over others. Now it's the oligarchs, the elite, not just the Russian ones, all of them, all over the world, who are salivating at the prospect of the trillions in profits to be made in the post-war era. If there is an era to follow.

I say, take away all the assets of all the oligarchs everywhere on earth and give the money to the victims of war, us, we, we the people. Then watch how quickly all the wars stop.

Martin Luther King tells us why he's against the Vietnam War. And that is why we should always be against all war. Just before FrameLab talks about American Authoritarians vs. American Democracy, General Smedley Butler delivers the warning he gave to the American people back in the 1930s about fascists wanting to take over the government of the USA. We should be listening closely to what he has to say. The danger is still there, and greater than it has been since the 30s of the last century.

All the music has something to do with war.

[FREE WHEEL StHoerfunk 2022 03 21](#)

What is happening in Ukraine should not be happening at all. Everyone knows that. Personally, I oppose all wars and all oligarchs everywhere, and especially the merchants of death who profit from selling the guns and bombs that kill civilians.

According to Bloomberg, the cumulative wealth of the richest Russians in the world has gone down by almost \$90B since the start of the war. Meanwhile, America's 704 billionaires have gotten \$1.7 trillion richer—57%—over two years of the pandemic. Almost all of those wealth gains will go tax-free. According to Forbes, the wealth of only the 3 richest oligarchs in America (Musk, Bezos and Gates) is \$594 billion, a total that is greater than the wealth of the 100 richest Russian oligarchs combined at \$558 billion. [CounterPunch <https://www.counterpunch.org/2022/03/18/roaming-charges-45/%5D>]

Ian Bremmer talks about What the War in Ukraine Means for the World Order. SUDS continues at the end of this hour. And all the music today is by Peter Gabriel, once-upon-a-time from Genesis.

In the second hour:

Today is the Equinox, when the day is as long as the night (at the Equator of course), and it is the official first day of Spring. Enjoy it. The sun is coming back and the flowers will bloom and green will return into our lives. Well, as long as there are no nukes bringing an end to everything.

Ian Bremmer continues to talk about What the War in Ukraine Means for the World Order. And Peter Gabriel keeps on delivering interesting music.

[FREE WHEEL 2022 03 24](#)

It's all about propaganda these days. What you see, what you hear, what you read. There is no subtlety at all on the Russian side. It's just blatant barefaced lies. On the other side – our side – we let failed Generals and old cold warriors tell us what we should know because after all they are the wise and knowledgeable, despite the fact that they were wrong on Afghanistan, wrong on Iraq, wrong on practically everything they have said over the past 30 years. But these fools are the ones that the media calls on to tell folks that Putin is a war criminal. Well, yes, he is a war criminal. But so is G. W. Bush, and especially Dick Cheney. And there are many, many more sitting on thrones and in the seat of the Chairman of the Board all around the world. If you are making money from

war, you have a share in being a war criminal. Why? Because war is criminal. War is a criminal enterprise. It always has been and always will be.

Normal people do not want war. They are only driven into war by the masters of propaganda, who use war as an excuse to stay in power. So with this war now we are supposed to forget about inequality, about how oligarchs East, West and North and South made trillions during an epidemic. We're supposed to forget how oil companies are destroying the environment, and we are supposed to pay more for the old world-destroying energy while hitting the pause button on renewables.

When you let psychopaths rule the roost, this is the result.

Fred Hampton, Malcolm X, Al Jazerra's Listening Post; all of them will try to open your mind to the fact that we are still all slaves of a system that loves to make money from destroying lives.

The music is really good.



Capitalism feeds the oligarch.

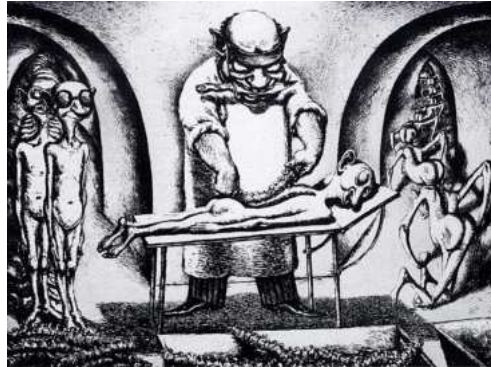
Life continues.

The refugees from Ukraine are pouring into Germany. A good friend of mine is down at the intake center acting as a translator. She is half-Russian, half-Scottish. A native-speaker of Russian and English (with a sweet Scottish accent). She was interviewed on German TV the other day and almost broke down in tears right there on camera. It's not easy for people who have basic human empathy. But the oligarchs are not saying anything at all, they aren't down at the centers aiding the refugees, delivering truckloads of food and clothing and providing room and board in their empty villas and empty apartments (good investments!).

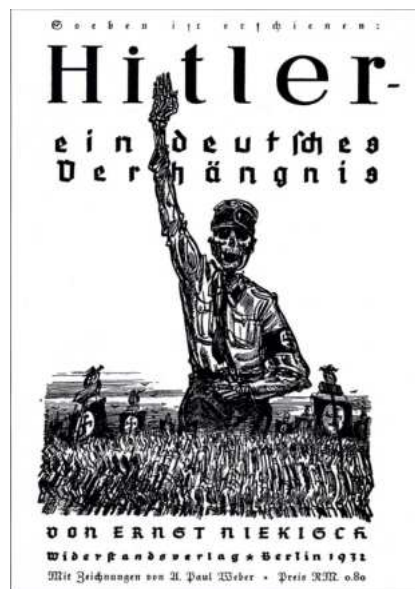
Next week we'll be getting some new neighbors. Ukrainians are moving into the apartment which is free next door. Our neighborhood isn't going to turn them away or ask them to stay the hell out.

But what if they were from the Congo, where war has been raging from the day that the Belgians were forced to leave? What then?

How to Win a Propaganda War



by adapting the illustrations of A. Paul Weber



Paul Weber was one of the most virulent anti-Nazi and anti-war illustrators of Germany in the 1930s. The Nazis eventually sent him to prison for his activities. But he emerged once again after the war to illustrate how things had not really changed.

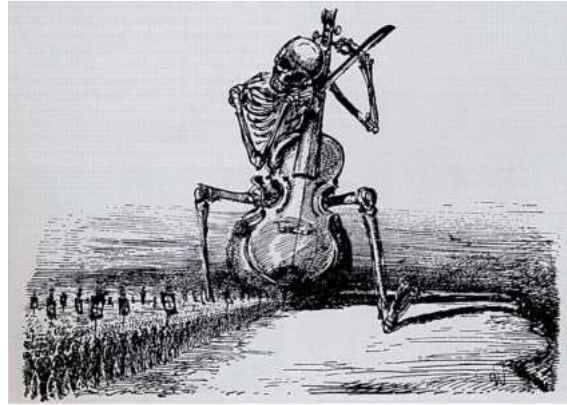
What I am going to attempt to do here is take some of Weber's most hard-hitting illustrations and imagine how they could be used or adapted to win the propaganda war against the most virulent new strain of authoritarian thinking and action to have emerged around the world since the 1920s. Skillful illustrators and cartoonists as well as animators should study the work of Paul Weber for inspiration. Follow the link to the [website of the museum](#) which is dedicated to him here in Germany, in Ratzeburg, not far from Hamburg. And if you are ever in the area, do go and see the wonderful collections available there. It is most definitely worth the pilgrimage. The pictures used here [not for profit] are from the illustrated biography by Helmut Schumacher & Klaus J. Dorsch which was published in 2003 and is available as a pdf download [here](#).

So let us begin.

The illustration under the headline is from the title page of an anti-Nazi article published in 1932 by the *Widerstandverlag* in Berlin. The title, when translated, says: "Hitler the doom of Germany." So you can see that Germans were quite aware of what was happening and what was going to happen. Just like we are today. We can see where the likes of authoritarian leaders like Orban, Trump and Putin are going to lead us – to our collective doom. *Widerstandverlag* translated is "The Resistance Publishing House." Where are the resistance publishers today? And are they getting

through to anyone except those of us who already understand what the consequences are going to be if we allow these criminals to continue along the path of least resistance?

Some major publications have made hard-hitting illustrations and photo collages that have been used against Putin and Trump. But how cool would it be if we printed the above illustration, replacing Hitler's image with Trump or Orban or Putin or Le Pen, in the form of a baseball card, with true facts and figures on the backs of the cards, so they eventually become collectables and thus even get through to the youngsters being influenced by the poison ideas of the right.



Auftakt 1932

From the same illustrated article as the Hitler picture at the start we have *Auftakt*, which means "Prelude." Everyone knows what is going to happen when the main part of the program begins. But now it's 1932 and it's only the prelude to the horrors which will follow. The warning is clear, but the music of Mr. Death is enchanting to the multitude. The same as today. The masses of people who are enchanted by the death cult that is the Republican Party in the USA, the AFD here in Germany and the other right-wing parties across Europe who promise new power to the powerless and yet advocate anti-vax and anti-mask policies which put the health of all at risk. The worship of the gun as the final arbiter of any argument marks the epitome of cultish thinking everywhere.

What if someone were able to take this illustration and transform it into an animation, maybe 20 or 30 seconds long with Mr. Death playing the melody from Chopin's *Funeral March*. There must be some super slick animators out there who could do justice to this picture.



Bestechlich 1930

Remember H. L. Mencken? His *Notes on Democracy* was translated into German (Mencken had German roots) and Weber illustrated an important argument: *Bestechlich* means "corruptible," and

as we have seen in all democracies, the rich have a way of making sure things go their way, either through direct bribery or through indirect bribery by contributing to the campaigns of those they know will work to make them even richer. This particular illustration also includes the clergy, who pay no taxes for the wealth accumulated by their institutions or, like in the USA, for their independent “church.” The promise of salvation is only guaranteed if you pay. The Reformation was supposed to have cured religion of time off (indulgence) in Purgatory for a monetary fee.

I’m quite certain plenty of you can think of how to relate this picture to the present.



Das Ende vom Lied: Der Sumpf 1933

“The End of the Song: The Swamp” is where all the party faithful end up. We have heard the prelude and so we know where it leads, but the poor delusional souls who believe their cult leaders hear only the beats of the march, and so they march forward until they enter the swamp, only to sink into the quicksand. How can we make them see that they are marching to their own undoing?

What if, again, someone creates a short animation in which the Nazi salute emerges from the swamp once, twice, three times, to slowly get sucked down, down, down, until all the saluting arms disappear and the mud bubbles that emerge from the swamp burst, with a feeble voice croaking out “We won! We won! We won!”



Der Spekulant auf Heldentod 1934

“The Heroic Death Speculator” is known to us all. He works in the arms industry and in politics, the one gets contracts from the politicians and the other gets money to remain in power. It’s a profitable two-way street. I would put the death speculator on a baseball card, with facts and figures on the rear about death from war, pandemic deaths allowed through lack of caution and death due to

poverty which could so easily be eliminated if the death speculators would just pay fair taxes on their windfall profits.



Das Leichentuch (Leviathan 1941/42)

“The Shroud” is an illustration of the book by Thomas Hobbes. Published in 1651 it is about the structure of society and what Hobbes believes to be legitimate government. It argues that there is a social contract and that society should be ruled by an absolute sovereign. Well, this is the inevitable result of unlimited power in the hands of an absolute sovereign. You can see how history has illustrated this and how it is being illustrated once again by the absolute ruler of modern Russia.

Obviously here the main character is the one dragging the shroud over the bodies. Another baseball card or animation, with the main character perhaps looking over his or her shoulder with a grisly smile. Putin? Trump? Le Pen? De Santis? There are, unfortunately, so many to choose from.



Der letzte Privatier (1944/49)

“The last privateer.” This is the final delusion of the oligarch. Oligarchs believe, deep down in that warped psyche of theirs, that when the earth has been reduced to ashes everywhere, there will still be a place where they can live safely behind a high wall and live a wonderful life. *Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio depicted such a life during the the Black Death, probably the epidemic of 1348. Poe’s *The Masque of the Red Death* showed the results of such fantastical thinking.

Surely someone can place an oligarch’s mansion or subterranean hideaway into this context and illustrate the final result. Or, better yet [warning, self-advertising imminent] you can read my play [Sheol](#). Use that for your illustrative or animation inspiration.



Die Diskussion im Boot (1948)

“The discussion in the boat.” Oh, we talk about it, we write about it, some of us make suggestions about how to use illustrations to win a propaganda war, but what are we actually *doing* about it?

One of the things which annoys me about talk shows and their hosts is that there is this absurd attempt to give the other side a chance to express their opinions. Why? How are the opinions of “the other side” being treated on the Murdoch Media Empire? How about in Putin’s Russia? In Orban’s Hungary? Here in Germany one cannot publish Nazi propaganda or use Nazi symbols in public. I’m quite happy with that. We know what happened here. Most of us have been to a death camp. These are not nice places. Don’t be fooled, the neo-authoritarians do not hesitate to use brute force. Remember Argentina? Remember Chile? It’s happening next door to you in Mexico and next door to me in Ukraine.

Stop talking . The boat is sinking. *Do something!*



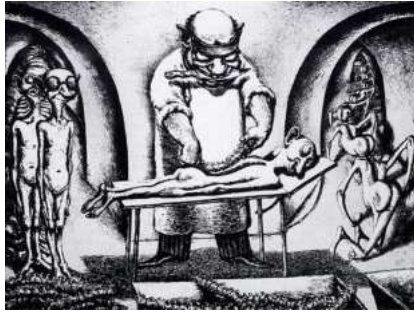
Deutsches Verhängnis (1931)

“German doom.” Everyone knew what was coming and yet paid no attention. And it’s coming again. A short animated film of an endless stream of the Trump/De Santis/Putin faithful marching over the hill and into the casket of doom, which never fills up to the brim because it is bottomless!



...und kommen nach kurzer Pause wieder (Widerstand 1934)

“...and we’ll be right back after this short break.” They are already back.



Rückrad raus! (1951)

“Out with your spine!” The “democratic” parties have lost it I’m afraid. Their corporate masters have been busy for years removing spines. The razor-sharp knife they wield is money, and too many of our purported democrats are willing to lie down and have their spines removed.

Surely an animated short film no longer than a minute can come from this, with your favorite corporate villain holding the blade while your favorite politician submits willingly to the treatment.

There are so many more possible illustrations, but I will end with these two:



Der Staatsfeind (1956)

“The Enemy of the State” is, and always will be, the poor person. You have nothing, you have nothing to lose, therefore you are the enemy of the state that gives you nothing. Add this to your baseball card collection, with facts and figures about poverty in your country.

And last but by no means least:



Triumphzug der unsterblichen Dummheit (1955)

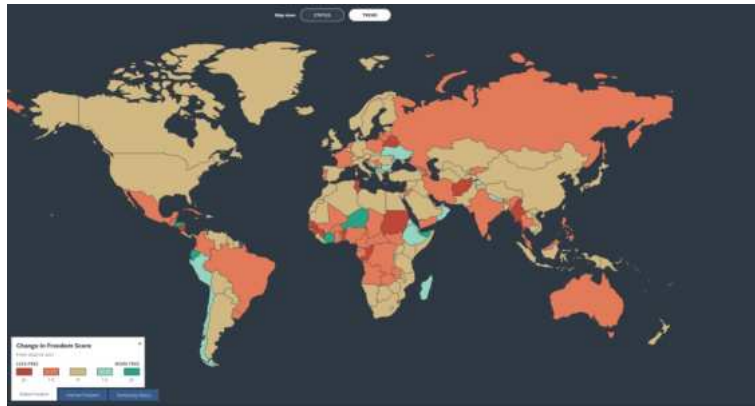
“The triumphal procession of immortal Stupidity.” A potentially wonderful animation that shows the dumbest of the dumb carrying their god “Immortal Stupidity” on their backs, enjoying their triumph over logic and love. In full color of course, with an endless procession!

Don’t let it happen.

Get to work!

WW III: The War Against Democracy

Authoritarians On The Rise



Authoritarians on the rise: world map from [Freedom House](https://freedomhouse.org)

This world map from [Freedom House](https://freedomhouse.org) illustrates the trends around the world toward more democracy or less democracy. Interesting enough is the depiction of Australia as heading in the negative direction away from democracy. The fact that the United States has been labeled as neutral, that is, not shifting one way or another, is certainly not anywhere near accurate, given the latest political decisions against civil liberties taken by various states, especially Florida, Texas and Arizona. And Canada is not really that far behind. The *oiligarchs* and the *techigarchs* have the country in their grip and won't let go without a fight.

My personal view is that WW III began on the day that The Orange Menace was elected with the help of the authoritarians, which includes the homegrown American oligarchs who funded his campaign and the foreign oligarchs who assisted through their electronic warfare. The election of Joe Biden has only given the authoritarians more time to get better organized for the final push (Putsch), which will come after the November elections in the USA or in the general election of 2024.

As in the years leading up to all-out war in the last century, the authoritarians have a long term plan, with incremental pressure being put on democracies everywhere. Their desire is that eventually the democratic systems will crack and then break under the constant pressure. And if there happens to be a rebellion against the threat of authoritarian rule (e.g. Spain) then the criminals gang up on the democrats and use all the force at their disposal to try and get rid of them. Hitler and Mussolini were happy to help Franco and get some of their soldiers battle-tested, as well as use some of their new war machinery and see how it performed under true test conditions.

Instead of Spain, this time around it's Ukraine. Russia is testing out its new equipment, getting its soldiers battle-tested and at the same time testing the will and spirit of the democracies which remain in Western Europe. As we can see from the map, not all of them are immune to a drift toward authoritarianism. And some of them are already well on the road to one-person or one-party rule. Intolerance has already poisoned Dutch and French politics, and Poland – were it not for the pressure Russia is currently exerting on them (and NATO and the EU) – would be more than happy to enact even more drastic anti-democracy legislation and whip up even more hate against non-Christian foreigners. Serbia is like a mini-Russia and the rest of the Balkans are always teetering on the edge of a precipice.

In the case of politics, money **is** the root of all evil. Since 1980 and the election of that Ronald ([McDonald](#)) Reagan clown, oligarchs have been given free rein to double and triple their fortunes, with minimum control about how they do this. Almost all the monopoly laws have either been superseded or ignored so there are no more checks and balances against making money, as they say,

[by hook or by crook](#). The pandemic allowed most of these billionaires to increase their fortunes even more while income for normal people either stagnated or disappeared altogether. And now, with war once again increasing profits across-the-board, oligarchs are laughing all the way to their well-hidden bank accounts run by well-disguised shell companies.

The brazen impunity of it all is worthy of a despot's role in a Greek tragedy. Hubris, of course, has never disappeared from the world stage. And these days it is arrogantly out in the open. Pronouncements from authoritarians like the Brazilian Bolsanegra, the Hungarian Crooked Sausage, the Russian Mad Hater and the [God of Immortal Stupidity](#) of the USA are featured in headlines and long articles, with photos of these criminals. The fact that people who espouse ideas like theirs are even allowed to be heard or read about is an error of catastrophic proportions. Their pronouncements should never be heard and their pictures never seen in countries that want to remain democracies. Their silence would be, in this case, golden.

Though there have been minor setbacks lately for the authoritarians in France and Slovakia, be assured that pressure in both of those countries will rise with every subsequent election. The good thing about living here in Germany is that Nazi symbols and propaganda are forbidden by law. None of the authoritarian parties can step over that line without serious consequences. Which is exactly how I wish it were in those bastions (?) of democracy, Great Britain and the USA. Free speech is a cornerstone of the post-war German constitution, but anti-democracy propaganda is a threat to the very existence of free speech and a state with a democratic society, therefore hate speech and anti-democratic rhetoric has no place in the discourse. As everyone with any sense realizes, once authoritarians take over, free speech is placed in a tomb with all its proponents.

Brazil is next on the agenda for the authoritarian movement. Bolsanegra (Black Bag) is preparing to "win" the upcoming election by declaring the vote fraudulent and using the corrupt military to cement his position in power. That is clear to anyone who has half a brain as regards the political situation in that country. Short of executing his whole family and his entourage of sycophant generals, there is little that can be done to stop the coming terror. And it will be a terror worse than the previous Argentine terror. These days the amount of data gathered over social media and electronic footprints puts in mortal danger anyone who has ever uttered a word against the criminals. Bolsanegra has already said there was not enough killing last time around. Torture isn't enough as far as he's concerned. You have to liquidate the opposition, like the two best-known Masters of Destruction did. But it has to be more like the mess the paranoid Russian Master left behind because the pedantic Germans left too many accurate records. That can turn out to be a problem should – heaven forbid – a counter-revolution succeed in the near future. Better to have everything done under the cloak of the darkness woven by proper propaganda.

So, if you want to avoid being put on the list and ending up in a stadium in your city, delete your social media accounts, don't post any images of yourself on the net, make yourself as difficult to follow and trace as is possible these days. And stay vigilant, because sooner or later these criminals will come for your democracy. Be sure of it. As Neil Young once said: [Rust Never Sleeps](#)! And authoritarianism is the deadly rust attacking democracy worldwide.

I'd like to dedicate this next song to the authoritarian lapdogs now working to overthrow democracy in the USA, some of them are even in wheelchairs, but that is of course not their greatest disability: Crippled Inside by John Lennon https://youtu.be/-aDr_bMH-pU

Baseball, Buddhism & Capitalism Ltd.™

When I was a kid growing up in Los Angeles, the Dodgers came to town. It was a life-changing experience for me. The Hollywood Stars and the Los Angeles Angels were our teams before the Dodgers arrived. The old Hollywood Stars stadium was smack dab in the middle of Hollywood, not far from the Pan Pacific Auditorium where all the best shows were put on for people much older than me. Both stadiums were a short car ride away from where we lived in West L.A.



Gilmore Field and the Fairfax neighborhood in Los Angeles

Farmers Market is still there. Neighboring parts of it have been turned into an outdoor mall that reminds me of those streets you find in Disneyland, all pretty and unreal-looking, full of casual consumers in a daze of buying fever. And the Pan Pacific became CBS Television City, appropriate I guess for the next-door neighbor of the Hollywood Stars. A few years after the stadium had been leveled, I went and stood on the place where the pitcher's mound had been. I stood there and looked around at the nothingness that surrounded it now. A moment of enlightenment for me; a minor Zen satori moment about the transition of life from something we experience as tangible to the nothingness of the intangible.

Though I wasn't born in the USA (and kids at my school didn't let me forget it), I very soon fell in love with the game of baseball and discovered, after Little League tryouts, that I was good at it. Turns out that when you end up being the catcher on your team (a position nobody else wanted), you start to understand the strike zone quite well. And you learn how to see the ball in flight and how it spins. When you're an 11-year-old and becoming a hitter, that is quite an advantage. My batting average reflected it. I decided then and there that I would make baseball my top priority.

Every day after school I went to the local park and played catch, shagged fly balls, took grounders and played in pickup games with all sorts of different people. One of the guys I practiced with a great deal was a guy who went to my school. Tony. He lived near a PONY League park that had lights! That was so absolutely great for us because we could stay there in the dark (after 6 pm in the winter) and still see the ball. We would take turns pitching to each other. Tony was a real pitcher. I wasn't, but I was good enough for batting practice and Tony smashed plenty of balls into the extra-high fences in left field that allowed us to fetch the balls because they didn't end up in the bushes on the other side. There was a white line about halfway up the fence that told you when it was a home run. Tony hit many home runs off me.

