

# QUOTATIONS FROM MICHAEL PARENTI

*Compiled by Joel Ruggi, Andre Schürmann Simpson*

*Published by Red Prints Publishing*



Red Prints Publishing

2024

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword by the Compilers.....	1
1. The Roots of Underdevelopment—Colonialism and Slavery.....	2
2. Democracy for the Few: Poverty for the Many.....	7
3. Rational Fascism.....	28
4. Imperialism: Fascism in a Pinstriped Suit.....	33
5. Cultural Hegemony, Class Power, and the Overthrow of Communism.....	44
6. The Politics of News and Entertainment Media—Inventing Reality and Making Us Believe.....	54
More From Michael Parenti and the Compilers.....	65

## Foreword by the Compilers

Walter Rodney's area of expertise was the struggle for liberation of African Americans. Frantz Fanon's was that of the wars for independence on the African continent. Vladimir Lenin was a studious political theorist and statecraftman specializing mainly on Russian questions. While all of these militant leaders had a key point of view from different fronts of our struggle—specifically, in the periphery—Dr. Michael Parenti has another key point of view, from another front, that cannot be ignored. Here, we make reference to the main focus of his life's work—North America and Western Europe. And even more important, we must clarify that like the previously mentioned authors, it is also a subjective point of view. One that vehemently includes other protagonists of our peoples' history outside the West—in the 20th Century, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and in the 21st, the Third World. We hope that this book lays evidence for these claims.

The team of two that worked on this compilation, in representation of one page from our social media network, Anti-Imperialist Parentiposting, are based in Buenos Aires and Põneke. Joel Ruggi, has been working on this collaborative online documentation scholarship project from Argentina with Andre Schürmann Simpson, from Aotearoa, who has been the main artistic mind behind our propaganda aesthetics along our network, besides his crucial contribution to this work. On a day like any other, the independent publisher Marxist-Leninist Reading Hub had the initiative to reach out and propose to us to structure this documentation work into a compilation work, with all that that entails for us as workers in the creative sense.

Anti-Imperialist Parentiposting was created in 2017, and this work is a condensation of quote selections transcribed from audiovisual sources and compilations from Dr. Parenti's overtures that we have published over those years.

## 1

## The Roots of Underdevelopment—Colonialism and Slavery

*“To Underdevelop” [verb]*

The impoverished lands of Asia, Africa, and Latin America are known to us as the "Third World," to distinguish them from the "First World" of industrialized Europe and North America and the now largely defunct "Second World" of communist states. Third World poverty, called "underdevelopment," is treated by most Western observers as an original historic condition. We are asked to believe that it always existed, that poor countries are poor because their lands have always been infertile or their people unproductive.

In fact, the lands of Asia, Africa, and Latin America have long produced great treasures of foods, minerals, and other natural resources. That is why Europeans went through so much trouble to steal and plunder them. One does not go to poor places for self-enrichment. The Third World is rich. Only its people are poor—and it is because of the pillage they have endured.

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p.7

When the merchant capitalists replaced the mercantilist monarchs, the process of expropriation accelerated and expanded. Along with gold and silver, they took flax, hemp, indigo, silk, diamonds, timber, molasses, sugar, rum, rubber, tobacco, calico, cocoa, coffee, cotton, copper, coal, tin, iron, and later on, oil, zinc, columbite, manganese, mercury, platinum, cobalt, bauxite, aluminum, and uranium. And of course there was that most dreadful of all expropriations—of human beings themselves, slaves. Millions of people were abducted from Africa, while millions more perished in the hellish passage to the New World.

The stupendous fortunes that were—and still are—being extracted by the European and North American investors should remind us that there are very few really poor nations in what today is commonly called the Third World. Brazil is rich; Indonesia is rich; and so are the Philippines, Chile, Bolivia, Zaire, Mexico, India, and Malaysia. Only the people are poor. Of course in some areas, as in parts of Africa south of the Sahara, the land has been so ruthlessly plundered that it too is now impoverished, making life all the more desperate for its inhabitants.

Lecture, “US Interventionism, the Third World, & the USSR” (5 April 1986)

Africa has been one of the lands most often misrepresented as "primitive" and "underdeveloped" by imperialism's image makers. The truth is, as early as the 1400s, Nigeria, Mali, and the Guinea coast were making some of the world's finest fabrics and leathers. Katanga, Zambia, and Sierra Leone produced copper and iron, while Benin had a brass and bronze industry. As early as the thirteenth century, finely illuminated books and manuscripts were part of the Amharic culture of Ethiopia, and impressive stone palaces stood in Zimbabwe. Yet Africa under colonial rule soon was exporting raw materials and importing manufactured goods from Europe, like other colonized places.

The advantages Europeans possessed in seafaring and warfare proved decisive. [...] Arms superiority also allowed the Europeans to impose a slave trade that decimated certain parts of Africa, set African leaders against each other in the procurement of slaves, and further retarded that continent's economic development.

Attempts by African leaders at development, including the area of arms technology, were suppressed by the British, French, and other colonizers. From the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, Europe imposed imperialist trade relationships, forcing Africa to sell its raw materials and buy manufactured goods on increasingly disadvantageous terms.

“The Sword and the Dollar: Imperialism, Revolution and the Arms Race” (1989), St. Martin’s Press, p. 14

### *Slavery and Class Power*

During antebellum days in the United States, some medical authorities gave serious attention to a mental condition that purportedly afflicted slaves. It was called Drapetomania, the mad impulse that caused those held in bondage to “abscond from service.”

“The Culture Struggle” (2006), Seven Stories Press, p. 31

It was understood that slaves, who abandoned the happy confines of servitude and the solicitous care of their masters in pursuit of an uncertain freedom in strange locales, must be suffering from a serious disorder. In 1851, in his “Report on the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race,” Dr. Samuel Cartwright concluded that drapetomania, which induces the slave to flee from slavery, “is as much a disease of the mind as any other species of mental alienation, and much more curable, as a general rule.” The cure consisted of ferocious applications of the bullwhip, and for repeat offenders: leg shackles, facial branding, cutting off ears, and in some cases, castration.

Ibid.

If one looks into the genealogies of many 'old families', one discovers episodes of slave trafficking, bootlegging, gun running, opium trading, falsified land claims, violent acquisition of water and mineral rights, the extermination of indigenous peoples, sales of shoddy and unsafe goods, public funds used for private speculations, crooked deals in government bonds and vouchers, and payoffs for political favors.

“Land of Idols: Political Mythology in America” (1994), St. Martin’s Press, p. 154

If the slaveholders of antiquity and the slaveholders of the Old South had anything in common, it was (1) their claim that their slaves were benefiting from and contentedly suited to their station in life, and (2) their terror of being massacred by their contented, happy slaves. Slave owners in antiquity lived in perpetual fear they might perish at the hands of their slaves. In the words of the younger Pliny, slaves were the purveyors of 'dangers, insults, and outrages' along with other 'wickedness.' Likewise, the slaveholders of the antebellum South repeatedly expressed their apprehensions about the terrible vengeance that rebellious slaves might wreak upon them. In 1793, Thomas Jefferson wrote to James Monroe, a fellow enslaver, ‘It is high time we should foresee the bloody scenes which our children certainly, and possibly ourselves ... [will] have to wade through, and try to avert them.’

At one time or another, the Southern aristocrats feared their slaves might be incited to insurrection by French, Spanish, or British agents, or by Northern abolitionists. They feared that slaves would ally with the Indians or any other enemy during wartime (which sometimes did happen). They feared, in the words of one, 'to see the tragic events of Santo Domingo repeated in our own land,'—the 'tragic events' being the triumph of liberty over tyranny in the form of a successful slave rebellion. In response to 'these perilous times of insurrection,' the slaveholders passed laws saying that chattels could carry no arms, clubs, or staves, nor make unauthorized visits to other plantations, nor learn to read or write, nor hold religious services of their own, nor engage in secret meetings, nor congregate in unauthorized groups of more than three or four.

The enslavers overworked their slaves from dawn to dusk and sometimes late into night, underfed them, forced them to live in miserable hovels, broke their hearts by selling off children from parents, flogged them mercilessly for insubordination or failing to work hard enough, drastically cut their rations when they got old, forced bred them, terrorized, tortured and raped them, hunted them down when they escaped, and sometimes killed them.

Ibid., p. 180-181

[T]he South, with its city police and country patrols of armed men on horseback, was something of an armed camp like Sparta, designed to safeguard itself against its slave population. As Aptheker records, across the South there were well-armed militia and voluntary paramilitary organizations. [...] Nineteenth-century historians like Henry Adams and Rosser Taylor commented on the prevalence of militarism in the South and its importance in preserving the slave system. Another historian writes, 'The constant possibility of insurrection required that attention should ever be given to the militia.' Treated today as an idiosyncratic cultural trait of that region, the South's 'military tradition' arose originally out of the necessities of class-race oppression.

After Emancipation, the erstwhile slaveholders expressed outrage at the 'ingratitude' shown by ex-slaves who joyously proclaimed their freedom, plundered the plantations, and tried to claim ownership to the land they had worked for generations. Equally 'horrid' were the ones who fled to the Union lines and joined the Union army. After the Civil War, vengeful Southerners engaged in widespread arson, beatings, killings, and terrorization of the Black population. With that remarkable self-serving capacity that has been the mark of every privileged class in history, they could reverse the roles of victim and victimizer in their own minds.

"Land of Idols: Political Mythology in America" (1994), St. Martin's Press, pp. 184-185

### *Colonialism as a Tool of Capital*

The colonizers expropriate not only the natural resources of the colonized but also their creative cultural production. The museums of Europe and North America are full of indigenous artifacts and art works from the Middle East, China, Africa, and the entire Western Hemisphere.

A Nigerian acquaintance recently informed me that while in Paris he visited the Louvre where he saw a rich and gratifying exhibit of African art, including a few works that came from a region close to his own home. What made him unhappy was that it was art he had never seen anywhere in Africa itself. He had to pay ten euros for a glimpse of his own past culture, now kept under lock and key in a European museum.

"The Culture Struggle" (2006), Seven Stories Press, p. 40

Usually we are told to avoid ethnocentrism, the tendency to consider other people according to the preferred standards of one's own group, faulting them when they are found to differ from us. Instead we must learn to respect or at least tolerate the different ways of different peoples. On the face of it, this sounds like enlightened advice. There is nothing more unattractive than those who seem to think that their own cultural values are the one and only natural way, a fixed universality for evaluating all other peoples and places. A stereotype of the ethnocentric is the uncouth tourist who travels abroad only to vent his or her irritation upon finding that things are not exactly the way they are at home.

Less amusing instances of ethnocentrism can be found in the millennia of wars and atrocities that have prevailed between clashing religions, with each faith driven by the certitude of its own divinely ordained (read, culturally ordained) creed and ritual. Here is a subject that could fill many volumes: the damage that ethnocentric religious believers inflict on those of other theological persuasion and on nonbelievers. Throughout the centuries, Christians butchered Jews. During the crusades, which extended over a span of generations, Christians and

Muslims slaughtered each other. In East Africa in the late nineteenth century, Muslim, Protestant, and Catholic converts within the indigenous population waged bloody three-way wars fueled by British and French colonizers.

Ibid., 37-38

To be sure, empires do not come cheap. Burdensome expenditures are needed for military repression and prolonged occupation, for colonial administration, for bribes and arms to native collaborators, and for the development of a commercial infrastructure to facilitate extractive industries and capital penetration. But empires are not losing propositions for everyone. The governments of imperial nations may spend more than they take in, but the people who reap the benefits are not the same ones who foot the bill. As Thorstein Veblen pointed out in *The Theory of the Business Enterprise* (1904), the gains of empire flow into the hands of the privileged business class while the costs are extracted from "the industry of the rest of the people." The transnationals monopolize the private returns of empire while carrying little, if any, of the public cost. The expenditures needed in the way of armaments and aid to make the world safe for General Motors, General Dynamics, General Electric, and all the other generals are paid by the U.S. government, that is, by the taxpayers. So it was with the British Empire in India, the costs of which, Marx noted a half-century before Veblen, were "paid out of the pockets of the people of England," and far exceeded what came back into the British treasury. He concluded that the advantage to Great Britain from her Indian Empire was limited to the "very considerable" profits which accrued to select individuals, mostly a coterie of stockholders and officers in the East India Company and the Bank of England. Beginning in the late nineteenth century and carrying over into the twentieth, the German conquest of Southwest Africa "remained a loss-making enterprise for the German taxpayer," according to historian Horst Drechsler, yet "a number of monopolists still managed to squeeze huge profits out of the colony in the closing years of German colonial domination." And imperialism remains today in the service of the few monopolists, not the many taxpayers. In sum, there is nothing irrational about spending three dollars of public money to protect one dollar of private investment—at least not from the perspective of the investors. To protect one dollar of their money they will spend three, four, and five dollars of our money. In fact, when it comes to protecting their money, our money is no object.

"Against Empire" (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 26

What's called underdevelopment is a condition which is forcefully imposed on [Third World] countries through history. One of the most dramatic examples is India. In 1810, India was exporting more textiles (finished, mass market textiles, not just those beautiful, exquisite silks we usually associate with India) to England than England was exporting to India. And more to China, and more to Egypt, and a number of other places. By 1830, the British had put up prohibitive barriers and blocked Indian goods, and then moved in, and were dumping their goods in India. And within a matter of another 10 years, the great textile centers of Daka and Madris were turned into ghost towns. And the people were sent back out on the land, to do what? To raise the cotton, the raw materials that would be used in the factories in Manchester, Lancashire and London.

India was reduced to being a calf, like much of the Third World, to be milked, and not to be developed. And by 1850, India's debt had grown to £53 million. And from 1850 to 1900, the per-capita income in India dropped by two thirds (65%). That's an incredible drop.

We always associate India with poverty. That's not their original condition. They are not an underdeveloped country, England underdeveloped India.

Ireland is another example. Ireland is a country that is not usually associated with the Third World. It was the first colony—England's very first. It was the first imperialism, going back to the 13th or 14th century.

---

Frederich Engels spent some time in Ireland [...] In 1856, he wrote "How often have the Irish started out to achieve something? And every time, they have been crushed politically, and industrially. By consistent oppression, they have been artificially converted into an utterly impoverished nation." Very interesting wordage. "Artificially converted". And so the same with Central America. Artificially converted. The Mayan Indians in Guatemala had a better diet, more calories, more protein and better conditions of health in the early 16th Century before the Europeans came than they do have today. They had more artists, more musicians, more architects, more horticulturalists than they do today. They are not underdeveloped, they are overexploited.

Lecture, "The Sword and the Dollar" (September 1993)

Liberal critics ask: "Why do we always find ourselves on the wrong side in the Third World? Why are we always on the side of the oppressor?" Too bad the question is treated as a rhetorical one, for it is deserving of a response. The answer is that right-wing oppressors, however heinous they be, do not tamper with, and give full support to, private investment and profit, while the leftists pose a challenge to that system.

"Dirty Truths" (1996), City Lights Books, p. 68

## 2

# Democracy for the Few: Poverty for the Many

### *Myths of the Founding Fathers*

Indeed, the problem is that most people too easily and self-servingly believe in their own virtue. The founders were no exception. They never doubted the nobility of their effort and its importance for the generations to come. Just as many of them could feel dedicated to the principle of “liberty for all” while owning slaves, so could they serve both their nation and their estates. The point is not that they were devoid of the grander sentiments of nation building, but that there was nothing in their concept of nation that worked against their class interest and a great deal that worked for it.

“Democracy for the Few, Ninth Edition” (2011), Wadsworth Cengage Learning, p. 12

Though supposedly dedicated to selfless and upright goals, the delegates nevertheless bound themselves to the strictest secrecy. Proceedings were conducted behind locked doors and shuttered windows (despite the sweltering Philadelphia summer). Madison’s notes, which recorded most of the actual deliberations, were published, at his insistence, only after all participants were dead, fifty-three years later, most likely to avoid political embarrassment to them.

Ibid., p. 13

[...] The Constitution was consciously designed as a conservative document, elaborately equipped with a system of minority locks and dams in order to resist popular tides. The Constitution furnished special provisions for the slaveholding class and for a rising bourgeoisie. For the founders, liberty meant something different from democracy. It meant liberty to invest, speculate, trade, and accumulate wealth without encroachment by the common populace.

Ibid.

While the delegates and their class dominated the events of 1787-1789, they were far from omnipotent. The class system they sought to preserve was itself the cause of marked restiveness among the people. Land seizures by the poor, food riots, and other violent disturbances occurred throughout the eighteenth century in just about every state and erstwhile colony. This popular ferment spurred the framers in their effort to erect a strong central government, but it also set a limit on what they could do.

Ibid., p. 16

We were never "given" what freedoms we do have, certainly not by the framers of the Constitution. Recall that the Bill of Rights was not part of the original Constitution. It was added after ratification, as ten amendments. When Colonel Mason of Virginia proposed a Bill of Rights at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787, it was voted down almost unanimously (Massachusetts abstained). Popular protests, land seizures by the poor, food riots, and other disturbances made the men of property who gathered in Philadelphia uncomfortably aware of the need for an effective central authority that could be sufficiently protective of the propertied classes.

But such popular ferment also set a limit on what the framers dared to do. Belatedly and reluctantly they agreed during the ratification struggle to include a Bill of Rights, a concession made under threat of democratic agitation and in the hope that the amendments would ensure ratification of the new Constitution.

So the Bill of Rights was not a gift from that illustrious gaggle of rich merchants, land and currency speculators, and slaveholders known as our "Founding Fathers?" It was a product of class struggle. The same was true of the universal franchise. It took mass agitation from the 1820s to the 1840s by workers and poor farmers to abolish property qualifications and win universal white male suffrage. Almost a century of agitation and struggle was necessary to win the franchise for women. And a bloody civil war and subsequent generations of struggle were needed to win basic political rights for African Americans, a struggle still far from complete.

During the early part of the twentieth century a nationwide union movement in this country called the Industrial Workers of the World (the "Wobblies") struggled for the betterment of working people in all occupations. To win gains, the Wobblies had to organize, that is, they had to be able to speak out and reach people. To speak out, they had to confront the repressive tactics of local police who would beat, arrest, and jail their organizers. The Wobblies discovered that if they went into a town with five hundred people instead of five, then the sheriff and his deputies could do little to stop them from holding public meetings.

The right to free speech was established de facto during the course of class struggle. The Wobbly free speech fights were simultaneously a struggle for procedural democracy impelled by a struggle for substantive economic democracy. This fight continued into the Great Depression, as mass organization and agitation brought freedom of speech to hundreds of local communities, where police had previously made a practice of physically assaulting and incarcerating union organizers, syndicalists, anarchists, socialists, and communists.

So it went with other freedoms and democratic gains like the eight-hour day, Social Security, unemployment and disability insurance, and the right to collective bargaining. All such democratic economic rights, even though they may be seriously limited and insufficiently developed, exist to some degree because of popular struggle against class privilege and class power.

"Dirty Truths" (1996), City Light Books, p. 85

Americans would balk at seeing any particular religious denomination designated the state religion, to be favored by law over all other religions. Indeed, the First Amendment of the Constitution explicitly forbids governmental establishment of any religion. Yet we have accepted laws that, in effect, make the Democrats and Republicans the official state parties, a rigged two-party monopoly and this at a time when they are less popular than ever.

"America Besieged" (1998), City Lights Books, p. 33

The state is the instrument used in all these societies by the wealthy few to impoverish and maintain control over the many. Aside from performing collective functions necessary for all societies, the state has the particular task of protecting the process of accumulating wealth for the few. Throughout our country's history, people have fought back and sometimes gained a limited degree of self-protective rights: universal suffrage, civil liberties, the right to collective bargaining, the eight-hour day, public education, social security, and some human services. While these democratic gains are frequently violated and prove insufficient as a restraint against state power, their importance should not be denied.

Today in the much-vaunted western democracies there exists a great deal of unaccountable state power whose primary function is to maintain the existing politico-economic structure, using surveillance, infiltration, sabotage, judicial harassment, disinformation, trumped-up charges and false arrests, tax harassment, blackmail, and even violence and assassination to make the world safe for those who own it.

*The Free Market: Freedom for Whom?*

The whole of humanity is divided into Column A and Column B. In Column A are those people who live off of their investments; they live on dividends, on bonds and securities, on rents, on land and mineral royalties that they earn, on the appreciation of speculative investment, and so on. The people in Column B principally live on wages, salaries and pensions.