The next season, when I was 12 and in my final year, I was one of the players who was actually picked by a team that wanted to be a contender for our Little League title. This made me rather proud. Tony and I were picked to play on different teams and, as fate would have it, in an important game against his team, which was one of the best, I came up to face him with the bases loaded. He was good, and he was fast and he was certain that he could throw the ball past me. Unfortunately for him, he threw one down the middle and I connected with it and it sailed directly over our field's much lower and closer center field fence for a grand slam. I remember jumping high in the air with joy before I got to first base. That was the game-winner and I even got a line in the local paper that reported on Little League results.

Tony never asked me to practice with him again.



Roxbury Park, view from center field

The Hollywood Stars and the Angeles had gone and the Dodgers had come to town. I mourned along with everyone else after the crippling accident that ended the career of Roy Campanella. He was a catcher, like me. And Campanella was definitely an Italian name, like mine. I identified with him. But for their first few years the Dodgers played at the enormous Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, with that very short and 42-foot high left field fence. It was an absurd place to play, but left-handed hitter Wally Moon didn't think so. He mastered the art of the Moon Shot and helped the Dodgers to a World Series win.

We had a real team in town now. Koufax, Drysdale, Gil Hodges, Duke Snyder, Pee Wee Reese, a whole gang of players we all wanted to emulate on the field. And in those days there were 8 teams in each league, and at the end of the 154-game season (National League, the American League already had 162), the 2 teams with the best records played each other in the World Series. It was all over before the middle of October, before the cold and rainy weather started in the eastern half of the USA. We had eternal sunshine in Los Angeles, and sometimes even some of the hottest days of the year in October, what with the Santa Ana winds blowing from Mexico through the southern part of the state up to L.A. So winter didn't mean much for us baseball kids. We continued playing through until the 2-week rainy season in December or January, depending on the year.

No, I never became a professional baseball player, though I was an All Star in PONY league in both years I played, and I was doing well on the Junior Varsity baseball team in high school until I got kicked off the team by an over-disciplinarian coach after I argued with the umpire on a close play at the plate. After all, I was just emulating the major-leaguers, but obviously the coach didn't see it that way. Anyway, the summer after that incident we left the USA and I was gone for 10 years, living in Africa and India but reading about the Dodgers whenever the chance came.



Dhamek Stupa in Sarnath

It was during that breathing time away from the American mind-grinder machine that I started exploring literature, music and history. India provided me with plenty of opportunity to explore religion as well. Buddhism was interesting. I traveled to Varanasi, splashed myself with the holy water of the Ganges and took the short taxi journey to the Dhamek Stupa in Sarnath, a few kilometers away. It's supposed to be the place where the Buddha sat and spoke with his first disciples. I walked around it a few times with hundreds of the faithful, like I was supposed to, and thought about what Buddhism meant to me. That's when it hit me: "It's like baseball!" Actually, now that I have a historical perspective, I would turn that around and say "Baseball is like Buddhism."

At least it used to be before all the extra teams, the big money and the recent rule changes. Meditative qualities were necessary before instant replays and screens began to dominate. You had to remember what the pitcher had thrown at you last time you met. And the pitcher had to remember what got that hitter out or allowed him to get a hit. It was all in the mind. Some discussions of course with coaches and other players, but it was your mind at work, meditating on the action of the ball or the action of the bat. And then came the ultimate empty-minded concentration. The pitcher as he starts his windup and the batter as the ball is released and starts its journey toward the plate. There is no more thought from either pitcher or batter at that point. It's a pure moment of being in the now, a Zen moment if you will, because there is action involved and automatic reaction, thought-less reaction. And then it's over, either because the ball has not been hit or because it has. Then the whole process begins over again.

Of course in the game there are winners and losers. Only the real Buddhist-influenced Japanese and Koreans allow for tie games, which are called after 12 innings in the regular season and 15 innings in the playoffs. But even the old extra-innings feature of baseball, the one where a game could, theoretically, never actually end, go on for days, months, even years, was an essentially Buddhist feature. These days they allow a phantom to arrive at second base so that the game can more quickly end in a win. Where's the fun in that? And now instead of the two teams who have literally busted their balls all season long to arrive in first place, with the best record able to be mustered in a season (now 162 games long), these teams have to face some second-rate wannabe-champion who won ten or even 15 games less than the best during the regular season. I have no problem with these "playoff" teams playing a round-robin tournament against each other for 3rd place, but the two top winning teams in each league should be the ones to go on to the World Series. They deserve it after surviving the long grind from April to the end of September. And if a game goes into extra innings, there should be no phantom runner at 2nd base. Either they should be allowed the chance to go on forever, or they should insert the 12 or 15 inning rule and declare a tie.

Stamina and concentration used to be the hallmarks of the game. Of course there is still stamina and concentration there, but it has been, to my mind, negatively modified by the screens and the over-abundance of teams and the profit-driven owners. Yes, owners were always rich, but now they belong to the oligarch class, like Roman Abramovich and the other billionaire owners of soccer

teams in England. Here in Germany, although it is also a money-based game, the soccer teams cannot be owned outright by one person or company. They are all cooperative associations owned by the cooperative. And that must remain at 51% or more.

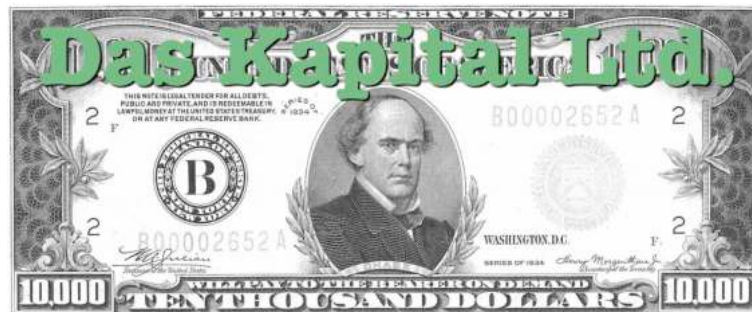
Which brings me to Capitalism Ltd.[™]

Proponents of capitalism always resort to the “entrepreneur” card to argue as if only through the magic of a brilliant founder can a company ever be made into a successful enterprise. This is of course false, as any cursory glance at the thousands of successful [cooperatives around the world](#) can show you. But let’s cater for a moment to the capitalist true believers who worship the likes of Rockefeller, Vanderbilt, Morgan, Bezos, Gates (who founded Microsoft with the now-forgotten Paul Allen) and Musk (who actually joined the Tesla party after it was founded by two other guys, Eberhard and Tarpinning).

So let’s go along with the prevalent capitalist mythology of the entrepreneur who has a brilliant idea, is honest and hard-working and builds up a company that dominates a certain sector of the economy. What about all the help the entrepreneur got to do that from the people who actually put in the work on a daily basis, who took care of the mail, the product distribution, the engineering, the accounting, the human beings who made sure the enterprise was running as smoothly and efficiently as possible on a day-to-day basis? OK. They got a salary. Fine. But often it wasn’t much, since the guiding principle in capitalism is to make as great a profit as possible with as little expenditure as possible. So if human beings cost too much, you cut the payroll, and *presto* you have an uptick in profits. If the company becomes a publicly traded corporation, the stock price ticks up each time jobs are cut. Profit!

Now we can all rail against capitalism because of its deep-rooted unfairness, but let’s put that aside long enough to look at a different possibility. Why not put a time-limit on the ruthless practices of a capitalist enterprise?

Let’s call this Capitalism Ltd.[™]



My proposal is to put a time limit of 10 years on all new capitalist enterprises. Let the so-called entrepreneur run wild for 10 years doing what the mythologized role says he/she is supposed to be doing, starting a business with energy and intelligence until it is built up into a powerhouse of efficiency and profit. Well, my proposal is that you’ve got 10 years to get that done. In year 9, the transition begins, from privately owned enterprise to a cooperative, where the people who work in it each get an equal share and, in year 10, the company is fully transitioned into a cooperative. The original entrepreneur is now faced with a choice: “Should I stay or should I go?”

Staying will bring the entrepreneur into an equal relationship with all his/her coworkers. The profits made during the time running up to the transition can remain with the entrepreneur, but everything after that goes into the common kitty for everyone in the company. The entrepreneur might even still be viewed as an essential piece in the function of the enterprise and may be given an important post like CEO or CFO, but the difference in salary will have been voted on by the members of the coop and you can be sure it will not ever rise to 300 times that of the lowest-paid worker.

And what if the entrepreneur decides to go? OK. The money made personally by her/him over the previous years is money that can be kept (that is, the salary but not yet the profit, which has to go through forensic accounting and must remain in escrow until it is proved to be above-board). Thank you and goodbye! Now this entrepreneur can either go off and start another enterprise or live on the money made without working ever again.

This Capitalism Ltd.TM system would allow for the mythologized role of the entrepreneur to continue, but would also provide all the people who help that myth to flourish with an incentive to do their best and look forward to a future where they can actually benefit from the time and energy they put into the enterprise for 10 years.

Ah, you say, what about the con-artists who build a business up for 5 years and then let it fail before the transition? Easy. Besides a reasonable salary as the CEO for a new business (never more than 30 times the salary of the lowest paid worker), all profits from the enterprise must be held in escrow until the transition is complete. Should the business fail before the 10 years are up, the profits accrued up to that point will be distributed fairly to all the employees, and to the entrepreneur, after a forensic accountant's investigation into the circumstances of the failure.

So, if we put this Capitalism Ltd.TM system into place we could have sports teams that belong to the players and the people working for the team, banks that belong to all the people working in them, basically public banks, [major enterprises](#), even arms manufacturing firms and aerospace companies which belong to the people working in them, and still allow the mythical capitalist entrepreneur a modicum of freedom to indulge her/his intelligence and energy into starting a business which makes a profit. The good thing here is that in the end that business also benefits the workers who kept it running. That results in a general spreading of wealth that brings peace, prosperity and satisfaction to a huge portion of the population. It also makes people aware that helping the less fortunate in society is actually of benefit to everyone. It might even cause the arms and aerospace co-ops to not favor war because, well, we can get along just fine without it.

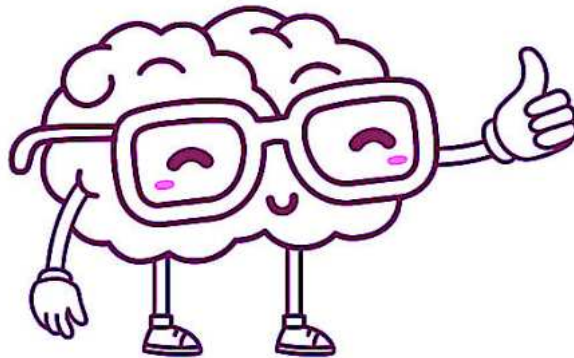
That's approaching a Buddhist mindset, isn't it?

So the game of capitalism can go into extra innings without phantoms designed to kill off the competition and when the transition comes into a co-op, it kind of even ends in a tie without anyone feeling hurt or resentful. In this way the inherent evil nature of capitalism is corralled and transformed into a benefit for the many instead of the few. Maybe, as a side-benefit from the democratic nature of the cooperative, governance at the state and country level will become more democratic as well.

Why not try it out for a couple of hundred years and see what results?

Let me know how it worked out.

An Open Letter To The American People



Exercise your brain!

[Keep it short, like their attention span!]

Dear Americans,

A rather important election is going to take place in the U.S. during a time when about 50% of Americans are miseducated, drug-swillers, war-mongers, gun-worshipers addicted to gasoline for their massive cars and trucks, concerned more with trolling on “antisocial” media and at the same time say their daily prayers to the God of Capitalism without realizing that the largest corporations as well as the oil industry can only survive because they all suck at the tit of crony socialism with cash and endless credit provided by their minions in government, be it state or federal, and these same deluded masses (now certainly more than 50%) actually believe the most illogical and absurd picture ever promulgated to the public, that is, that if you try hard enough you can “pull yourself up by your own bootstraps.” Pull on your own bootstraps long enough and only two things can happen, either you tear out the straps or you fall on your butt.



<https://www.leunig.com.au/works/recent-cartoons/325-bootstraps>

A comforting idiom from many on the progressive side of the spectrum: The darkest hour is just before dawn. That of course depends on how far north or south of the equator you live. Up here in the northland, dawn takes a long time to arrive and it starts more than an hour before it has crept in and you notice that it's daytime again. Same with sunset in the summer. I lived 100 kilometers south of the equator for a while. Sunset and sunrise are both sudden, and more or less around 6 a.m. or 6

p.m. year-round. So this darkest hour that the U.S. is currently experiencing isn't before dawn, it's around midnight, and there are many many hours of darkness to get through before a new morning arrives.



Still, there is a ray of hope. Although the dark ages in Europe lasted about 800 years, authoritarian dictators usually lose their power after about 35 to 40 years. And if they are over 50 when they take control, you can count on their demise and death in about 30-35 years.

So, Dear American People, you can rejoice that whichever benign or ruthless authoritarian takes over your country in the next few years, he or she can only last for a maximum of 40 years anyway. And think of all the fun you can have joining an underground resistance and learning how to fight the new fascists [now were they rightists or leftists?].

Seems like the demonization of Russia and China has turned the U.S. into a mirror image of both.

Boa Sorte!

Want to know how despots die?

Check this out: <https://www.livescience.com/41224-how-dictators-die.html>

Insurrection 2.0

Kill Lists, Kill Teams, and the Bloodthirsty Horde of Ignoramuses

“The difference between [willful ignorance and true self-deception](#) is subtle, but important. Willful ignorance tends to be more adaptive than self-deception. Willful ignorance is a cognitive strategy that people adopt to promote their emotional well-being, whereas self-deception is less controllable and more likely to be detrimental. Although willful ignorance and self-deception sometimes help individuals to avoid unpleasant facts, in the long run, it is usually better to confront reality than to avoid or deny it. Because the self-deceived person fully believes things that are untrue, she has fewer resources for correcting her course when her erroneous beliefs lead her astray.”

Americans are strange people. They tend to have respect for a system that was put in place almost 250 years ago by oligarch landowners (slaveholders). The system was fashioned for a “republic” and is termed a “democracy” although it is quite clear that democracy was absolutely not wanted by the framers of the American constitution. The fact that it is still called a republic by so many people is only possible because of the vague echoes of the Roman republic (e.g. the [Fasces](#) wrapped in laurel branches on the rostrum of the House of Representatives), which retained the SPQR (the Senate and People of Rome) logo even after the empire became the vehicle for serial emperors (serial killers all) and their fellow oligarch supporters who were always jockeying their families into position to become the next dynasty at the head of the most powerful military juggernaut in history. Even Mussolini used SPQR to make his regime look as if it was a continuation of the old republic. Modern Italians, with a self-deprecating sense of history now translate it as: *Sono Porci Questi Romani* (These Romans are Pigs!)

We (those of us with a minimal awareness of reality) all know that the opponents of democracy (even the pretend kind of democracy that the American constitution has provided) have been on a trajectory to overtake control of the system since the public assassination of JFK, the mini-explosion of Barry Goldwater in 1964 and then the wild rout of any social-thinking forces that still existed in 1980 with the insertion of Ronald Reagan into the halls of power. Of course it is quite clear that Reagan was only a figurehead. His head was empty and got emptier as his second term ground to a close. He could still recite his lines though, and that charming smile and wave of a hand mesmerized the fools who actually believed that if you sent money up, some of it would trickle back down again and help the not-so-fortunate.

The Sopranos should have cured everyone of that twisted thinking: [Tony Soprano](#): *This thing is a “pyramid” since time immemorial, shit goes downhill, money goes up: it’s that simple. I should not have to be coming here “hat in my hand”, reminding you of your duty to that.*

Since 1980 the eternal pyramid scheme has been renamed and has acquired a veneer of theoretical economic respectability as neoliberalism. Brazen greed and the rape of resources, with a parallel destruction of any social benefits for the working populace, has a legion of Madison Avenue culture warriors cutting through the media landscape, clearing a path broader and more devastating than Sherman’s march toward the sea. The new ideology of greed has wrapped its tentacles around the whole world. The first experimental feelers were sent out to Chile under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. The rape of the Chilean economy was so successful that soon the method was being refined and further disguised through the benevolent-looking auspices of the IMF and The World Bank. And then, the final breakthrough, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the injection of rampant capitalism into a system that was already so corrupt that the *nomenklatura* immediately transformed itself into the new oligarchs and, were it not for the intervention of Vladimir Putin, would have been run as a subsidiary of Standard Oil and Chase Manhattan Bank.

No, this is not going to turn into a positive argument for Vlad. It’s just a reality observation. Without him, Russia is, as John McCain said: a “gas station masquerading as a country”. [Yeah,

sometimes the worst guys have the best quotes.] So now, although Russia is still a glorified gas station, it has been able, through the willful ignorance of the pro-democracy forces in the US (as well as in Europe) to push a very poison needle deep under the political skin of the whole world.

Have absolutely no doubt:

Putin and Trump are working toward the same goal: Autocratic domination.

Autocrats are united in their fear and hatred of any society that opens a path to social justice. This was true of all the empire-builders throughout history, and it is still true of autocrats wherever they may be, the Philippines, China, Brazil, Florida or Hungary. Sitting on top of the pyramid is where an autocrat wants to be. From there (mostly) he can look out over the world and see fellow-autocrats sitting atop other pyramids, smile, wave, and secretly (or not so secretly) plan their destruction and domination.

The war against Ukraine is not accidental. The expansion of China into Tibet was not accidental. The domination of Central and South America by the Monroe-doctrinaire Americans is not accidental. An aggressive nation doesn't arise suddenly one day after breakfast with an extra cup of coffee that got its dander up and unintentionally caused it to invade its neighbor or sweep across a continent and eliminate its indigenous people, or get rid of a bunch of humming monks who thought their harmony with the greater oneness of the universe could save them from Mao's dictum: "[Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.](#)" Autocrats know this. And as noble as it might have been for the communists of China to fight against the Japanese imperialist forces, you must understand that this phrase is at the very heart of modern autocratic thinking. "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." And, coming back to the United States now, we know for sure that the anti-democracy forces are going to implement this belief very literally as soon and as often as possible.

Kill Lists

Oh, you are either really willfully ignorant or blindly self-deceiving yourself if you think there are no kill lists being circulated by the ignorant hordes and the malicious murderers that worship at the altar of God's Own Party. Why do you think that armed vigilantes are recording license plates and filming people who are going to vote early in elections? Are you naive enough to believe that these people are only engaged in some kind of "civic duty"? You are either too young or just ignorant enough of history to remember that Tricky Dickie Nixon had an "[Enemies List](#)" and actually tried to move against those enemies during his presidency. His dark side was ruled by J. Edgar Hoover of the FBI, a cross-dresser (nothing wrong with that, Edgar) who had a maniacal need to have something nasty written down about anybody who was near the levers of power.

These days all the kill lists are being circulated on the dark side of the internet. With access to police data-bases and actual serving military, the compilers of these lists are preparing the post-electoral landscape to reflect their deeply desired bloodbath of purification of the American populace to remove those of non-Christian beliefs, and especially those who are atheists. The non-whites will either be subjugated into the new slaves (and be rewarded nicely if they adhere to Christianity) or will get herded into the narco-ghettos of big cities where they will either die from overdoses, from starvation, or from gang violence, since gang leaders are both willfully ignorant and self-deceiving, believing that their dominance of a certain "turf" bestows some kind of magic power upon them and allows them to make deals with the Dixie and other mafias so they can live like little kings on top of a heap of trash.

If only the pro-democracy forces in the USA could learn from the resilience of the people of Ukraine. What that bombed and battered populace is standing up to now in their war against an aggressor that is not just twice as big and powerful, but more than ten times as big and powerful than they are is not just praiseworthy, it is the closest thing we have to the ideal of the little guy standing up to the bully in the playground. The pro-democracy forces in the USA are the little guy and the anti-democracy forces are the bully, that is more than clear. Just look at the bullies that God's Own Party has placed in the media limelight. The impunity of these people is astounding. Well, it's actually no different from the impunity of Franco, Hitler, Mussolini, Bolsonaro, Urbán

and Putin, and you can fill in a whole list of other madmen who have captured center stage for themselves.

It is therefore imperative that the pro-democracy forces must organize themselves in [home defense units](#) comparable to the ones the Ukrainians organized prior to the invasion and which helped them weather the first horrible storms in the battle for Kiev. What skills do you have? Are you a doctor, a nurse, a good driver? Do you have military experience? Know your neighbors. Are they pro or anti-democracy? Will they support or hinder you in the upcoming civil strife?

To some I'm beginning to sound like a survivalist who is now going to tell you to stock up on food and ammunition so that when the apocalypse hits, you can survive for a few weeks. I don't want to alarm you to that extent, because the civil strife will not be apocalyptic in the sense of being comprehensively destructive for everyone everywhere all at once. It will probably be more like some of those California and Oregon forest fires of late. A deadly inflammatory situation here, another one there, and the competing media stoking the fires so that their constituents will be inflamed against the other side. Certain regions will have a de facto martial law imposed upon them, even if it's not called martial law, just a "curfew" from sunset to sunrise in this or that part of a city. With police in control. But whose police are they?

In Washington you can be sure of only one thing: paralysis. Political paralysis. No pro-democracy politician will ever risk his or her status and political future by actually standing up and organizing the forces of democracy against the political lunatics in the anti-democracy faction. The ancient men and women who sit on their hundred-million-dollar thrones are not going to risk anything to support "true" democracy. The few young representatives who just might do that will be among the first to be targeted for destruction of one kind or the other.

Kill Teams

In Nicaragua they called them [Death Squads](#). They were taught their trade at the [School of the Americas](#), and they learned well. The modern-day kill teams in the USA have been trained in the armed forces, sent to practice their trade in Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa, and other obscured locations. And those overweight and under-educated white boys that didn't have the balls to take risks in the wild world beyond the US, joined police forces and militia groups near home so they can now open-carry their penis-extending ARs and AKs in public. These people are not only willing to use their weapons, they are eagerly waiting for the representatives of God's Own Party to give them the green light. And that flashing green light will come, not after an electoral win, but after an electoral loss. If the balance of political power tends toward the anti-democracy forces after an election, the guns will stay silent for a little longer. However, if unexpected losses occur because somehow the populace has awoken to the imminent danger, the "clear and present danger" of anti-democratic forces, then the first trigger-happy ignoramuses will begin to claim victims.

The kill teams are out there. It's convenient these days to fear groups that call themselves silly playground names like Proud Boys or 3% or whatever idiotic moniker they dream up. Those are readily identifiable groups and can be fought in a conventional way. No. It is the undefined and unnamed squads of professional killers who band together in murky associations for both ideological and monetary reward who are the greatest menace. Like the Wagner Group in Russia, these professional killers are only in it for their own cynical purposes. They may wave the banner of Christianity at the masses, but it is gold and power that they are really interested in, and they are more than willing to rape, torture and kill their way to the fortunes they seek. Think of [Erik Prince](#) and his private army of mercenaries.

Oligarchs are rich, yes, but most of them are stupid enough to believe that the soldiers they employ will never be disloyal enough to turn on the master. The [condottieri](#) of the late middle ages in Italy should disabuse any rich person of that silly belief. "The most fearsome of the mercenary armies was the Great Company, its leader, the German knight, Werner von Urslingen, whose motto was 'Enemy of God, of Pity and of Mercy.'" Sounds just like [The Wagner Group](#) motto: Death is our business – and business is good!