Lecture, “A Critical Assessment of the New World Order” (20 June 1991), Women Strike for Peace

Wealth buys every comfort and privilege in life, the fame of fortune, elevating the possessor to the highest social stratosphere, an expression of the aggrandizing self, an expansion of the ego’s boundary, an extension of one’s existence beyond the grave, leaving one feeling almost invulnerable to time and mortality. Wealth is pursued without moral restraint. The very rich try to crush anyone who resists their endless, heartless, unprincipled accumulation. Like any addiction, money is pursued in that obsessive, amoral, single-minded way, revealing a total disregard for what is right or wrong, just or unjust, an indifference to other considerations and other people’s interests—and even one’s own interests should they go beyond feeding the addiction. Capitalism is a rational system, the well-calculated systematic maximization of power and profits, a process of accumulation anchored in material obsession that has the ultimately irrational consequence of devouring the system itself—and everything else with it.

“Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism” (1997), City Lights Books, p. 154

Where business goes, so goes government ... In the service of big business, the governments of capitalist nations, including the United States, have striven mightily to create and maintain the conditions of investment and accumulation in other lands. This may not be the only function of US foreign policy, but it is the function that is often ignored by those who would minimize the role played by international capitalism in the affairs of nations.

“The Sword and the Dollar: Imperialism, Revolution and the Arms Race” (1989), St. Martin’s Press, p. 11

Mass productivity coupled with elitist distribution results in more wealth for the few and greater poverty for the many. So after two centuries of incredible technological development and unprecedented economic expansion, the number of people living in poverty in the capitalist world has grown more quickly than any other demographic cohort. The world’s slum population has increased at a far greater rate than the total global population. Amazing growth in industrial productivity has been accompanied by increasingly desperate want, misery, and repression. In short, there is a causal link between vast concentrations of wealth and widespread poverty. The next time someone preaches the free-market gospel of economic freedom and productivity, we need ask, for whose benefit and at whose cost? Those who show concern for the elites overthrown in the whirl of revolution should also keep in mind the hundreds of millions more who are obliterated by economic reactionism. If all rebellions were to be successfully repressed today and forever, free-market autocracy’s violence against humanity would be with us more unrestrained than ever—as is indeed happening. For these reasons, those of us who are genuinely concerned about democracy, social justice, and the survival of our planet should support rather than oppose popular revolutions.

“Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism” (1997), City Lights Books, p. 40

Marx noted that something more than greed is involved in the capitalist’s relentless pursuit of profit. Given the pressures of competition and rising wages, capitalists must make technological innovations to increase their

productivity and diminish their labor costs. This creates problems of its own. The more capital goods (such as machinery, plants, technologies, fuels) needed for production, the higher the fixed costs and the greater the pressure to increase productivity to maintain profit margins.

Since workers are not paid enough to buy back the goods and services they produce, Marx noted, there is always the problem of a disparity between mass production and aggregate demand. If demand slackens, owners cut back on production and investment. Even when there is ample demand, they are tempted to downsize the workforce and intensify the rate of exploitation of the remaining employees, seizing any opportunity to reduce benefits and wages. The ensuing drop in the workforce's buying power leads to a further decline in demand and to business recessions that inflict the greatest pain on those with the least assets. Marx foresaw this tendency for profits to fall and for protracted recessions and economic instability. As the economist Robert Heilbroner noted, this was an extraordinary prediction, for in Marx's day economists did not recognize boom-and-bust business cycles as inherent to the capitalist system. But today we know that recessions are a chronic condition and—as Marx also predicted—they have become international in scope.

When the Communist Manifesto first appeared in 1848, bigness was the exception rather than the norm. Yet Marx predicted that large firms would force out or buy up smaller adversaries and increasingly dominate the business world, as capital became more concentrated. This was not the accepted wisdom of that day and must have sounded improbable to those who gave it any attention. But it has come to pass. Indeed, the rate of mergers and take-overs has been higher in the 1980s and 1990s than at any other time in the history of capitalism.

Another of Marx's predictions is that the proletariat (workers who have no tools of their own and must work for wages or salaries, selling their labor to someone else) would become an ever-greater percentage of the workforce. In 1820 about 75 percent of Americans worked for themselves on farms or in small businesses and artisan crafts. By 1940 that number had dropped to 21.6 percent. Today, less than 10 percent of the labor force is self-employed. The same shift in the workforce can be observed in the Third World. From 1970 to 1980 the number of wage workers in Asia and Africa increased by almost two-thirds, from 72 million to 120 million. The tendency is toward the steady growth of the working class, both industrial and service workers, and—as Marx predicted—this is happening globally, in every land upon which capitalism descends.

As capitalism develops so will the proletariat, Marx predicted. We have seen that to be true. But he went further: With the growing misery and polarization, the masses would eventually rise up and overthrow the bourgeoisie and put the means of production under public ownership for the benefit of all. The revolution would come in the more industrialized capitalist countries that had large, developed working classes. What struck Marx about the working class was its level of organization and consciousness. Unlike previously oppressed classes, the proletariat, heavily concentrated in urban areas, seemed capable of an unparalleled level of political development. It would not only rebel against its oppressors as had slaves and serfs but would create an egalitarian, non-exploitative social order as never before seen in history. In his day Marx saw an alternative system emerging in the clubs, mutual aid societies, political organizations, and newspapers of a rapidly growing British working class. For the first time, history would be made by the masses in a conscious way, a class for itself. Sporadic rebellion would be replaced by class-conscious revolution. Instead of burning down the manor, the workers would expropriate it and put it to use for the collective benefit of the common people, the ones who built it in the first place.

“Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism” (1997), City Lights Books, p. 126-127

The conservative goal has been the "Third Worldization" of the United States: an increasingly underemployed, lower-wage work-force; a small but growing moneyed class that pays almost no taxes; the privatization or elimination of human services; the elimination of public education for low-income people; the easing of

restrictions against child labor; the exporting of industries and jobs to low-wage, free-trade countries; the breaking of labor unions; and the elimination of occupational safety and environmental controls and regulations.

“Land of Idols: Political Mythology in America” (1994), St. Martin’s Press, p. 104

The federal government subsidizes the railroad, shipping, and airline industries, along with the exporters of iron, steel, textiles, tobacco, and other products. The government paid \$3.3 billion to expand the airline industry from 1940 to 1944. It doles out huge amounts in grants and tax “incentives” to the big companies to encourage oil and gas drilling, charging the companies only a pittance for the large amounts of oil extracted from public lands.

County and municipal governments also feed big business. The largest retail corporation in the world, Wal-Mart, has received at least \$1 billion of public money from local governments, including free land, free water and sewerage service, property tax breaks, and direct cash subsidies.

Whole new technologies are developed at public expense—nuclear energy, electronics, aeronautics, space communications, mineral exploration, computer systems, the Internet, biomedical genetics—only to be handed over to industry for private gain without the government collecting a dollar. Thus, AT&T managed to have the entire satellite communications system put under its control in 1962 after U.S. taxpayers put up the initial \$20 billion to develop it.

“Democracy for the Few, Ninth Edition” (2011), Wadsworth Cengage Learning, p. 62

There are more than 200,000 corporations in the USA today, but 100 companies control more than half the nation's industrial assets. Fifty of the largest banks and insurance companies own half of all the financial assets. Ten firms make 22 percent of all the profits.

Some 400 corporations control about 80 percent of the capital assets of the entire non socialist world. One-third of the assets of US industrial corporations are located outside the United States. Eight of the nation's nine largest banks now rely on foreign sources for over 40 percent of their total deposits. Many of these holdings—often the larger portions—are in other industrial countries. But more and more investment is going into the Third World. Citibank, for instance, earns about 75 percent of its profits from overseas operations, mostly in the Third World. American and other Western corporations have acquired control of more than 75 percent of the known major mineral resources in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The USA is South Africa's largest trading partner and its second-largest foreign investor, with investments amounting to about \$2 billion as of 1986. US banks provide the apartheid regime with one-third of its international credit.

“The Sword and the Dollar: Imperialism, Revolution and the Arms Race” (1989), St. Martin’s Press, p. 10

Multinationals do not have to pay U.S. taxes on profits made in other countries until these profits are repatriated to the USA—if ever they are. Taxes paid to a host country are treated as tax credits rather than mere deductions here at home. In other words, \$1 million paid to a foreign country in taxes or even oil royalties is not treated as a deduction of taxable income by the IRS (which might save the company \$100,000 or so in stateside taxes), but is written off from the final taxes the company has to pay, saving it an entire \$1 million in payments.

In addition, multinationals can juggle the books between their various foreign subsidiaries, showing low profits in a high-tax country and high profits in a low-tax country, thereby avoiding at least \$20 billion a year in US taxes.

The billions that corporations escape paying because of their overseas shelters must be made up by the rest of us. Additional billions of our tax dollars go into aid programs to governments that maintain the cheap labor markets that lure away American jobs. U.S. foreign aid seldom trickles down to the poor people of the recipient countries. In fact, much of it is military aid that is likely to be used to suppress dissent among the poor.

The empire increasingly impoverishes the republic. Operational costs of global militarism may become so onerous as to undermine the society that sustains them, such as has been the case with empires in the past. Americans pay dearly for "our" global military apparatus. The spending binge that the Pentagon has been on for decades, especially the last fourteen years or so, has created record deficits and a runaway national debt, making the United States the largest debtor nation in the world. The government is required to borrow more and more to pay the growing interest on a debt that is owed to rich creditors at home and abroad.

Between 1948 and 1994, the federal government spent almost \$11 trillion on its military—more than the cumulative monetary value of all human-made wealth in the United States. The current Pentagon budget plus the military projects of the Energy Department and NASA, foreign military aid, veterans' benefits, and interest paid on past military debt comes to almost \$500 billion a year. The annual Pentagon budget is more than the gross national product of almost every country in the world.

Ibid., p. 32

### *Rulers of the Planet*

Throughout much of the Third World the land is owned by major landowners and corporate agribusiness and is either left underutilized or is used for livestock or cash crop exports that bring enormous profits to a few. With "development," or what more accurately should be called "maldevelopment," countries like Indonesia, Ceylon, and Malaysia, which were easily self-sufficient in food production as late as the 1950s, now suffer shortages as their land comes increasingly under the control of multinational agribusiness. Similarly, Africa has become both less self-sufficient in food and more active as a commercial food exporter. Land once used to grow corn and sorghum for local consumption now produces coffee and cotton for export. Deprived of native grains and unable to afford the imported wheat and rice, the people of Africa suffer increasingly from hunger, even as their lands feed people elsewhere.

When profit considerations rather than human need determines how resources are used, then poor nations feed rich ones. Under capitalism, money is invested only where money is to be made.

The problem is neither poor lands nor unproductive populations but foreign exploitation and class inequality. A mere 2.5 percent of landowners (mostly absentee owners including agribusiness firms) control almost 75 percent of the world's land.

"The Sword and the Dollar: Imperialism, Revolution and the Arms Race" (1989), St. Martin's Press, p. 20

Today in the maldeveloping countries, we find more factories, more exports, more giant agribusiness, and more poverty and hunger than ever before. After a decade of a very good growth rate in the Philippines, according to the Washington Post, "the average Filipino is probably worse off than when the decade began." Of the 9 million Filipino children between six months and six years of age, at least one-third are either "moderately" or severely malnourished. Yet the Philippines has become a food exporter in the last two decades, selling abroad large quantities of the very rice and vegetable products needed by Filipino children.

Fifty percent of Guatemala's Indian children die before the age of five from malnutrition and related illnesses. It has been argued that such poverty is historical, an original condition: the Indians have always been poor. In truth, the Mayan Indian population had more abundant food supplies and better lands in the fifteenth century before the Spaniards arrived than they do today. Their staples were corn and beans, supplemented by fruits, vegetables, and wild game. With the arrival of the Europeans the forested plains were cleared for the growth of cotton, sugar, coffee, and the raising of beef for export to more affluent nations. The Indians were forced back

into the hills where the land was poor and quickly eroded. Today, the largest landowners and investors in Guatemala are American agribusiness corporations.

Ibid., p. 23

*The Poor Pay the Costs of Empire. Cui bono?*

Most of our domestic financial woes can be ascribed to military spending. The enormous scale of that spending is sometimes hard to grasp. The cost of building one aircraft carrier could feed several million of the poorest, hungriest children in America for ten years. Greater sums have been budgeted for the development of the Navy's submarine rescue vehicle than for occupational safety, public libraries, and daycare centers combined. The cost of military aircraft components and ammunition kept in storage by the Pentagon is greater than the combined federal spending on pollution control, conservation, community development, housing, occupational safety, and mass transportation. The total expenses of the legislative and judicial branches and all the regulatory commissions combined constitute less than 1 percent of the Pentagon's yearly budget.

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 32

Because of the disproportionate amount spent on the military, Americans must endure the neglect of environmental needs, the financial insolvency and decay of our cities, the deterioration of our transportation, education, and health care systems, and the devastating effects of underemployment upon millions of households and hundreds of communities. In addition, there are the frightful social and psychological costs, the discouragement and decline of public morale, the anger and suffering of the poor and the not-so-poor, the militarization and violence of popular culture, and the application of increasingly authoritarian solutions to our social ills. Poverty can be found in the rich industrial nations as well as in the Third World. In the richest of them all, the United States, the number of people below the poverty level grew in the last dozen years from twenty-four million to almost thirty-five million, according to the government's own figures, which many consider to be underestimations, thus making the poor the fastest growing social group in the USA, rivaled only by the dramatic growth of millionaires and billionaires.

In recent years, tuberculosis—a disease of poverty—has made a big comeback. The House Select Committee on Hunger found that kwashiorkor and marasmus diseases, caused by severe protein and calorie deficiencies and usually seen only in Third World countries, could now be found in the United States, along with a rise in infant mortality in poor areas.

Those regions within the United States that serve as surplus labor reserves or "internal colonies," such as Appalachia, poor Latino and African American communities, Inuit Alaska, and Native-American Indian communities, manifest the symptoms of Third World colonization, including chronic underemployment, hunger, inadequate income, low levels of education, inferior or nonexistent human services, absentee ownership, and extraction of profits from the indigenous community. In addition, the loss of skilled, good-paying manufacturing jobs, traditionally held by white males, has taken a toll on working-class white communities as well.

So when we talk of "rich nations" and "poor nations" we must not forget that there are millions of poor in the rich nations and thousands of rich in the poor ones.

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 32

[...] Military spending happens to be one of the greatest sources of domestic capital accumulation. It represents a form of public expenditure that business likes. When the government spends funds on the not-for-profit sector of the economy such as the postal service, publicly-owned railroads, or affordable homes and public hospitals—

it demonstrates how the public can create goods, services, and jobs and expand the tax base, without need of private investor gain. Such spending competes with the private market.

In contrast, missiles and aircraft carriers constitute a form of public expenditure that does not compete with the civilian market. A defense contract is like any other business contract, only better. The taxpayers' money covers all production risks. Unlike a refrigerator manufacturer who has to worry about selling his refrigerators, a weapons manufacturer has a product that already has been contracted, complete with guaranteed cost overruns. In addition, the government picks up most of the research and development costs.

Defense spending opens up an area of demand that is potentially limitless. How much military security or supremacy is enough? There are always new weapons that can be developed. The entire arms industry has a built-in obsolescence. Not long after a multibillion-dollar weapons system is produced, technological advances make it obsolete and in need of updating or replacement.

Furthermore, most military contracts are awarded without competitive bidding, so arms manufacturers pretty much get the price they ask for. Hence, the temptation is to develop weapons and supplies that are ever more elaborate and costly, and therefore ever more profitable. Such products are not necessarily the most efficient or sensible. Many perform poorly. But poor performance has its own rewards in the form of additional allocations to get weapons to work the way they should.

In sum, defense contractors enjoy a rate of return substantially higher than what is usually available on the civilian market. [...] Arms spending bolsters the entire capitalist system, even as it impoverishes the not-for-profit public sector. These, then, are the two basic reasons why the United States assiduously remains an armed superpower even though lacking the pretext of an opposing superpower: First, a massive military establishment is needed to keep the world safe for global capital accumulation. Second, a massive military itself is a direct source of immense capital accumulation.

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 43

### *Counterinsurgency at Home and Abroad*

There exists a state within the state, known as the national security state, a component of misgovernment centering around top officers in the various intelligence agencies, the Pentagon, and policy makers in the Executive Office of the White House. These elements have proven themselves capable of perpetrating terrible crimes against dissidents at home and abroad. National security state agencies like the CIA, in the service of dominant economic interests, have enlisted the efforts of mobsters, drug traffickers, assassins, and torturers, systematically targeting peasant leaders, intellectuals, journalists, student leaders, clergy, labor union leaders, workers, and community activists in numerous countries. Hundreds of thousands of people have been murdered to prevent social change, to destroy any government or social movement that manifests an unwillingness to reduce its people to economic fodder for the giant corporations that rule the world's economy.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, p. 154

Within the government there exists what some have called "the national security state." It consists of the president, the secretaries of State and Defense, the National Security Council, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and numerous intelligence agencies. The national security state often operates like an unaccountable sovereign power of its own. Its primary function is to defeat political forces that seek alternatives to capitalism at home or abroad or that try to introduce any seriously reformist economic policies, even within the existing capitalist framework.

“America Besieged” (1998), City Lights Books, p. 105

U.S. intelligence agencies have perpetrated terrible crimes against the peoples of other nations. In countries like Guatemala, Greece, Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, Argentina, Zaire, Haiti, and the Philippines, U.S. national security forces have used military intervention, terror, sabotage, bribery, propaganda, and political disruption to bring down populist or democratically elected governments and install regimes that better suited the needs of global investors, including reactionary dictatorships of the worst sort.

Countries that embarked upon popular revolutions, such as Nicaragua, Mozambique, and Angola, found their economies and peoples devastated by the mass-murder assaults of U.S.-supported mercenary armies. The CIA has sabotaged and stolen elections abroad, waged massive disinformation campaigns, and infiltrated and fractured the trade-union movements of other nations. It has funded and trained secret armies, paramilitary forces, torture squads, and death squads, and pursued destabilization and assassination campaigns against labor, peasant, religious, and student organizations in numerous nations. Jesse Leaf, an ex-CIA agent active in Iran, reported that CIA operatives instructed the Shah's secret police on interrogation "based on German torture techniques from World War II" and that the torture project was "all paid for by the USA" (New York Times, Jan. 7, 1979).

*Ibid.*, p. 108-109

Officials and operatives of repressive right-wing governments and almost any anticommunist emigre departing from a communist country—including persons who just want to pursue more lucrative careers in the United States—have gained easy entry as visitors or permanent residents. Over the years these have included former Nazis from Germany, Nazi collaborators from Eastern Europe, and Vietnamese, Nicaraguan, Cuban, and Afghani right-wingers and erstwhile terrorists.

In contrast, the victims of rightist procapitalist regimes, fleeing political repression in El Salvador, Haiti, Chile, and other U.S.-sponsored client states, have been denied entry and deported back to their countries, often to face jail and death. This seeming inconsistency has an underlying logic: rightists are allowed into the country and leftists are not because the Left generally opposes the capitalist class order, while the Right supports it. In fact, that is the major differentiation between Right and Left.

The fascist threat [in the U.S.] comes not from the Christian Right or the militias or this or that grouplet of skinheads but from the national security state itself, the police state within the state.

"America Besieged" (1998), City Lights Books, pp. 116-117

We often think that the United States is free of the political murders and terrorism that characterize other countries. Think again. From 1968 to 1971, in a series of unprovoked attacks in more than ten cities, coordinated with the FBI, police raided the headquarters of the Black Panther Party (a Marxist revolutionary organization), wrecking offices, smashing typewriters, stealing thousands of dollars in funds, and arresting, beating, and shooting the occupants. At least thirty-four Panthers were murdered by police in that period, including Chicago leader Fred Hampton, who was shot while asleep in his bed.

Through much of the 1970s, a paramilitary "peacekeeping" force, established by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs under FBI direction, carried out a terrorist campaign on the Pine Ridge Reservation that was directly responsible for hundreds of assaults and the deaths of more than sixty supporters of the American Indian Movement.

*Ibid.*, p. 121

The military spending binge is the major cause of the nation's \$5 trillion national debt, runaway deficits, decaying infrastructure, and high taxes. It has transformed the United States from the world's biggest lender into the world's biggest spender and debtor. To save \$2 trillion over the next decade, we should cut the bloated "defense" budget by two-thirds.

In a number of countries, such as South Africa, Zaire, Guatemala, Chile, Angola, and Haiti, where US policymakers have not always felt politically comfortable about committing American military personnel in noticeable numbers, Israel has been willing to do the dirty work in return for large sums of US aid and other special considerations. Likewise in countries such as Nicaragua (with the contras), El Salvador, Namibia, Taiwan, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Bolivia, Israeli military personnel have worked as advisors in counterinsurgency. According to one Israeli writer: "Consider any third-world area that has been a trouble spot in the past 10 years and you will discover Israeli officers and weapons implicated in the conflict-supporting American interests and helping in what they call 'the defense of the West.'

"The Sword and the Dollar: Imperialism, Revolution and the Arms Race" (1989), St. Martin's Press, p. 55

No system in history [capitalism] has been more relentless in battering down ancient and fragile cultures, devouring the resources of whole regions, pulverizing centuries-old practices in a matter of years, and standardizing the varieties of human experience.

"Land of Idols: Political Mythology in America" (1994), St. Martin's Press, p. 115

One should distinguish between those who own the wealth of society and those who must work for a living. The very rich families and individuals who compose the owning class live mostly off investments, which include stocks, bonds, rents, mineral royalties and other property income. Their employees live mostly off wages, salaries and fees.

The distinction between owners and employees is blurred somewhat by the range of incomes within both classes. "Owners" refer to both the fabulously wealthy stockholders of giant corporations and the struggling proprietors of small stores. But the latter hardly qualify as part of the corporate owning class. Among the victims of big business is small business itself. Small businesses are just so many squirrels dancing among the elephants. Every year over thirty thousand of them get trampled and go out of business.

"Contrary Notions: The Michael Parenti Reader" (2007), City Lights Books, p. 132

[...] The first law of the market is to make the largest possible profit from other people's labor or go out of business. Profitability rather than human need is the determining condition of private investment.

"Land of Idols: Political Mythology in America" (1994), St. Martin's Press, p. 116

Throughout history there has been only one thing that ruling interests have ever wanted—and that is everything: all the choice lands, forests, game, herds, harvests, mineral deposits, and precious metals of the earth; all the wealth, riches, and profitable returns; all the productive facilities, gainful inventiveness, and technologies; all the control positions of the state and other major institutions; all public supports and subsidies, privileges and immunities; all the protections of the law with none of its constraints; all the services, comforts, luxuries, and advantages of civil society with none of the taxes and costs. Every ruling class has wanted only this: all the rewards and none of the burdens. The operational code is: we have a lot; we can get more; we want it all.

With the rollback of communism, the politico-economic circles that preside over this country no longer feel they need to tolerate any *modus vivendi* with those who work for a living. Instead of worrying about lowering unemployment, as during the cold war, corporate elites now seek to sustain a relatively high level of joblessness in order to weaken unions, curb workers, and attain growth without inflation.

Growth without inflation sounds pretty good. But meanwhile we are witnessing the Third Worldization of the United States, the economic downgrading of a relatively prosperous population. Corporate circles see no reason why millions of working people should be able to enjoy a middle-class living standard, with home ownership,

surplus income, and secure long-term employment. They also see no reason why the middle class itself should be as large as it is.

[...] For the ruling interests, it is time to return to nineteenth-century standards, the kind that currently obtain throughout the Third World specifically, an unorganized working populace that toils for a bare subsistence; a mass of unemployed, desperate poor who help to depress wages and serve as a target for the misplaced resentment of those just above them; a small, shrinking middle class that hangs on by its bleeding fingers; and a tiny, obscenely rich owning class that has it all.

The haves are pulling out the stops. For them, it's time to cutback drastically on such luxuries as education, medical care, libraries, mass transportation, and other publicly funded human services, so that people will have the opportunity to learn how to take care of themselves. Time to do away with unions, business regulations, minimum-wage laws, occupational safety, consumer safety, environmental protections, and taxes on investment income. All these things cut into profits. Every dollar that goes into the public sector is one less for the private sector. And the haves want it all.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, p. 46

Global finance capital... has no dedication to human and social values. Capitalism has no loyalty to anything but itself, to the accumulation of wealth.

Ibid., p. 58

Far from being reluctantly propelled into hostilities by popular war fever, leaders incite that fever in order to gather support for their war policies. Thereby do they attempt to distract the public from pressing domestic matters, serve the overseas interests of U.S. investors, justify gargantuan military budgets, and present themselves as great leaders.

“Land of Idols: Political Mythology in America” (1994), St. Martin’s Press, p. 57

### *Central Intelligence and Social Control*

The function of that police action—those interventions in Central America and the Middle East—the function is system sustaining. It is to maintain that overall system! And you don't look at the particular cost! I could demonstrate to you that [in] every single bank robbery, that in every single case practically, the cost of the police was more than the actual money that the robbers took from the bank. Does that mean, "Oh you see, there's really no economic interest involved then. They're not protecting the banks, the police are just doing this 'cause they're on a power trip or they're macho, or they're control freaks, that's why they do it"?

No, of course it's economic—of course they're defending the banks—of course, because if they didn't stop that bank robbery, regardless of the cost, this could jeopardize the entire banking system. You see, there are people who believe that the function of the police is to fight crime, and that's not true. The function of the police is social control and protection of property.

Intro to “Money” by Choking Victim

The FBI and local police Red squads are once again spying, burglarizing, disrupting, and otherwise targeting various organizations that work for social justice, peace and disarmament, or environmentalism. During the 1980s almost two hundred organizations were labeled, not communist fronts as during the repressive McCarthy era of the 1950s, but "terrorist fronts," including Martin Luther King Jr.'s own Southern Leadership Conference and various church and student organizations.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, p. 36

The social control function of law enforcement operates on three levels within inner-city communities and among potentially "troublesome" populations. First, there is the street-level repression provoked and perpetrated by too many police officers, who use their badges and guns as a cover for venting their racist animosities and personal distortions. All this is a matter of public record, with case after case of police brutality and case after case of settlements. And for every brutality victim who wins damages there are many who never make it into court.

Second, there is the mass trafficking in narcotics, in which the police play an active role as distributors along with federal agencies, such as the CIA, that are linked directly to overseas traffickers. This too is a matter of public record, with findings by three different congressional committees and sworn testimony by pilots who have flown narcotics and weapons shipments for the CIA.

On the third level are the coordinated systematic efforts by federal, state, and local authorities to undermine community protest organizations, because the powers that be prefer demoralized, divided, disorganized, and drug-ridden populations to people who are politicized and who mobilize for collective action and radical change.

*Ibid.*, p. 37

The CIA alone owns outright over 1200 newspapers, magazines, wire services, and publishing houses in countries throughout the world.

U.S. government-funded agencies like the National Endowment for Democracy and the Agency for International Development, along with the Ford Foundation and other such organizations, help maintain Third World universities, providing money for academic programs, social science institutes, research, student scholarships, and textbooks supportive of a free market ideological perspective. Right-wing Christian missionary agencies preach political quiescence and anticommunism to native populations. The AFL-CIO's American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), with ample State Department funding, has actively infiltrated Third World labor organizations or built compliant unions that are more anticommunist than proworker. AIFLD graduates have been linked to coups and counterinsurgency work in various countries. Similar AFL-CIO undertakings operate in Africa and Asia.

"Against Empire" (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 28

After an extensive investigation, the US Senate Intelligence Committee reported that (1) the CIA was involved with the group that assassinated General Rene Schneider (a democratic constitutionalist) in an effort to block the election of President Salvador Allende in Chile, (2) that President Eisenhower authorized the poisoning by the CIA of Congolese liberation leader Patrice Lumumba—although Lumumba was supposedly killed by "rivals," and (3) the CIA made at least eight assassination attempts against Fidel Castro and other Cuban leaders, even using organized crime gangsters as operatives.

"The Sword and the Dollar: Imperialism, Revolution and the Arms Race" (1989), St. Martin's Press, p. 48

### *Save Your Trust for Friends and Family*

A president's primary commitment abroad is not to democracy as such but to the global "free market."

"America Besieged" (1998), City Lights Books, p. 17

[...] The president must present himself as a "man of the people" while quietly serving those who control the wealth and power of the country.

[...] The president plays a dual role in that he must satisfy the major interests of corporate America and high finance and at the same time make a show of serving the public.

[...] The success any group enjoys in winning presidential intercession has less to do with the justice of its cause than with the place it occupies within the class structure.

Ibid., pp. 20-21

During times of crisis, such as war, we hear that we must have faith in our leaders, for they are the ones who will see us through. What is overlooked is that they are likely the ones who created the crisis and should be held accountable for their actions.

It is the essence of democracy that we not trust and not have faith in our leaders. Democracy is a system built on distrust. That is why—when a close approximation of it works—we get real debate, investigation, exposure, and accountability. At the heart of all procedural democracy is the idea that we must watch leaders closely, question them sharply, demand to see the documents, look for differing explanations, and pursue open debate about policies, before, during, and after elections.

Ibid., p. 26

The first condition of having a democratic citizenry is to have a critical view of what's going on. I remember during the Gulf War, a student saying to me, "This is the difference between you and me - it's not very pretty, what's happening there, they're destroying a lot of things - but I place my faith in President Bush (Bush Sr.). I trust President Bush." I said "What do you mean, you have your faith in President Bush? What are we doing here, religion, or politics? You have faith the way my Italian grandma had faith in St. Anthony? You light a candle to him? What are you talking about, faith? What do you mean you trust [him]?"

Trust, which is [...] where you put your interests in someone else's hands, is something you do only with very close friends and loved ones. And even then, check them out once in a while.

Lecture, "Terrorism and Globalization" (9 September 2002)

Democracy isn't about trust, people didn't give their lives to build up trust. Democracy is about distrust. Democracy is about the people mobilizing, challenging and calling for transparency. For investigation, for showing what this is about. Trust is a blind faith. It's something you reserve for your loved ones or close friends, and even them, check 'em out once in a while. The answer is democracy, real democracy, right in their face democracy, kick 'em in the ass democracy.

Lecture, "Ideology and Conspiracy" (May 2010) from the Understanding Deep Politics Conference

### *Bipartisanship and a Word on Abortion*

The very system of representation discriminates against third parties. The single-member-district, winner-take-all plurality elections used throughout most of the United States, tend to magnify the strength of major parties and the weakness of smaller parties. Winner-take-all means the party that polls a plurality, be it 40, 50, or 60 percent, wins 100 percent of a district's representation with the election of its candidate. The smaller parties, regardless of their vote, receive zero representation, thus suffering a higher percentage of wasted or unrepresented votes. The minor parties invariably win a lower percentage of seats, if any, than their actual percentage of votes.

[...] Proportional representation (P.R.) is the most popular voting system in the world.

[...] In countries that have P.R. there is a broader choice of parties, a higher rate of participation, and greater representation of various groups.

"America Besieged" (1998), City Lights Books, pp. 33-35

Conservatives used to be in favor of abortion. They had a feeling the poor have too many children, too many on welfare, they should have abortions.

Ronald Reagan signed one of the most liberal abortion bills in America, here, when he was Governor of California. George Bush Sr., when he was in Congress from Texas, supported legalized abortion. It was only later when they discovered that they could use abortion to split the traditionally Democratic Catholic vote, or the Protestant fundamentalist vote, and activate those people. It was only then that they thought abortion as being a terrible thing.

Lecture, “The Culture Struggle” (30 September 2006)

About half the females who get pregnant do not want to be pregnant. Yet some 85 percent of the nation’s counties lack access to safe abortion providers. Dominated by advocates of compulsory pregnancy (who call themselves “pro-life”), many local governments have been imposing nuisance laws on abortion clinics, demanding changes in door widths, ceiling heights, size of counseling rooms, and dozens of other trivial but costly “repairs” that make it too expensive for the clinic to remain open. Still 1.5 million women manage to procure safe and legal abortions every year, many of them voicing their profound thanks for the service.

As of 2009, advocates of compulsory pregnancy—who believe that a fertilized ovum is a human being with rights that take precedence over its human carrier—have committed 8 murders of doctors and abortion workers, 2 kidnappings, 17 attempted murders, 41 bombings, and 175 arsons against abortion clinics and family-planning centers; along with innumerable acts of vandalism, assaults, intimidation, burglaries, and blocking clinic entrances. Abortion and birth control centers have sustained millions of dollars in damages. They continue to spend large sums on bulletproof glass, armed guards, security cameras, and metal detectors. The violence perpetrated by the advocates of compulsory pregnancy largely explains why so many counties in America do not have a single abortion provider.

“Democracy for the Few, Ninth Edition” (2011), Wadsworth Cengage Learning, p. 113

Many of these terrorist acts show a large degree of organized and coordinated effort among anti-abortion groups. Yet the FBI still does not classify anti-abortion violence as domestic terrorism. It is hard to imagine such a lackadaisical FBI response if identifiable radical groups had subjected hundreds of banks to arson attacks, bombings, and killings.

Ibid.

### *The Criminal Injustice System*

Vast amounts of money are stolen from the American public by big business through insufficient wages, price-fixing, crooked financing, inflated insurance rates, deceptive sales, and other shadowy practices.

Far more money is stolen by these boardroom bandits than by ordinary criminals. The savings-and-loan conspiracy alone cost us more than all the burglaries, bank robberies, and other grand-larceny street crimes in all of America over the past half-century.

But unlike crime in the streets, crime in the suites is removed from our immediate perception and is often accomplished by remote control. Though the material and human costs are much worse, the corporate-owned media give far less exposure to corporate crimes than to street crime.

“America Besieged” (1998), City Lights Books, p. 41

In the last two decades one of the fastest growing markets has been in guns, clubs, helmets, bulletproof vests, and other items of domestic warfare sold to law enforcers, and the fastest growing area of public employment has been police and prison guards. The prison populations in most states have grown exponentially, mostly with small-time drug users. By 1995-96, California was spending more on prisons than on education.

This is not to assume that the police are busy fighting crime. For all their new equipment and personnel, they do little if anything to stop the big drug traffickers, slumlords, sweatshop operators, mobsters, corrupt politicians, spouse beaters, child abusers, rapists, muggers, hate mongers, and others who prey off the most vulnerable among us.

The real function of the police is social control. Their job is to keep in line those elements that might prove potentially troublesome to the powers that be.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, p. 36

[...] African Americans and other ethnic minorities still confront serious discrimination in various walks of life and at the hands of the law. Affirmative action for Whites has long been the rule. Since 1790, immigration laws have favored White European immigrants over people of color. Slavery and segregation allowed Whites to superexploit Black labor for centuries. For generations Whites got the better schools and better funding. From the 1930s to the 1960s some 15 million White families procured homes with federally subsidized loans, whereas people of color were mostly excluded from the program. Whites currently are inheriting property and other assets from their parents and grandparents, accumulated at a time when people of color were allowed almost no access to such assets.

The nation’s prison population is disproportionately African American, Latino, low-income, and underemployed. It is usually assumed that this reflects the higher crime rate and social pathology among such groups. In fact, various studies show that drug use, alcoholism, violence, weapons possession, and drunken driving actually have been higher among White youths than among Black youths over the last decade—but much less publicized. The class and racial biases of the law enforcement system are major factors in determining who goes to prison. An attorney who specializes in juvenile cases notes that youngsters from well-to-do (mostly White) families, who get into minor scrapes with the law, are turned over to their parents with a warning to stay out of trouble. But in less affluent neighborhoods, children are arrested, charged, and brought to court. African American youths are more likely than White offenders of the same age to be apprehended, tried, and convicted, and more likely to get longer prison terms than Whites convicted of the same crimes.

Almost six times as many Whites use narcotics as African Americans, yet 62 percent of drug offenders sent to state prisons nationwide are African American; in some states it is as high as 90 percent. About 82 percent of federal crack defendants are Black, even though a federal health survey found that most crack users are White. African Americans, who commit only about 26 percent of violent crimes in a given year, compose 46 percent of the U.S. prison population.

Prosecutors are far more likely to seek the death penalty if the victim is White. Almost all inmates on death row (whether Black or White) are there for murdering a White person. African Americans are almost four times more likely to receive the death penalty and significantly less likely to have it commuted than Whites who perpetrate similar crimes.

“Democracy for the Few, Ninth Edition” (2011), Wadsworth Cengage Learning, pp. 115-116

We have heard much about the "refugees from communism"; we might think a moment about the refugees from capitalism. Driven off their lands, large numbers of impoverished Latinos and other Third Worlders have been compelled to flee into economic exile, coming to the United States, many of them illegally, to compete with U.S. workers for entry-level jobs. Because of their illegal status and vulnerability to deportation, undocumented workers are least likely to unionize and least able to fight for improvements in work conditions.

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 30

The problem with capitalism is that it best rewards the worst part of us: ruthless, competitive, conniving, opportunistic, acquisitive drives, giving little reward and often much punishment—or at least much handicap—to honesty, compassion, fair play, many forms of hard work, love of justice, and a concern for those in need.

“Land of Idols: Political Mythology in America” (1994), St. Martin’s Press, p. 128

### *Superpatriotism*

Once war comes, especially with the promise of a quick and easy victory, some individuals suspend all critical judgement and respond on cue like mindless superpatriots.

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 28

The America that the superpatriots claim to love is neither a geographical totality, nor is it a vast population, nor is it really history or culture. As far as I can see, their America is an ideological abstraction. It’s an emotive symbol that can be embodied in other abstract symbols, like the flag. It’s almost a love without content, I mean, how else could you love a flag? I mean, a flag, as you know, is a piece of rag on a stick, and it’s got colors and things. And if you love that flag, and that flag is a symbol of your country, it’s a kind of love that doesn’t seem to have a content to it. Having said that, let me contradict myself, because there is one real content to superpatriotism. Its main substance is militarism.

Lecture, “Superpatriotism” (August 1988)

I was talking on radio some months ago, out in the West Coast, and a call came in and the guy said, "Do you know something? It's kind of ironic—your right to dissent has been protected by the US army, and here you are criticizing that army". And I pointed out that the US Army has never protected the right of dissent, not in Guatemala, Central America, nor the Middle East. None of these places. And not in the US. The history of the US is of the US Army being used by compradors, mining bosses and state militia, and police and gun thugs being used to suppress peace demonstrations and strikers. The extent to which we have any right to dissent is because we face up against those bayonets.

I remember during the Vietnam War, that US Army wasn't protecting my right to dissent. I had those bayonets sticking in my face. And that's it—that despite that government and that display of power, we have that little modicum of freedom that we do [have]. It's when we organize and fight back that we can have that freedom.

Speech at the National Victory Parade Counter-Demonstration (1991), C-SPAN

There are those who say "If you criticize a policy, or you criticize a policy maker, what, do you hate America? Why are you always criticizing America?" And we have to again, and again, tell them (and they know the difference) we're not criticizing America, it's our home too. We're criticizing policymakers who are doing things that are damaging America.

Superpatriotism is a thing where you go around beating your chest and saying "America is the greatest! America is number 1! We're the tops!"

Under the guise of loving your country, our leaders play upon the best instincts of people and get them to support policies that hurt the quality of life at home.

Interview on Penn & Teller’s Bullshit (2005)

### *Keeping the Population in Line with Drugs*

Among the various crusades fabricated by our leaders is the "war on drugs." On Pacifica Radio (October 31, 1990), a spokesperson from America Watch described how the United States was giving funds to military and

paramilitary groups in Colombia ostensibly to stop the narcotics traffic. Instead, these forces were devoting their efforts to torturing and killing members of the legal Left, those working for social reform and a peaceful electoral challenge. The America Watch representative concluded that "unfortunately" U.S. policy "is in error." In its haste to fight the war on drugs, Washington was "giving money to the wrong people."

Actually, the administration was giving money to the right people, who were putting it to exactly the use Washington desired. Again it was assumed that U.S. leaders were misguided when in fact they were misguiding us. Colombia was the leading human rights violator in the hemisphere and, under the Clinton administration, the leading recipient of U.S. military aid.

In Peru, too, under the guise of fighting drug trafficking, U.S. forces became deeply involved in a political counterinsurgency that has taken thousands of lives. U.S. funds have been used to train and equip Peruvian troops, who have been put to merciless use in areas suspected of cooperating with insurgent guerrillas.

The White House would have us believe that the purpose of the 1989 invasion of Panama was to apprehend President Manuel Noriega, because he had dealt in drugs and was therefore in violation of U.S. laws. Here the United States operated under the remarkable principle that its domestic laws had jurisdiction over what the heads of foreign nations did in their own countries. Were that rule to work both ways, a U.S. president could be seized and transported to a fundamentalist Islamic country to be punished for failing to observe its laws.