Just as Wagner Group financier Yevgeniy Prigozhin (while pretending to be Putin's buddy) is starting to make a move to take over from Vladimir Putin and make Russia his own private fiefdom,

any American mercenary killer with a remnant of grey matter brain cells will have designs on the power structure in the USA. The flaccid American oligarchs who own sports teams and plan to own city and perhaps even state governments, support their anti-democracy cheerleaders with dark money and “innocent bystander” expressions when they get named or shamed. Within the blink of an eye their media friends make sure that the tables are turned immediately so that the accusers are accused, the whistle-blowers are named and shamed and as soon as possible the storm is determined to be in a teacup, and all goes back to business as usual. The pyramid scheme eternal. Money goes up, shit comes down.

Bloodthirsty Horde of Ignoramuses

It's certainly not “only in America” but America probably has the most comprehensively stupid – that is, under-educated and miseducated – mass of citizenry in the world. And this stupidity is not accidentally caused by unavailability of education or decrepit infrastructure that prevents schools from being built. It has been engineered into existence.

The [destruction of the university system](#) was begun in 1964 when Reagan became governor of California. Slowly but surely he started jacking up fees for students. Today, going to state university is just as expensive as going to a private one. As soon as opposition to the war in Vietnam took hold at the university level, this destruction through fees was made a nation-wide model. Then, with each subsequent post-Reagan administration the rot crept down from the university level, to the city-college (JC) level, to high schools and all the way down to the grade school level, so that now if you send your kid to a Christian faith school where they are steered clear of any kind of logic or critical thinking, those schools can suck on the tax tit of the city, county or state and federal government without having to meet even the lowest standards of general education. OK. The kids might be able to read a text message and recite a couple of bible verses, but please don't expect any of them to know anything about science, history or art.

These are the ignoramuses who populate the stagnant pools of American cultural society. They are transfixed by reality shows and 15-second TikTok film clips while they ride gas-guzzling monster trucks to the end of the Death Spiral Highway, “[And believe in whatever may lie/In those things that money can buy](#)”. The difference between these ignoramuses and other ignoramuses of the garden-variety is that with the flick of a media switch these bastions of consumerism can be turned into a bloodthirsty mob of predators ready to maim and pillage. All they need are simple directions to be pointed in. Once upon a time we were amused and slightly horrified by the Westboro Baptist Church and its crazy little mob of anti-gay warriors. Now all a local anti-democracy proponent has to do is say: “Drag Queen” and masses of [armed rock-throwing fanatics](#) appear within the hour at whatever location is indicated. They are there to prepare the bloodbath for public consumption. And the cameras will be rolling because prime time says: *If it bleeds, it leads!* Should a gun-toter be killed, the media will make him a martyr. If a drag queen is dragged through the streets chained to the back of a mega-truck, she'll be labeled a provocateur trying to groom children.

Like the Putin machine in Russia that has convinced an untold number of Russians that NATO is planning to invade Russia and turn all their children into homosexuals and transsexuals, the anti-democracy forces around the world use issues of gender and women's reproductive freedom to prepare the killing fields for the bloodbath they so eagerly await.

Being well-meaning and willfully ignorant has now become a liability that can be fatal. Without some pretty quick organization at the basic level for the citizenry among the pro-democracy forces, the initial devastating shock of loss that the first attacks from the anti-democracy forces create, will cause a depressing loss of faith in the possible final victory of democracy, true democracy. But it is precisely the arrogant hubris of the aggressor (and the ingrained rot of corruption) that ultimately also causes his downfall. The Ukrainians were shocked. But they were not over-awed. They fought off the enemy around Kiev and in the ensuing months have mounted a counter-offensive that is on the verge of reclaiming most of the territory they once lost. Of course they have had help from allies in America and Europe.

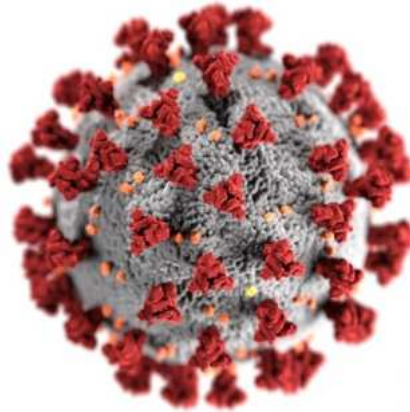
Who can the pro-democracy forces in the USA count on getting help from? From Canada. From Mexico. From Europe. From pro-democracy movements everywhere.

Organize now. Create the basic network. Be ready to move into action. Evil doesn't wait for an invitation to enter, it tries to break down the door. Fortify that door. Barricade yourself against evil. And after the first wave has hit, be ready to counter-attack.

True democracy will emerge from the rubble of the old system.

May I suggest: The Man In The High Castle: Fight For The World You Want

Nut Job? Me?



Covid-19 (one of its variants, obviously) came to visit me two weeks ago and only yesterday did I finally test negative again. It was hell. Seriously. No light flu-like version because of protection offered by my four vaccinations. But it is very probable that because of those vaccinations I'm here now and able to talk about the horrors of my experience. Well, I'm not going to go into detail, but I had a high fever for at least 4 or 5 days, breathing was difficult, but I was able to develop a technique that facilitated regular and fairly shallow breathing, combined with a type of mental mantra accompanying the ritual of "in through the nose, out through the mouth" while my fevered brain pictured a light source I could focus on in order to hold the breathing ritual in place.

The fact that I had to resort to this yoga-like ritual should already give you a clue to how deep down I had to go in order to fight the nasty virus. No, I am not religious. I didn't pray. I used techniques of body control written down thousands of years ago, tried and tested techniques, and they proved sufficient for my needs during my illness. I use the bits and pieces of these teachings as I need them and I do not give them mystical powers. They are body-related techniques that can help in certain situations. Nothing more.

After the fever finally broke, I had a huge explosion of energy. That was when I wrote [my previous article](#), late into the night, feeling like a superman with a super clear brain able to see everything so well, especially the political landscape. I was still riddled with Covid of course and the next day body weakness took over and I slept three times for at least 3 or 4 hours in each sleep session. Exhausted. My anger, however, was rising on a daily basis. I was angry that Covid had chosen me, I was angry at the lady who brought it into our house, I was angry at the lady relative in our family chat who said: *Männergrippe* when I announced that I had Covid. I was not familiar with the term *Männergrippe*, so I commented on the description by saying that Covid had no gender, it attacked all indiscriminately. Then I found out that *Männergrippe* was just how some German women describe men complaining of their ailments, imagining them to complain loudly about little things – unlike what women do. That infuriated me even more because I had announced Covid, not some sniffles or a hangover headache. And I hadn't complained at all, had only made the announcement. My anger was on the rise again.

During the tail end of the two weeks I went to the test center 3 times, even got a PCR test, but I was still positive for the virus. My anger started turning inwards and I could feel the depression begin. No action for my body. No improvement in my status (though I was feeling better as far as fever and coughing were concerned). Anger at everyone and at the whole world. Reading about the war in Ukraine and the atrocities and the constant drivel of right-wing propaganda here and in the USA was having its own negative effect. Or positive effect if anger and irrationality can be seen as the positive result of negative news.

Confused? I was most certainly. <https://youtu.be/9pjdwUYWGn0>

My imagination was trying to figure out a way Russia could be nuked out of existence while the rest of the world survived intact. And then my mental foot hit the brakes, hard! That's how nut jobs think. Me? A nut job? I could feel myself morphing into a nut job. More anger and crazy thinking would soon have me trolling right-wing sites and commentators, maybe even threatening them with grievous bodily harm. This could not be the person I wanted to become, not a mirror image of the right-wing trolls who are thick as swamp mosquitoes in the social media jungle.

How could I avoid that fate?

First of all, as luck would have it, I have absolutely no presence on social media. No Facebook (still counts as social media though it's getting to be obsolete), no Instagram, no Twitter, no TikTok, nothing. Second: I don't subscribe to anything or anyone. No news feeds, no following anyone. And third, my web-browser functions most of the time in Private mode, has at least 5 AdBlockers and, when I want to, I use VPN from riseup.net. So, although I could remain anonymous while trolling, I am just not really that off my rails enough to do it. Yet.

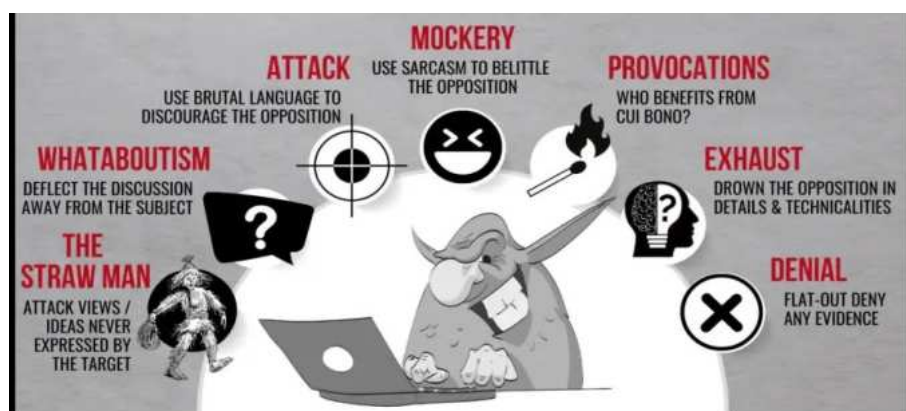
Anything is possible of course. I sent some pretty weird shit out to some people I know; a couple of them are journalists who previously made some positive comments about stuff I sent. But there has been silence from them since I sent out a short piece wherein I claimed (satirically, ironically, humorously, I thought) that actually Russia had it all wrong by attacking Ukraine and claiming it belonged to Russia because it was Catherine The Great who conquered all that territory and she was actually German, so if anyone has a claim on the territory it should be Germany. Ha ha. Nobody laughed. Nut job? Me? Well, I suppose I can't blame anyone for thinking that, since the argument was pretty ridiculous and the way I worded it sounded like I was serious. I wasn't, but people need to know up front that you are "just kidding" or cancellation is swift and most times permanent.



Then I wrote the article about right-wing kill lists, kill squads and how bloodthirsty those people are turning out to be. From a distance or 10 days or so, it now does sound a tiny bit hysterical. Not necessarily wrong. Not necessarily nut job material. But kind of hysterical. I was really angry at the time. My fever had been replaced by rage at the injustice of children being separated from their parents and transported to Russia to be given to who knows what kind of family of true believers in the nationalistic bullshit that dominates Russian propaganda. It is the aim of these monsters to actually expunge all memory of Ukrainian parents from the lives of these children. Oh, and you think that is difficult to do? Not really. During the two weeks I have been ill, I haven't seen or talked to the new baby in the family (he'll be 2 years old in a few weeks). Yesterday, after my negative result, I saw him again for the first time. It took me over 5 minutes of talking and playing with him for his memory to come back. "DANNY!" he said at last as the memories of our previous encounters returned to his consciousness. I could suddenly see the memory in his eyes. He smiled and understood it was me. And that is after only 2 weeks. Think about how it will be for the stolen children after 2 years, 12 years, 20 years. No memory of the past will remain if they are young enough when they are ripped away from home.

And what about the parents? Were the parents simply killed? First take the children then kill the parents, or what? Nobody talks about the parents and what has happened to them. You certainly don't think they are living it up at some Black Sea resort near Sochi, do you?

You see how easy it is for the anger to grip and the possible nut job to emerge? I can sense my irrationality just below the surface. I'm not immune to Covid, I'm not immune to irrationality. The question is whether or not it becomes a rational choice or whether one just slides into it, crosses a vague line that one sees but the line is so vague that it's only when you are on the other side of it that you notice, and then suddenly you have to make a conscious choice to go back, to return to rationality. And of course it is so much easier to just continue, to march into the land of crazy and join the celebration of the irrational, which I imagine is like a never-ending new year's party, with balloons dropping and fireworks exploding and a non-stop flow of liquor and drugs and the heady feeling that now, now, now something earthshaking is going to happen, and it's all going to change suddenly into the perfect utopian future or the perfectly dystopian future where death and destruction become normal, and it's all because of me, because of my comments, because of what I have said or written or thrown out into the world. Me. Nut job.



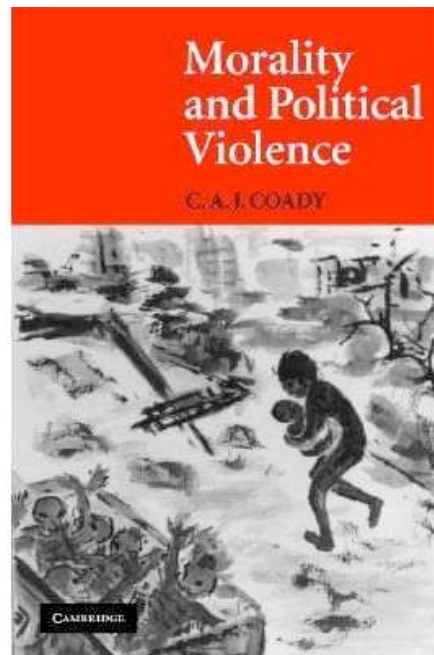
Written words are actions because they have been written, and actions have consequences. So by gripping rationality instead of the irrational, I accept the consequences. The consequences of being rational. And for the most part, the consequences of being rational are that you remain frustrated and angry. Why? Because irrationality acts and destroys and has no moral compass and doesn't care about the destruction it causes. In fact, irrationality is drunk on death and destruction and the people in its grip cannot imagine that they can ever lose because the cumulative effect of this death and destruction gives the irrational a power that blinds it to everything else, especially to rationality.

Rationality has the impediment of logical thinking, the weighing of good vs. evil, the contemplation of law and justice coupled with coherent argumentation which results in a discovery of the truth and putting injustice and evil to rest. But of course that only works when both sides agree to be rational. Truth has been made relative and it is *my truth* that is most important, not yours (or *the truth*).

Everyone (?) knows that war is an irrational answer to – most of the time – greed. Greed is often cloaked in ideology or religious doctrine, or both, and it attempts to give the perpetrators of irrationality a mask to hide behind, a system of belief to use as a reason for their irrational behavior. Anyone with a smidgen of rationality can perfectly understand that stoning a man, woman or child to death is completely irrational. And yet, there are people who are convinced that it is OK to do that because it is written in a book that they think is either sacred or is the law. It gives them a reason (which they mistake for rationality) to perpetrate the most hideous crimes.

So, the question arises: When must irrationality be opposed with violence (especially when you understand full well that violence breeds violence, breeds irrationality) in order to rid the scourge from the world? At what point could everyone agree that going to war against the Nazis was not just OK, but that it was a good thing, a thing that had to be done? Had even rational people become nut jobs at that point?

When will it be time once again to use violence to oppose the irrationality which is trying to dominate the world? Is that time now? Is it never? When? And will we decide by committee or individually?



That's where I'll leave it for you to think about, because I certainly don't want to open myself up to the charge: Nut Job? Me?

QAnon and The Puntinesque Rightists

The new breed of fascistic right-wingers are like good circus dogs. They bark and dance on their hind legs and jump through fiery hoops whenever their master holds his whip high. Their master. Who is their master now? DeSantis? Kim Jong-un? Putin?

Personally, I think it's the guy who's behind QAnon.

Q

No, seriously, maybe it's not even just one person. You know. Think about it. When the secret services of any country want to mess with people's brains, they always get a bunch of mad scientists together and plot scary shit. Like testing hallucinogenic drugs on people. Ken Kesey got into one of those tests. He needed the money. He's the guy who wrote *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*.

OK. So you don't read books. I now feel as if I have passed into a future dystopia.

Wait, I haven't finished with the QAnon stuff yet. Think about it. For the "enhanced interrogation" idea that the Bush and Cheney people wanted to use, they made sure the weirdest psychos got together and planned out a program they were certain would make anybody talk. The Russians do it, the Chinese do it, and every little tinpot dictator as well as the Kings and Ayatollahs do it. You know the song, but I'm not going to sing it.

They get a team of psychopaths and sociopaths together and they decide that maximum pain is what really works to make people talk. Their historical model is the Inquisition. Apparently they think it worked really well because so many Jews and Muslims converted to Christianity. They forget the fact that most of those converts just kept up their religious practices in private. Crypto Muslims and Crypto Jews.

Which has nothing to do with cryptocurrency, by the way.

Think about it. QAnon is much too well-organized for it to be just some loon out there dropping acid and then sending off-the-wall texts to his followers on *Telegram*. Notice I didn't mention *Twitter*? That's because it doesn't exist anymore. The name has been changed to *Twatter*. Really. Because of the Twat who bought it.

Billionaires like him are much too dumb to be behind QAnon. No. Really. Billionaires are like Zombies. They're fixated on sucking money out of everyone on the planet. QAnon is not a money-making enterprise. Uh, no, wait a second. Of course it's a money-making enterprise. It wouldn't be there if it wasn't. But that's not it's primary function. You have to look at QAnon and see that it functions in the same way a TV evangelist does. The evangelist's primary goal is to enter people's brains and stir, mix, blend and shake them up so that eventually the 10, 20 and 50 dollar bills will flow into the evangelist's tax-free wallet.

QAnon is the same. The primary purpose is to burrow into a brain, stir, mix, blend and shake. And Hey Presto! Another sock-puppet!

The people behind QAnon are exactly the same as the people who dreamed up the Inquisition. Of course. They must be. It doesn't matter if they're working for a religion or for the Americans, the Russians, the Chinese or any other country. In fact, all those countries are OK with QAnon because it serves to make the job of controlling people easier.

The Spanish Inquisition by Mel Brooks: <https://youtu.be/LnF1OtP2Svk>

QAnon uses influencers just like TikTok. Yeah, I guess you can say that QAnon is a TikTok for psycho-fascists. *The Q Collective*, as I like to refer to Q, mines the data, sifts through it to see what has worked well in the past and dreams up new shit to test the effect it has on its captive audience. You call this captive audience Trolls, I call them A-holes. Trolls are those funny little guys with blue hair. Much too cute. A-holes are young punks and undereducated adult gun-worshipers who mostly hate women because no women want to be near them. Some of these guys are what people call

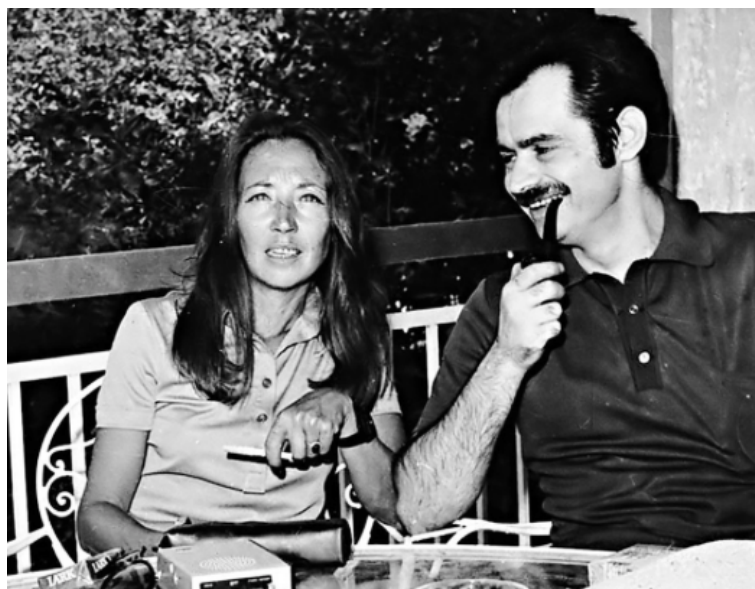
Incels, guys who are so afraid of performing poorly in sex that they claim they are being made *Involuntarily Celibate*. *Incel* is the short form for that.

A-holes is a much better description for all these people. They spew hate and make threats and spread the QAnon brain rot through the virtual world while claiming that they are victims.

I don't really know who is behind QAnon. But what surprises me actually is that nobody seems to be placing the International Rightists in the same basket with the Putin Right. They have the same agenda. They have the same talking points. They suck on the same types of oligarchic money tits. Each one of them: Kari Lake, DeSantis, Orban, Meloni and the other ones popping up all over the place should be constantly placed side-by-side with Putin and his ideology. This, if done on a coordinated daily and constantly unrelenting basis, will eventually get through some of the thicker skulls and may also elicit some interesting denials and responses from the right-wingers. The liberals who think all you need to do is talk it out, have to see the world the way it is of course, but the disenfranchised also need to be wooed by good old fashioned social(ist) democratic policies that limit the wealth of the oligarchs and corporations.

Drumming up a storm of Putin=DeSantis, Putin=Lake, Putin=Meloni, Putin=AfD Putin=Orban, etc., can throw a very useful spanner into their works.

Start the drum roll rolling and see what happens.



Oriana Fallaci and Alexandros Panagoulis

I didn't act like a mad fanatic and I'm not a mad fanatic.

Both I and my comrades acted as instruments of justice.

When tyranny is imposed on a people, the duty of every citizen is to kill the tyrant.

— Alexandros Panagoulis

Athens, September 1973

Oriana Fallaci

[INTERVIEW WITH HISTORY](#)

Early Onset Stupidity (EOS)

Also as Connected to Plot Failure in Film & TV

Many articles and discussions center around Early Onset Dementia (EOD) and how devastating it can be for family and friends, not to mention for the person actually debilitated by the disease. That got me to thinking about an equally destructive and even more widespread disease: Early Onset Stupidity (EOS).

EOS has been almost completely ignored by science and the media. In fact, I may even be the first to brace the subject in this way. Of course people complain about poor education systems and the politics of planned ignorance in which logic and self-realization are not only shunned but actively suppressed. But no one, as far as I could find, has tried to understand the EOS disease that is at the core of these policies and is so obviously the driving factor for the general lack of any public stimulus for intellectual thought and discourse. Educated people are present, but they are not valued. This begins with the absolute lack of respect for teachers and professors and anyone, really, who attempts to spread knowledge which is not directly connected to a function that can enable a person to do a job and therefore make money, which always entails working for someone, usually a company or corporation, so that this entity can make twice or three times more money from the work done – when compared to the salary earned by the person who actually does the work.

EOS begins in childhood. School and family are crucial to its spread.

The Beverly Hills (CA) school system has always been among the highest-ranked in the country. Rich people want their kids to learn stuff so that they can take good care of the fortunes which will be passed along later. Good Shepherd, also known as Beverly Hills Catholic School (BHCS) in those days, was run by nuns, the Holy Cross Sisters. That's where I spent 8 years of my childhood.



The first three years were wonderful for me. My second grade teacher, Miss Helveston, was young, dynamic, good looking and, besides the basics of math and writing, she also taught us my favorite course, Phonics. I was a whizz at Phonics. After all, I had 4 other languages in my ears while I was growing up in Zagreb: Italian (mother), Serbo-Croatian (my best friend Ranko Boric), French (Kindergarten), English (my mother's American friends), and German (my nanny, from an old Austrian family stuck in Croatia after the Austro-Hungarian Empire disappeared). Phonics was interesting because it presented me with sounds. I loved the sounds in languages. Still do. In fact since childhood I have only learned foreign languages from listening, not from reading about them in a book and then learning how they function. Miss Helveston was so pleased with me and I with her that my mother invited her home, where we had coffee and cookies, and then my mother even tried get her into the film industry where, as a functionary of the Italian Consulate in Los Angeles, she had many connections. I often wonder if that was the reason Miss Helveston vanished from my life after third grade.

In any case, Phonics was gone, Miss Helveston was gone and the nuns took over and taught us what all good children should learn, arithmetic, history (mostly American), English (which meant grammar and writing) and plenty of religion. The Bible stories, all approved by Imprimatur of the

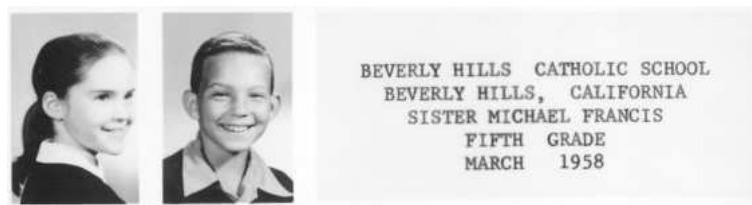
Catholic Church, were actually quite riveting sometimes. The illustrations were in color and excellently depicted Jesus as a baby in Mary's arms, Joseph working as a carpenter with a pre-pubescent apprentice Jesus hewing a log, and then the wandering Jew Jesus with his band of long-haired and bearded followers in their flowing many-hued robes. How many of us Catholic School kids ended up looking just like that merry band of men in the 60s flower power era?

EOS was most visible in those days outside of school, among my friends. Most of them were from school, which meant that they were Catholics and strongly anti-Semitic. That didn't come directly from the nuns, though they did hint that Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus. Well, at least the group of Pharisees who were asked by the Romans what should they do with him. The antisemitism came from inside the family. One family, the McCann family, had 5 boys. Dick McCann, the second youngest boy, was in my class. He wasn't very bright and did as little as possible in school. All his older brothers had gone to BHCS and, except for the oldest who was training to be a lawyer, the rest were what you could call "fuck-ups." I remember Austin, the second-oldest leaning out the window of a passing car and pointing a .45 automatic at us kids walking home. I ran and hid behind an open garage door. EOS had definitely hit that family hard. The father was a lawyer, but obviously that made no difference. The mother was a loving darling and allowed us to make as many Wonderbread PB&J sandwiches as we wanted after school in their kitchen. That didn't seem to have any effect.

I played Little League baseball, and then PONY League as well, and most of the friends I made in baseball were Jewish. I felt comfortable with them. They weren't as dumb and reckless as Dick and a few of the other boneheads in my class. I was a good player, so I had some credibility among them. One of my childhood neighbors was Brian Epstein. I spent a lot of time playing board games at his house. His parents were fine with me being a *goy*. What they didn't know, and what I didn't know at the time was that my mother had seriously Jewish family roots through her own mother, and that therefore I was technically Jewish, since the religion is passed down through the mother.

Not all of the nuns were bad teachers. Actually, only one that I can remember was really horrible. It had nothing to do with the teaching of material, which she more or less did according to the guidelines set out by Sister Willomena, the principal. What made "little dynamite" truly despicable was her vile character. She would attack anyone, anytime, on the slightest provocation, whether it was real or imagined. She had a short fuse, and it was, as far we were concerned, because all of us in the sixth grade were either just as tall or taller than she was. Yes. That is how her stature compared with ours. And she hated us for it with all her virulent energy. And she was extremely energetic.

But we only suffered under her dictatorship for that one year. The next year was enlightening because we delved into real literature and were encouraged to read books. In fact, there was a contest of how many books you could read in a month. Maria Roach always won. She read tons more than the rest of us. But two to three books a month was the average for the class. EOS was being fought through exposure to literature. Of course it made no difference to the McCann-types in the class, and there was a solid group of them.



Maria Roach and Dick McCann

An encouraging moment came for me when we were asked to pick a short story and read it in class. Most everyone picked stories that were three to five pages long, so more than one could be read during the lesson. It was obvious from many of the stories that they had been picked by parents

eager to let their children shine. Edgar Allen Poe and O’Henry and Mark Twain among the choices – most of us kids would never have known about them.

On Monday, with about 15 minutes left to read at the end of the class, I was asked. I had some thin and rather small, about 4 inches x 5 inches editions of a series of short stories that my mother had gathered from somewhere and brought home. I chose the thinnest of the lot and it turned out that my story was by Nathaniel Hawthorne. It was classed as a short story, but it was considerably longer than the stories of the others. So, even though the pages were small, there were 35 of them in total, and it turned out that for the whole week, at the end of each class, I had to read from *The Great Stone Face*. It was like I was the link from day to day and kept the drama alive until Friday. For me it was a wonderful experience. I was able to delve into a remarkably interesting story and also be a bit of a stand-out for the week. The nun running the class had given me a good role and I was able to mesmerize the students (most of them) with the story and my voice, inflecting, learning how to introduce drama and nuance. Unconsciously that was the beginning of my training for a later career as a voice-over specialist and a radio play writer and voice actor. The detailed training came at St.Mary’s School in Nairobi, years afterward, where the drama teacher singled me out and trained me to recite poetry for an inter-school competition in which (despite my American accent) I garnered a joint-second place!

While in our special Beverly Hills Catholic School anti-EOS atmosphere we were learning all about classic literature and history beyond America – after all, how could a Catholic school evade the Roman Empire and its eventual fostering of Christianity and its forcible spread throughout the empire, including the conquest of Jerusalem on more than one occasion – not everyone else was so lucky. In most of the rest of the country the black and white TV era had a firm grip on the minds and habits of the children and their parents. *Father Knows Best*, *Ozzie and Harriet* (the Nelson family, with teen idol Ricky), *Gunsmoke* and *I Love Lucy*. *Leave It To Beaver* was for us kids directly, showing us how as “good” youngsters we could thwart the “bad” teenage older brothers and bring balance and justice back from the edge of destructive behavior. Nothing taxing for the brain and straight white-man morality. After all, even Lucy didn’t really break away from her subordinate role as a “good” housewife until later, after everyone realized that Desi had cheated on her.



By 8th grade we were starting to look like people.

There weren’t (and still aren’t) any mainstream programs that challenge the intellect and try and broaden the scope of the normal American individual. The airwaves – public and private – are filled with reality show nonsense and programming which doesn’t disturb the status quo. EOS is woven into the fabric of each show and video one might wander into. I won’t even start talking about the FOX network, which should really change its name to the EOS network.

Early Onset Stupidity, a disease which has been cultivated in the USA and exported abroad to any nation corrupt enough to import it, has been a staple part of the American experience since early colonial times. In fact, colonialism anywhere in the world could not have been possible without EOS-infected populations. Thomas Hobbs, with his *Leviathan* was a major instigator and pervaded EOS by influencing and thereby infecting the power elite of the 17th century. He preached that men

were only power-seekers and that was how things were, so do what you want. If you win, it's OK. If you don't, you were too weak.



Who in their right mind would want to go out and conquer some unknown place on the earth? Right mind being of course a mind with self-awareness, logical abilities and a sense of what is morally good, while possessing knowledge of what is evil. Anyway, maybe some right-minded people would go, but definitely not in the multitudes that actually went after the elite infected them with the Hobbsian view of life.

Which brings me seamlessly to plot criticism in some of the films and TV shows I have been watching recently.

My preference in TV and film (as well as novels lately) has been for mystery and crime. Not real crime. The fantasy kind, where Danny Ocean or his sister figure out how to break into a place that holds the ill-gotten gains of evil people. Mysteries are intriguing because you are constantly trying to figure out who did it from the lack or over-abundance of clues presented. It keeps the mind active while watching the banality on the screen.

Luther, with Idris Elba, was a series that I loved to watch. But probably, like most people, it was Ruth Wilson's murderous character (Alice Morgan) that kept me coming back for more. 20 episodes of brilliant writing and acting that never had me asking WTF? The new film however...

First of all, dear Alice is nowhere to be seen. The evil multinational serial killer is beyond Joker evil, and the motivation for people to allow themselves to be used by this monster is pure EOS in its most virulent form.

You have a secret. EOS-driven, you allow this secret to occupy a space in the digital world. Since the digital world is open to anyone with +/- knowledge of how the internet works, your secret can be found and you can be exposed. Ergo: Blackmail. Well, a self-aware and logical person would first of all not put a secret out there in the virtual world. Second, should by some twist of fate a secret actually come to exist in the virtual world, a non-EOS-infected person would say: Fuck you. Expose it. It can't possibly be worse than jumping off a building in Piccadilly Circus with a GoPro filming me splatter my brains on the sidewalk. So, without EOS-infected masses of "shame-filled" individuals, the plot of *Luther: The Fallen Sun* wouldn't stand a chance.



Action scenes are action scenes and today they are expertly constructed and carried out. No problem with the techniques and the emotional impact of the scenes themselves. But now we get to another point that rankles. Luther, who has been railroaded into prison by the monster serial killer Robey, informs DCI Odette Raine, the new head of Serious and Serial Crime, of what is going on and how dangerous this person can be. Luther more or less does all the work to catch the monster, but DCI Odette is reluctant to embrace the intelligent Luther. She is obviously at least partially infected by EOS. This is brought out quite succinctly when Robey manages to kidnap Odette's daughter. This happens in Odette's apartment, at night, while Odette is busy hunting the criminal and Luther. Now, if you are not infected by EOS and you understand the nature of the online-addicted victims of this monster, the first thing you do is send someone from work (police) to go get your family members (daughter) and bring them to a safe location in the station because (if EOS has not yet invaded you) you know that what makes you most vulnerable to any monster you might be chasing is your family.

So when the daughter gets grabbed, I think, WTF? for the second time in this movie.

The only hopeful, maybe redemptive aspect of this movie is the fact that at the very end, the secret services want to enlist Luther. Idris didn't get or (more probably) didn't want to be Bond, James Bond. But now we might get a super-spy Luther as a future reward. Hopefully the new non-Bond Luther scripts will be devoid of EOS plot moments. And will somehow re-integrate Alice, the most interesting TV character the BBC ever featured.

Meanwhile, although there are many more shows I could critique for their EOS-infected writing, I will move on to *The Watchful Eye*. Mariel Molino is excellent in this show. She has a website (<https://www.marielmolino.com/>) and IMDB says she has worked in both Mexico and the USA, but she is not really well known yet. This show should make her very well known in the business. Most of the time she has a good, scary sometimes, mystery-solving personality, which wants you, as a viewer, to have her win. But there are some rather EOS moments that don't actually work for a veteran mystery-watcher like me. The most egregious EOS material woven into the story is the occasional appearance of the "ghost" nanny who is the mother of "Ruby" (really Mrs. Ivy) the illegitimate daughter of the original Mr. Greybourne and who actually owns the whole building. This ghost can be heard crying by Mrs. Ivy and can be seen and heard by Molino's character Elena Santos.



I don't mind plotting to con rich people out of a precious stone, a ruby, which turns out to be Ruby the illegitimate daughter. And I find the mystery surrounding the evil families who have interwed in order to maintain their power, not all bad. But then, after the constant reappearance of the ghost nanny, comes the most imbecilic moment of all when Elena Santos reveals to her awful and obviously untrustworthy brother that she is planning to run away with 5 million bucks and from whom, why and how she is to get it. Directly after that we see the EOS-infected brother report back to his/their loathed (by Elena) and recently released from prison mother, who has been previously described as the original fount of evil in the family.

Eliminate the horrible brother and the useless mother from the story and Elena Santos, as a solo orphan, can be a complete well-rounded character, on her own, fighting against the corrupt world of

moneyed power and trying to navigate her way to safety and freedom. But no. The writers and producers believe that they must cater to an EOS-riddled audience – their targets. Any carefully crafted and intellectually challenging plot twists and turns would create brain-freeze in the sad EOS-infected morons who believe in ghosts and other-worldly spirits. These sad consumers couldn't stand the spasms in their frontal lobes brought on by awakening their curiosity about new areas of thought and would reflexively press a button or hit a key and escape to some reality-besotted island or other in the Archipelago of Stupidity.

EOS is a serious disease which should be studied by more qualified researchers than me. They will be sure to find more sinister causes for its virulent spread in society than a lab leak or an animal market. Racism and antisemitism was normal in Spain many hundreds of years ago (<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/how-racism-was-first-officially-codified-in-15th-century-spain>), and without orders from above – the church and the royals – EOS would not have spread through the land and eventually through the world. Later, when the European fascist movements (fed by their success in Franco's Spain) took up the racist and anti-Semitic chants and spread EOS among *Il Popolo* and *Das Volk* in their countries, the infected masses were used as fodder for wars that eventually came back home to bite, and bite hard.



El Greco – Toledo. Public Domain

And now, with the new batch of authoritarians in Russia and the USA (as well as Hungary and Poland and China, etc.) the battle cry is once again: “Them – of impure blood!” and “Us – the pure ones and rightful masters.” Same as the 14th and 15th century in Spain and Portugal, then eventually all the colonial powers seeking to convince their EOS-ridden populations that it was OK and not a sin to wreak genocide on the non-persons of the new lands they were conquering. And even after conversion to Christianity or whatever religion the conqueror touted, the newly converted were still not accepted as pure and as important as we, the original “We” of the conquerors.

EOS is infecting everyone these days. Inoculate yourself with knowledge.



Letter to Thomas

Dear [Thomas](#),

As I mentioned before, I like it when you use the term [“fantasies” with the word “conspiracy.”](#) I discussed this with some linguist friends and they agree that when one allows “theories” to be used, legitimacy (or the possibility of legitimacy) is lent to the subject being discussed.

However, what you and everyone else seems to be missing is that all the talk about “conspiracy” and debunking of statements coming from the people who are putting their fantasies out into the public sphere is actually nothing but a distraction.

It is a well-planned distraction. These people have learned much from Edward Bernays, “the father of public relations”, from Goebbels (who studied Bernays) and of course also from Sun Tzu and battlefield generals like Hannibal. When attacking the Romans and winning decisive battles against them, Hannibal always distracted the Roman legionaries before attacking. Once they were distracted, he attacked where he wanted to. Their surprise rendered them weak at the point of encounter and their lines of defense were broken. Battle lost.

This is what is happening right now.

The authoritarian right (Putin and Erdogan included) are cleverly distracting thinking defenders of freedom by baiting them with little tidbits of nonsensical trash that seem to need some kind of rational reply or analysis. These bits of bait only need to be ignored.

Book banning, anti-LGBT(etc), gender arguments, or whatever hot topic is being promoted on social media is nonsense and only there to distract and to stop thinking people from concentrating on the most important aspects of the fight against the new authoritarians.

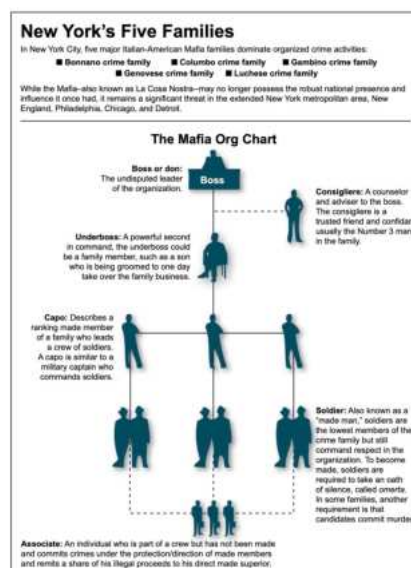
And what are these important aspects?

The most important aspects to reveal are the identity of the leaders and their chain of command as well as the battle plans of the authoritarian army that is in the field to do battle against freedom and free thinking.

How can this be done?

This is not difficult. The data is there. We know who and where they are. What is missing is a site that puts the data together in a simple organigram that exposes the organizational breakdown structure (OBS), including its leaders, general membership, propaganda arms and financial flow charts.

This can be done in the same way that the FBI does it with analysis of New York’s Five Families.



If you can show the world who they are, where they sit in the power structure, where the money is from and where it is going, you can also expose the battle plan, the array of the troops at their command and make it possible to attack the most vulnerable (and important) people in the power structure effectively by exposing the factual truth of their activities.

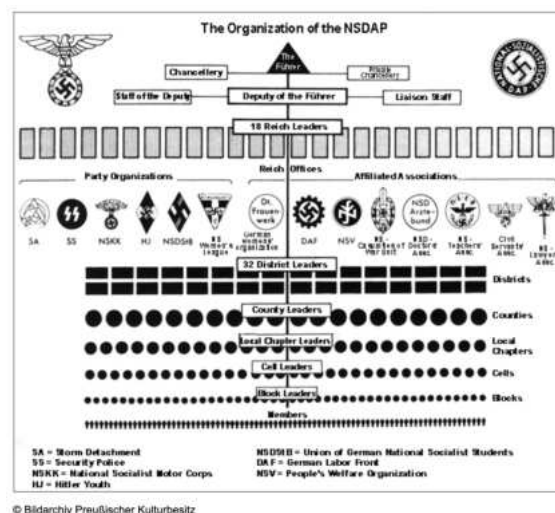
The J6 nobodies are “Fussvolk” and a great distraction. Without their generals and chain of command, these dunderheads are nothing but fodder, like the Wagner convict conscripts sent to die in Bakhmut.

A linked set of websites can be set up that expose the structure and its constituent parts. Let’s say one site is all about leadership, another site all about finances, another site all about propaganda, a site about members, both loosely and rigidly attached to the command structure. And all the sites linked to one another so that it is easy to go from one to another and each site can be updated by the specialists who work on that site.

Detective shows put the photos of suspects up on a board. The faces, the names, where they fit in as suspects, what their motives are, and what relationship they have to the crime.

The crime in this case is the forcible destruction of freedom of association, freedom of speech and freedom of thought. Democracy just happens to be the governmental form we have used thus far to attain these freedoms. So by destroying democracy through authoritarianism, these criminals also delete freedom from society.

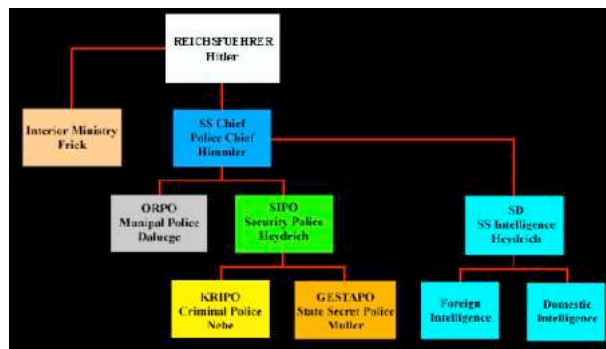
A thorough analysis of the Nazi regime structure as well as the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei NSDAP (National Socialist German Worker’s Party), we know how the party was structured, who its principle actors were and [from where the money flowed](#).



We also know how the government was structured.



And how the police state was organized.



Are you going to tell me it's not possible to find the structures and the actors behind the authoritarian movement that is sweeping across the world right now?

Come on, you are better than that.

We are all better than that.

COMPLAINTS

It's time to get stuff off my chest and just complain out loud,
which is what I hear so many people around me do all the time.



Weather

As the sun heads towards its zenith, summer up here in the northland comes in fits and spurts (30°C yesterday, 15°C today). In Hamburg we hardly ever get a steady spell of warm or hot weather. It's a roller coaster ride, up into the near 30s and then down into the near 10s. Unfortunately for me, I grew up in Los Angeles where you were certain that when the sun was shining (almost always) that it was going to be a warm if not really hot day. Moving to Kenya and India didn't change that expectation, so it's burned deep into my psyche. Now of course each time I see the sun shine outside my window I think it's going to be a pleasantly warm day. Not true in the northland. The sun can shine and it can be cold outside in June. It's annoying and the cause of renewed disappointment, despite the fact that I have lived here longer than I lived anywhere else.

Germans

The obvious next choice, because I'm definitely *not* German. I live among them and I can understand them and I really like the social system they have built here with all the nets to catch people when they fall from grace with the capitalist system. But I'm getting sick and tired of speaking the language. Each day I think in English, read English, speak English whenever I can and watch films in English, not to mention my daily baseball condensed game recap of Dodger games on MLB. Then at some point during the day I'm forced to speak German. It's OK for taking care of transactional stuff, but as soon as I'm in the large family dinner situation, I just can't interact with the conversation going on at the table between the 8 to 10 people gathered around for the meal. I'm not witty in German because I can't get the retort out quickly enough. It comes to me 10 or 15 seconds too late. By the time I have it prepared, the conversation has moved along and I'm forced to remain mute. Also, the tone of my voice is different. There are people who think that when I speak, I sound like I'm complaining or angry. Well, the truth is that I can't use the same mellifluous vocal patterns I use when I'm getting paid to narrate an image film or a car commercial for the international market. And when I'm with my (few) native-speaker friends, I can jib and jab and make cultural references that we understand and laugh at without any hesitation. The little redemptive aspect at the moment is that there is a 2-year-old grandchild in the family and I speak only English to him. Thankfully, he's starting to understand, and the family accepts the concept.

Not Germans

Hamburg is a melting pot of nationalities, which is one reason why it's so cool to live here. If you sit in an outdoor cafe (even when the sun is not shining) you can hear people speaking all sorts of languages: Portuguese, Italian, Russian, Ukrainian, Danish, English, and all sorts of African languages that my linguist brother can sort out by region. Turkish is of course like Spanish is in Los

Angeles, the most common second language you hear in the street. Turks were imported as cheap labor many years ago, like the Italians were during WW2, and now the second and third generations of Turks are integrated nicely into the system. Of course they still face lots of prejudice from Germans who still have the mistaken notion that they are “pure blood” residents of the country. The new authoritarian right-wingers have not changed their opinions of Turks, nor of Italians or Jews or any other non-Germans, but these days they are concentrating their ire and aiming their political arrows at the poor people our wars and economic models have driven from their homes in Africa and the Middle East and caused them to become refugee migrants.

Race

There are no “races.” Race is a construct. It has no basis in science. It’s bullshit used by malevolent politicians to atomize the electorate and make sure we don’t unite to throw out the elitist oligarchs and their complicit political lackeys. About 10 minutes of an anthropology lesson will disabuse you of any racial misinformation you might have picked up along the way. The present population of the earth is made up of one race only: *Homo sapiens sapiens*. We evolved from *Homo sapiens* sometime between 160,000 and 90,000 years ago in Africa before migrating, first to the Middle East and Europe and later to Asia, Australia, and the Americas. During this wonderful migratory journey we either killed off or bred with the *Homo sapiens* still hanging around and now we are the dominant, actually the only human race on the earth. Through our migration we adapted – over a long long time – to the environmental conditions of the region we settled in and skin pigmentation changed, hair growth and body form changed, facial characteristics changed, and so we have all the various *Homo sapiens sapiens* that you see today. One race with many varieties of packaging!

Americans

I’m Afraid of Americans by David Bowie should probably be the World Anthem, along with *All You Need is Love* by The Beatles. If you are not afraid of Americans, you should be. Along with their favorite sparring partners, the Russians, they are in love with war and power, both nations believing deep in their hearts that *Might is Right*. Symptoms of that disease are the liberal firearms policy that exists in the US and the worship of mercenary groups in Russia, like Wagner, who advertise their brutality and use it to attract the powerless and the criminals to their ranks. Only the weakest personalities exert their need for power through the barrel of a gun. Americans are Maoists. Mercenaries are amoral psychopaths. American Evangelical Christian fundamentalists are a Cult of Death, fast and furiously speeding down any road that will lead to Apocalypse. Be afraid of Americans. The current group of politically dominant Russians are just greedy and brutal, not necessarily apocalyptic. Which doesn’t make them better.

AI

Artificial Intelligence is an oxymoron, because by self-definition it is artificial, therefore not real, and also therefore cannot be intelligence. In reality it should be called MIRPC, Mathematically Induced Random Phrase Collocation. AI is the supra-brand name, nothing else. People are trying to market the supra-brand under sub-brand names that should excite the buyer by incorporating words like *chat* or *draw* or *music*. MIRPC will get more refined as time goes on and many unsophisticated minds will try and use it to pretend that they are sophisticated. The protests against this technology being used in education are superficial. Nobody would care about MIRPC if there wasn’t such an emphasis on hierarchical placement through the writing of papers that have the same function as examinations. Kids used to use Cliffs Notes to write essays about literature that they couldn’t be bothered to actually read. MIRPC collocates all the various notes providers plus all essays written about the book or story in question and vomits it out in a form that seems to make sense. It only makes sense in actuality if the parameters of the system remain as they are today. Change the parameters and the MIRPC is defeated.