U.S. forces did more than go after Noriega. They bombed and forcibly evacuated working-class neighborhoods in Panama City that were pro-Noriega strongholds. They arrested thousands of officials, political activists, and journalists, and purged the labor unions and universities of anyone of leftist orientation. They installed a government headed by rich compradors, such as President Guillermo Endara.

The amount of narcotics that came through Panama represented but a small fraction of the total flow into the United States. The real problem with Panama was that it was a populist-nationalist government. The Panamanian Defense Force was a left-oriented military. General Omar Torrijos, Noriega's predecessor who was killed in a mysterious plane explosion that some blame on the CIA, initiated a number of egalitarian social programs. The Torrijos government also negotiated a Canal treaty that was not to the liking of U.S. rightwingers. And Panama maintained friendly relations with Cuba and Sandinista Nicaragua. Noriega had preserved most of Torrijos's reforms.

After the U.S. invasion, unemployment in Panama soared; the public sector was cut drastically; and pension rights and other work benefits were abolished. Today Panama is once more a client-state nation, in the iron embrace of the U.S. empire.

"Against Empire" (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 50

Besides financing wars and lining pockets, narcotics are useful as an instrument of social control. As drugs became more plentiful in the United States, consumption increased dramatically. Demand may create supply, but supply also creates demand. The first condition for consumption is availability, getting the product before the public in plentiful amounts. Forty years ago, inner-city communities were just as impoverished as they are now, but they were not consuming drugs at the present level because narcotics were not pouring into them in such abundance and at such accessible prices as today.

Ibid., p. 52

U.S. policy is less concerned with fighting a war against drugs than in using drugs and drug traffickers in the empire's eternal war for social control at home and abroad. Like the ex-Nazis who proved useful in the war against communism, the drug traffickers (some of whom are linked to fascist organizations) are on the side of the CIA. "For the CIA to target international drug networks," write Peter Dale Scott and Jonathan Marshall in *Cocaine*

Politics (1991), "it would have to dismantle prime sources of intelligence, political leverage, and indirect financing for its Third World operations." This would be nothing less than "a total change of institutional direction."

Ibid.

### *Conspiracy or Coincidence?*

The alternative to a conspiracy theory is an innocence theory. That is—they do all of this, but they're not pursuing self-interests, they just do it, you know. [Audience laughter]

The other alternative is a somnambulism theory. Somnambulism is the tendency to walk in your sleep. David Rockefeller gets up in the morning and says, "What am I going to do to advance and protect my interest?" No, that would be conspiratorial.

Another alternative would be coincidence theory. It's just a coincidence that this happened. Or sometimes, a variation of coincidence theory is uncanny theory.

Then there's stupidity theory and incompetence theory. Don't laugh at that one, that's used all the time. I have had about a 20-year argument with my co-politicians on the left to stop calling Ronald Reagan stupid, to stop calling George Bush stupid. It's good for a joke, but that guy knew what he was doing and he did it. He got rid of the inheritance tax for the super rich. He cut corporate taxes down to almost nothing. He doubled the military budget. He waged two major wars, got this country into war, and left it that way. Another creep before him named Bill Clinton deregulated the banking system to create this disaster we've all been facing.

These guys know what they're doing, and they know who they're doing it for—they're doing it for themselves.

Lecture, "Ideology and Conspiracy" (2010), from the Understanding Deep Politics Conference

Our rulers themselves call for conspiratorial activities. They publicly admit it, except they don't call them conspiracies. They call it covert action, clandestine operations, special operations, and national security. If for some reason, you don't want to call these undertakings conspiracies, don't call them conspiracies. Give them another name. Call them "peekaboo operations", "surprise-surprise initiatives", call them whatever you want. But recognize them for what they are, as willfully planned actions whose real intentions are almost always denied. If they're not conspiring, why all the secrecy?

Lecture, "Conspiracy and Class Power" (1993)

In their eagerness to neutralize themselves, scholars tend to neutralize the subject matter. But history is never neutral. And relatively little of it is purely stochastic and accidental.

"History as Mystery" (1999), City Lights Books, p. 231

### *Ecology's Implications*

It is necessary not to confuse subterfuge with stupidity. The policy is remarkably rational. Its central organizing principle is to make the world safe for the multinational corporations and the free-market capital-accumulation system.

"Dirty Truths" (1996), City Lights Books, p.70

People began to be fascinated by the idea that they would be able to harness this power of nature. Instead of cringing before the power of nature, to actually harness it and become the master of this power. It led to this process of material plenty, instead of material scarcity. It led to industrial capitalism, and with capitalism you get a hijacking of this process. The essence of capitalism is to convert living nature into commodities, and

commodities into dead capital. And it reaches the point where finance capital develops means of just reproducing its own wealth with the hedge funds, and while the whole country is suffering, these guys are making more and more money.

Fall and Winter Documentary (2013)

Ecology's implications for capitalism are too momentous for the capitalist to contemplate. The plutocrats are more wedded to their wealth than to the Earth upon which they live, more concerned with the fate of their fortunes than with the fate of humanity. The present ecological crisis has been created by the few at the expense of the many.

“Contrary Notions: The Michael Parenti Reader” (2007), City Lights Books, p. 64

The earth itself is beginning to lose its natural ability to remove air pollutants.

There exists in the atmosphere a highly reactive oxygen compound, a free radical known among chemists as a molecular scavenger. This key molecule cleanses the air by attacking and transforming many of the gases it bounces into. Concentrations of this vital scavenger have decreased by 10 percent worldwide over a twenty-year period.

The life support systems of the entire ecosphere—the planet’s thin skin of air, water, and topsoil and its finite supply of material resources—are threatened by global warming, endless capitalist industrial expansion, and massive population growth. Global warming (also referred to as climate change) is caused by motor vehicle exhaust and other fossil fuel emissions that create a “greenhouse effect,” trapping heat close to the earth’s surface.

The last several decades have produced the warmest years on record. [...] These buildups are altering the climatic patterns on which we depend for our rainfall, resulting in record hurricanes, windstorms, droughts, and floods. In northern climes as well as warmer ones, rising temperatures have diminished soil moisture and rainfalls, disrupting the forest’s ability to renew itself. The consequent increase in drought and forest fires only adds to the warming.

Atmospheric warming is leading to the disappearance of freshwater sources in many parts of the world, causing life-threatening disaster for millions. Drought and overuse have led to serious water shortages in almost every area of the United States, not just the usually parched Southwest. Reservoirs have dropped to record lows. Waterfalls have disappeared. River basins and lakes are shrinking. Underground aquifers—the source of 60 percent of U.S. freshwater—are being depleted. Industrial expansion and the population boom create an additional drain on water supplies, while contributing directly to greater greenhouse emissions and more global warming.

The meltdown of permafrost in the northern climates releases vast amounts of carbon dioxide and methane that further accelerate the heat buildup, creating a cycle that feeds on itself. Global warming is causing the Antarctic and Arctic ice caps and Greenland glaciers to melt. Arctic ice caps act as reflector shields against the sun’s rays. As they melt away, the earth absorbs still more of the sun’s heat causing still more meltdown. The melting of the ice caps brings a dramatic rise in sea levels, causing them to swallow up shorelines and small islands, and disrupt natural ecosystems, threatening to flood large sectors of the globe.

By exacerbating flooding and drought, global warming causes more than 300,000 deaths and about \$125 billion in economic losses each year. The increased death rates are from illnesses including malnutrition, diarrheal disease, malaria, and various heat-related ailments.

“Democracy for the Few, Ninth Edition” (2011), Wadsworth Cengage Learning, p. 93

The automobile is one of the greatest causes of air pollution in urban areas and of global warming throughout the world. An estimated thirty thousand deaths yearly are caused by automotive emissions.

Rubber tire and oil slick runoffs and the tons of salt poured on winter roads cause trees and vegetation to wither while damaging bays and rivers. The average vehicle generates seven hundred pounds of air pollution and four tons of carbon just in its manufacture.

Auto companies have done little to develop zero-emission vehicles, falsely claiming there is insufficient demand. If anything, car dealers and the general public have long been asking for affordable zero-emission vehicles.

Ibid., p. 88

For years the herbicides, pesticides, and hazardous pharmaceuticals that were banned in this country have been sold by their producers to Third World nations where regulations are weaker or nonexistent. (In 1981, President Reagan repealed an executive order signed by President Carter that would have forced exporters of such products to notify the recipient nation that the commodity was banned in the USA.)

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 30

For decades, over one hundred nuclear weapons plants have been pouring radioactive waste into the air, soil, groundwater, and rivers. The military is the single biggest consumer of fuel in this country and the greatest polluter, contaminating the environment with hundreds of thousands of tons of heavy metals, solvents, lubricants, PCBs, plutonium, iridium, fuel runoffs, and other toxic wastes.

Ibid.

The military creates over 90 percent of our radioactive waste and stockpiles thousands of tons of lethal biochemical agents. There are some 21,000 contaminated sites on military bases and at nuclear weapons plants.

Ibid., 31

Other theories enjoy wide currency. We hear that Third World poverty is due to overpopulation, too many people having too many children to feed.

Actually, over the last several centuries, many Third World lands have been less densely populated than certain parts of Europe. India has fewer people per acre—but more poverty—than Holland, Wales, England, Japan, Italy, and a few other industrial countries.

Furthermore, it is the industrialized nations of the First World, not the poor ones of the Third, that devour some 80 percent of the world's resources and pose the greatest threat to the planet's ecology.

Ibid., p. 8

If Third World nations are impoverished, then, it is not because of their climate or culture or national temperament or some other "natural condition" but because of the highly unnatural things imperialism has been doing to them. It is not because they have lacked natural wealth and industries but, quite the contrary, because the plenitude of their resources proved so inviting to the foreign pillagers, and the strength of their industries so troublesomely competitive to foreign industrialists.

Nor is overpopulation the cause of Third World poverty. The most desperately impoverished areas of the Third World, such as Northeast Brazil and the various famine regions of Africa, are among the more sparsely populated. Countries like India, Pakistan, and Indonesia, whose poverty is often blamed on their supposedly excessive human fertility, actually have less people per square mile than England, Wales, Holland, Japan, Belgium, West Germany, Italy, and a few other industrialized countries. Cuba, with a population of only 5 million people in the 1950s, suffered widespread poverty and hunger; today with a population of 11 million no one is starving.

“The Sword and the Dollar: Imperialism, Revolution and the Arms Race” (1989), St. Martin’s Press, p. 15

---

The enormous interests of giant multinational corporations outweigh doomsayer predictions about an ecological crisis. Sober business heads refuse to get caught up in the "hysteria" about the environment, preferring to quietly augment their fortunes. Besides, there can always be found a few experts who will go against all the evidence and say that the jury is still out, that there is no conclusive proof to support the alarmists. Conclusive proof in this case would come only when we reach the point of no return.

Ecology is profoundly subversive of capitalism. It needs planned, environmentally sustainable production rather than the rapacious unregulated kind. It requires economical consumption rather than an artificially stimulated, ever-expanding consumerism. It calls for natural, low-cost energy systems rather than profitable, high-cost, polluting ones. Ecology's implications for capitalism are too horrendous for the capitalist to contemplate.

*"Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism"* (1997), City Lights Books, p. 159

The preoccupation of the super-rich to do nothing but augment their wealth is a pathology. And that's who we've got running this world. These are small groups of plutocrats whose addiction is to make the world safe for the continued accumulation of wealth. These people are dangerous. The lunatics are running the asylum.

Fall and Winter Documentary (2013)

## 3

## Rational Fascism

*The False Revolution*

What distinguishes fascism from ordinary right-wing patriarchal autocracies is the way it attempts to cultivate a revolutionary aura. Fascism offers a beguiling mix of revolutionary-sounding mass appeals and reactionary class politics. The Nazi party's full name was the National Socialist German Workers Party, a left-sounding name. As already noted, the SA storm troopers had a militant share-the-wealth strain in their ranks that was suppressed by Hitler after he took state power.

Both the Italian fascists and the Nazis made a conscious effort to steal the Left's thunder. There were mass mobilizations, youth organizations, work brigades, rallies, parades, banners, symbols, and slogans. There was much talk about a "Nazi revolution" that would revitalize society, sweeping away the old order and building the new.

For this reason, mainstream writers feel free to treat fascism and communism as totalitarian twins. It is a case of reducing essence to form. The similarity in form is taken as reason enough to blur the vast difference in actual class content. [...] Thus, Noam Chomsky claims, "The rise of corporations was in fact a manifestation of the same phenomena that led to fascism and Bolshevism, which sprang out of the same totalitarian soil." But in the Italy and Germany of that day, most workers and peasants made a firm distinction between fascism and communism, as did industrialists and bankers who supported fascism out of fear and hatred of communism, a judgement based largely on class realities.

Years ago, I used to say that fascism never succeeded in solving the irrational contradictions of capitalism. Today I am of the opinion that it did accomplish that goal—but only for the capitalists, not for the populace. Fascism never intended to offer a social solution that would serve the general populace, only a reactionary one, forcing all the burdens and losses onto the working public. Divested of its ideological and organizational paraphernalia, fascism is nothing more than a final solution to the class struggle, the totalistic submergence and exploitation of democratic forces for the benefit and profit of higher financial circles.

Fascism is a false revolution. It cultivates the appearance of popular politics and a revolutionary aura without offering a genuine revolutionary class content. It propagates a "New Order" while serving the same old moneyed interests. Its leaders are not guilty of confusion but of deception. That they work hard to mislead the public does not mean they themselves are misled.

“Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism” (1997), City Lights Books, pp. 16-17

*Capitalism's Apology*

Authorities in these Western European countries and the United States have done little to expose neo-Nazi networks. As the whiffs of fascism develop into an undeniable stench, we are reminded that Hitler's progeny are still with us and that they have dangerous links with each other and within the security agencies of various Western capitalist nations.

“Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism” (1997), City Lights Books, p. 21

Italian fascism and German Nazism had their admirers within the U.S. business community and the corporate-owned press. Bankers, publishers, and industrialists, including the likes of Henry Ford, traveled to Rome and Berlin to pay homage, receive medals, and strike profitable deals. Many did their utmost to advance the Nazi war effort, sharing military-industrial secrets and engaging in secret transactions with the Nazi government, even after the United States entered the war. During the 1920s and early 1930s, major publications like *Fortune*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Christian Science Monitor* hailed Mussolini as the man who rescued Italy from anarchy and radicalism. They spun rhapsodic fantasies of a resurrected Italy where poverty and exploitation had suddenly disappeared, where Reds had been vanquished, harmony reigned, and Blackshirts protected a "new democracy."

Some dissenters refused to join the "We Adore Benito" chorus. *The Nation* reminded its readers that Mussolini was not saving democracy but destroying it. Progressives of all stripes and various labor leaders denounced fascism. But their critical sentiments received little exposure in the U.S. corporate media.

As with Mussolini, so with Hitler. The press did not look too unkindly upon der Fuehrer's Nazi dictatorship. There was a strong "Give Adolph A Chance" contingent, some of it greased by Nazi money. In exchange for more positive coverage in the Hearst newspapers, for instance, the Nazis paid almost ten times the standard subscription rate for Hearst's INS wire service. In return, William Randolph Hearst instructed his correspondents in Germany to file friendly reports about Hitler's regime. Those who refused were transferred or fired. Hearst newspapers even opened their pages to occasional guest columns by prominent Nazi leaders like Alfred Rosenberg and Hermann Goring.

Radio Talk on TUC Radio: The Functions of Fascism

One of the things conveniently overlooked by mainstream writers is the way Western capitalist states have cooperated with fascism. In his collaborationist efforts, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain was positively cozy with the Nazis. He and many of his class saw Hitler as a bulwark against communism in Germany, and Nazi Germany as a bulwark against communism in Europe.

After World War II, the Western capitalist allies did little to eradicate fascism from Italy or Germany, except for putting some of the top leaders on trial at Nuremberg. By 1947, German conservatives began to depict the Nuremberg prosecutors as dupes of the Jews and communists. In Italy, the strong partisan movement that had waged armed struggle against fascism was soon treated as suspect and unpatriotic. Within a year after the war, almost all Italian fascists were released from prison while hundreds of communists and other leftist partisans who had been fighting the Nazi occupation were jailed. History was turned on its head, transforming the Blackshirts into victims and the Reds into criminals. Allied authorities assisted in these measures.

Under the protection of U.S. occupation authorities, the police, courts, military, security agencies, and bureaucracy remained largely staffed by those who had served the former fascist regimes or by their ideological recruits—as is true to this day. The perpetrators of the Holocaust murdered six million Jews, half a million Gypsies, thousands of homosexuals, several million Ukrainians, Russians, Poles, and others, and got away with it—in good part because the very people who were supposed to investigate these crimes were themselves complicit.

In comparison, when the Communists took over in East Germany, they removed some 80 percent of the judges, teachers, and officials for their Nazi collaboration; they imprisoned thousands, and they executed six hundred Nazi party leaders for war crimes. They would have shot more of the war criminals had not so many fled to the protective embrace of the West.

What happened to the U.S. businesses that collaborated with fascism? The Rockefeller family's Chase National Bank used its Paris office in Vichy France to help launder German money to facilitate Nazi international

trade during the war, and did so with complete impunity. Corporations like DuPont, Ford, General Motors, and ITT owned factories in enemy countries that produced fuel, tanks, and planes that wreaked havoc on Allied forces. After the war, instead of being prosecuted for treason, ITT collected \$27 million from the U.S. government for war damages inflicted on its German plants by Allied bombings. General Motors collected over \$33 million. Pilots were given instructions not to hit factories in Germany that were owned by U.S. firms. Thus Cologne was almost leveled by Allied bombing but its Ford plant, providing military equipment for the Nazi army, was untouched; indeed, German civilians began using the plant as an air raid shelter.

“Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism” (1997), City Lights Books, pp. 17-19

### *Plunder and Corruption*

Along with serving the capitalists, fascist leaders served themselves, getting in on the money at every opportunity. Their personal greed and their class loyalties were two sides of the same coin. Mussolini and his cohorts lived lavishly, cavorting within the higher circles of wealth and aristocracy. Nazi officials and SS commanders amassed personal fortunes by plundering conquered territories and stealing from concentration camp inmates and other political victims. Huge amounts were made from secretly owned, well-connected businesses, and from contracting out camp slave labor to industrial firms like I.G. Farben and Krupp.

“Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism” (1997), City Lights Books, p. 9

Both Mussolini and Hitler showed their gratitude to their big business patrons by privatizing many perfectly solvent state-owned steel mills, power plants, banks, and steamship companies. Both regimes dipped heavily into the public treasury to refloat or subsidize heavy industry. Agribusiness farming was expanded and heavily subsidized. Both states guaranteed a return on the capital invested by giant corporations while assuming most of the risks and losses on investments. As is often the case with reactionary regimes, public capital was raided by private capital. At the same time, taxes were increased for the general populace but lowered or eliminated for the rich and big business. Inheritance taxes on the wealthy were greatly reduced or abolished altogether. The result of all this? In Italy during the 1930s the economy was gripped by recession, a staggering public debt, and widespread corruption. But industrial profits rose and the armaments factories busily rolled out weapons in preparation for the war to come. In Germany, unemployment was cut in half with the considerable expansion in armaments jobs, but overall poverty increased because of the drastic wage cuts. And from 1935 to 1943 industrial profits increased substantially while the net income of corporate leaders climbed 46 percent. During the radical 1930s, in the United States, Great Britain, and Scandinavia, upper-income groups experienced a modest decline in their share of the national income; but in Germany the top 5 percent enjoyed a 15 percent gain. Despite this record, most writers have ignored fascism's close collaboration with big business. Some even argue that business was not a beneficiary but a victim of fascism. Angelo Codevilla, a Hoover Institute conservative scribe, blithely announced: "If fascism means anything, it means government ownership and control of business". Thus fascism is misrepresented as a mutant form of socialism. In fact, if fascism means anything, it means all-out government support for business and severe repression of antibusiness, prolabor forces. Is fascism merely a dictatorial force in the service of capitalism? That may not be all it is, but that certainly is an important part of fascism's *raison d'être*, the function Hitler himself kept referring to when he talked about saving the industrialists and bankers from Bolshevism. It is a subject that deserves far more attention than it has received.

“Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism” (1997), City Lights Books, p. 7

*If Fascism Came to America*

If fascism came to America, some say it would be an unbearable nightmare drastically disrupting the everyday pattern of our lives. And since our lives seem to retain their normal pattern, it follows that fascism has not taken over. In actuality, however, the fascist state, like all states, has no need to make nightmarish intrusions into the trivia of every citizen's life.

The Orwellian image of Big Brother commanding an obscure citizen to do his morning exercises via two-way television leaves us with a grossly exaggerated caricature of the authoritarian state. Rather than alerting us to more realistic dangers, novels like *1984* cloud our vision with fanciful horrors of the future, thereby making the present look not all that bad in comparison, and leaving us the more convinced that there is no cause for alarm.

The concentration camp was never the normal condition for the average gentile German. Unless one were Jewish, or poor and unemployed, or of active leftist persuasion or otherwise openly anti-Nazi Germany from 1933 until well into the war was not a nightmarish place. All the "good Germans" had to do was obey the law, pay their taxes, give their sons to the army, avoid any sign of political heterodoxy, and look the other way when unions were busted and troublesome people disappeared.

Since many "middle Americans" already obey the law, pay their taxes, give their sons to the army, are themselves distrustful of political heterodoxy, and applaud when unions are broken and troublesome people are disposed of, they probably could live without too much personal torment in a fascist state—some of them certainly seem eager to do so.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, pp. 33-34

It is sometimes argued by those who deny the imminence of American fascism that we are more free today than ever before. One's ability to accept such reassurance partly depends on the class conditions and life chances that one confronts. The affluent individual whose views fit into that portion of the American political spectrum known as the "mainstream" (from rightist Republican to centrist Democrat) and whose political actions are limited to the standardized forms of participation—informal discussion, television viewing, newspaper reading, and voting—is apt to dismiss the contention that America is fascistic. But those who oppose the existing political orthodoxy and who find themselves under surveillance and subjected to the intimidations, harassments, and sanctions of the U.S. national security state have a less sanguine view.

Ibid., p. 34

It seems that the ability of most middle-class whites to perceive the fascist features of American society is seriously blunted not only by their class experiences but by the aura of familiarity and legitimacy that enshrouds the established political culture. In making comparisons between their society and others, they tend to employ a double standard. Thus the organized forms of police violence in America are seen as isolated, aberrant happenings on the infrequent occasions they are publicized rather than as inherent manifestations of our social order. But the same practices in certain other lands are treated as predictable components of totalitarian systems.

The Nazi invasion of Poland is fascism in action; the American invasion of Vietnam is a "blunder" or at worst an "immoral application" of power. The indoctrination of children in Nazi Germany into the myths and rituals of the nation-state is seen as characteristic of fascism; but our own grade-school indoctrination replete with flag salutes, national anthems, and history books espousing the myths of American superiority is "education for citizenship." Many social arrangements and happenings that would evoke strongly negative sentiments if defined as products of a totalitarian state become, by their proximity and cultural familiarity, no cause for alarm when practiced at home.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, p. 39

---

At least fifty US transnational corporations operated in Germany from 1933 to 1945, the years the Nazis were in power. Before the war, as the *New York Times* reported on its front page, Boeing was arming Nazi Germany with a “mighty” air fleet, for which the company waxed rich in profits. Faced with class action law suits in 1999-2000, growing numbers of corporations now admit having used and greatly profited from unpaid slave labor supplied from Nazi concentration camps. No US corporate head was ever prosecuted for complicity in these war crimes.

“Democracy for the Few, Seventh Edition” (2002), St. Martin’s Press

## 4

# Imperialism: Fascism in a Pinstriped Suit

### *Wealth Creates Poverty*

When we say a country is "underdeveloped," we are implying that it is backward and retarded in some way, that its people have shown little capacity to achieve and evolve. The negative connotations of "underdeveloped" have caused the United Nations, the Wall Street Journal, and parties of various political persuasions to refer to Third World countries as "developing" nations, a term somewhat less insulting than "underdeveloped" but equally misleading. [...] It still implies that poverty was an original historic condition and not something imposed by imperialists. It also falsely suggests that these countries are developing when actually their economic conditions are usually worsening.

The dominant theory of the last half century maintains that it is up to the rich nations of the North to help uplift the "backward" nations of the South, bringing them technology and proper work habits. This is an updated version of "the white man's burden," a favorite imperialist fantasy.

According to the development scenario, with the introduction of Western investments, workers in the poor nations will find more productive employment in the modern sector at higher wages. As capital accumulates, business will reinvest its profits, thus creating still more products, jobs, buying power, and markets. Eventually a more prosperous economy evolves.

This "development theory" or "modernization theory," as it is sometimes called, bears little relation to reality. What has emerged in the Third World is an intensely exploitive form of dependent capitalism. Economic conditions have worsened drastically with the growth of transnational corporate investment. The problem is not poor lands or unproductive populations but foreign exploitation and class inequality. Investors go into a country not to uplift it but to enrich themselves.

"Against Empire" (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 10

We're taught a few things about capitalism, we're taught that it's a system that works; it's a system that has brought us prosperity. We've heard that all our lives. Now I'm going to try to convince you otherwise, and I'm going to do it in two minutes. [Audience laughter] Okay? Actually, I think some of you already have certain suspicions about that system.

It's very simple. Almost the entire world is capitalist, and almost the entire world is poor. Capitalist Indonesia is miserably poor and getting poorer. Capitalist India is miserably poor and getting poorer. So with capitalist Thailand, and capitalist Nigeria, and capitalist El Salvador, and Haiti, and Mexico, and Brazil, and Argentina. And capitalist Russia, and Poland, and Bulgaria, with all of the privatization, and deregulation, and free market coming in. Poverty! Poverty, increase in crime, increase in desperation, increase in misery, increase in suicides! It's capitalism at work, moving in.

These countries are getting poorer as there is more and more deregulation, more and more so-called free market, which is really monopoly market. It's a free market if you've got money, it's a market that works for those

who have money. These countries are getting poorer because the people are being driven off the lands by the giant corporations. They create business zones. [...] Those business zones make people poorer.

The corporations go in and they displace and wipe out domestic production and businesses by dumping and underselling; that makes people poorer. The corporations go in, they force cutbacks in human services, education, health and housing, as the country develops a heavier and heavier debt structure, as the IMF [imposes] its Structural Adjustment Programs, imposing conditions of lower spending and lower consumption. They consume less, they've got to produce more to help pay this debt—a debt that becomes soon unpayable because it accumulates and compounds. That makes people poorer.

The corporations force down prices of non-renewable resources. [They] go in and plunder the land, the Earth, to get those natural resources out, underpaying whatever production people do produce—whatever they put on the international market is underpaid through monopoly control of those markets. That makes people poorer.

So we've solved the mystery in a little bit more than two minutes. We've solved the mystery though, of why over the past half-century, financial investment has increased, profits have increased, wealth has increased, but so has poverty.

'Cause wealth and poverty don't just live together in unfortunate juxtaposition. We always hear that too, don't we? "Isn't it terrible? So much wealth next to so much poverty...", "What a shame! Wouldn't it be nice if these people gave a little bit more to those people?" Well, they're not just there so much shamefully in contrast, they're there in a dynamic interrelationship, because it's wealth that creates poverty.

The corporations don't go into the Third World to start affirmative action programs, to abolish poverty, to uplift these little brown and black and yellow people to the ways of the wise white man! They don't go in to do that, though they actually talk about doing that... They don't go in to help the poor, they go in to help themselves—that's what they do.

Lecture, "Terrorism, Globalism and Conspiracy" (9 October 2002)

### *Making the World Safe for the Fortune 500*

An important goal of U.S. policy is to make the world safe for the Fortune 500 and its global system of capital accumulation. Governments that strive for any kind of economic independence or any sort of populist redistributive politics, that attempt to take some of their economic surplus and apply it to not-for-profit services that benefit the people—such governments are the ones most likely to feel the wrath of U.S. intervention or invasion.

The designated "enemy" can be a reformist, populist, military government as in Panama under Torrijo (and even under Noriega), Egypt under Nasser, Peru under Velasco, and Portugal after Salazar; a Christian socialist government as in Nicaragua under the Sandinistas; a social democracy as in Chile under Allende, Jamaica under Manley, Greece under Papandreou, and the Dominican Republic under Bosch; a Marxist-Leninist government as in Cuba, Vietnam, and North Korea; an Islamic revolutionary order as in Libya under Qaddafi; or even a conservative militarist regime as in Iraq under Saddam Hussein, if it should get out of line on oil prices and oil quotas.

"Against Empire" (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 20

The CIA personnel who devise [...] violent programs do not consider themselves involved in anything less noble than the defense of U.S. interests abroad. They may admit that certain of their methods are unsavory but they are quick to point out the necessity of fighting fire with fire, emphasizing that a communist victory is a far greater evil than whatever repressive expedencies they are compelled to utilize. So they justify their crimes by saying that their victims are criminals. The national security warriors do not support torturers and death squads

arbitrarily, but as part of a process of extermination and repression in defense of specific politico-economic interests.

Ibid., p. 17

By any measure other than the peculiar one used by Washington policy makers and propagandists, the U.S. national security state is the greatest purveyor of terrorism in the world today and has been for some time.

Tallying only the death toll inflicted by U.S. armed forces or U.S.-backed surrogate forces around the world, the estimates are as follows: 3,000,000 in Vietnam, 1,000,000 in Cambodia, 1,000,000 in Mozambique, 500,000 to 1,000,000 in Indonesia, 600,000 in Angola, 300,000 in Laos, 250,000 in East Timor, 200,000 in Iraq, 200,000 in Afghanistan, 150,000 in Guatemala, 100,000 in Nicaragua, 90,000 in El Salvador, and tens of thousands in Chile, Argentina, Zaire, Iran (under the Shah), Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil, Panama, Somalia, South Yemen, Western Sahara, and other countries.'

Against the blowing up of a building or an airliner, how do we measure this U.S.-sponsored terrorism? To be sure, we must not dismiss or make light of individual acts of terror. Yet we might wonder why they are the only ones that warrant publicity and condemnation. The wholesale terrorism of aerial massacres, death squads, mass executions, torture, and intimidation orchestrated by the U.S. national security state either goes unreported altogether or is represented as the legitimate activity of governments defending themselves from insurgencies and terrorists.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, p. 74

For most of this century U.S. foreign policy has been devoted to: the suppression of revolutionary governments and radical movements around the world. The turn of the twentieth century found the McKinley administration in a war of attrition against the people of the Philippines lasting from 1898 to 1902 (with pockets of resistance continuing for years afterward). In that conflict, U.S. forces slaughtered some 200,000 Filipino women, men, and children. At about that same time, in conjunction with various European colonial powers, the United States invaded China to help suppress the Boxer Rebellion at substantial loss of life to the Chinese rebels. U.S. forces took over Hawaii, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Guam and in the following decades invaded Mexico, Soviet Russia, Nicaragua, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, and other countries, actions that usually inflicted serious losses upon the populations of these countries.

“Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism” (1997), City Lights Books, p. 23

The anti-Red propagandists uttered nary a word about how revolutionaries in Russia, China, Cuba, Vietnam, Nicaragua, and other countries nationalized the lands held by rich exploitative landlords and initiated mass programs for education, health, housing, and jobs. Not a word about how their efforts advanced the living standards and life chances of hundreds of millions in countries that had long suffered under the yoke of feudal oppression and Western colonial pillage, an improvement in mass well-being never before witnessed in history.

No matter that the revolutionaries in various Asian, African, and Latin American countries enjoyed popular support and were willing to pursue a neutralist course in East-West relations rather than place themselves under the hegemony of either Moscow or Peking. They still were targeted for a counterrevolutionary battering. From opposing communists because they might be revolutionaries, it was a short step to opposing revolutionaries because they might be communists.

The real sin of revolutionaries, communist or not, was that they championed the laboring classes against the wealthy few. They advocated changes in the distribution of class power and the way wealth was produced and used. They wanted less individualistic advancement at the expense of the many and collective betterment for the entire working populace.

When Washington says "our" interests must be protected abroad, we might question whether all of us are represented by the goals pursued. Far-off countries, previously unknown to most Americans, suddenly become vital to "our" interests. To protect "our" oil in the Middle East and "our" resources and "our" markets elsewhere, our sons and daughters have to participate in overseas military ventures, and our taxes are needed to finance these ventures.

The next time "our" oil in the Middle East is in jeopardy, we might remember that relatively few of us own oil stock. Yet even portfolio-deprived Americans are presumed to have a common interest with Exxon and Mobil because they live in an economy dependent on oil. It is assumed that if the people of other lands wrested control of their oil away from the big U.S. companies, they would refuse to sell it to us. Supposedly they would prefer to drive us into the arms of competing producers and themselves into ruination, denying themselves the billions of dollars they might earn on the North American market.

In fact, nations that acquire control of their own resources do not act so strangely. Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea, Libya, and others would be happy to have access to markets in this country, selling at prices equal to or lower than those offered by the giant multinationals. So when Third World peoples, through nationalization, revolution, or both, reclaim the oil in their own land, or the copper, tin, sugar, or other resources, it does not hurt the interests of the U.S. working populace. But it certainly hurts the multinational conglomerates that once profited so handsomely from these enterprises.

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 25

In pro-capitalist countries like El Salvador and Guatemala, the U.S. national security state is on the side of the government, rendering indispensable counterinsurgency assistance in order to suppress popular liberation forces. By the “US national security state” I mean to the Executive Office of the White House, the National Security Council (NSC), National Security Administration, Central Intelligence Agency, Pentagon, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and other such units that are engaged in surveillance, suppression, covert action, and forceful interventions abroad and at home.

Ibid., p. 16

Washington's embargo against Cuba is shutting out U.S. business from billions of dollars of attractive investment and trade opportunities. From this it is mistakenly concluded that U.S. policy is not propelled by economic interests. In fact, it demonstrates just the opposite, an unwillingness to tolerate those states that try to free themselves from the global capitalist system.

Ibid., p. 23

Reagan's invasion of Grenada served notice to all other Caribbean countries that this was the fate that awaited any nation that sought to get out from under its client-state status. So the invaders put an end to the New Jewel Movement's revolutionary programs for land reform, health care, education, and cooperatives. Today, with its unemployment at new heights and its poverty at new depths, Grenada is once again firmly bound to the free market world. Everyone else in the region indeed has taken note.

Ibid.

The economy of Third World nations typically is concentrated on exporting a few raw materials or labor-intensive commodities. Since it is such a buyer's market, a poor nation finds itself in acute competition with other impoverished nations for the markets of more prosperous industrial countries. The latter are able to set trading terms that are highly favorable to themselves, playing one poor country off against another.

### *Free Market and Monopoly Market*

Among the recent undertakings by politico-economic elites are the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the 1993 Uruguayan Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which represent attempts to circumvent the sovereignty of nation-states in favor of the transnational corporations. As presented to the public, NAFTA and GATT will break down tariff walls, integrate national economies into a global system, and benefit the peoples of all nations with increased trade. This "globalization" process is treated as a benign and natural historical development that supposedly has taken us from regional to national and now to international market relations.

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 35

The GATT agreements create a World Trade Organization (WTO), an international association of over 120 signatory nations, with the same legal status as the United Nations. WTO has the authority to prevent, overrule, or dilute the environmental, social, consumer, and labor laws of any nation. It sets up panels composed of non-elected trade specialists who act as judges over economic issues, placing them beyond the reach of national sovereignty and popular control, thereby ensuring that community interests will be subordinated to finance capital.

Ibid., p. 18

Generally, GATT advances the massive corporate acquisition of publicly owned property and the holdings of local owners and worker collectives. Deprived of tariff protections, many small family farms in North America and Europe will go under, and the self-sufficient village agricultural economies of much of Asia and Africa will be destroyed. As Kim Moody notes, "Third World peasant producers will be driven from the land by the millions, as is already happening in Mexico [under NAFTA]."

We are told that to remain competitive under GATT, we in North America will have to increase our productivity while reducing our labor and production costs. We will have to spend less on social services and introduce more wage concessions, more restructuring, deregulation, and privatization. Only then might we cope with the impersonal forces sweeping us along. In fact, there is nothing impersonal about these forces. GATT was consciously planned by business and governmental elites over a period of years, by interests that have explicitly pursued a deregulated world economy and have opposed all democratic checks upon business practices.

Ibid., p. 19

### *Foreign Aid: Poor People in a Rich Country Giving Money to Rich People in a Poor Country*

Since World War II, the U.S. government has given over \$200 billion in military aid to train, equip, and subsidize more than 2.3 million troops and internal security forces in some eighty countries, the purpose being not to defend them from outside invasions but to protect ruling oligarchs and multinational corporate investors from the dangers of domestic anti-capitalist insurgency. Among the recipients have been some of the most notorious military autocracies in history, countries that have tortured, killed, or otherwise maltreated large numbers of their citizens because of their dissenting political views, as in Turkey, Zaire, Chad, Pakistan, Morocco, Indonesia, Honduras, Peru, Colombia, El Salvador, Haiti, Cuba (under Batista), Nicaragua (under Somoza), Iran (under the Shah), the Philippines (under Marcos), and Portugal (under Salazar).

U.S. leaders profess a dedication to democracy. Yet over the past five decades, democratically elected reformist governments in Guatemala, Guyana, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Syria, Indonesia

(under Sukarno), Greece, Argentina [twice], Bolivia, Haiti, and numerous other nations were overthrown by procapitalist militaries that were funded and aided by the U.S. national security state.

The U.S. national security state has participated in covert actions or proxy mercenary wars against revolutionary governments in Cuba, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Portugal, Nicaragua, Cambodia, East Timor, Western Sahara, and elsewhere, usually with dreadful devastation and loss of life for the indigenous populations. Hostile actions also have been directed against reformist governments in Egypt, Lebanon, Peru, Iran, Syria, Zaire, Jamaica, South Yemen, the Fiji Islands, and elsewhere.

Since World War II, U.S. forces have directly invaded or launched aerial attacks against Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, North Korea, Laos, Cambodia, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, Libya, Iraq, and Somalia, sowing varying degrees of death and destruction.

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 21

It is misleading to say that the United States, as a nation, gives aid to this or that country. A nation as such does not give aid to another nation as such. More precisely, the common citizens of our country, through their taxes, give to the privileged elites of another country. As someone once said: foreign aid is when the poor people of a rich country give money to the rich people of a poor country. The transference is across class lines as well as national lines, representing an upward redistribution of income.

Ibid., p. 40

### *The Debt Trap*

A key instrument of class-biased aid is the World Bank, an interlocking, international consortium of bankers and economists who spend billions of dollars—much of it from U.S. taxpayers—to finance projects that shore up repressive right-wing regimes and subsidize corporate investors at the expense of the poor and the environment.

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 14

In many poor countries over half the manufacturing assets are owned or controlled by foreign companies. Even in instances when the multinationals have only a minority interest, they often retain a veto control. Even when the host nation owns the enterprise in its entirety, the multinationals will enjoy benefits through their near-monopoly of technology and international marketing. Such is the case with oil, an industry in which the giant companies own only about 38 percent of the world's crude petroleum production but control almost all the refining capacity and distribution.

Given these disadvantageous trade and investment relations, Third World nations have found it expedient to borrow heavily from Western banks and from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which is controlled by the United States and other Western member-nations. By the 1990s, the Third World debt was approaching \$2 trillion, an unpayable sum. The greater a nation's debt, the greater the pressure to borrow still more to meet deficits—often at still higher interest rates and on tighter payment terms.

An increasingly large portion of the earnings of indebted nations goes to servicing the debt, leaving still less for domestic consumption. The debts of some nations have grown so enormous that the interest accumulates faster than payments can be met. The debt develops a self-feeding momentum of its own, consuming more and more of the debtor nation's wealth.

Ibid., p. 13

In 1944, the United Nations created the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Voting power in both organizations is determined by a country's financial contribution. As the largest “donor,” the United

States has a dominant voice, followed by Germany, Japan, France, and Great Britain. The IMF operates in secrecy with a select group of bankers and finance ministry staffs drawn mostly from the rich nations.

The World Bank and IMF are supposed to assist nations in their development. What actually happens is another story. A poor country borrows from the World Bank to build up some aspect of its economy. Should it be unable to pay back the heavy interest because of declining export sales or some other reason, it must borrow again. But the IMF imposes a “structural adjustment program” (SAP), requiring debtor countries to grant tax breaks to the transnational corporations, reduce wages, and make no attempt to protect local enterprises from foreign imports and foreign takeovers.