When you want a job, you go in for an interview. Interview the student about the subject matter. A human being asks a human being questions and a human being replies. Either you know or you don’t know. Let people partner up and make a presentation about the subject matter. Two, maybe three people work together and come up with a way to present their knowledge to a group of

people, including teachers, and through talking, acting, presentation of pictures and sounds, the group delivers their knowledge (or lack thereof) to an audience. Questions can be asked and answered. Human beings interact. Machines are defeated. Change the system.

Politicians

9th Circle of Hell for all of them, even the cute ones that you think are “progressive.” Until representation becomes a civic duty, like serving on a jury, and all representatives are chosen by lottery, with service limited to 2 years, you can reserve professional politicians ice block seats in the Treachery section above Satan’s chamber in Dante’s Hell.

Family

Raised by a single mother (before it became fashionable), my experience of family was watching a movie and eating pizza at home in front of the TV while my mother was out at a party with her friends. Now I have people around me who all grew up with brothers and sisters and have no idea how pleasant it is to be an only child. They think we are spoiled and selfish. Not necessarily true. An only child has no competition for love from the parent, tantrums have a tendency to actually bring results, and single mothers feel guilty because they think the only child is suffering from loneliness, especially if the mothers grew up with siblings. I was never lonely. I read books. I played with my toys. Masturbated. Learned the lyrics to all the songs on my mother’s jazz records. Went to the park to play baseball. Interacted with kids I didn’t have to see when I was at home. Only had to go visit old Italian people with my mother sometimes on a Sunday, dressed in a white shirt, tight collar, black clip-on bow tie, and play with their grandchildren in a garden with swings and croquet mallets and balls and wire arches with younger children and girls as young as me (7 or 8) in white fluffy-skirt dresses who I didn’t fall in love with (except for one, once, a blond who I only met that one time) and the dark-haired very beautiful but silent girl who my mother and the old folks tried to pair me with because, well, that’s what the older generation of Italians used to do.

These days, as one of the oldies, I enjoy speaking English to the youngest member of the family. Other than that, I can’t get a word in edgewise when all 10 sons, daughters, sons-in-law, wives, official grandparents, as well as spouses they married later, are sitting around the dinner table talking over each other about subjects (mostly food and soccer) that mean nothing to me. Many years ago I presented the family with *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (in German). Both volumes remain in their thin Saran-wrap and have recently been transferred to my library where they sit dustless and virgin next to my oft-thumbed, bent-paged bible-like rice-paper edition of *The Complete Works*.

Dogs

In Germany people are allowed to bring dogs into cafes and restaurants. Disgusting, as far as I’m concerned. A dog not only likes to smell the butt-holes of other dogs and lick their own butt-hole and penis, they piss and shit wherever they like and their human companions have to pick up the shit while it’s still warm by thrusting a hand into a black environmentally friendly plastic bag, wrap the warm and maybe softly squishy shit in the bag and then dispose of the bag – usually in somebody else’s trash can. Or, hey, by accident, the bag drops on the sidewalk and they just leave it there because the dog is pulling them on down the street. And please, don’t get me wrong, it’s not the dog’s fault. Dogs are just happy being dogs. It’s the humans that annoy me. First of all, the permission to bring an animal into a place where people are eating is a permission that was granted by humans to humans. Dogs didn’t ask for it. It’s against the law to take a dog into a supermarket. Dogs didn’t protest and say: “Hey, if we can go into cafes and restaurants then why not supermarkets?” They just accept it, like their humans do, and stay leashed up outside and wait. Some whine about it because obviously they are aware of the dissonant logic involved. But most are rather well-behaved and sit or lie on the sidewalk peacefully. Surely they could and would do the same thing outside of cafes and restaurants.

Cats

Coco was the only cat I have ever really liked. We had her twice as a sleepover guest for three weeks each time. The first time she was only a few months old, had been snatched from her home on a large estate in France and had been relegated to house and garden life in a big city. Hamburg.

The house that was her new home was large enough and not far from a canal with lots of tall grass and reeds, but it was also a couple of streets away from a hospital where she would wander in and walk the halls in her grey and white fur uniform, drawing purrs of admiration from staff and patients alike until her owners finally came to look for her. Later they put up a picture with a phone number for when she came back, which she did on a regular basis.

The second time her humans brought Coco to us was during the Christmas season. They were gone on vacation and couldn't or probably didn't want to take her back to the Chateau in France with them in the car along with their huge friendly hound, with whom Coco had a good relationship by the way. Of course during this second visit she crossed the threshold into maturity and entered her first full phase of heat. This changed her personality temporarily. She became a friendly, loving, snuggling bundle of hormones. Normally she wasn't unfriendly *per se*, she just didn't need constant petting or excessive human contact. Because we live in an area that is not near a canal or fields of green, and is between some busy streets, we were forced to keep her indoors so that she wouldn't wander away, until one day I went to a pet store and bought her a body harness leash. She loved it. When I went to get it from where it hung to take her for a walk so she could sniff and piss in our little front garden, she would purr and stroke her body against my leg and let me slip the harness over her head and onto her body without resistance. Finally, when we were outside, she didn't try and slip out of the harness or strain to run away. I kept her on a long loose leash and let her go wherever she wanted in the garden and mostly she kept to the flower beds and the grass. Once or twice we ventured out onto the road in front of our house where, because of the gates at each end, there is no traffic. She was a princess of a cat, with long white furry legs and that regal hauteur that went so well with her grey crown and the white around her eyes and little pink nose.

Coco went home to her humans after Christmas and the New Year, was neutered, ran away a few more times, got a collar with a phone number and a name pendant, slipped out of the collar on a regular basis, kept wandering, getting returned, until her fickle humans got tired of going after her and told the people who found her to keep her.

Coco was not a cat to complain about, and she deserved to stay on the grounds of her French Chateau where she could have had an adventurous life and bred to her heart's content instead of being kidnapped as a baby and taken to a foreign land in the cold north.

Graffiti

It is everywhere. Personally, I think it's silly and don't regard it as artistic in any way, though I concede that you need a certain amount of skill in order to create the colorful completely illegible swirls that are randomly plastered across fences and sides of buildings. The little squiggly types of graffiti (also illegible) that you see in busses and trains and on corner walls of buildings are like dog piss. The poor animal can't stand another animal's smell attached to the territory he considers his and so he pisses over it and a bit higher up if possible to show he is bigger, stronger, better. Graffiti, if it is going to be placed on a wall or on a monument of some kind should either be political or obscene in nature. Ideally, both: ***Fuck Capitalism! • Cunts Rule! • Don't Be A War Hole! • Peoples Is Legals! • God? No!***

Hair

I do not approve of shaved pubes. Pubic hair is good. Lots of pubic hair is better. OK, trim it a bit if you want, but don't style it, unless of course you plan on parading your pubic area in front of the public for praise or profit. • Personally I prefer smooth hairless legs and armpits that have been left to nature from the start of maturity. That might have something to do with the era in which I grew to maturity. • Beards are itchy, can cause bad skin to develop or have a tendency to be grown in order to hide bad skin or weak chins, or to make a fashion statement which emphasizes manhood, like the Taliban and other fundamentalists are prone to do. • Hair color I understand, though I would never do it for myself. Anyway now that my hair is tending toward white, it would be silly to douse it with henna or some other agent. • Shaving can be a task, but after doing it, the face is clean and smooth and your true external face is made visible. You have nothing to hide. • Hairlessness seems to have become a fashion statement and is supposed to hark back to elitist Rome and sexual freedom, but you need to remember that body lice were common in ancient times and one of the

treatments was ridding yourself of bodily hair, especially if you were a soldier, like Caesar, on the road, living in encampments with limited access to fresh water. You live in a new era, with running water and soap, you don't need to shed your body hair, just bathe regularly and keep clean so lice, fleas and scabies won't be a problem for you.

TV & Movies

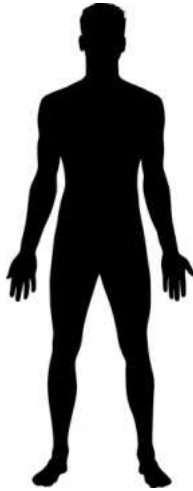
2000 channels and nothing on. That's how much nothing has changed since Springsteen made his statement in 1992 with *Fifty-Seven Channels and Nothin' On*. I watch film and series pretty regularly because I like listening to the English language in all its various accents. What I've noticed is that the plots are getting simpler, the characters are getting dumber, and the violence is increasing in brutality and in its graphic depiction. What I long for is a mystery crime thriller where the detective (male or female) does everything right while following the trail of clues and yet a twist always comes because the criminal was clever enough to lead the detective down a false trail, which forces the detective to re-calibrate and finally, after a number of following the right clues along false trails, through cogitational dexterity the detective arrives at the solution because the clues were real, just not interpreted correctly at the time, and catches the criminal without a fistfight, a gun battle or a deadly encounter of any kind, the criminal showing respect for the cleverness of the detective and accepting the defeat with composure.

Modes of Transportation

I don't fly. I did, from time to time in the past, but now I don't need to and refuse to get on an airplane. Being sealed in a metal tube 50-thousand feet up in the sky is not a pleasure. On a train which stops from time to time and would allow me to pull an emergency stop lever if I wanted to, I am connected to the ground and can spend time looking out the window at the passing scenery or get up and walk the length of the train and back, hang out in the dining car, or use the toilet as often and for as long as I like without people thinking I'm trying to join the Mile High Club. • Cars are problematic because either you are ruining the climate with CO₂, or causing lithium to be scraped from the surface of Earth by oil-burning machines. Electric vehicles depend on the lithium batteries that are then made and, unfortunately, as it now stands, there is an electric car manufacturer who is making billions from your need for a safe environment and is an authoritarian Neo-fascist. • I ride a bicycle. I wear a helmet and yellow safety gear. Of course I live in a flat city where any place I want to go is only about 15 or 20 minutes away from where I live. We have bike lanes. They have improved greatly in the past 10 years. I avoid riding in the street if there is a bike lane that is on the sidewalk. I'm not a fan of speedy riders on racing bikes in full cyclist gear. I'm not a fan of reckless speedy riders who think that they have the right to do anything they like at any time they like. Arrogant fuckers. I certainly don't wish anyone harm, but those idiots seem to forget that 2 tons of metal are more dangerous than 12 kilos of metal wires and frames topped by 80 kilos of bones and blood covered by a thin layer of skin.

I'm not finished... so sit back and relax. Brew yourself a nice cup of green tea from Vietnam: <https://viet-tee.de/en>

The Naked Conservative



Ambrose Bierce in the Devil's Dictionary: "Conservative, n. A statesman who is enamored of existing evils, as distinguished from the Liberal, who wishes to replace them with others."

The High Priest of people who like to call themselves Conservatives is a man by the name of Russell Kirk. In 1953 he published a book, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot*. This book not only serves as the Bible for the modern Conservative movement, it is also a manual which outlines how the strong Father must exert his authority over the unruly masses under his watchful eye. The masses are ignorant of the wisdom the Father possesses. He has this natural wisdom because of his exalted position as the head of the family – a position ordained by the Master, i.e. God – and he has a divine responsibility to make sure that his masses of ignorant and unruly children follow his dictums, ideas which have been handed down through history and are aligned with the power structure of male over female and Father over the rest of the family. The family, for Conservatives, is the society we live in and the Father is the ruler over that society.

Conservative ideas are hierarchical in nature and must be enforced with strength. That might even call for violence from time to time in order to purge society of the unbeliever and teach the recalcitrant a lesson they will never forget. In idiomatic form it equates to: *Spare the rod and spoil the child*.

Kirk handed down 6 basic commandments for the followers of the Conservative Faith. Let's have a look at what they are and what these commandments actually mean when stripped of their eloquent camouflage.

N.B.: Although there have been and may well be in the future, some females who fit into the Conservative mold, e.g. Margaret Thatcher, it is the male who is touted as the one who should be and should remain dominant if the system is to remain stable and in place for the longest time possible, i.e. Eternity.

Now let's play some strip poker and see what the Conservative Mind looks like when it's naked!

1. Transcendent Order

First, the Conservative generally believes that there exists a transcendent moral order, and the ways of society ought to conform to this moral order. In other words, God is at work here. His "natural law" is the enduring moral authority. This moral order is codified in the Good Book.

Take off your hat buddy!

This sounds quite pleasant to your ears if you are a Deist and [True Believer](#) in the words written in one of the books that serve a religion. The Christian version of “moral order” is essentially written in the various “books” of the Old Testament. The Bible is full of [contradictions](#) as regards the “moral order.” Anyone who has spent time reading the document knows this.

Despite these contradictions, what is “moral” has gone through various interesting transformations since Constantine made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. The gods and goddesses of the pre-Christian empire were notorious for their licentiousness, their vengefulness and their fickle dispensation of fortune, both good and bad. Christianity brought along with it the Jewish God of the Old Testament, the only God, a dispenser of furious vengeance, an intolerant Master who demands absolute obedience to his will, even going so far as to order his subject Abraham to kill his son as an act of submission.

This is the Father model that Conservatives love. The absolute monarch, ordained by God to rule over his subjects. If the divine will of the Master is not submitted to without question, wrath and punishment is sure to come. And it has come often enough since Constantine’s time, especially when Rome insisted on converting the conquered to the new state religion. Non-compliance was rewarded with a quick trip to Hades for the pagans. For recalcitrant converts who didn’t want to be under the yoke of the new masters, Hell was their reward.

What about Jesus? What we know about Jesus from the research done by [Michael Hudson](#) and others, is that he was a reformer who wanted to get rid of perpetual debt slavery and bring back the Jewish tradition of the Jubilee Year, the year in which all debt was forgiven and all seized property was returned to its former owners. In other words, a complete reset. A restart. A chance for people to get it right this time and not fall into debt that destroyed them and their family.

Constantine and the “fathers of the church” erased that aspect of Jesus and changed the word “debt” into the word “sin” so that owners of debt and property would not be forced to return anything and debt slavery could continue unhindered. Jesus was transformed from a reformer working for the liberation of the common man from earthly slavery into a divine being liberating mankind from the burden of sin, which is there from birth, thus following orders given by the almighty Father and dying in order to free us all from our sins instead of our debts.

Suddenly, with the adoption of the doctrine of “original sin” you were guilty for just being born. Leverage for the people in charge of the state religion, leverage for the people in charge of the state. “Sinners” had no standing and could be punished any way the authoritarian leader, the divinely ordained “Father,” saw fit. The fact that those in power were (and still are) the greatest sinners and just as licentious and fickle as the gods of the pagans made no difference, because by a simple confession to a man who took the oath of omertà, all could be forgiven.



2. Variety

Conservatives believe egalitarianism belongs to radical systems that destroy long-established social institutions and modes of life. They are convinced of the need for social classes, differences in material condition, and many sorts of inequality. The only true form of equality is equality at the Last Judgement.

Take off that tailored shirt!

God – the Christian God – never leaves the Conservative Mind. Embedded in the skull along with the Last Judgement is the simple, geometrically sound and efficient pyramid, with the all-seeing eye of the Master at the top. The wealthy and wise leaders, the merchants and the military are up there, and the base consists of the masses who toil under the watchful eye of the Master(s) who sit (divinely ordained) at the pinnacle.

The Roman version of Christianity seems to have always been rather corrupt. Popes had mistresses and illegitimate children, powerful families got their brothers and cousins installed in the highest offices of the church, greed was endemic, and so, eventually, reformers like Luther and Calvin, became whistleblowers. Aristocrats from the northern parts of Europe realized they could use this schism to break away from the control hitherto exerted by the southern oligarchs. Max Weber put pen to paper and came up with what he termed “The Protestant Ethic.” He said that Protestants were successful and loved by God because they attached value to hard work, thrift, and efficiency. Calvin said that success in worldly endeavors meant that God loves you and you are headed for eternal salvation.

Conservatives believe there are natural distinctions among men, leading to inequalities of condition. The only equality is equality before God and the courts (which conveniently follow the laws written up by the rich and powerful); anything more leads to “servitude and boredom.” Therefore, inequality is necessary to uphold the status of the rich (the successful blessed by the Lord) and ensure the domination of the poor – sinners unrepentant and not worth saving because, since they are not successful, must therefore be lazy and/or stupid.

3. Freedom and property are linked.

Without private property, the state is unstoppable. Redistribution of wealth, by taxes or other means, is not economic progress. Men need property to secure their rights, discharge their duties, and limit government.

Take off that wife-beater and show us your muscular chest!

Money talks. The landed gentry who fashioned the Constitution of the United States made sure that money would continue to talk by making it impossible for the voting public to elect the leader of the nation directly. Men (most always men) appointed by the rulers of individual states – [electors](#) – are to be sent to congress to deliver the results of the vote in their particular state. These electors are, however, allowed to *not* follow the will of the voters in their state and can give their vote to a candidate their state had not preferred. It hasn’t happened often, but it has happened. The candidate for President in 2020, who actually lost the battle for electors in the states, attempted to send faux electors to congress in order to manipulate the system in his favor. He also attempted to force the ceremonial tallier of the preferences expressed by the electors to nullify those preferences and declare the loser a winner.

4. Social Continuity

Conservatives uphold the principle of social continuity, a community of souls. Change may not be a good thing, and though it is sometimes necessary, it must be gradual and discriminatory, never “unfixing old interests at once.” Revolution is a cure that kills.

Unhook that Gucci belt and drop those Dolce & Gabbana pants!

If you have a community of souls, then there must be someone in charge who looks after those souls. [Nikolay Gogol](#) showed us how that concept could be successfully manipulated in order to ensure that the masters remained the masters and that clever men could become masters by using the ambiguity inherent in the system to cash in.

Let’s just leave God in the background for a moment because now we are dealing with earthly things, despite the souls.

Redistribution of wealth is akin to revolution. To give anything of value to the unwashed unsuccessful rabble, as the original Jesus attempted to do, is anathema to the Conservative Mind.

[Edmund Burke](#), a member of Kirk's Pantheon of Conservative Thinkers¹, was appalled and frightened by the French Revolution. After many years of climbing the ladder of the social system in Britain, he had finally arrived at being able to pal around with well-known thinkers and at the same time be of service to important aristocrats and anything that threatened his newly attained rank in life was horrifying. In France the new revolution was truly a "cure that kills."

Burke reasoned: If a king is a divinely appointed head of state and the aristocratic system that supports it, peopled by the rich and successful, is made up of the chosen, the saved, then any attempt to take away the basis for their power – their wealth – must be stopped at any cost. Well, that meant of course at the cost of the lives of those trying to enable redistribution, before the blade of the guillotine meets the heads of the elite.



In England during Burke's time – Kirk's Conservative Garden of Eden – debtors were imprisoned and thieves were hanged. Later, when it became convenient to empty the country of these reprobates, they were all shipped to penal colonies to work as indentured servants, i.e. slaves, for the elite colonial masters who were exploiting the new territories by stealing natural resources and murdering the indigenous.

Taxes are evil – on the other hand, this evil of taxation is not applicable if taxes burden the unsuccessful and redistribute wealth upward. Government must be limited – limited to the exploitation of the underclasses by the elite. Only thus will the state run efficiently, with the successful at the helm. Ergo, debt slavery is fine, and even actual slavery is fine, as long as no Spartacus appears on the scene and tries to change "the natural order."

5. Prescription

Things are the way they are for a good reason. Past generations passed on these customs and conventions, and so why should these things change. Customs and traditions serve as a check on anarchy. People who advocate change for the sake of change only lust for power. Power has been in the hands of the Fathers who rule with divine authority and that should not change. "The individual is foolish, but the species is wise," Burke declared.

Are you wearing cashmere boxers? With your initials in gold thread? Strip!

Translation: "That's the way we've always done it, so why should we change now." Strangely enough, this slogan has become the slogan for doom when applied to a business entity. Every consultant firm in the modern world will tell you that if you don't change how you do business, you will fail. Innovation is the mother of success.

OK says the Conservative Mind. As long as The Father controls the business and the tradition of the hierarchy can be maintained, then the technical aspects of how the business functions can be modified. And when innovation is born, then it can be born from a mother, but only because the seed was planted by an all-powerful Father. Of course this type of change is only acceptable if quarterly profit continues to rise and the workers don't get uppity.

But never apply this dictum to society. Society should not change at all if humanly possible. Any change in the fabric of the social system must be slow and always benefit the structure that is in place: the Masters and Priests, Merchants and Military, and keep down at the bottom women and the slaving unwashed and ignorant Subjugated Masses.

Money goes up, shit comes down.



6. Imperfection

No perfect social order can ever be created because people are imperfect. To aim for utopia is to end in disaster. If the old institutional and moral safeguards of a nation are forgotten, then the anarchic impulses in man break loose. All that we can reasonably expect is a tolerably ordered, just, and free society, in which some evils, maladjustments, and suffering continue to lurk.

A chastity belt? Seriously?

Imperfection of course resonates nicely with the concept of original sin. Original sin can be washed away by baptism into the faith when you are a baby, but according to modern evangelical Christians, a second, maybe even a third or fourth baptism is necessary in order to be “born again” into the Kingdom of Christ, the figure who has been adopted (and adapted) by these groups and transubstantiated into a Warrior King fighting at the head of the Christian Army of God against unbelievers – non-Christians – and those who do not kowtow to the authority of the ordained ruler, who must be rich, white, and the king of the nation, ordained by God and the elite, the successful ones who know how to lead.

The evil, maladjustment and suffering that continues to lurk in an imperfect social order, the social order that the Conservative Mind fixates on, are only evil if they upset the class system that is in place, are only maladjustments if women and people of color and human beings with diverse sexual proclivities seek equality, and suffering is for these people alone. Suffering lurks as a possibility for the elite because recalcitrant rebellious members of society are plotting to diminish the wealth and power of the successful captains of industry and the hereditary dispensers of political power and wisdom. And this type of suffering must be avoided.

Bring me the bolt cutters.

All of Kirk’s Conservative Commandments have one underlying factor: God. The God of Protestant Christianity mostly. There are plenty of Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians and Fundamentalists from many other religions who adhere to [The Strict Father Principle](#). [Opus Dei](#) and the Taliban for instance. But it is the material success of Protestantism in its various forms, mostly evangelical these days in the USA, and its permanent grip on government and the corporate world that determines the direction politicians are guided toward in the modern political environment.

The Conservative Mind is a closed mind. Milton Rokeach explained the difference between an open mind and a closed mind in his book *The Open and Closed Mind*, written in 1956. It has become the core source for investigations into how [dogmatism](#) effects the the brain, how [truth and bias](#) work, and what [the consequences of authoritarianism](#) can be, as well as numerous other studies into how the brain sorts information.

Capitalism has one important and over-riding dictum embedded in the heart of every single corporation: *The corporation exists to “maximize profit for its shareholders.”* One might add Malcolm X’s phrase: *By any means necessary*. When the 6 Conservative Commandments and the profit dictum are combined, the consequence is a rigid, authoritarian, faith-based, closed-minded system. In this Social Darwinist, brutalist, anti-humanistic system there is no room for the non-believer and the rebel. Either you conform or you are eliminated, one way or another. Inevitably,

after the Conservative can no longer maintain control through manipulating the “electoral” system to his ends, he will dispense with the velvet glove and expose his iron fist.



It's no wonder that the country which describes itself as the beacon of democracy always supports as many dictatorships as possible in Africa, Asia, and South America. Authoritarian systems are rigid and unchanging and therefore can be counted on to provide the service needed in order to keep the pyramidal structure intact and ensure governance by the elite, under God of course.

And so now (2024) we arrive at the point where dictatorship by the divinely chosen Christian leader of the United States is going to step up on the world stage and announce the new Crusades of Christianity, to be enforced by violence if the current financial domination no longer holds sway.

The authoritarian Father model that dominates the Conservative Mind leads inevitably to a coercive system that is closed within its dogmatic and fundamentalist cocoon.

With no sense of irony at all, Conservatives refer to this absolute bondage to authority and rigid tradition as Freedom.



The Truth will set you free!

1. John Adams, the Romantics such as Robert Louis Stevenson, Southern Conservatives Randolph and Calhoun, Liberal Conservatives Macaulay, Cooper, and Tocqueville, Conservatives with imagination: Disraeli and Newman and Critical Conservatives: Babbitt, More, and Santayana. We can add William F. Buckley and his generation of right-wingers to the list as well.

The Zone of Interest



The Zone of Interest is a film that every German child should be shown at the age of 15. Yes, they will not understand why the screen is black for so long at the beginning, and they might get a little restless because there are no chase scenes. But the longer they watch, the more they will start to understand exactly what Hannah Arendt meant by “[Adolf Eichmann and the banality of evil](#).”

[Martin Amis](#) wrote a novel that has the same title as the film, but apart from the title and the location, [Jonathan Glazer](#) has managed to tell a story that stands on its own and is more powerful than the one informing the plot of the Amis novel. No spoilers here for people who want to read the novel. The novel depicts a love story in the shadow of Auschwitz. The film doesn't. Not by a long shot.

The film is in German. Jonathan Glazer, the director, doesn't speak or read German. He had to trust his actors and the script translators to bring across the dialogue in such a way that it made sense to the viewer. For those of us who understand German, the dialogue is superb. The set magnificent. The costumes perfectly in tune with the time. No Hollywood over-dressing, no star-friendly makeup or hairdressing. Just normal people in a normal setting. Except of course, it's Auschwitz.

Yes, the film has English subtitles for the American and British markets. Too bad. Because they were embedded in the copy of the film that I saw, they were sometimes a distraction. But they were small enough to not be a major distraction. And, as all subtitles, they are only accurate to a point. Subtleties of meaning and turns of phrase that are akin to idioms function differently in every language.

Christian Friedel, who played a photographer for the Berlin police department in the hit series [Babylon Berlin](#), is absolutely believable as the German Nazi commandant Rudolf Höss. No Hollywood over-acting, no “I'm the bad guy” posturing. Höss (the historical personage) was the commandant of the Auschwitz death camp. He knew what he was doing there, and he knew his job was to exterminate Jews.

Friedel who, like Höss, sports what is known today as a Hitler-Youth haircut, shows us an efficient camp commander who has to jockey to keep his post by using his political connections in Berlin. Nothing different from the vicissitudes of a manager heading a branch – an important branch – of a major corporation. His job is to make the camp run smoothly, which means the killing has to be done efficiently and cost-effectively. His meeting with the designers of a new rotating oven system for the burning of corpses is no different from a meeting a manager would hold who needs to order new production facilities.

“[The optimal position for a business](#) is to be both effective and efficient, whereby the right goals are pursued and the organization is being run in a cost-efficient manner.” Friedel, who plays Höss as

one would play a senior manager who has the desire to control, and also the will to indulge himself in the pleasures of life – horses, prostitutes, flowers, lilac trees – is trying to be both effective and efficient. He's running a business for the corporation.

The corporate entity is the NSDAP, with Adolf Hitler at the helm. The main product is Death. Not indiscriminate death; this death is aimed specifically at Jews and other undesirables, as laid out in the corporate guidelines written by important members of the board of directors, like Himmler, Goering, Goebbels and of course the CEO and Chairman of the Board Adolf Hitler. These corporate guidelines – aka [The Final Solution](#) – were handed down to managers like Höss. He made sure the SS men and soldiers under his command carried them out faithfully.

Sandra Hüller, who has won the European Film Award for Best Actress, plays Hedwig, the venal wife of the camp commandant. Like her husband Rudolf, she came from humble beginnings and is now living “the ideal National Socialist life” in the extended Reich (empire) that Hitler has created for the benefit of “normal” Germans like her.

When her husband is ordered from above to transfer to Berlin to take up what is actually a more important post, her lifestyle is threatened and she urges her husband to put up a fight against the political actors who have caused this upsetting situation. If not able to stop the transfer then to at least make sure that the house where she and her children are living is not given to the new commander who is to replace Rudolf.

We don't see any killings. We don't see any torture. The only scary moment for Höss and his children is, – while he and his kids are bathing in the river – when he finds human remains. That gets him out of the water fast, and he scoops up his children and runs back home with them.

And what a lovely home it is. A three-story house with heating installed to fend off the snowy winters. A backyard with green grass, a small swimming pool for the kids, with a slide, a gazebo where Hedwig and her lady visitors can sit and sip tea, and flowers, flowers, everywhere. The most beautiful flowers you can imagine. Red, white, and the very special golden yellow Mädchenaugen. Coreopsis. Girl's eyes. Beautiful two-tone flowers with a protruding brown-maroon heart. This makes the flowers resemble the iris and pupils of a girl's eyes.

Only if you have no sense of irony can a description of that flower have no effect on you. As when Hedwig puts a bunch of sheer petticoats on the table and instructs her Polish servant girls to “take only one,” while she goes to her bedroom and unwraps a full length brown mink coat, tries it on, and studies herself in the mirror while wrapping it around her like the models do in advertisement photos.

Later, when chatting with her lady neighbors – wives of other camp officers – they gossip about an overweight woman who picked a dress which had been worn by a Jewess half her size and didn't fit properly, but she insisted in having it anyway because she “loved” it and was going to go on a diet in order to be able to fit into it properly. And then Hedwig shows her Kaffee Klatsch girlfriends a diamond ring. “Guess where I found it? In the toothpaste.” They laugh and comment “How clever,” and “Yes, they are clever.” Then Hedwig tells them that she has ordered more tubes of toothpaste.

In German there is a word that describes these women: gierig. The official translation is “greedy.” But what they display is the same as what a kid who has hardly ever tasted chocolate displays when he is taken to a chocolate shop for the first time and told he can choose whatever he likes, but not too much. His mouth waters because he'd love to eat every single piece of chocolate in the shop, but he knows he can't, so he acts shy and chooses the 2 or 3 pieces that look delicious and he can savor later.

These women are hungry for the luxury items their captives brought with them to the camp. They are thirsty for the recognition they will get from their neighbors when they show off their pillaged dresses and rings and fur coats. And they are proud of their standing, as the wives of officers who are high enough up in the ranks to be able to “afford” to treat their women to these little trinkets. Meanwhile Hedwig and Rudolf's children play at night in bed with the gold fillings from extracted teeth.

Do you understand now what is meant by the banality of evil?

While all these scenes of what could pass for a normal domestic life play out in front of us, right there, at the back of the splendidly flowered garden is the gray cement wall of the camp, with a roll of barbed wire at the top. The soundscape, which remains well in the background is punctuated from time to time by distant gunshots, the occasional shouted order, a muted scream before a gunshot ends it.

The constant rumble of the crematorium is also muted. That's the production line working 24/7 to make sure that deadlines [pun intended] are met and orders are fulfilled. From time to time we see clouds of dark smoke emanate from the towers where the bodies are being turned into ash that will then serve as fertilizer for the garden.

Höss is an excellent manager and his skills are finally recognized by the powers that be. He is reassigned as the head of Auschwitz in order to manage the new big job that only he can take care of so efficiently: 700,000 Jews from Hungary must be disposed of urgently, and a contingent of them must be pared off as slave labor for the commanders who need them. Höss is the man who can deliver.

If you are 15 years old and you see this film, it might take you a while to fully grasp its significance. But, as time goes by and you see the world around you in a clearer light, you will begin to realize that you are surrounded by people who will grasp at any opportunity to get more out of life than they have now. And these are your neighbors. These are people you grew up with. These are the “normal” people who are able, like the Trumpista neofascists of today, to live with the cognitive dissonance of the death camp that borders the backyard as long as their private “gier” is being satisfied.



Richard Baer, Josef Mengele and Rudolf Höß at Solahütte (the vacation house) Auschwitz, 1944
Public domain via Wikimedia Commons

Selling Fascism

The Traveling Carnival Fascist Fairground



Henry Monnier, 1828

Fascism has become a marketable product again. And a very profitable one to boot.

Fascism is now being sold through a series of Traveling Carnivals both in the United States and Europe. And everywhere you look these days there are google-eyed Carny Barkers [pitching](#) the Traveling Carnival at the Rubes on the street. “You looking for a good time? Right this way, Ladies and Gentlemen, right this way! Step right up.”

Of course entering the Traveling Carnival Fascist Fairgrounds is always free. Once the Rubes are in, they become “[marks](#)”. In the old carnival days of the 30s, if you walked around the fairgrounds and spent your nickels and dimes foolishly on rigged games, like the duck shoot, where you were given a rifle with a crooked sight or a bent barrel, then the wink was given to the marker man and he would place a chalk mark on the back of your shoulder; that’s how you—the victim—became known as “the mark.”

The mark is then easily recognized by the other carnival cons in on the game and lured to other booths or tents where the mark is urged to spend his money until he has no more. But of course with barkers outside every tent yelling: “Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Everyone’s a winner. Double your money!” there is the promise to win a great deal more than what is invested, and because marks are gullible, and greedy for winnings, then if they have run out of nickels and dimes, they are “put on the send”, to go home—or these days to the ATM—and get more money, but now they bring back real cash paper money.

Yes, I’m still talking about how the Traveling Carnival Fascist Fairground operates. It’s a well-oiled, [expertly marketed con](#) game that takes in millions in cash on a daily basis and bilks millions of Rubes around the globe. Some of the Con Masters have even taken charge of countries like Hungary and Slovakia and Serbia and Albania. Some are hovering near the top of the pile, like in the Netherlands. In Spain and Portugal, where some people can still remember fascist rulers they had to live under, a resurgence is evident and the alarm bells are ringing.

Franco and Salazar closed the Iberian peninsula to democracy and progress, both of them ruling their countries with an iron fist. Salazar loved [corporatism](#), modeling his regime after the one in Italy. Franco was by far the most ruthless and bloody dictator of his era until Adolf rose to the top of the heap of bones. The place where the [Inquisition](#) was born is where the most dangerous cult-like sect within the Catholic Church calls home. [Opus Dei](#) arose in Spain and supported the repressive regime of Franco, harmonizing with the fascism of the day, and it seems as if it has never cut its ties with the would-be authoritarians who are around now.

The original Fascist carnival show con game was sold to the public by an Italian actor and screenwriter by the name of Benito Amilcare Andrea Mussolini. Later, after he ascended to the dictatorship of the corporate state, he wrote some books: *The Doctrine of Fascism* in 1932, and *The Corporate State* in 1935. He also wrote screenplays for a couple of films, the best known being *100 Days of Napoleon*, which was made in 1935 and released in the US in 1936.

Benito, like the fascists who followed him, knew well how to sell his product. He had learned [the power of the new media](#) and used it to his benefit, as did—and still do—the fascists who have followed. Moving pictures and radio opened up the world to marketing on a mass scale. These were mediums that had not existed before. Consumers no longer had to know how to read in order to be influenced to buy the product. Moving pictures give us the illusion of life. People moving and people talking just like in real life. And the good screenwriter and the good director, using expert camera technique and lighting can convince the viewer that what is being shown and said is true.

So when you entered Benito's movie house, or later [Adolf's movie theater](#), their version of the truth could be fed to you in the dark, to your staring eyes and your open ears, underpinned by an emotional music soundtrack and words that grab you, evoke an emotional response, and convince you that the product—fascism—is the cure for all ills in society and the product that will heal your troubled soul.

Today's Traveling Carnival Fascist Fairgrounds are no longer limited to a dark room with a screen at one end. The Fairgrounds are on your desktop and the carnival is in your hand. [Screens are everywhere](#). Ah, yes, the Fascist Fairgrounds are full of colorful characters and eye-catching tents which—for a small fee—you can enter and be entertained. Some are even free (TikTok, YouTube), but if you really want to have the complete experience you have to pay some kind of an entrance fee, whether it is with your personal information (data) or actual cash.

So, what's available at the carnival? How does it work?

The Traveling Carnival Fascist Fairground is made up of all sorts of interesting—for the Rube/mark—things to do. There are rides, like the "[Take Our Border Back](#)" trucker convoy that drove across the U.S. They went through Virginia to Florida, then Texas, Arizona and California. Along the way they were able to fly their banners proclaiming that the United States was being invaded by Mexicans and Central Americans. These truckers seem to have forgotten that their ancestors invaded the continent from afar and actually killed off most of the original inhabitants. But in the fascist lexicon "Might is Right", so killing off indigenous people is OK because, as is declared loudly by the conquistadors: "Possession is nine-tenths of the law."

In the Kingdom of Florida the local dictator, aka [Santo Ronaldo](#), even proposed opening up a theme park based on Adolf's Dachau, where "woke" people can be displayed behind barbed wire and taunted and tortured by the Rubes who pay to engage in blood sports.

Back in the old days, before the [latest crop of grifters](#) infiltrated (mostly) the Republican Party, there was Warren G. Harding and his Teapot Dome scandal. John Oliver explained [Harding and his scandals](#) expertly in an episode of Last Week Tonight. [Yes, the Democrats have [their own bunch of crooks](#) too!]

The Traveling Carnival also has food vendors who will sell you on the absolute necessity of cattle-ranching (and [government subsidies for the ranchers](#)), which you need in order to feed your burger habit, and [corn farming](#) (with its huge subsidies for the farmers) to feed those cattle and provide fuel for your farm vehicle, as well as provide you with flakes and corn dogs to increase your cholesterol and BMI ([body mass index](#)).

The Orange Menace, the latest American Master of The Con, is an expert vendor of these items. He even tried selling steaks to people once, although that venture, like many others he has tried to push onto the public, failed miserably.

The most interesting merchandise available to the Rube and sold by the con men at the Traveling Carnival Fascist Fairgrounds is guaranteed to stroke his ego and make him feel his masculinity rise to attention. Guns. [Guns are #1](#). The top of the hit parade for the mark who is convinced that he has to defend himself against people who are not like him. He professes to be non-Catholic, [white-skinned](#) and Christian (at least in brand name if not in actual practice). This self-description gives

him, according to the barkers at the carnival, the right to do unto others whatever the fuck he wants to do, as long as the others have a different skin color or a different religion.

Republicans in the United States and the new fascists in Europe haven't yet proclaimed this nihilist doctrine aloud like Adolf and his cronies did. But Vlad the Bad has no compunction about that. [He says it out loud](#). In fact he shouts it out as loud as he can on any screen he can inhabit. Anyone who is not of his religion [What doctrine does the KGB adhere to?] and not of his ethnic persuasion, is an [Unmensch](#). These cruel, wicked and inhuman people don't deserve to live. They can be slaughtered, their land taken from them and the survivors can be enslaved and forced to work for the [Übermensch](#).

If you walk into Vlad's tent at the carnival, you will enjoy the Kalashnikov [symbol of proud \[boy\] masculinity](#) that every soldier carries as he joins the constant parade of meat assaults against the barbarian hordes from the West who are trying to invade and topple Mother Russia, the seat of Wisdom and Holiness. Soldiers dying and missiles flying in the direction of the enemy are how your lust for blood is satiated, while the golden cupolas of the onion-domed churches glisten in the sun.

One thing you need to know about the modern Fascist Fairground carnival: All the games are run as [Flat Stores or Flat Joints](#), where the owner wins every time and the mark gets fleeced completely. Bankman-Fried and Bernie Madoff ran Flat Stores that raked in every dollar which was invested in their scam. They were caught. There are thousands of operators out there of the fascist persuasion who have never been caught. Why? Because some of them either have the power to write the laws or they have [corrupt friends who write the laws for them](#).

Of course the Traveling Carnival Fascist Fairground also has games of chance. Online Poker is one that grabs the dummies instantly. They see the shows that display the winner who rose from nowhere and attained the pinnacle of success, earning millions after finally being asked to appear at the poker table in Las Vegas. All the greedy wannabe Rubes out there are having orgasms in their dreams each time they see the flashing lights of the casino and the chips piling up on the table.

"If the question is, 'What percentage of people who play poker in casinos and/or online are winners?', then [the answer is probably somewhere around 5 percent](#), or even lower. ... The same is true—though to a lesser degree—online."

A [scam](#), or a confidence trick, is an attempt to defraud a person or group after first gaining their trust. Confidence tricks exploit victims using a combination of the victim's credulity, naïveté, compassion, vanity, confidence, irresponsibility, and greed.

Why do you think they love the Orange Monster Con Master? After years of preparing the marks for fleecing, gaining their confidence through books, appearances on TV and then a slew of outrageous lies, he steps out onto the world stage with [a coterie of fawning sycophants](#) who amplify his every falsehood until even a reincarnated [Goebbels](#) wouldn't be able to match him in the bigness of the lies.

Marks forget the simple rules: When something is too good to be true, it must be a con. Placing ideas in people's minds, like winning big on an investment that is bunk or on a game of chance that is rigged, is a basic tenet of selling fascism to the gullible. When the wannabe fascist leader says: I will take care of you. I will make life better for you! The naïve believe. Why? Because they have been softened up by the [razzle-dazzle](#) of the success story, the against-all-odds fight to glory that the Con Master has woven around himself.

Adolf was a failed architecture student, a failed artist who had briefly seen service in World War 1 on the losing side. He organized a [putsch in Munich](#) and that failed too. Failure after failure, until a merry band of psychopaths and sociopaths joined him and eventually placed him on the throne of Germany. And then he failed again, big time, and brought the whole house down. Ruin and destruction followed him everywhere he went.

The Orange Monster Con Master and his Traveling Carnival Fascist Fairground is no different. Using the technique of [Stochastic Terrorism](#), the fascist barker stirs up the lunatic fringe. They entered the tent that houses the [Freak Show](#) (a show where human oddities displayed themselves, often selling photos, Bibles or other memorabilia) at first to have a look at the freaky people in

there, but then they realized that this is how they could actually join the carnival and become part of the action.

Language used in the days immediately prior to the insurrectionist event of January 6 “arguably falls short of the standard of incitement, it is likely a candidate case of stochastic terrorism with several recognizable features: incendiary rhetoric from an influential figure; an audience primed and easily goaded into action, aligned with a conspiratorial movement; language-use which has plausible deniability; and an actual security threat as outcome.” ([link](#))

The Traveling Carnival Fascist Fairground is everywhere and working hard to steal your money and rape your mind. What every aspiring fascist leader should remember however is that failure and very often [a violent end](#) are what awaits the hubris inculcated in these [tyrants](#).



<https://www.img2go.com/ai-art-generator>

R.I.P. Pax Americana



King Donald of Oceania, Emperor Xi of Eastasia and Vladimir I of Eurasia

Disclaimer: Past the Past, a quarterly journal on history, would like to remind our readers that the information in this piece was put together from sources found in various places after the The Great Conflagration of 2207. The world order described here is still a matter of speculation and is being analyzed and discussed in earnest by historians. Because all digital sources of information were erased during The Great Conflagration, the only sources for the information provided below come from the Hamburg Manuscript, found in the ruins of the University Library in Hamburg, the handwritten Paris Declaration, discovered in a garret apartment in Paris, and what has been named the Athens Codex, a collection of various unsigned typewritten and handwritten papers which were gathered loosely into a manuscript. Some were in English, some in Greek, and one report of 7 pages in length was in what was then called Modern Hebrew.

Definition: Pax Americana, a state of comparative tranquillity throughout what has come to be regarded as the Modern Era. The Pax Americana encompassed the continental United States, Europe, Asia and most of the rest of the world. The Pax Americana was thus named because after the Second World War it was the United States that maintained peace and world order through its dominance—both economically and militarily.

Although the world was engaged in war until the capitulation of the Nazi regime in 1945, and was followed by a period known in history as the Cold War, peace was generally the state of the world until 2014 and the first invasion of Ukraine.

There had been wars on the periphery of the American Empire (now known as Oceania) and after the accession of Czar Vladimir I, wars of consolidation in Eurasia (formerly Russia) during the Pax Americana, however the three great powers, Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia did not engage in direct conflict with each other, knowing that to do so would most probably end in a nuclear holocaust from which none of them would ever recover.

After 2014, the world split into three, as predicted by novelist George Orwell in his seminal work, 1984. ([The book in its original version](#)—not the redacted and rewritten New Baptist version from 2031—is available from our library in Alexandria, Egypt.) War had been general and continuous, and mostly conventional, in the regions that could be considered as “soft” borders to the three great empires, as well as in the mineral-rich regions of Africa and South America, where the three great powers vied for control of resources.

Emperor Xi of Eastasia was able to play friend to Oceania or to Eurasia, as the political climate or the economic opportunity dictated. His clever maneuvering prevented a total dissolution into war on every front—i.e. every actual territorial borderline area between the three great powers.

On April 1, 2026 the three powers, headed by King Donald of Oceania, Vladimir I of Eurasia and Emperor Xi of Eastasia, met at the Great [Iaorana e Maeva](#) Conference in Papeete, Tahiti and pledged to refrain from direct territorial conflict. They proclaimed that this agreement was in perfect accord with the Capitalist Manifesto, which was the basis of competition and technological advance in each of the three empires and would ensure that all their people would benefit.

In addition to the [Capitalist Manifesto](#) (Louis O. Kelso and Mortimer J. Adler), the Big Three (as they were known) also decided to adapt the [Laws of Manu](#) to fit the modern social structures in their three realms.

In the territory of Eurasia, society was divided into Oligarkhi, Soldaty, Rabochie, Zveri (Oligarchs, Soldiers, Workers, Beasts). The religious leaders—Sviatye, a caste of their own—were commanded to preach the Evangelie Prevoskhodstva Belykh (Gospel of White Supremacy). From time to time, under the reign of Vladimir I, human sacrifices of the Sveri were carried out, especially in the aftermath of the First Ukrainian War, which ended in 2025 with the Armistice of Christiania, when 365 captured Ukrainian soldiers were crucified in Red Square during the Orthodox Easter service presided over by the Patriarch and Vladimir I himself.