The debtor nations are pressured to privatize their economies, selling at scandalously low prices their state-owned mines, railroads, and utilities to private corporations. They are forced to open their forests to clear-cutting and their lands to strip mining, without regard to the ecological damage done. The debtor nations also must cut back on subsidies for health, education, transportation, and food, spending less in order to have more money to meet debt payments. Required to grow cash crops for export earnings, they become even less able to feed their own populations.

Throughout the Third World, real wages have declined, and national debts have soared to the point where debt payments absorb almost all of the poorer countries’ export earnings. Some critics conclude that IMF and World Bank structural adjustments do not work, because the end result is less self-sufficiency and more poverty for the recipient nations.

Why then do the rich member states continue to fund the IMF and World Bank? It is because foreign loan programs do work, depending on who benefits. Their intent is not to uplift the masses in other countries but to serve the interests of global finance, to take over the lands and local economies of Third World peoples, indenture their labor with enormous debts, privatize public services, and eliminate the trade competition these countries might have posed had they ever really been allowed to develop. In these respects, foreign loans and structural adjustments, aid and investments, all work very well indeed—not for the recipient nations but for the predatory lenders.

“Democracy for the Few, Ninth Edition” (2011), Wadsworth Cengage Learning, pp. 145-146

### *The Third Worldization of Everything*

[...] The Third World is not "underdeveloped" but overexploited. The gap between rich and poor nations is not due to the "neglect" of the latter by the former as has been often claimed. For forty years or more we have heard how the nations of the North must help close the poverty gap between themselves and the nations of the South, devoting some portion of their technology and capital to the task. Yet the gap between rich and poor only widens because investments in the Third World are not designed to develop the capital resources of the poor nations but to enrich the Western investors.

“The Sword and the Dollar: Imperialism, Revolution and the Arms Race” (1989), St. Martin’s Press, p. 12

Just as the power of the feudal aristocracy had to be broken in order for capitalism to emerge fully, so must imperialism and capitalism in Third World nations be overcome if a new system is to prevail.

Ibid., p. 109

A closer look reveals that U.S. foreign policy is neither weak nor foolish, but on the contrary is rational and remarkably successful in reproducing the conditions for the continued international expropriation of wealth.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, p. 57

Third World countries are underpaid for their exports and regularly overcharged for the goods they import from the industrial world. Thus, their coffee, cotton, meat, tin, copper, and oil are sold to foreign corporations at low prices in order to obtain—at painfully high prices—various manufactured goods, machinery, and spare parts. According to a former president of Venezuela, Carlos Andrés Pérez: "This has resulted in a constant and growing outflow of capital and impoverishment of our countries."

"Against Empire" (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 13

Over the last two decades, in Latin America, Asia, and even in Europe and North America, conservative forces have pushed hard to take publicly owned not-for-profit industries and services (mines, factories, oil wells, banks, railroads, telephone companies, utilities, television systems, postal services, health care, and insurance firms) and sell them off at bargain prices to private interests to be operated for profit.

Ibid., p. 20

Designed to leave the world's economic destiny to the tender mercy of bankers and multinational corporations, globalization is a logical extension of imperialism, a victory of empire over republic, international finance capital over democracy.

Ibid.

Neither liberals nor conservatives seem to have anything to say about economic imperialism as practiced throughout the world by the corporate and financial interests in the United States and other capitalist countries. Most liberals and conservatives, be they political leaders, academics, or media commentators, do not believe imperialism exists—at least not since Rudyard Kipling's day or not since the Spanish-American War. If they use the term "imperialism" to describe a contemporary event, it is usually in reference to something the Soviet Union is doing. They never consider whether capitalism as a global system has any integral relationship to US foreign policy....

[...] liberals and conservatives seem to agree that the US government acts with benign intent in the world. While they allow that the United States sometimes must do unsavory things because that is the kind of world we live in, they generally leave the goals and premises of US policy unexamined.

"The Sword and the Dollar: Imperialism, Revolution and the Arms Race" (1989), St. Martin's Press, p. 3

### *Using Fascism to Preserve Capitalism*

After World War II, European powers like Britain and France adopted a strategy of neo-imperialism. Financially depleted by years of warfare, and facing intensified popular resistance from within the Third World itself, they reluctantly decided that indirect economic hegemony was less costly and politically more expedient than outright colonial rule. They discovered that the removal of a conspicuously intrusive colonial rule made it more difficult for nationalist elements within the previously colonized countries to mobilize antiimperialist sentiments.

Though the newly established government might be far from completely independent, it usually enjoyed more legitimacy in the eyes of its populace than a colonial administration controlled by the imperial power. Furthermore, under neo-imperialism the native government takes up the costs of administering the country while the imperialist interests are free to concentrate on accumulating capital, which is all they really want to do.

After years of colonialism, the Third World country finds it extremely difficult to extricate itself from the unequal relationship with its former colonizer and impossible to depart from the global capitalist sphere. Those

countries that try to make a break are subjected to punishing economic and military treatment by one or another major power, nowadays usually the United States.

The leaders of the new nations may voice revolutionary slogans, yet they find themselves locked into the global capitalist orbit, cooperating perforce with the First World nations for investment, trade, and aid.

In many instances a comprador class emerged or was installed as a first condition for independence. A comprador class is one that cooperates in turning its own country into a client state for foreign interests. A client state is one that is open to investments on terms that are decidedly favorable to the foreign investors. In a client state, corporate investors enjoy direct subsidies and land grants, access to raw materials and cheap labor, light or nonexistent taxes, few effective labor unions, no minimum wage or child labor or occupational safety laws, and no consumer or environmental protections to speak of. The protective laws that do exist go largely unenforced.

In all, the Third World is something of a capitalist paradise. Its leaders enjoy opportunities to line their pockets with the foreign aid sent by the U.S. government. Stability is assured with the establishment of security forces, armed and trained by the United States in the latest technologies of terror and repression.

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 11

(Third World elites seldom perish in revolutions. The worst of them usually manage to make it to Miami, Madrid, Paris, or New York.) They dread socialism the way the rest of us might dread poverty and hunger. So, when push comes to shove, the wealthy classes of Third World countries, with a great deal of help from the corporate-military-political elites in our country, will use fascism to preserve capitalism while claiming they are saving democracy from communism.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, p. 68

### *Death Squads and Military Force*

The U.S. press never heard of U.S. imperialism. Instead, poverty is treated as its own cause. We are to believe Third World people are poor because that has long been their condition; they live in countries that are overpopulated, or there is something about their land, culture, or temperament that makes them unable to cope. Occasionally, corrupt rulers are blamed, as when the New York Times reported that President Marcos of the Philippines was a practitioner of "crony capitalism, "concentrating wealth in the hands of a few favored friends and relatives, passing over more qualified persons and freezing out competitors". The press made the same complaint about the Somoza family of Nicaragua in the last days of its rule. But these critical observations fall short of any indictment of imperialism itself, concentrating instead on the "abuses" and "excesses" committed by a corrupt coterie that has violated capitalist norms of competence and competition.

“Inventing Reality: The Politics of the Mass Media” (1986), St. Martin’s Press, p. 190

[...] The United States has supported some of the worst butchers in the world: Batista in Cuba, Somoza in Nicaragua, the Shah in Iran, Salazar in Portugal, Marcos in the Philippines, Pinochet in Chile, Zia in Pakistan, Evren in Turkey, and even Pol Pot in Cambodia.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, p. 60

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, large U.S. investments in Central America and the Caribbean brought frequent military intercession, protracted war, prolonged occupation, or even direct territorial acquisition, as with Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Panama Canal Zone. The investments were often in the natural resources of the country: sugar, tobacco, cotton, and precious metals. In large part, the interventions in the Gulf in 1991 ... were respectively to protect profits and oil prospects.

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 22

Now even the palest economic nationalism, as displayed in Iraq by Saddam Hussein over oil prices, invites the destructive might of the U.S. military. The goal now, as always, is to obliterate every trace of an alternative system, to make it clear that there is no road to take except that of the free market.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, p. 72

They didn’t tell you that Saddam Hussein was created by the CIA, that his first gig, his first job was to assassinate the prime minister of a democratically elected government in Iraq. They didn’t tell you that Iraq had had a democratic revolution, with a wide range and coalition of all sorts of people - progressives, communists, constitutionalists, democrats, all these people - they didn’t need to be taught democracy by the US Army coming in in 2003, they had a democracy. And that democracy was destroyed.

He muffed his first job. He didn’t kill the prime minister, he just wounded him and [...] got hustled out of the country to some safehouse in Saudi Arabia. Later on, he came back, and he was backed. And competence that Saddam Hussein, when he took over power, he killed every single progressive, democrat and leftist, including the whole left-wing of his Ba’athist Party. He assassinated [...] and murdered them.

And during those years, when he was at his most bloodthirsty, murderous and torturous, he was Washington’s poster boy. They couldn’t do enough for him. They gave him money, guns, and some bacterial weapons to use against Iran, didn’t they?

Lecture, “Diversity & Orthodoxy in the Media - Modern Media Censorship” (28 August 2008)

Military force is in even greater evidence today than during the era of colonial conquest and occupation. The United States maintains the most powerful military machine on earth. Its supposed purpose was to protect democracy from communist aggression, but the U.S. military’s actual mission—as demonstrated in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Lebanon, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Panama—has been not to ward off Russian or Cuban invasions but to prevent indigenous anti-capitalist, revolutionary or populist-nationalist governments from prevailing.

U.S. military force is also applied indirectly, by sponsoring Third World armies, gendarmerie, and intelligence and security units including death squads. Their purpose is not to safeguard their autocratic governments from a nonexistent communist invasion but to suppress and terrorize rebellious elements within their own populations or in adjacent countries.

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 16

### *Criminals In Action*

Terror remains one of the common instruments of imperialist domination. With the financial and technical assistance of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and other such units, military and security police throughout various client states are schooled in the fine arts of surveillance, interrogation, torture, intimidation, and assassination. The U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA) at Fort Benning, Georgia, known throughout Latin America as the, "School of Assassins," trains military officers from U.S. client states in the latest methods of repression. In a country like El Salvador, a majority of the officers implicated in village massacres and other atrocities are SOA graduates.

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 15

U.S. intelligence agencies do more than just gather intelligence. One could fill volumes delineating their crimes against humanity. In countries like Guatemala, Greece, Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, Argentina, Zaire, Guyana,

Haiti, Panama, Mozambique, Angola, Jamaica, Kosovo, and the Philippines, U.S. national security forces and U.S.-supported mercenary armies have used every means to destroy popular revolutionary movements and governments or even just reformist ones, and install repressive regimes that were totally accommodating to U.S. corporate interests. What a State Department memorandum had to say about Guatemala could apply to any number of places, namely that the government has used indiscriminate “counter-terror” to combat insurgency. “People are killed or disappear on the basis of simple accusations.... Interrogations are brutal, torture is used and bodies are mutilated. We [the U.S. government] have condoned counter-terror.... We encouraged the Guatemalan Army to do these things.”

The CIA has stolen elections and waged disinformation campaigns abroad. It has bribed officials, incited ethnic enmities, and funded and trained secret armies, paramilitary forces, saboteurs, torture teams, and death squads. It has pursued destabilization and assassination campaigns against government leaders, labor unions, and peasant, religious, and student organizations in numerous nations.

CIA training manuals unearthed by a Freedom of Information lawsuit revealed that the agency taught methods of torture to Third World militaries, such as electric shock, water torture, sleep, food, and sensory deprivation, and psychological torture such as forcing victims to witness the torture of loved ones, including one’s children or parents. Other CIA manuals taught methods of assassination. Torture has become an American export. According to Amnesty International, the U.S. Commerce Department has issued hundreds of export licenses worth more than \$27 million for thumbscrews, leg irons, shackles, stun guns, and electro-shock instruments, “specifically designed implements of torture,” much of it to countries with dismal human rights records.

“Democracy for the Few, Ninth Edition” (2011), Wadsworth Cengage Learning, p. 131

### *CIA: Cocaine Import Agency*

The US is [...] the most active promoter (or protector) of drug traffickers, who serve the gangster functions of US policy, which is terror, assassination, intimidation.

Late 1940s, Corsica, a Sicilian drug mafia. Communist longshore unions, which were honest and militant, dedicated and political, were smashed by these gangsters and terrorists with the help and aid of the CIA. And the payback the CIA gave to these gangsters was a free hand in the drug trade.

In Southeast Asia, the drug lords; active collaboration; the Golden Triangle; Air America was the airline that shipped the heroin out of there. Air America, it turned out, was owned by the CIA, and do you know what the first market was for the Golden Triangle? Where was it? [Someone in the crowd responds] That's right, the soldiers in Vietnam! A perfect market. Nearby, a hundred thousand young men with nothing to do, homesick, with good spending money (compared to most of the world), [again,] nothing to do and so many of them come back with a drug problem. That drug problem didn't just happen! The Vietnam GIs didn't suddenly just go berserk. It's because of that that the drugs were there, they were cheap, they were plentiful, they were pouring in.

Supply creates demand, we always think of demand creating supply, but in many instances, it's supply that creates demand.

In Afghanistan, the Mujahideen who fought against the Soviets, were drug dealers. I remember seeing it prominently displayed in the Washington Post on page 22, the 35th paragraph, "With the Mujahideen back in power, the heroin supplies, much of which reaches the American Streets, will now increase in abundance". I said "Isn't this amazing?" It was like a weather report. There was this one sentence in the middle. I said “Can you imagine if that was Fidel Castro, or the Sandinistas or somebody? Why, they'd still be talking about it on the evening news three years later, referencing it”. And they were CIA supported.

Lecture, “The U.S. War on Yugoslavia” (16 May 1999)

## 5

## Cultural Hegemony, Class Power, and the Overthrow of Communism

### *The Class Implications of Cultural Hegemony*

Gramsci noted that the capitalist class achieves hegemony not only by propagating the right values, attitudes, and beliefs but by actually performing vital social functions that have diffuse benefits. [...] If the ruling class fails to [act affirmatively on behalf of public interest], its legitimacy will decline, its cultural and national hegemony will falter and its power will shrink back to its police and military capacity, leaving it with a more overtly repressive but ultimately less secure rule.

“Monopoly and Culture” (1985), *Political Affairs Magazine*

The question is not how they see themselves but how we see them. That a particular class has achieved cultural hegemony over the entire society does not mean it has created a democratic culture. Nor need we struggle with the question of whether the causal factor is "class" or "culture," as if these terms were mutually exclusive; for class dominance both helps to create and is fortified by cultural hegemony.

“Inventing Reality: The Politics of the Mass Media” (1986), St. Martin’s Press, p. 242

The usual criticism of objectivity is that it does not exist. The minute one sits down to write the opening line of a story, one is making judgement calls, selecting and omitting things. Furthermore, the very nature of perception makes it a predominantly subjective experience. We are not just passive receptors sponging up a flow of images and information. Perception involves organizing stimuli and data into comprehensive units. In a word, perception is itself an act of selective editing.

“The Culture Struggle” (2006), Seven Stories Press, p.106

Culture is not an abstract force that just floats around in space and settles upon us—although given the seemingly subliminal ways it influences us, it often can feel like a disembodied ubiquitous entity. In fact, we get our culture through a social structure, from a network of social relations involving other people in primary groups such as family, peers, and other community associations or, as is increasingly the case, from formally chartered institutions such as schools, media, government agencies, courts, corporations, churches, and the military. Linked by purchase and persuasion to dominant ruling interests, such social institutions are regularly misrepresented as being politically neutral, especially by those who occupy command positions within them or who are otherwise advantaged by them.

Ibid., p. 9

For the adherents of cultural relativism there exists no universal standard for judging what is desirable or undesirable because the mores of any specific culture are unique to that culture. In academic circles, postmodernist theorists offer their own variety of cultural relativism. They reject the idea that human perceptions can transcend culture; all kinds of knowledge are little more than social constructs. Evaluating any society from a platform of fixed and final truths, they say, is a dangerous project that often leads to extreme forms of domination.

The result, then, is cultural and moral relativism. But such relativism “serves as a justification of many inhuman social practices,” Kathleen Barry reminds us. “If one questions the principles of cultural relativism, one

is charged with ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism assumes that the judgments made about another culture stem from the assumption of the superiority of one's own culture." It follows that the best way to avoid being ethnocentric is to refrain from making judgments about other cultures. But we thereby elevate cultural relativism itself to an absolute, and must accept all ongoing societies as beyond critical judgement. When confronted with something that might otherwise earn our condemnation, we throw up our hands and proclaim: "Who is to say what's right or wrong, just or unjust? Everything is culturally determined, including our very standards for judging right and wrong." As logically fit as cultural relativism might be, how then do we develop a critical perspective about social relations anywhere in the world, including within our own society?

Ibid., pp. 44-45

### *Manifestations of Class Power*

Marxists understand that a class society is not just a divided society but one ruled by class power, with the state playing the crucial role in maintaining the existing class structure. Marxism might be considered a "holistic" science in that it recognizes the links between various components of the social system. Capitalism is not just an economic system but a political and cultural one as well, an entire social order. When we study any part of that order, be it the news or entertainment media, criminal justice, Congress, defense spending, overseas military intervention, intelligence agencies, campaign finance, science and technology, education, medical care, taxation, transportation, housing, or whatever, we will see how the particular part reflects the nature of the whole. Its unique dynamic often buttresses and is shaped by the larger social system—especially the system's overriding need to maintain the prerogatives of the corporate class.

In keeping with their system-sustaining function, the major news media present reality as a scatter of events and subjects that ostensibly bear little relation to each other or to a larger set of social relations. Consider a specific phenomenon like racism. Racism is presented as essentially a set of bad attitudes held by racists. There is little analysis of what makes it so functional for a class society. Instead, race and class are treated as mutually exclusive concepts in competition with each other. But those who have an understanding of class power know that as class contradictions deepen and come to the fore, racism becomes not less but more important as a factor in class conflict. In short, both race and class are likely to be crucial arenas of struggle at the very same time.

Marxists further maintain that racism involves not just personal attitude but institutional structure and systemic power. They point out that racist organizations and sentiments are often propagated by well-financed reactionary forces seeking to divide the working populace against itself, fracturing it into antagonistic ethnic enclaves.

Marxists also point out that racism is used as a means of depressing wages by keeping a segment of the labor force vulnerable to super-exploitation. To see racism in the larger context of corporate society is to move from a liberal complaint to a radical analysis. Instead of thinking that racism is an irrational output of a basically rational and benign system, we should see it is a rational output of a basically irrational and unjust system. By "rational" I mean purposive and functional in sustaining the system that nurtures it.

Lacking a holistic approach to society, conventional social science tends to compartmentalize social experience. So we are asked to ponder whether this or that phenomenon is cultural or economic or psychological, when usually it is a blend of all these things. ... We need a greater sense of how analytically distinct phenomena are often empirically interrelated and may actually gather strength and definition from each other.

"Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism" (1997), City Lights Books, p. 133-134

You can't have slaves unless you have slave-holders. You can't have serfs unless you have lords. You can't have employers unless you have employees, you can't have plutocrats and capitalists unless you have workers [and vice versa].

This interrelationship is really linked to a third factor, which is the material conditions of society, the means of production. One of these groups owns the wealth, has access to the natural resources, and has the industry, the technology, and all that stuff. And the other group has nothing but its labor, which it sells. And it gets back much, much less than it produces.

So, that becomes the important component of class. The reason class differs from race and gender, is that you can imagine (I'm not saying we have it) equality in race, and you can imagine equality in gender, but you can't, by definition, imagine equality in class. If you have equality in class, then you don't have any classes, you have a classless society, which we have had in history. Through most of our history we have had classless societies. Primitive societies have been status differentials, for the most part, of course. In all tribes, or any kind of [social] group, even. But, there wasn't a small group monopolizing the means of production and having hired retainers to force the other people to keep their hands off it, and so on.

[...] That's the big difference—it has to do with class. And the crucial component here is not class, as this demographic trait, but class power. That is what we have to be thinking about—class power. That's what ownership brings, and that's what economic power brings. It's also easily translated, then, into cultural predominance and political power.

Lecture, “The Culture Struggle” (30 September 2006)

Seizing upon anything but class, U.S. leftists today have developed an array of identity groups centering around ethnic, gender, cultural, and lifestyle issues. These groups treat their respective grievances as something apart from class struggle, and have almost nothing to say about the increasingly harsh politico-economic class injustices perpetrated against us all. Identity groups tend to emphasize their distinctiveness and their separateness from each other, thus fractionalizing the protest movement. To be sure, they have important contributions to make around issues that are particularly salient to them, issues often overlooked by others. But they also should not downplay their common interests, nor overlook the common class enemy they face. The forces that impose class injustice and economic exploitation are the same ones that propagate racism, sexism, militarism, ecological devastation, homophobia, xenophobia, and the like.