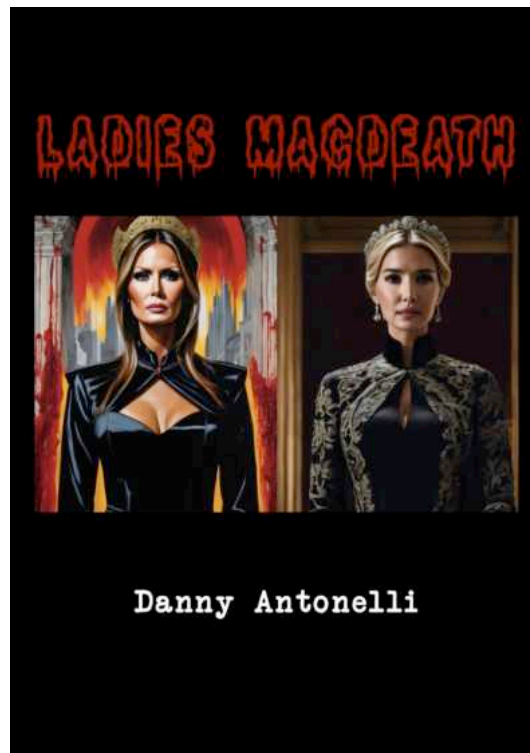
In Eastasia, the Xi dynasty enacted a law that split society into the Guardians of the Empire, Guardians of Business, Guardians of Work. After the capital was moved to Shanghai in 2027, a fourth class or caste was described in official documents as the Unproductive Subversives. People in this caste were officially excluded from all social benefits, including healthcare, credit, public housing and licensed employment. A strict 70/30 ratio male child law was enacted in 2031, and at the age of 7, those female children who exceeded the 30% limit for their year were sent to work in African colonies where they extracted minerals in the mines until they died from exhaustion. Some reports say that many of these women escaped into the densely forested areas near the mines, established centers of resistance, bred with locals and convicts that had escaped from the mining operations of the other empires and survived the Great Conflagration. No verified claims have come to light so far, although there are rumors of a tribe known as Crypto-Han who occupy an area near what was once called Lake Victoria.

In Oceania the three classes had been separating from each other for quite some time but the ultimate separation was finally encoded in law by the Supreme Court in 2027 in a 9-0 decision in the case *Braun vs. Swift*. Male dominance was enshrined through this law. All financial gains made by any woman in any capacity were declared null and void, unless she was married. Then her earnings would automatically go to her male mate. In the *Braun vs. Swift* case it was ruled that since at the time of her earnings Swift was not married, all her earnings automatically belonged to her manager and the facilitator of her work, Braun. Thus the decision also specified the three classes: Male Alpha 1, also known as the Oligarchs, Male Alpha 2, known as the Entrepreneurs, and Male Alpha 3, known as the Toughies. Females were relegated to what was commonly described as the Gene Pool. Females in the Gene Pool were not allowed to resist advances made by Alpha 1 and Alpha 2 males, but if they were able to defeat a Toughie in hand-to-hand combat, then they were gifted to an Oligarch for his own personal Gene Pool.

Common to all three realms was a ban on the practice of any religion associated with Mohammad or his teachings. People caught with the book or caught practicing the religion in any of the three empires were executed on the spot. In Oceania, the realm of King Donald, a fundamental version of Christianity was declared the religion of the empire. In Eurasia, an orthodox version of Christianity was declared the religion of the realm, and in Eastasia, worship of the emperor, known as Xi-ism, became the standard.

More information about this era in world history is being uncovered through archeological remains that are being discovered on a regular basis. We expect to be able to update this general history of the Modern Era in the next edition of *Past the Past*, your history journal.

Ladies MacDeath



Ladies MacDeath is a comedy/drama/musical about the machinations behind the throne and how tyrants always attempt to dethrone the tyrant who came before them. You can download the pdf file from here: [download Ladies MacDeath](#).

AUTHOR'S NOTE

What we know from reading history [some of us still do that] is that behind every throne there is a conspiracy linked to people who want to topple whoever sits upon that throne. The toppling comes, sooner or later. Sometimes the person on that throne dies of natural causes. Sometimes they die of unnatural causes. But one way or another the King or Queen is replaced with a new King or Queen or Emperor or Empress.

Democracy does away with this ancient process where the rule was “Might is Right.”

The toppling of the leader comes about in a peaceful way and is undertaken by the people who are being ruled. They have the ability to openly give their opinions and then act on their opinions through a process called voting. This voting thing has traditionally been tied to a timeline, every two years, every four years, every five or seven years, depending on the form of the democracy and its set of rules.

Currently, in one of the western states— a great world power—a would-be dictator, a would-be King and his cohort are trying to destroy all vestiges of democracy and bring their authoritarian would-be state into line with the two other great power authoritarian states currently on the planet. This amusement you are reading, or are going to read, is an attempt to show the machinations behind any throne. The fact that such machinations may eventually come to pass in a country that has had a tradition of democracy—however flawed that democracy might be—for over 200 years, is scary. It is scary because it could result in the death of millions in a rather short period because of violence related to the takeover, but even more scary because it could result in the death of billions because these new authoritarians are proponents of the man-made climate disaster that is currently underway.

The characters depicted in this petite drama are of course fictional, although their names may have some resonance because they sound just like people who are participants in the public sphere today. They are pure fiction, with only accidental resemblance to real people.

If this entertainment amuses you, I am happy. If this prank annoys or angers you, I am happy. Ladies MacDeath is a distraction. It is a distraction calculated to open your eyes and brain to the horrors that await you if you are trapped inside a system that is governed by one, or a coterie around that one, without giving you, the audience, any possible ability to either comment upon the evil you see, or remove it without resorting to the violence called for in tyrannicide.

The ones who conspire to kill a tyrant in this little piece aspire to become tyrants themselves, so whatever fate befalls them can be seen as their just deserts.

This merriment (with dark overtones) is written in such a way that a clever composer of music could turn it into a theater piece. In fact, I have added some classical vocal descriptions to the various members of the cast in order to give a composer a push in the right direction when writing for that particular character.

Enjoy your reading. Enjoy your composing. Enjoy your freedom as long as you have it. There are tyrants all around us, and they are seeking a throne to sit on for the time remaining them on earth.

This bagatelle will, hopefully, motivate you, the audience, to let democracy survive yet another challenge and self-correct itself so that in the future democracy will be able to immunize itself from the deadly virus of authoritarianism.

All the illustrations in **Ladies MacDeath** were generated by giving commands to Artificial Intelligence.

America Sucks

That's the title of a poem I wrote back in the 1970s when I was living in Los Angeles and aspired to be part of the post-Beat Generation. In those days I had read all the good guys, Proudhon, Bakunin, Max Stirner, Orwell's books about being down and out as well as his sojourn in Andalusia. I had a rudimentary grasp of Marxism. Tito and the Italian Communists were still doing the world a favor and being part of the non-aligned movement, not siding with the Soviets or the Americans. Just a few years earlier I had traveled from New Delhi to London and back to New Delhi, overland, through Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey without a hateful word or glance being raised against me. Of course I was traveling on an Italian passport, so that was an advantage. The Americans crossing the borders did get some hard stares and long waits and extra backpack checks before they were eventually waved through to the other side. No wars were being fought. I traveled alone by bus and train, mixed in with the locals and nobody ever treated me badly. In fact, I was able to sleep in a bus station office one night in Tehran because the bus I needed to take would leave at 6 in the morning and the bus station manager figured it would be easier for me if I slept there. Kindness.



Danny, 1973. Green Card photo.

When I got to America in 1972, it was Nixon's country, even though he would be forced out soon. After a year or so in Baltimore, I made it back to Los Angeles, where I had spent my youth, growing up in Beverly Hills (not the rich part) and where I eventually enrolled in LACC, which then got me to Cal State Northridge (CSUN) where I studied English Literature. My friends were all in the entertainment industry, TV, films, advertising, and the fact that I was leaning left politically didn't faze anybody at all. Leftism was OK. Jane Fonda was a leftie and still working in movies, so what was the harm? Of course I took film classes, worked on student films as a boom-man and grip, wrote scripts, like everyone, but was so beguiled by the Beat Generation, which had been introduced to me in Durban while I was at university there, that I wanted to be Gregory Corso's poetic heir, be Ferlinghetti's godson, be published by City Lights and careen across the United States in a wild Kerouac/Kesey journey that would bring my work to the eyes of every American.

Things went otherwise.

My script about an anarchist who steals a battlefield nuke from NATO and tries to blow up Paris was "not the kind of material suitable for production." My script about a coup in Africa (entitled *Coup!*) disappeared from the table when my agent went to a script meeting. He said: "Sorry," with a twisted smile. A few years later I saw the title as a novel, set in Africa, with a plot more-or-less like mine, but cleverly elaborated and changed so that in case my script ever turned up, no copyright infringement could be claimed. Hollywood at its finest. *America Sucks*.

Meanwhile, I was reading my poetry at various small bookstores in Hollywood, with and without jazz guitar accompaniment. Usually, *America Sucks* would close out my reading. It drew various types of reaction. Smiles, frowns, some embarrassing side glances, once in a while an angry stare,

and once, from a gay poet who followed me to the podium, a humorous comment: “I like to suck!” The laughter he got was a smooth transition to his homoerotic verses. He was a good poet, with great images. He ended up being a professor of literature at a Midwestern university.

I ended up being a lyricist for pop, rock, metal and country music in Germany.

A couple of my friends went on to fame and fortune in the entertainment industry, and we are still friends today. The difference between us is that they were able to understand the system they were dealing with from a practical side. Their skills were needed in the industry, and they made sure their skills were being paid for very well. I was naive. I believed that it was only technical skills one had to develop. Write well and you will be rewarded. But the skill my friends had developed, beyond the technical skill, was the ability to understand how the system actually functioned and how the people in the system did business. One friend of mine, who writes music for films, will not write one single note of music until he sees the money on the table. The other, who works in animation, learned how to make himself indispensable to the company’s success, thus ensuring that he is not shit out of the system at age 50 because his salary is too big.

My naive idealism, my dreams of belonging to a new generation that could never be what the old generation was, drove me to travel abroad, to a place where I felt more at home: Europe. After all, I’m a European, not an American, even though I was deeply affected by the American culture (or as one of my friends terms it: the American *subculture*). I was born in Italy. I spent my early life in Zagreb. When I was in second grade at Good Shepherd in Beverly Hills, Dick McCann screamed at me: “You lost the war!” I didn’t know what war he was talking about. It didn’t matter, really. It was made quite clear to me that no matter how well I played baseball (I was an All-Star in Little League and PONY League), no matter how well I was able to surf Malibu, to blend in, I was not an American, and I never would be an American. Then my mother got transferred to Madagascar and my Beverly Hills High School career was broken up just before my junior year, just before some of my schoolmates would not be able to beat the draft despite their rich parents, and some would end up dead in Vietnam.

Boy was I glad then that I was not an American. *America Sucks*.

From Madagascar, we went to Nairobi, Kenya and I ended up getting a better education at St. Mary’s than I had at Beverly High. I read Shakespeare and the Bronte sisters, was a prime debater, won an elocution contest, and was encouraged to write an article for the yearbook. And it’s where I first started to learn to play the guitar. This was followed by two years of unrewarding university studies in Durban, where my leftist leanings and my love of the Beat Generation, as well as my fascination with drugs, were all nurtured. Sure, there was Apartheid, but we broke the barriers by going to the Blue Note after midnight where an all-black jazz band played to an all-white audience of university students mixed in with jazz-lovers. Boy, it was great to feel like a rebel with a cause, until of course my drug habit kicked me into psychosis and a stint in the Pietermaritzburg asylum, where I was eventually able to recover enough so that my mother could pick me up and take me back to Nairobi.



In Pietermaritzburg.

We traveled by ship, stopped in Mozambique, the Comoros islands and in Zanzibar before we landed in Mombasa. I was on a heavy Stelazine Thorazine regimen, but was able to eat a bowl full of shrimp peri-peri in Lourenço Marques with pleasure as my mother and I watched the sunset from the restaurant terrace before riding back to the ship with our driver, George Washington. We sent a hundred postcards from Zanzibar on the day before the revolt which overthrew the Sultan. Our friends got postcards with the Sultan stamps and the new revolutionary government date-stamp. We sent them very valuable philatelic material. I wonder how many of them realized that?

When I finally escaped from America again in 1980, it was on a romantic journey to Lisbon, where I would write my first book while ghosting a book (for money) for a Syrian businessman. Besides that, I also taught English to a Freudian psychiatrist. It was really fun, because when people asked me what I did, I always replied: "I go to a psychiatrist, and he pays me!" It was my secret pleasure. And it always caused consternation in people. These were mostly people from the music business in Lisbon who wanted to go international, so they would hire me to write lyrics for them in English, for cash of course. No credit. I didn't mind. I needed to pay rent and eat. Until one day I played some of my songs for one of the publishers and he took me to play live in front of a singer and her manager. They took one of my rock songs, recorded it with Portuguese lyrics, released it as a single, and it shot to number one. With my name in the credits!



Don't worry. It didn't make me rich. After all, Portugal is a very small market and 50,000 sold copies of the single made me about \$500. Which was enough to buy me a ticket to Germany, the third largest music market in the world. In Hamburg I found that I was not only needed, but that my skill could be well rewarded. And, in contrast to the *America Sucks* music scene, I got both name credit and money, even when it wasn't in advance. And then I got lucky. Another number one hit. But this time in France and Belgium with a song for which I wrote the lyrics. But don't worry, it didn't make me famous (or rich actually), but it did help me survive for a few years while I didn't give up my day job as an English teacher and translator.



Believe it or not, you don't make millions in the music industry with every hit record, especially if your total share is only about 12% of the author's part. What? Yeah. The original lyricist gets 50% (actually 25% because the publisher takes half), the sub-lyricist (me writing in a different language from the original) gets half of that 12.25%. It's OK pay for a few hours of work, but it won't put you in a mansion and a Rolls. Nor will writing for heavy metal bands and pop groups that want to break into the British and American markets. One of my good friends in the German music industry told me lately that even Nena, with her American hit *99 Red Balloons* got shafted by the *America Sucks* music industry. Let's put it this way, she got less for her hit song over there than I got paid to write lyrics anonymously for a popular German metal band signed with SONY. Over here, she made tons of money with that song in German and the album and other hits and other albums, which eventually got her a seat as a judge in one of the casting shows that are now so popular. But the *America Sucks* music industry took what it wanted and said what it always says when your lawyers tell them you want your money: "Sue me!"

Yes, I'm still over on the left field side of the diamond, near the track in front of the fence, taking home runs away from people who try and tell me that capitalism is god's answer to how humans should comport themselves. The latest homer I took away was the argument somebody made about how generous and kind billionaires can be. Besides the generosity of Microsoft's founder Bill Gates in regard to a vaccine, this person quoted the 4 billion dollars donated by MacKenzie Scott, the ex-wife of the world's richest man, Amazon owner Jeff Bezos. Now I am certainly not against wealthy people giving away their money. In fact, I wish they would give away more of it, or even just pay their fair share of taxes. Not paying tax is often a prime source of their wealth. The fact that MacKenzie Scott has decided to [give lots of money away](#) is a good thing. "In April 2019, Scott posted her first ever tweet to lay out terms of their divorce affecting shareholders. She gave him [Bezos] 75% of their Amazon stock and voting control of her shares, which left her a 4% stake in Amazon worth \$38 billion or so at the time (as of early October [2020], her net worth is more than \$60 billion). Overnight, she became one of the richest women in the world."

Her decision to give away a bit over \$4 billion came as a surprise that made other billionaires snarl at the betrayal they felt from a senior member of "the club" that George Carlin mentions and reminds us that "[you ain't in it](#)." What she has decided to do is to give her donations to charitable organizations that can then funnel the money to those who need it. That's one way of doing it. Hopefully it will be effective. But it begs the question: Why does this need to be done? The answer is that it needs to be done because *America Sucks*, and sucks big-time. With a functioning social net and Medicare-for-all, as well as a progressive tax system which reduces the billions in profits to (at the very most) a million in profits for shareholders, the system would be a shining example to what can be done in the world if people are fair to each other, distribute wealth to those places where it is needed instead of funneling money into disastrous wars and the destruction of our habitat.

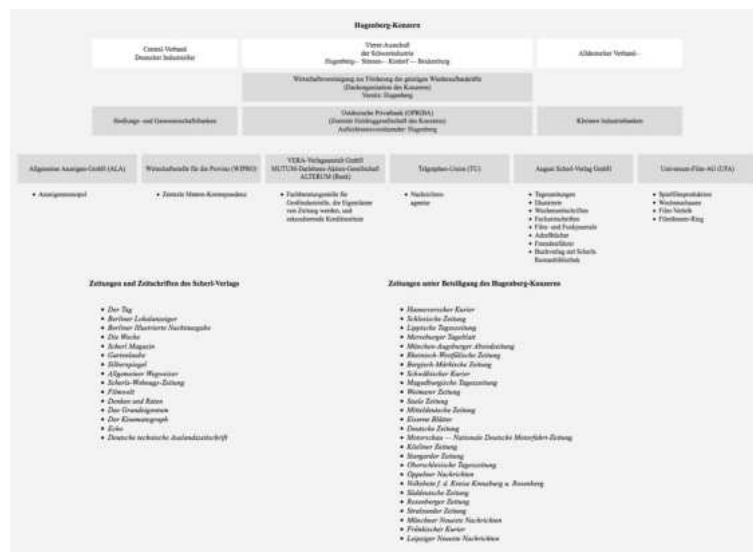
Of course I am still the naive idealist who went back to Europe where the social net still catches a lot of people, despite the holes that have been poked in it by the capitalist true-believers over the past 20 years. Yet I am happy to be in a place where the wrathful sociopathic energy of the capitalist is confronted with legal barriers that cannot always be overcome with huge amounts of money.

The sad thing is, that though I wrote that poem almost 50 years ago, it's still true: *America Sucks*.

1929: Nazis in the Antechamber

ARD, also known as Channel One, is the main state-run broadcaster in Germany. On 7 October it will start showing the third season of [*Babylon Berlin*](#). In order to prepare the German audience for the third season, ARD has put together a 44-minute documentary which highlights the true political and financial circumstances of the time. Not only is it informative, but it sheds light on a company and person that even Germans who know their own history quite well were not aware of: Alfred Hugenberg and the [*Hugenberg-Konzern*](#) (Hugenberg Corporation).

“... Alfred Hugenberg, who is, among other things, head of Universum-Film-AG (UfA) and the most powerful publisher in the republic, who has bought an empire with the money he earned from the heavy armaments industries. His main enemy: Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann, who is fighting with great persistence with the victorious powers for compromises in the [Young Plan](#) – for a peaceful future for Germany in a united Europe.”



Hugenberg has newspapers and magazines that are owned outright (Scherl-Verlag), and newspapers in which he is a shareholder (Zeitungen unter Beteiligung). His monopoly of the news market is even greater than that of Rupert Murdoch (Note: *Babylon Berlin* is shown on what used to be Murdoch's Sky TV, bought by Comcast in 2018). Like Murdoch, Hugenberg also owns a powerful film studio, the largest film studio in Germany, the [UFA](#), which will not only make classics by Fritz Lang and Josef von Sternberg, but will also produce films which awaken nationalist emotions in the masses who have hitherto been faithful communists and socialists, a working class that knows in its gut that it must oppose the oligarchs, and yet, is so easily hypnotized by the simple stories of great German Emperors and kings and heroes that are put on the screen and seem to erase the humiliating defeat suffered by Germany in 1918.

“Hugenberg grieves for the monarchy and fights Stresemann. In return, he also allied himself with the Nazis, made pacts with Adolf Hitler and the Berlin Regional Director Joseph Goebbels. Their goal is a referendum against the *Young Plan*. In October 1929, Stresemann dies of a heart attack. The democratic parties mourn, Hugenberg and Goebbels rub their hands with glee. When the world economic crisis also reaches Germany and puts Berliners in shock, the anti-democrats see the end of the Weimar Republic coming.”

This is how ARD begins to prepare us for the upcoming season of *Babylon Berlin* which, if you have not had the chance to see from the beginning, I strongly urge you to do. In my opinion it's the first really well-produced and directed German series that also has a strong political message which resonates in our time. As happened back in 1929 when the Nazis were in the antechamber of power,

so today is the AfD in the antechamber, legitimately elected in many of the poorest districts in Germany, getting serious recognition by the media outlets owned by oligarchs as well as by the state-owned media, and supported by big money from some known and some dark and unknown sources.

De-Nazification was always just a half-hearted process after WW2. It had to look like it was happening in the eyes of the world, but what really happened was that some of the big fish were put on trial, a few of them executed, a few took their own lives, but many more of the big fish were just thrown back into the water, swam away into their familiar hunting and breeding pools and continued to run the industrial and political empires that they ran prior to and during the war.

Nazis or no Nazis, big money people always seem to escape punishment, even if, like Hugenberg, they enable the rise of terrorist monsters like Hitler and Goebbels, or Trump Inc. as have Murdoch and the [Trump enablers](#).

Hugenberg, besides his media empire, was also the head of a political party that sat in the Reichstag, the [DNVP](#), German National People's Party.



It all began with an organization called the [Alldeutscher Verband](#), the All-German Association that was started in 1891 with the help of, yes, you guessed it, Alfred Hugenberg. It was influential before WW1 and after the defeat in 1918:

“Its approximately 40,000 members belonged to various political parties. Although the number of members was never very large, the All-German Association, not least with the help of its *Alldeutsche Blätter* (All-German Paper), unleashed lively nationalist and anti-liberal propaganda, and in the process had a considerable opinion-forming effect until the end of World War I.”

[Heinrich Claß](#) (Note: the ß has been mostly replaced with “ss” in modern German), the head of the All-German Association demanded the establishment of a “national dictatorship” and – with strong anti-Semitic references – the repression of “foreign nationalism”. Besides all this, in 1924 he was also suspected of taking part in a plot to murder Hans von Seeckt, the head of the armed forces. There is a trial, but nothing comes of it. In 1926 he is once again before the courts because he is suspected of plotting a coup. Of course nothing comes of this either. And later, during the [NSDAP](#) domination of the Reichstag from 1933 to 1945, he is seated with the Nazis as a powerless “guest,” like his friend and accomplice Alfred Hugenberg. Neither of these men are considered to be instigators by the allies after the war. In the eyes of allied justice these super-rich enablers are only “followers” who lost their way. They survived the war and died at home in the 1950s.



Sitting L to R: Hermann Göring, Reich Commissioner for Aviation and the Prussian Ministry of the Interior; Adolf Hitler, Reich Chancellor; Franz von Papen, Vice Chancellor. Standing L to R: Franz Seldte, Minister of Labor; Dr. Dr. Günther Gereke; Lutz Graf Schwerin von Krosigk, Reich Minister of Finance; Wilhelm Frick, Reich Minister of the Interior; Werner von Blomberg, Reich Minister of Armed Forces; Alfred Hugenberg, Minister of Economics and Food. (Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-H28422 / CC-BY-SA 3.0)

Both of these men, Claß and Hugenberg, started their campaigns for a “pure” Germany early in their careers. Claß started soon after he passed his exams to become a lawyer, in 1894, as a founding member of the *Deutscher Bund* (German Federation), which propagated a “pure Germanism” by excluding ethnic minorities. Under a pseudonym he writes a best-selling history of Germany which goes into a 19th printing, all the way through to the end of the Nazi regime.

Sound and Fury

When films with sound arrived in Germany, there was a huge push-back from journalists, critics and filmmakers like Charlie Chaplin, who wrote articles about how films with sound will ruin the international character of films that conquered the world through facial expression and movement. They were certain films would now become chained through language to national markets and thus lose their power, bringing an end to the industry. But *The Singing Fool* with Al Jolson arrives and breaks all box office records. It looks like the future of sound film is secure – if there is plenty of music to be heard! But there is someone who recognizes the potential of films with sound, Hugenberg’s friend and advisor Joseph Goebbels. In his diary for 2 September 1929 Goebbels wrote: “I was surprised at the exceptionally advanced technology of films with sound. ... We have to recognize the future possibilities here.” And recognize the possibilities he did.

Again, in his diary entry for 3 September 1929 Goebbels writes: “This Fall a series of decisions will be made. ... The war has begun!” Just the other day as he was being interviewed by Tucker Carlson, Steve Bannon declared that the war would begin on 3 November.