People may not develop a class consciousness but they still are affected by the power, privileges, and handicaps related to the distribution of wealth and want. These realities are not canceled out by race, gender, or culture. The latter factors operate within an overall class society. The exigencies of class power and exploitation shape the social reality we all live in. Racism and sexism help to create superexploited categories of workers (minorities and women) and reinforce the notions of inequality that are so functional for a capitalist system.

To embrace a class analysis is not to deny the significance of identity issues but to see how these are linked both to each other and to the overall structure of politico-economic power. An awareness of class relations deepens our understanding of culture, race, gender, and other such things.

“Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism” (1997), City Lights Books, pp. 151-152

When we think without Marx's perspective, that is, without considering class interests and class power, we seldom ask why certain things happen. Many things are reported in the news but few are explained. Little is said about how the social order is organized and whose interests prevail. Devoid of a framework that explains why things happen, we are left to see the world as do mainstream media pundits: as a flow of events, a scatter of particular developments and personalities unrelated to a larger set of social relations—propelled by happenstance,

circumstance, confused intentions, and individual ambition, never by powerful class interests—and yet producing effects that serve such interests with impressive regularity.

Thus we fail to associate social problems with the socio-economic forces that create them and we learn to truncate our own critical thinking.

Suppose we started with a particular story about how child labor in Indonesia is contracted by multinational corporations at near starvation wage levels. This information probably would not be carried in rightwing publications, but in 1996 it did appear—after decades of effort by some activists—in the centrist mainstream press. What if we then crossed a line and said that these exploitative employer-employee relations were backed by the full might of the Indonesian military government. Fewer media would carry this story but it still might get mentioned in an inside page of the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*.

Then suppose we crossed another line and said that these repressive arrangements would not prevail were it not for generous military aid from the United States, and that for almost thirty years the homicidal Indonesian military has been financed, armed, advised, and trained by the U.S. national security state. Such a story would be even more unlikely to appear in the liberal press but it is still issue specific and safely without an overall class analysis, so it might well make its way into left-liberal opinion publications like the *Nation* and the *Progressive*.

Now suppose we pointed out that the conditions found in Indonesia—the heartless economic exploitation, brutal military repression, and lavish U.S. support—exist in scores of other countries. Suppose we then crossed that most serious line of all and instead of just deploring this fact we also asked why successive U.S. administrations involve themselves in such unsavory pursuits throughout the world. And what if then we tried to explain that the whole phenomenon is consistent with the U.S. dedication to making the world safe for the free market and the giant multinational corporations, and that the intended goals are (a) to maximize opportunities to accumulate wealth by depressing the wage levels of workers throughout the world and preventing them from organizing on behalf of their own interests, and (b) to protect the overall global system of free-market capital accumulation.

Then what if, from all this, we concluded that U.S. foreign policy is neither timid, as the conservatives say, nor foolish, as the liberals say, but is remarkably successful in rolling back just about all governments and social movements that attempt to serve popular needs rather than private corporate greed.

Such an analysis, hurriedly sketched here, would take some effort to lay out and would amount to a Marxist critique—a correct critique—of capitalist imperialism. Though Marxists are not the only ones that might arrive at it, it almost certainly would not be published anywhere except in a Marxist publication. We crossed too many lines. Because we tried to explain the particular situation (child labor) in terms of a larger set of social relations (corporate class power), our presentation would be rejected out of hand as "ideological." The perceptual taboos imposed by the dominant powers teach people to avoid thinking critically about such powers. In contrast, Marxism gets us into the habit of asking why, of seeing the linkage between political events and class power.

“Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism” (1997), City Lights Books, pp. 136-138

### *The Anti-Communist Impulse*

The exercise of U.S. power is intended to preserve not only the international capitalist system but U.S. hegemony of that system. The Pentagon's "Defense Planning Guidance" draft (1992) urges the United States to continue to dominate the international system by "discouraging the advanced industrialized nations from challenging our leadership or even aspiring to a larger global or regional role." By maintaining this dominance, the Pentagon analysts assert, the United States can ensure "a market-oriented zone of peace and prosperity that encompasses more than two-thirds of the world's economy".

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 21

A socialist Cuba or a socialist North Korea, as such, are not a threat to the survival of world capitalism. The danger is not socialism in any one country but a socialism that might spread to many countries. Multinational corporations, as their name implies, need the entire world, or a very large part of it, to exploit and to invest and expand in. There can be no such thing as "capitalism in one country." The domino theory—the view that if one country falls to the revolutionaries, others will follow in quick succession—may not work as automatically as its more fearful proponents claim, but there usually is a contagion, a power of example and inspiration, and sometimes even direct encouragement and assistance from one revolution to another.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, p. 68

One repeatedly hears that U.S. leaders oppose communist countries because they lack political democracy. But [...] successive administrations in Washington have supported some of the most repressive regimes in the world, ones that regularly have indulged in mass arrests, assassination, torture, and intimidation. In addition, Washington has supported some of the worst right-wing counterrevolutionary rebel cutthroats: Savimbi's UNITA in Angola, RENAMO in Mozambique, the mujahideen in Afghanistan, and in the 1980s even the Pol Pot lunatics who waged war against socialist Cambodia.

Consider the case of Cuba. We are asked to believe that decades of U.S. hostility toward Cuba—including embargo, sabotage, and invasion—have been motivated by a distaste for the autocratic nature of the Castro government and a concern for the freedoms of the Cuban people. Whence this sudden urge to "restore" Cuban liberty? In the decades before the Cuban Revolution of 1959, successive U.S. administrations backed a brutally repressive autocracy headed by General Fulgencio Batista. The significant but unspoken difference was that Batista was a comprador leader who left Cuba wide open to U.S. capital penetration. In contrast, Fidel Castro did away with private corporate control of the economy, nationalized U.S. holdings, and renovated the class structure in a more collectivized and egalitarian mode. That is what made him so insufferable.

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 37

The state must protect not only the overseas investments of particular firms but the entire capital accumulation process itself. This entails the systematic suppression of revolutionary and populist-nationalist movements that seek to build alternative economic systems along more egalitarian, collectivist lines.

Ibid., p. 17

### *Against Empire*

It was with domestic opinion in mind that the U.S. imperialists developed the method of "low intensity conflict" to wreak death and destruction upon countries or guerrilla movements that pursued an alternative course of development. This approach recognizes that Third World guerrilla forces have seldom, if ever, been able to achieve all-out military victory over the occupying army of an industrial power or its comprador army. The best the guerrillas can hope to do is wage a war of attrition, depriving the imperialist country of a final victory, until the latter's own population grows weary of the costs and begins to challenge the overseas commitment. The war then becomes politically too costly for the imperialists to prosecute.

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p. 17

To avoid stirring up [...] political opposition at home, Washington policymakers have developed the technique of low intensity conflict, a mode of warfare that avoids all-out, high-visibility, military engagements and thereby minimizes the use and loss of U.S. military personnel. A low-intensity war is a proxy war, using the

mercenary troops of the U.S.-backed Third World government. With Washington providing military trainers and advisers, superior firepower, surveillance and communications assistance, and generous funds, these forces are able to persist indefinitely, destroying a little at a time, with quick sorties into the countryside and death squad assassinations in the cities and villages. They forgo an all-out sweep against guerrilla forces that is likely to fall short of victory and invite criticism of its futility and savagery.

The war pursued by the Reagan and Bush administrations against Nicaragua was prosecuted for almost a decade. The counterinsurgency war in El Salvador lasted over fifteen years; in the Philippines over twenty years; in Colombia, over thirty years; and in Guatemala, thirty-five years. Once low-intensity conflict is adopted there are no more big massacres, no massive military engagements, no dramatic victories or dramatic setbacks, no Dien Bien Phu or Tet Offensive.

The U.S. public is not galvanized to opposition because not much seems to be happening and the intervention drops from the news. Like the guerrillas themselves, the interventionists pursue a war of attrition but against the people rather than with their support. Their purpose is to demonstrate that they have endless time and resources, that they will be able to outlast the guerrilla forces not only militarily, but also politically, because there is now scant pressure to withdraw from their own populace back home.

Ibid.

### *Liberal Complaints and Radical Analysis*

The pure socialists' ideological anticipations remain untainted by existing practice. They do not explain how the manifold functions of a revolutionary society would be organized, how external attack and internal sabotage would be thwarted, how bureaucracy would be avoided, scarce resources allocated, policy differences settled, priorities set, and production and distribution conducted. Instead, they offer vague statements about how the workers themselves will directly own and control the means of production and will arrive at their own solutions through creative struggle. No surprise then that the pure socialists support every revolution except the ones that succeed.

“Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism” (1997), City Lights Books, p. 51

Those of us designated as "extreme leftists" actually want rather moderate and civil things: a clean environment, a fair tax structure, use of social production for social needs, expansion of public sector production, serious cuts in a bloated military budget, affordable housing, decently paying jobs, equal justice for all, and the like. There is nothing morally extreme about such things. They are "extreme" only in the sense of being extremely at odds with the dominant interests of the status quo. In the face of such gross injustice and class privilege, considerations of social justice and betterment take on the appearance of "extreme" measures.

Nor does it follow that those who occupy the center of any political spectrum are thereby incapable of the kind of brutal, repressive, destructive, intransigent actions usually associated with fascist extremists. It was not the John Birch Society that tried to bomb Indochina into the Stone Age, nor was it the American Nazi Party that perfected napalm and put thalidomide in the defoliants used throughout Indochina. And today it is not the skinheads and Klan that maintain the death squads and other homicidal operations throughout so much of the Third World. It is the best and the brightest of the political Center (with plenty of help from rightists).

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, p. 41

In the political realm, the further left one goes on the opinion spectrum the more difficult it is to gain exposure and access to larger audiences. Strenuously excluded from the increasingly concentrated corporate-owned media are people on the Left who go beyond the conservative-liberal orthodoxy and speak openly about the negative

aspects of big capital and what it does to people at home and abroad. Progressive people, designated as "the Left" believe that the poor are victims of the rich and the prerogatives of wealthy and powerful interests should be done away with. They believe labor unions should be strengthened and the rights of working people expanded; the environment should be rigorously protected; racism, sexism, and homophobia should be strenuously fought; and human services should be properly funded.

Progressives also argue that revolutionary governments that bring social reforms to their people should be supported rather than overthrown by the U.S. national security state, that U.S.-sponsored wars of attrition against reformist governments in Vietnam, Nicaragua, Angola, and a dozen other countries are not "mistakes" but crimes perpetrated by those who would go to any length to maintain their global privileges.

To hold such opinions is to be deprived of any regular access to the major media. In a word, some people have more freedom of speech than others. People who take positions opposing the one outlined above are known as conservatives or right-wingers. Conservative pundits have a remarkable amount of free speech. They favor corporations and big profits over environmental and human needs, see nothing wrong with amassing great wealth while many live in poverty, blame the poor for the poverty that has been imposed upon them, see regulations against business as a bureaucratic sin, and worship at the altar of the free market. They support repressive U.S. interventions abroad and pursue policies opposed to class, gender, and racial equality.

Such rightists as Rush Limbaugh, William F. Buckley Jr., John McLaughlin, George Will, and Robert Novak enjoy much more exposure to mass audiences than left liberals and populists like Jim Hightower, Jerry Brown, or Ralph Nader. And all of them, conservatives and liberals, enjoy more exposure than anyone on the more "radical" or Marxist Left.

It is the economic power of the rich corporate media owners and advertisers that provides right-wingers with so many mass outlets, not the latter's wit and wisdom. It is not public demand that brings them on the air; it is private corporate owners and sponsors. They are listened to by many not because they are so appealing but because they are so available. Availability is the first and necessary condition of consumption. In this instance, supply does not merely satisfy demand; supply creates demand. Hence, those who align themselves with the interests of corporate America will have more freedom of expression than those who remain steadfastly critical.

People on the Left are free to talk to each other, though sometimes they are concerned their telephones are tapped or their meetings are infiltrated by government agents and provocateurs—as has so often been the case over the years. Leftists are sometimes allowed to teach in universities but they usually run into difficulties regarding what they say and write and they risk being purged from faculty positions.' Leftists are free to work for labor unions but they generally have to keep their politics carefully under wraps, especially communists. People on the Left can even speak publicly, but usually to audiences that seldom number more than a few hundred. And they are free to write for progressive publications, which lack the promotional funds to reach mass readerships, publications that are perennially teetering on the edge of insolvency for want of rich patrons and corporate advertisers.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, pp. 82-85

The collusion between Center and Right is understandable. Despite their differences in emphasis and methods (differences that are not always to be dismissed as insignificant) the Center and Right share a common commitment to the ongoing corporate class structure, and conservative institutional authority.

Ibid., p. 40

*Reflections on the Overthrow of Communism*

The overthrow of Eastern European and Soviet communist governments was cheered by many left intellectuals. Now democracy would have its day. The people would be free from the yoke of communism and the U.S. Left would be free from the albatross of existing communism, or as left theorist Richard Lichtman put it, "liberated from the incubus of the Soviet Union and the succubus of Communist China."

In fact, the capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe seriously weakened the numerous Third World liberation struggles that had received aid from the Soviet Union and brought a whole new crop of right-wing governments into existence, ones that now worked hand-in-glove with U.S. global counterrevolutionaries around the globe.

In addition, the overthrow of communism gave the green light to the unbridled exploitative impulses of Western corporate interests. No longer needing to convince workers that they live better than their counterparts in Russia, and no longer restrained by a competing system, the corporate class is rolling back the many gains that working people in the West have won over the years. Now that the free market, in its meanest form, is emerging triumphant in the East, so will it prevail in the West. "Capitalism with a human face" is being replaced by "capitalism in your face." As Richard Levins put it, "So in the new exuberant aggressiveness of world capitalism we see what communists and their allies had held at bay."

Having never understood the role that existing communist powers played in tempering the worst impulses of Western capitalism and imperialism, and having perceived communism as nothing but an unmitigated evil, the left anticommunists did not anticipate the losses that were to come. Some of them still don't get it.

"Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism" (1997), City Lights Books, pp. 57-58

In societies that worship money and success, the losers become objects of scorn. Those who work the hardest for the least are called lazy. Those forced to live in substandard housing are thought to be the authors of substandard lives. Those who do not finish high school or cannot afford to go to college are considered deficient or inept.

"Land of Idols: Political Mythology in America" (1994), St. Martin's Press, p. 161

During the cold war, the anticommunist ideological framework could transform any data about existing communist societies into hostile evidence. If the Soviets refused to negotiate a point, they were intransigent and belligerent; if they appeared willing to make concessions, this was but a skillful ploy to put us off our guard. By opposing arms limitations, they would have demonstrated their aggressive intent; but when in fact they supported most armament treaties, it was because they were mendacious and manipulative. If the churches in the USSR were empty, this demonstrated that religion was suppressed; but if the churches were full, this meant the people were rejecting the regime's atheistic ideology. If the workers went on strike, this was evidence of their alienation from the collectivist system; if they didn't go on strike, this was because they were intimidated and lacked freedom.

"Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism" (1997), City Lights Books, p. 41

Much of history is a chronicle of immense atrocities. Whenever surplus wealth accumulates in any society, whenever people emerge from a cooperative subsistence economy, some portion of the population will do everything it can to exploit the labor of the rest of the people in as pitiless a manner as possible. This is true whether it be the slaveholders of ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, and the antebellum American South; or the feudal aristocracy of medieval Europe; or the financial moguls of modern capitalist society. Today, throughout much of the capitalist Third World and increasingly in the United States and other industrialized nations, people are being driven into desperation and want, made to work harder for less, when able to find work.

When the USSR fell, many intellectuals in the US—including those who claimed to be leftists—said it was a victory for the workers in the face of bureaucracy, that it was something marvelous and that finally we were free. But for me it was a disaster.

It was a disaster for the left, for the popular movements. We have seen this manifest itself. It has been an incredible opportunity for imperialism to take over.

This doesn't mean it was the ideal socialist society nor that they didn't make mistakes. They made mistakes, and sometimes even committed crimes. Every political system commits crimes. The question is how we work upon it in the function of social justice. It was a sobering historical period for everyone and requires new studies.

Interview for the Cuban cultural magazine "La Jiribilla"

With the overthrow of communist governments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, announcements about the moribund nature of "Marxist dogma" poured forth with renewed vigor. But Marx's major work was *Capital*, a study not of "existing socialism," which actually did not exist in his day, but of capitalism—a subject that remains terribly relevant to our lives. It would make more sense to declare Marxism obsolete if and when capitalism is abolished, rather than socialism. I wish to argue not merely that Marx is still relevant but that he is more relevant today than he was in the nineteenth century, that the forces of capitalist motion and development are operating with greater scope than when he first studied them.

This is not to say that everything Marx and Engels anticipated has come true. Their work was not a perfect prophecy but an imperfect, incomplete science (like all sciences), directed toward understanding a capitalism that leaves its bloody footprints upon the world as never before.

Some of Marxism's basic postulates are as follows: In order to live, human beings must produce. People cannot live by bread alone but neither can they live without bread. This does not mean all human activity can be reduced to material motives but that all activity is linked to a material base. A work of art may have no direct economic motive attached to it, yet its creation would be impossible if there did not exist the material conditions that allowed the artist to create and show the work to interested audiences who have the time for art.

What people need for survival is found in nature but rarely in a form suitable for immediate consumption. Labor therefore becomes a primary condition of human existence. But labor is more than a way of providing for survival. It is one of the means whereby people develop their material and cultural life, acquiring knowledge, and new modes of social organization. The conflicting class interests that evolve around the productive forces shape the development of a social system. When we speak of early horticultural societies, or of slave or feudal or mercantile or industrial capitalist societies, we are recognizing how the basic economic relations leave a defining stamp on a given social order.

Capitalist theorists present capital as a creative providential force. As they would have it, capital gives shape and opportunity to labor; capital creates production, jobs, new technologies, and a general prosperity. Marxists turn the equation around. They argue that, of itself, capital cannot produce anything; it is the thing that is produced by labor. Only human labor can create the farm and the factory, the machine and the computer. And in a class society, the wealth so produced by many is accumulated in the hands of relatively few who soon translate their economic power into political and cultural power in order to better secure the exploitative social order that so favors them.

The standard "trickle down" theory says that the accumulation of wealth at the top eventually brings more prosperity to the rest of us below; a rising tide lifts all boats. I would argue that in a class society the accumulation of wealth fosters the spread of poverty. The wealthy few live off the backs of the impoverished many. There can

be no rich slaveholders living in idle comfort without a mass of penniless slaves to support their luxurious life style, no lords of the manor who live in opulence without a mass of impoverished landless serfs who till the lords' lands from dawn to dusk. So too under capitalism, there can be no financial moguls and industrial tycoons without millions of underpaid and overworked employees.

“Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism” (1997), City Lights Books, pp. 122-124

### *A Peoples' History of the World*

When the best pages of history are finally written, it will not be by princes, presidents, prime ministers, nor even professors, but by the people themselves. For all their faults and shortcomings, the people are all we have. Indeed, we are they.

“Contrary Notions: The Michael Parenti Reader” (2007), City Lights Books, p. 209

There is a tradition of popular struggle in the United States that has been downplayed and ignored. It ebbs and flows but never ceases. Moved by a combination of anger and hope, ordinary people have organized, agitated, demonstrated, and engaged in electoral challenges, civil disobedience, strikes, sit-ins, takeovers, boycotts, and sometimes violent clashes with the authorities—for socioeconomic betterment at home and peace abroad.

Against the heaviest odds, dissenters have suffered many defeats but won some important victories, forcibly extracting concessions and imposing reforms upon resistant rulers.

“Democracy for the Few, Ninth Edition” (2011), Wadsworth Cengage Learning, p. 273

Under Allende, the danger was not that the economy was collapsing (although the U.S. was doing its utmost to destabilize it); the real threat was that the economy was moving away from free-market capitalism and toward a more equitable social democracy, albeit in limited ways.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, p. 67

Marxist and other leftist or revolutionary states do pose a real threat, not to the United States as a national entity and not to the American people as such, but to the corporate and financial interests of our country, to Exxon and Mobil, Chase Manhattan and First National, Ford and General Motors, Anaconda and U.S. Steel, and to capitalism as a world system.