Here a [transcript](#) of a segment of that interview:

Steve Bannon: ... Or here’s what’s going to happen. Donald Trump is going to win the vote on the only day that matters. That’s November 3rd. He’s going to win the real election in the way we’ve done it with secret ballots, with people going into a booth and voting for president of the United States, OK, by that evening, he will be the winner. And what they’re going to do is that between the lawfare they’ve got with eight hundred attorneys under Eric Holder, the mob they’ve got with Antifa and the radical elements of Black Lives Matter, but most importantly, the digital muscle of Facebook and Twitter, they’re going to sit there and they’re gonna not declare Trump the winner.

Tucker Carlson: Huh. And then maybe the real contest begins. Steve Bannon, I’m glad that you came on. Thank you very much.

Steve Bannon: That’s when the war starts.

Tucker Carlson: I’m beginning to think that’s true.

Goebbels knew a war against the enemies of his party was coming. And he was going to use every means at his disposal to make sure his party and his ideas won out. He understood the techniques of propaganda so well that he was able to use them effectively to propel a minority party into the Reichstag and then maneuver it into a position to take over the government, with no small help from the anti-democratic forces led by the likes of Hugenberg and Claß.

Goebbels and his propaganda machine was so effective that it has lasted into today, with TV, social media and even popular bands leading the charge. Old Nazi propaganda films that now have a cult following among the new generation of American fascists are the films of Leni Riefenstahl. Her first major propaganda film entitled *Sieg des Glaubens* (Victory of Faith) portrays the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP) in an aesthetically pleasing documentary. Her biggest international hit, which still resonates today with advertisers and political propagandists everywhere is *Triumph of the Will*, which won a Gold Medal at the Venice Film Festival in 1935. *Day of Freedom – Our Armed Forces* also won her a prize, and two films about the Olympics held in Berlin in 1936 earned her a gold medal from the International Olympic Committee. Despite his official support for her film work, she has a tense relationship with the Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels. Goebbels is skeptical about her friendship with Hitler. There is some obvious jealousy for

her skill as a propagandist, and animosity because of her personal relationship with the man Goebbels is in love with.



Leni Riefenstahl, who also escaped justice in Nuremberg, went on to have an unhindered post-WW2 career, even being accredited as a photographer for the [1972 Olympic games in Munich](#) where, as you might remember, there was a terror attack and a botched rescue which cost a number of innocent lives. Eventually Leni even gets an Emmy for a film about her life story and lives out her life in peace and fame until 2003.

You must, by now, have understood that if you are super-rich or super-famous, and you are able to ally yourself with anti-democratic forces who live by the gun and maybe even die by the gun, your chances to prosper and survive will be almost certain, even after a huge defeat like WW2 or the fall of the Confederate States of America. Oh there might be a few sacrificial lambs sent to the slaughter after the fires are spent in order to make it look like justice is being carried out, but somehow or another the rich and famous will continue with their lives hardly disturbed by the temporary bump in the road to their happy and prosperous future.

Follow the link to the original words and an English translation to [The Song of the Class Enemy](#) “Das Lied vom Klassenfeind”, which was written by Bertolt Brecht in 1930 (then set to music by Rolf Lukowsky and sung by Ernst Busch). Bertolt Brecht was a German Marxist playwright and poet who devoted much of his work to opposing Nazism.

The Song of the Class Enemy was written in that context.

Here is the link to the song in German:

Ernst Busch – Das Lied vom Klassenfeind: <https://youtu.be/61B2oN5tV3M>

What Me Worry? Watching From Planet Europa

Good weather in Hamburg

Equinox brings sunshine

While the USA burns and police rampage, killing anyone who dares to even look askance at them, and while the fascist machine gets its gears well-oiled for the massacres to come, Hamburg is experiencing a late resurgence of warm weather and sunshine. It won't last of course. The equinox is here and after this brief window of warmth and sun, the darkness will descend and our six months of chilly misery will begin, until sometime around the next equinox in March, when we will once again be watching the sun rise ever-higher into the sky. Not that it will necessarily bring warmth and good weather when it does that, but at least we will know that behind the clouds up there the orb is climbing steadily to its zenith.

The disastrous political situation in the US will eventually cause problems for us over here in the (currently) neutral zone. Americans are not well-liked anymore, and since some American lady turned out to be a Covid-19 super-spreader in [Garmisch-Partenkirchen](#) last week, the Likes for Yanks have dropped considerably. But eventually, if the trend continues, the American Reich will make itself felt through frenemies like the UK and Hungary and Poland and, not far behind them, perhaps Italy. Though to tell you the truth, nobody believes Italy will do anything rash because the politicians are well aware of the fact that an Italian (kinda like me) is only interested in enjoying life by eating well and making as much love as possible before *La Morte* comes to pull you into the underworld. Oh, and of course the underworld that is in the real world would never stand for an entity that could potentially stop their lucrative business in sex, drugs and rock and roll.

What is it like to watch you poor Americans?

Well, picture a huge 53 QT Stainless Steel Stock Pot similar to this:



[CONCORD](#) Stock Pot

And then imagine it is filled to the brim with water and that water is boiling. And not far away from this massive pot is a tank full of water which contains numerous lobsters. They have been caught and their pincers have been made useless as attack weapons by thick rubber bands, and yet, though they can't really fight, they are alive in the water, all crowded together to be sure, but somehow it seems that despite the crowding, life will go on as before, perhaps, hopefully, well, maybe, who knows? They don't because they cannot see what I see from over here beyond the boiling water. I see the stainless steel Stock Pot. And I see the lobsters. And I know what is going to happen to those lobsters. And, my American friends: You are the lobsters!

There is a website which attempts to convince people that you can be humane when killing a lobster. This is what they say:

Is there a humane way to kill a lobster? What's the best way to kill a live lobster for cooking? There is much debate on whether lobsters feel pain or not, but we believe a quick plunge into hot water will make for [a quick death](#).

There is not much debate on whether human beings feel pain or not. They do. We do. And given the fact that the authoritarian enemies among you are not known for their humaneness, they might not deal out a death which is quick and painless. In fact, it may very well have many of the trappings of a previous regime known well in history to have created wonderful places to gather people together so that they could be guarded well by as few soldiers as necessary. These wonderful places are called concentration camps precisely because they concentrate prisoners in one location. And of course our frenemies in Britain used them with great skill in southern Africa during their war against the [Boers](#).

Many people now prefer to call these establishments internment camps, but basically they are the same thing. Lots of people who could possibly cause trouble for the rulers are placed in one place surrounded by fences and watched over by people with guns. And of course where I live now, in Germany, the camps became famous for their *Arbeit Macht Frei* slogan worked into their wrought-iron gates and plastered over their entrances.



Dachau concentration camp near Munich, Germany. Photo: Danny Antonelli.

So while I enjoy the last vestiges of a summer that barely showed itself this year, I see from afar what you poor lobsters cannot possibly understand. I see you being de-clawed, stacked up in one place, and very unmercifully eliminated from the game, like that fly Bukowski eliminates from the game at the beginning of one of his novels.

It's true. I'm currently a pessimist as regards the future of the USA and of course by extension the future of Europe and the rest of the world. The madmen sitting atop the structures of power have a total disregard for the planet Earth and its inhabitants. But here I am on planet Europa gazing at the slow-motion collapse of civilization that has begun over there in the western half of the planet and will slowly but surely jump across the pond to engulf Airstrip One (as Orwell liked to call it) and then come here to where I eat a croissant and sip a large *Milchcafe* at a Jewish cafe that has sunshine in the morning on all its tables outside on the sidewalk because nobody sits inside anymore during this Covid-19 pandemic.

Each time I stumble across the BBC web page or Huffington Post or CounterPunch, my pessimism gets another boost and only the sun on my face keeps me from descending into a dark melancholy. But soon the sun will be gone. What then? What will I do?

I'm trying to keep busy, working on my artistic [projects](#), earning some money from people who pay for my other more technical skills. Artistic projects have stopped earning significant amounts of money, you know. Back in the 80s and 90s when I was quite *au courant*, the pennies from heaven made my life quite pleasant at times. Of course, being a sensible person, I never gave up using my other skills to earn steady hard cash. And now even that is drying up. Besides this pandemic thing,

apparently, when you get older people tend to not want to work with you anymore. I feel like an old Inuit being put on a little floating iceberg and pushed out into the foggy ocean.

And yet: What Me Worry?

I'm watching a whole nation being destroyed, its good, thinking masses being eliminated, its future more firmly under the death grip of oligarchs than ever before. And these oligarchs laugh at the revelations of their own scandalous behavior, as the Collateral Murder, Panama Papers, Snowden revelations, Blue Leaks and the FinCEN files spill over the digital world, nothing happens to them. They rise from the mud like Golems that cannot be killed.

I'm over here. You're over there. You're yelling and screaming as you get dropped into the boiling water, and there is nothing I can do to stop the slaughter. But rest assured, I will start to worry soon enough.

Remember this guy? He was a lobster that didn't have a chance either:



Salvador Allende-Platz, Hamburg, Germany. Photo: Danny Antonelli.

Costa-Gavras: A Camera's Eye for Truth



Still from *State of Siege*.

Costa-Gavras has shown us, over and over again, how the state can and will silence all opposition when those who worship at the altar of power feel threatened by ordinary people and their desire for justice and freedom. And how the police organs of the state will not hesitate to use any means necessary to attain their goal.

Not too long ago, one night, and early into the morning, I watched a double-feature of Costa-Gavras films, *State of Siege* (1972) and *Missing* (1982). This kept me awake until a little after two in the morning. Then I couldn't sleep because my brain was working overtime thinking about the methods that had been used to suppress dissent. Both films showed quite clearly the US playbook on overthrowing democratic societies that put American business interests in danger. Then, a week later, I watched *Betrayal* (1988) and was reminded of the fact that nothing has changed in the realm of racist rhetoric and evil deeds, and that the FBI hasn't changed either, they've just gotten even better, since 1988, at surveillance and extra-judicial activities.

In *State of Siege*, Costa-Gavras lets us see that the pattern for domination has been in place for a long time and, no matter what the resistance to this domination, it is met with brutal force. The same pattern is shown in *Missing*. Since *Missing* was made 10 years after *State of Siege*, you might have thought that maybe something positive had developed in the decade in-between. But no. *Missing* takes place in an unnamed South American country, but everyone knows it's Chile (and Argentina, and Brazil), where people were swept up off the streets and herded into stadiums and then were executed or just disappeared. Some thrown out of helicopters or airplanes into the ocean — which was spoken of with admiration by power-worshipping Republican Erick Erickson.

Betrayal brings the topic of racism in America into sharp focus. The “hunting” scenes and later the “camping” scenes explore the casual cruelty and the indoctrination that reduces people of color to a non-human status, to “mud people.” That was back in 1988. Today, I believe, a film like this could not be made. It wouldn't get the green light because of language, for one thing, but the danger of retaliation for actors, producers and the director is so heightened today that nobody would dare bring reality into such stark focus. It's bad enough that those who govern are undoubtedly racist, but if they were to disparage a film like *Betrayal* you can be sure that their militia-henchmen would get the message in the same way they did in Michigan when they showed up in front of the state capitol.

Plans of action and procedure for an organized takeover of the state, as outlined in things like the [Venezuelan Coup contract](#), the [Homeland Security Analyst Desktop Binder](#) and the [CIA Manual on trickery and deception](#), are nothing compared to Edward Luttwak and his [Practical Handbook for a Coup D'Etat](#). And, as *Betrayal* shows us, the right-wing forces have such plans drawn up already

and are anxious to employ them. 1988 was eight years into the Reagan regime, which expertly ravaged Central and South America as well as fuelling the Iraq-Iran war. It was also the final stage of right-wing infiltration of all levels of government.

In *State of Siege*, around minute 57, a speech is given in Washington at the International Police Academy to police officials from every nation in South America and other developing countries around the world about “anti-social activities that threaten the free world” and “irresponsible elements striving to pass themselves off as revolutionaries” and then the cops in attendance are told:

“... the nations responsible for the free world have now realized the urgency of putting an end to terrorism and restoring the rule of law and order. Police officials, since they are the front line fighters in the defence of society, have a duty to learn more about these problems in order to better solve or combat them. Such was the main purpose that led to the establishment of our academy, so that the best representatives of all police forces in the free world can meet together, exchange their ideas and experiences, and thus reach a deeper, more inclusive insight into the serious problems that our society now faces.”

Police in the USA have heard this speech thousands of times, and police chiefs attend such meetings regularly. They are even trained at what was once called [The School of the Americas \(SOA\)](#). Authoritarians care little about the color of your skin or your religion as long as you are working for “restoring the rule of law and order” ... “in the defence of society.” All this with an iron fist of course!

Missing is much more graphic in how it presents death, with bodies strewn everywhere, in the streets, in the stadium, and the stark contrast between those scenes of horror and the way officials deal with the situation, casually stepping over bodies, showing rooms full of “these have been identified”, and then “these have not” and Jack Lemon looking up and seeing shadowy dead bodies, limbs akimbo, through the milky glass roof of the room he is standing in, surrounded by the dead. And the American embassy officials, with their weasel words and their constant evasion of the truth, until it’s so impossible to hide the truth that they have to admit it. The clincher comes around 1:49 into the film when Ray Tower, the police and military liaison guy from the embassy, #2 on the terrorist hit list, says:

“I don’t know what happened to your kid, Ed. But I understand he was a bit of a snoop. He poked his nose around in a lot of dangerous places where he didn’t really belong. Now suppose I went up to your town, New York, and I started messing around with the Mafia and I wind up dead in the East River, and my wife or my father complains to the police because they didn’t protect me. They really wouldn’t have much of a case, would they? [dramatic pause] You play with fire, you get burned.”

In *Betrayed* we see how a female agent of the FBI is manipulated into remaining undercover even after she is convinced that she will be discovered and is therefore in danger of being killed. In fact, it’s not only Debra Winger’s character “Cathy” who is supposedly betraying Tom Berenger’s “Gary”, it is the betrayal perpetrated by someone inside the FBI who passes sensitive information along to the white supremacists. Even though she protests that her cover has been blown, the agents don’t care because Winger’s character is seen by her male FBI cohorts (one of whom, Michael, had an affair with her that she no longer wants to pursue) as a weak female. Around 1:19:25 into the film Cathy says to her FBI handler:

“I didn’t join up to kill anyone. Michael, you promised me I wouldn’t get dirty. You were using me. You’re still using me.”

And Michael, replies: “You let me use you.”

Then another agent chimes in: “Everybody uses everybody, girl. It’s just a matter of what you’re being used for.”

Along the way I read George Orwell’s [Second Thoughts on James Burnham](#), an American writing before and during WW2, and started to really understand when Orwell said: “... it is clear that Burnham is fascinated by the spectacle of power...” That “It is a major mental disease, and its roots lie partly in cowardice and partly in the worship of power, which is not fully separable from cowardice.” And “Power worship blurs political judgement because it leads, almost unavoidably, to

the belief that present trends will continue. Whoever is winning at the moment will always seem to be invincible.” It is a very good analysis of the thinking of James Burnham, but Orwell also makes it a great analysis of the way American minds work in the realm of political thought. How the “mental disease” of power worship has been placed above all else. Why, otherwise, would a country want to have so many guns in the hands of irresponsible people? Misreading an ancient amendment to a constitution is just a poor excuse. The true worship is for the power the weapon bestows.

[Mao’s expert opinion](#): “Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.”

All three of the Costa-Gavras films explore the use of power in detail. *State of Siege* and *Missing* expose the brutal power of American influence in the overthrow of “unfriendly” governments. And *Betrayed* shows us how both the right-wing and the government believe that the power of the gun is the ultimate expression of how control can be exerted.

BLM has not yet reverted to the power of the gun. Their power at the moment is because of numbers of people (of all colors) on the street. The police show power (using the gun) and are praised by the people most interested in holding on to power, the oligarchs who control the United States. If you pay even the slightest attention to any of the films that Costa-Gavras has made, you will be aware of the fact that if BLM (or any other justice-seeking group, like OWS for example) starts to get too much power and then decides to actually use the gun because their power is frustrated at every turn, then they will be tarred with the same brush as the ANTIFA movement or Islamic jihadists. The consequences will then be harsh.

The fact that white supremacists and anti-democratic forces have infiltrated all levels of government does not make a *State of Siege* impossible in the USA. It has already been hinted at often by the regime now in power. And it is very possible that people who will join in “restoring the rule of law and order” ... “in the defence of society” will be members of militias headed by white supremacists and members of organs of the state, like Homeland Security, the police and the FBI.

The Absurdity of Hope

Of all the evils released by Pandora from her jar, the evil that was left behind, HOPE, is obviously the worst of all.

I can remember clearly going to a play by Fernando Arrabal in a little theatre off Melrose, both because I was interested in theatre of the absurd and because some actor friends of mine were in it. This was back in 1974 or 75 and I can't for the life of me remember the name of the play or the names of my actor friends. But I do remember the ending of the play very well. The guy who was the main character in the play (and was the boyfriend of a girl I knew from when I was 5 years old) writes the word HOPE in large letters on the thigh of the main female character, and then the play ends.

We didn't discuss this significant detail after the play because, well, actors. But that scene has come back to me often over the years since, and each time it returns, its significance seems to metamorphose a little and take on a different shape. And now here it is, Pentecost 2020, the coronavirus rampant around the world, fascism and other forms of authoritarianism emerging from hiding once again, capitalism dangerously tipping over because it's so top-heavy, and yet HOPE is still being peddled by liberals (nasty word?) and progressives (is progress when we go forward or when we go back?) and by the authoritarians themselves.

This time when the image of HOPE written on that thigh came back to me, it seemed to say: HOPE is the absurdity in the theatre of the absurd!

We are told, in the Pandora story that this first of all women has a jar full of evil things that she releases on mankind (emphasis on "man"). The misogyny in the tale has become more obvious as the centuries have passed. The myth has always been that women are treacherous and will engage in any evil that will hurt the male. This has been a convenient excuse to treat women like shit since the myth was concocted by some guy who had his advances rejected by a woman who was not going to be submissive and knew what she was worth. And it was exactly what was used against Hillary by both the left and right and, coupled with her arrogance, led to her defeat.

All that aside, let me get to the absurdity once again. And since it is Pentecost, the day those little flames appear above the heads of the apostles (as it was illustrated in my Catholic school bible), let's have a look at what those guys started peddling that day. You got it! HOPE. Out they go into the world, ten days after their main man has somehow climbed the stairway to heaven, and 50 days after he got nailed to that cross which has absurdly become a symbol of salvation instead of a reminder of the grisly torturous death that was suffered by anybody who tried to defy the power of Rome.

[Bill Hicks](#) had it right when he did his JFK assassination routine:

Lots of Christians wear crosses around their necks. You think when Jesus comes back he's gonna want to see a fucking cross, man? "Ohhh!" Maybe why he hasn't shown up yet. "Man, they're still wearing crosses. [beep] it, I'm not goin', Dad. No, they totally missed the point. When they start wearing fishes I might show up again, but ... Let me bury fossil heads with you, Dad. Fuck 'em ... Let's fuck with them! They're fuckin' with me now, let's get 'em. Give me that brontosaurus head, Dad."

You know, kinda like going up to Jackie Onassis with a rifle pendant on, you know. "Thinkin' of John, Jackie. We love him. Just tryin' to keep that memory alive, baby."

So our apostles are sitting around thinking about how they can continue with their crusade to eat and drink for free when somebody comes up with that four letter word: HOPE. We'll sell them

HOPE. It was probably one his direct descendants who later worked for the Obama campaign and added CHANGE to the formula. HOPE and CHANGE. Nothing changed and while you were hoping for something good to happen during the time Obama was president or after he was gone, you got the Great White Hope instead. He sells HOPE as well, but it's not the kind of idealistic progressive HOPE that people on the supposedly "left" side of the political spectrum are filled up with. The demon in orange sells the HOPE of domination, the HOPE of salvation from insignificance and, with his Dominionist Rapture-seeking lapdog, he has managed to blind a hard-core third of the American populace into believing his brand of absurd HOPE.

Jean-Paul Sartre, in the short story [The Wall](#), loses all HOPE because he understands the tactic:

They knew what they were doing: I had passed the night in waiting; then they had made me wait an hour in the cellar while they shot Tom and Juan and now they were locking me up in the laundry; they must have prepared their game the night before. They told themselves that nerves eventually wear out and they hoped to get me that way.

They were badly mistaken. ... I didn't like Ramon Gris any more. My friendship for him had died a little while before dawn at the same time as my love for Concha, at the same time as my desire to live. Undoubtedly I thought highly of him: he was tough. But it was not for this reason that I consented to die in his place; *his life had no more value than mine; no life had value*. They were going to slap a man up against a wall and shoot at him till he died, whether it was I or Gris or somebody else made no difference.

HOPE is absurd for the simple reason that death is coming, either now or later and you will not escape it, nor will the tyrants that rule over you. The question you are faced with this: How are you going to live? Are you going to submit to the absurdity and wait and wait (Godot is not coming!) until the tyrant decides how you will die? Or are you going to act like the partisans in Europe acted against the Nazis, how the Republicans acted against the Nationalists in the Spanish civil war, how any number of groups fought to defeat the tyrants trying to dominate their lives.

Hannah Arendt believed that Action is how we show our engagement with politics. Talking is a side-show, intellectual duels serve the purpose of hardening the hearts of the people on your side against the people on their side. Nobody is converted. Nobody wins hearts and minds. The debate ends and lies and truth are rendered equal in the eyes of the people reporting on the results, and after 10 minutes nobody cares who said what because it's old news.

The forces of evil in the USA are not limited to one political party, they have entered into both parties through the process of osmosis, from the day that they got rid of Henry Wallace as FDR's vice president, the fix has been in and the rot entered. By 1980 the rot has taken over the majority of the Republican party and now it has taken over both parties so completely that you can't get anything approved that even looks like it might help people who are not millionaires.

What really surprises me is that people of color (and not only people of color, but people who pretend they want justice and equality as well) have not followed the advice of El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, also known as Malcolm X:

"A man with a rifle or a club can only be stopped by a person who defends himself with a rifle or a club. That's equality. If the United States government doesn't want you and me to have rifles, then take the rifles away from those racists.

If they don't want you and me to use clubs, take the clubs away from the racists. If they don't want you and me to get violent, then stop the racists from being violent. Don't teach us non-violence!!!"

The violent right wing in America embraces their right to bear arms and kill anyone who trespasses against their right to be white and violent. How is it possible that people of color (and the justice-seekers) have not swarmed to gun shows and bought assault weapons and handguns and enough ammunition to last out a siege? After all, it's America, anybody can buy a gun. Where are the partisans? Are you all just being morally correct and good (small d) democrats? Are you waiting until the roundups begin, until your brothers and cousins are transported to the stadiums and the new camps built in Montana or North Dakota? Will it then be OK to rise up against the monsters?

No, it's not a moral high-ground you are standing on, you are still blinded by the absurdity of HOPE. You believe in an after-Trump-life of justice and fairness and goodness and perhaps a basic income so that you can purchase the latest screen into which you will stare from morning deep into the night and devour HOPE in all its forms, as sold to you by the wolves of Wall Street.

From my vantage point in High Castle of Europe I sit safe and secure(?), far away from the streets of the USA where the coming conflict is bubbling to a boil. The only question is: Who will prevail? The Purveyors of HOPE, or the Partisans?