The problem is not that revolutionaries accumulate power but that they use power to pursue substantive policies that are unacceptable to U.S. ruling circles. What bothers our political leaders (and generals, investment bankers, and corporate heads) is not the supposed lack of political democracy in these countries but their attempts to construct economic democracy, to depart from the impoverishing rigors of the international free market, to use capital and labor in a way that is inimical to the interests of multinational corporatism.

Ibid., p. 66

U.S. leaders must convince the American people that the immense costs of empire are necessary for their security and survival. For years we were told that the great danger we faced was "the World Communist Menace with its headquarters in Moscow." The public accepted a crushing tax burden to win the superpower arms race and "contain Soviet aggression wherever it might arise." Since the demise of the USSR, our political leaders have been warning us that the world is full of other dangerous adversaries, who apparently had been previously overlooked.

“Against Empire” (1995), City Lights Publishers, p.25

## 6

## The Politics of News and Entertainment Media—Inventing Reality and Making Us Believe

### *The Myth of Objectivity*

Corporate power permeates the entire social fabric of our society. Along with owning the media, the corporate business class, as already noted, controls much of the rest of America too, including its financial, legal, educational, medical, cultural, and recreational institutions. Thus the dominant capitalist interests not only structure the way the media report reality, they structure much of reality itself. The ideological character of the news, then, is partly a reflection of the journalist's "routine reliance on raw materials which are already ideological." Opinions that support existing arrangements of economic and political power are more easily treated as facts, while facts that are troublesome to the prevailing distribution of class power are likely to be dismissed as opinionated. And those who censor dissenting views see themselves as protectors of objectivity and keepers of heterodoxy when, in fact, they are the guardians of ideological conformity.

“Inventing Reality: The Politics of the Mass Media” (1986), St. Martin’s Press, p. 50

Another investigator, Jerry Mander, argues that media images are "irresistible," since our brains absorb them regardless of how we might consciously regard such images. Children believe that what they are seeing in the make-believe media is real. They have no innate capacity to distinguish between real and unreal images. Only as they grow older, after repeated assurances from their elders, do they begin to understand that the stories and characters on the big and little screens do not exist in real life.

“Make-Believe Media: The Politics of Entertainment” (1992), St. Martin’s Press, p. 9

### *Class Bias in the Media*

Why do so many people have a negative view of workers and labor unions? In part, it is because of what is fed to them by the corporate-owned news media. A 1990 City University of New York study found that programs devoted to "elite" personages consumed "nearly ten times more PBS prime-time programming hours than programs devoted to workers." Less than half of one percent of the programming dealt with workers—and it was mostly with British rather than American ones. A Los Angeles Times survey found that newspaper editors favored business over labor by 54 to 7 percent. My reading of this nation's newspapers leaves me to wonder who the 7 percent might be.

The media's pro-business bias is pronounced enough for anyone to see. The major newspapers and weeklies have no labor section to go along with their business section. They have whole staffs reporting on business news but not more than one labor reporter, if that. And usually "labor" reporters, judging from the ones I have met, show no special grasp of labor's struggles or sensitivity toward workers' issues. If they did, they would not last at that assignment and would be judged as "getting too close" to their subject.

The media's devotion to corporate America is manifested in the many TV and radio commentary shows that are glutted with conservatives. Public affairs programming is crowded with offerings like "Wall Street Week" "American Enterprise" "Adam Smith's Money World," "Nightly Business Report," and "Marketplace."

The network evening news regularly reports the Dow Jones average but offers no weekly tabulations on layoffs, industrial accidents, and long-term occupational illness. When the stock market has a good day, for some reason this is treated as good news for all of us. The press seldom refers to the politico-economic power of corporations. The economy itself is presented as something government and business attend to, while organized labor tags along at best as a very junior and often troublesome partner.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, pp. 117-118

The media's anti-labor biases should come as no surprise. Media owners themselves are among the most exploitative, antiunion employers and strikebreakers. Over the years, the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Herald-Examiner, the New York Daily News, CBS, NBC and numerous other news organizations have been locked in bitter strikes that ended with unions being seriously weakened or totally crushed. As Washington Post owner Katharine Graham is reportedly fond of saying: "Unions interfere with freedom of the press."

Ibid., p. 121

I once taught a mass media class at Cornell University. Midway through the course some students began to complain that they were getting only one side, one perspective. I pointed out that, in fact, the class discussions engaged a variety of perspectives and some of the readings were of the more standard fare. But the truth was, admittedly, that the predominant thrust of the class and assigned readings was substantially critical of the mainstream media and of corporate power in general. Then I asked them, “How many of you have been exposed to this perspective in your many other social science courses?” Of the forty students—mostly seniors and juniors who had taken many other courses in political science, economics, history, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and mass communications—not one hand went up (a measure of the level of ideological diversity at Cornell). Then I asked the students, “How many of you complained to your other instructors that you were getting only one side?” Again not a hand was raised, causing me to say, “So your protest is not really that you’re getting only one side but that, for the first time, you’re departing from that one side and are being exposed to another view and you don’t like it.” Their quest was not to investigate opinion heterodoxy but to insulate themselves from it.

“The Culture Struggle” (2006), Seven Stories Press, p. 109

[T]he Press treats the government as a neutral arbiter acting on behalf of the "national interest" in the struggle between management and labor. It is assumed that the public's interest is best served by avoiding strikes or getting strikers back into production as soon as possible, regardless of the terms of settlement. The police—along with the courts, the president, and the rest of the state apparatus—are presented as guardians of the peace, defenders of the public interest, rather than as protectors of corporate property and bodyguards for strikebreakers.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, p. 123

House Report 102-363, accompanying the Public Telecommunications Act of 1991, calls on the public broadcasting community to stop ignoring "class differences and the plight of American working people" and to make greater efforts to meet its "obligation to encourage diversity in programming, including programming which addresses the lives and concerns of American workers and their families, in documentaries, dramas, and public affairs programs." The report also noted that "public television station boards typically are dominated by business interests, even though working Americans are key supporters of public television." Unfortunately the report had little to say about the media's treatment of labor unions, an omission that itself may be a reflection of the anti-union bias that permeates the business-dominated political culture.

Ibid., p. 124

A common method of deception practiced by U.S. leaders and the U.S. news media is omission. Rather than outright lying, rather than twisting and embellishing the truth, leaders and their faithful flacks in the mainstream media frequently just ignore or greatly downplay events that might prove too troublesome for officialdom and too edifying for the U.S. public.

This is especially true when it comes to matters relating to the national security state. Reports can appear now and then in the news regarding an irresponsible business firm, a catastrophic oil spill too large to keep hidden, a corrupt banker or broker, an incident of sexism in the armed services, and so forth. Out of bounds are the fundamental questions about the use of state power in the service of corporate class interests at home and abroad. Critical discussions of global capitalism and what it is doing to the world are not likely to be countenanced by either U.S. leaders or the corporate-owned media.

The various methods of U.S. interventionism in other countries include both the overt forms of military invasion and the covert actions of the CIA and other counterinsurgency agencies; they include everything from bribes and rigged elections to death squads and mass slaughter. The purpose of these actions is to eliminate individual leaders, political parties, social movements, and governments that in any way challenge the existing global politico-economic arrangements that advocate egalitarian social change, be it toward a social democracy or socialism or even a conservative economic nationalism that strives for some kind of independent development.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, p. 126

Our "free and independent" news media are actually controlled by publishers and network bosses who see to it that their own preferred views prevail. They will refuse to run letters, guest columns, and occasionally even their regularly syndicated features and comic strips if the material does not suit their political proclivities. They punish editors and journalists by passing them over for promotion, transferring them to remote posts, and even firing them if they don't learn soon enough what is and is not ideologically fit to print or broadcast. Such actions should be exposed for what they are: censorship. But news organizations are the last to publicize their own transgressions. Instances of censorship are simply not treated as newsworthy.

The hardest kinds of censorship to detect are the preemptive forms. In a profession that is literally awash with right-wing pundits, there are few, if any, progressives who appear regularly as TV commentators or as nationally syndicated columnists in the major dailies. The Left does not have to be censored; it is excluded from the start. It does not have to be reined in; it is never even put into harness.

Ibid., p. 146

A myth is not an idle tale or a fanciful story but a powerful cultural force used to legitimize existing social relations. The interventionist mythology does just that, by emphasizing a community of interests between interventionists in Washington and the American people when in fact there is none, and by blurring over the question of who pays and who profits from U.S. global interventionism.

The mythology has been with us for so long and much of it sufficiently internalized by the public as to be considered part of the political culture. The interventionist mythology, like all other cultural beliefs, does not just float about in space. It must be mediated through a social structure. The national media play a crucial role in making sure that no fundamentally critical views of the rationales underlying and justifying U.S. policy gain national exposure.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, pp. 58-59

While Washington policy-makers argue that US overseas intervention is necessary to protect "our interests," the press seldom asks what "our interests" are and who among us is actually served by them. As we have seen in regard to Nicaragua, Grenada, Panama, Iraq, and other cases, "defending US interests" usually means imposing

a client-state status on nations that might strike a course independent of, and even inimical to, global corporate investment. This is rarely the reason given in the national media. Rather, it is almost always a matter of "stopping aggression," or "protecting our national security," or punishing leaders who are said to be dictators, drug dealers, or state terrorists.

References may occasionally appear in the press about the great disparities of wealth and poverty in Third World nations, but US corporate imperialism is never treated as one of the causes of such poverty. Indeed, it seems the US press has never heard of US imperialism. Imperialism, the process by which the dominant interests of one country expropriate the land, labor, markets, capital, and natural resources of another, and neo-imperialism, the process of expropriation that occurs without direct colonization, are both unmentionables. Anyone who might try to introduce the subject would be quickly dismissed as "ideological." Media people, like mainstream academics and others, might recognize that the US went through a brief imperialist period around the Spanish-American War. And they would probably acknowledge that there once existed ancient Roman imperialism and nineteenth-century British imperialism and certainly twentieth-century "Soviet imperialism." But not many, if any, mainstream editors and commentators would consider the existence of US imperialism (or neo-imperialism), let alone entertain criticisms of it.

What capitalism as a transnational system does to impoverish people throughout the world is simply not a fit subject for the US news media.

"Inventing Reality: The Politics of the Mass Media" (1986), St. Martin's Press, p. 190

### *Mass Media and Counter-Revolution*

Ten business and financial corporations control the three major television and radio networks (NBC, CBS, ABC), 34 subsidiary television stations, 201 cable TV systems, 62 radio stations, 20 record companies, 59 magazines including Time and Newsweek, 58 newspapers including the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, and the Los Angeles Times, 41 book publishers, and various motion picture companies like Columbia Pictures and Twentieth-Century Fox. Three-quarters of the major stockholders of ABC, CBS, and NBC are banks, such as Chase Manhattan, Morgan Guaranty Trust, Citibank, and Bank of America. 1

"Inventing Reality: The Politics of the Mass Media" (1986), St. Martin's Press, p. 27

The brutality does not go entirely unnoticed. But press reports are usually sporadic and sparse, rarely doing justice to the endemic nature of the repression, rarely, if ever, showing how the repression functions to protect the few rich from the many poor and how it is linked to US policy.

Following the official line, the national media will readily deny that the United States harbors aggressive intentions against other governments, and will dismiss such charges by them as just so much "anti-American" propaganda and as evidence of their aggressive intent toward us. Or the media will condone the aggressive actions as necessary for our national security or implicitly accept them as a given reality needing no justification.

For instance, in 1961 Cuban right-wing emigres, trained and financed by the CIA, invaded Cuba, in the words of one of their leaders, to overthrow Castro and set up "a provisional government" that "will restore all properties to the rightful owners." Reports of the impending invasion circulated widely throughout Central America, but in the United States, stories were suppressed by the Associated Press and United Press International and by all the major networks, newspapers, and news-weeklies. In an impressively unanimous act of self-censorship, some seventy-five publications rejected a report offered by the editors of the Nation in 1960 detailing US preparations for the invasion. Fidel Castro's accusation that the United States was planning to invade Cuba was dismissed by the New York Times as "shrill... anti-American propaganda," and by Time as Castro's "continued tawdry little melodrama of invasion." When Washington broke diplomatic relations with Cuba in January 1961 (after Castro

started nationalizing US corporate investments and instituting social programs for the poor), the Times explained, "What snapped U.S. patience was a new propaganda offensive from Havana charging that the U.S. was plotting an 'imminent invasion' of Cuba."

Yet, after the Bay of Pigs invasion proved to be something more than a figment of Castro's anti-Americanism, there was almost a total lack of media criticism regarding its moral and legal impropriety. Instead, editorial commentary referred to the disappointing "fiasco" and "disastrous attempt" and the need to free Cuba from the "Communist yoke" (an endeavor assumed to be laudable even though the Cuban people themselves had failed to rise up and join the invaders, as the latter had anticipated).

"Inventing Reality: The Politics of the Mass Media" (1986), St. Martin's Press, pp. 187-188

Several responses are in order. First, it should be noted that there are conspiracies among ruling groups, things done in secrecy with the intent to sustain or extend power—as Watergate, the Pentagon Papers, the FBI's COINTELPRO campaign against the left, and the CIA's daily doings have demonstrated. Just because some people have fantasies about conspiracies does not mean every conspiracy is a fantasy. Like most other cultural institutions, the media exercise their influence through overt means. Given the nature of the institution, it would be hard to imagine secret mass media. But there may often also be something secret and conspiratorial, something deliberately slanted and politically motivated, about news production. Examples may be found in the unpublicized owner and advertiser dominance over news personnel and editorial content, the planted and fabricated information and suppressed stories, and the instances of government interference and manipulation.

Ibid., pp. 240-241

It is a widely accepted belief in this country that the press suffers from a liberal bias. Television pundits, radio talk show hosts, and political leaders, including presidents of both parties, help propagate this belief. And their views are widely disseminated in the media. In contrast, dissident critics, who maintain that the corporate-owned press exercises a conservative grip on news and commentary, are afforded almost no exposure in the supposedly liberal media.

Consider the case of David Horowitz. When Horowitz was a radical author and editor of Ramparts, the mainstream press ignored his existence. But after he and former Ramparts colleague Peter Colliers surfaced as newborn conservatives, the Washington Post Magazine gave prominent play to their "Lefties for Reagan" pronunciamento. Horowitz and Colliers soon linked up with the National Forum Foundation, which dipped into deep conservative pockets and came up with hundreds of thousands of dollars to enable the two ex-radicals to do ideological battle with the Left. Today Horowitz is a rightist media critic, who has his own radio show and who appears with dismaying frequency on radio and television to whine about how radio and television shut out the conservative viewpoint.

Then there is the multitude of talk show hosts, of whom Rush Limbaugh is only the best-known, who rail against the "pinko press" on hundreds of local television stations and thousands of radio stations owned by wealthy conservatives and underwritten by big business firms. To complain about how the media are dominated by liberals, Limbaugh has an hour a day on network television, an hour on cable, and a radio show syndicated by over 600 stations.

There are well-financed, right-wing, media-watch organizations, such as Reed Irvine's Accuracy in Media (AIM). In a syndicated column appearing in over one hundred newspapers and a radio show aired on some two hundred stations, Irvine and his associates complain that conservative viewpoints are frozen out of the media. Many left critics would like to be frozen out the way AIM, Limbaugh, and Horowitz are.

"Dirty Truths" (1996), City Lights Books, pp. 97-98

*Freedom of Speech and Self-censorship: Who Paid the Piper?*

Most things are simultaneously cultural and economic. An automobile, a television advertisement, a board of trustees, a cosmetic kit, and a tool kit are all cultural and economic. The technology, commodities, services, institutions, and systems of ownership and command have both a cultural and economic dimension, and for that matter a psychological one as well. Indeed, it would be hard to imagine any of the dimensions existing in a context devoid of the others. This does not mean they operate with perfect coordination, but it is time we stopped thinking about them as being mutually exclusive and conceptually competitive.

Economic power does not automatically translate into cultural hegemony, but it makes such hegemony much more likely. Those who own the media must make conscious efforts in selecting the right managers and editors, and setting down proper guidelines and permissible boundaries—so that they might exercise maximum control with a minimum of direct and naked intervention.

“Inventing Reality: The Politics of the Mass Media” (1986), St. Martin’s Press, p. 33

There is no free and independent press in the United States. The notion of a "free market of ideas" is as mythical as the notion of a free market of goods.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, p. 99

Who owns the big media? The press lords who come to mind are Hearst, Luce, Murdoch, Sulzberger, Annenberg, and the like, personages of markedly conservative hue who regularly leave their ideological imprint on both news and editorial content. The boards of directors of print and broadcast news organizations are populated by representatives from Ford, General Motors, General Electric, Alcoa, Coca-Cola, Philip Morris, ITT, IBM, and other corporations in a system of interlocking directorates that resembles the boards of any other corporation. Among the major stockholders of the three largest networks are Chase Manhattan, J.P. Morgan, and Citibank. The prime stockholder of this country's most far-reaching wire service, Associated Press, is the Wall Street brokerage firm, Merrill Lynch. NBC is owned outright by General Electric, a corporation that frequently backs conservative causes and candidates. In 1995, CBS was bought up by Westinghouse for \$5 billion and Time Warner prepared to take over Ted Turner's CNN.

Not surprisingly, this pattern of ownership affects how news and commentary are manufactured. Virtually all chief executives of mainstream news organizations are drawn from a narrow, high-income stratum and tilt decidedly to the right in their political preferences. Media mogul Rupert Murdoch was once asked in an interview: "You're considered to be politically conservative. To what extent do you influence the editorial posture of your newspapers?" He responded with refreshing candor: "Considerably... my editors have input, but I make the final decisions."

Ibid., pp. 99-100

If every reporter had to be policed continually by superiors when producing the news, the system could not maintain its democratic appearance. As it turns out, there is no necessity for editors and owners to exercise constant control; intermittent control will do.

There is no need for ubiquitous supervision, just occasional intervention. The anticipation that superiors might disapprove of this or that story is usually enough to discourage a reporter from writing it, or an editor from assigning it. Many of the limitations placed on reporting come not from direct censorship but from self-censorship, from journalists who design their stories so as to anticipate complaints from superiors. This anticipatory avoidance makes direct intervention by owners a less frequent necessity and leaves the journalist with a greater feeling of autonomy than might be justified by the actual power relationship.

"Some intervention by owners is direct and blunt," observes veteran journalist Ben Bagdikian. "But most of the screening is subtle, some not even occurring at a conscious level, as when subordinates learn by habit to conform to owners' ideas."

"Inventing Reality: The Politics of the Mass Media" (1986), St. Martin's Press, pp. 35-36

Corporate advertisers exercise an additional conservative influence on the media. They cancel accounts not only when stories reflect poorly on their product but when they perceive liberal tendencies creeping into news reports and commentary.

As might be expected from business-dominated media, the concerns of labor are regularly downplayed. Jonathan Tasini, head of the National Writers Union, studied all reports dealing with workers' issues carried by ABC, CBS and NBC evening news during 1989, including child care and minimum wage: it came to only 2.3 percent of total coverage. No wonder one survey found that only 6 percent of business leaders thought the media treatment accorded them was "poor," while 66 percent said it was "good" or "excellent."

Religious media manifest the same gross imbalance of right over left. The fundamentalist media, featuring homophobic, sexist, reactionary, televangelists like Pat Robertson comprise a \$2-billion-a-year industry, controlling about 10 percent of all radio outlets and 14 percent of the nation's television stations. In contrast, the Christian Left lacks the financial backing needed to gain major media access.

"Dirty Truths" (1996), City Lights Books, p. 100

A favorite conservative hallucination is that the Public Broadcasting System is a leftist stronghold. In fact, more than 70 percent of PBS's prime-time shows are funded wholly or mostly by four giant oil companies, earning it the sobriquet of "Petroleum Broadcasting System." PBS's public affairs programs are underwritten by General Electric, General Motors, Metropolitan Life, PepsiCo, Mobil, Paine Webber, and the like. One media watchdog group found that corporate representatives constitute 44 percent of program sources about the economy; activists account for only 3 percent, while labor representatives are virtually shut out. Guests on National Public Radio (NPR) and PBS generally are as ideologically conservative as any found on commercial networks. Even "Frontline" and Bill Moyer's "Listening to America"—favorite GOP targets—use Republicans far more frequently than Democrats.

Conservatives like Horowitz make much of the occasional muckraking documentary that is aired on public television. But most PBS documentaries are politically nondescript or centrist. Progressive works rarely see the light of day. Documentaries like *Faces of War* (revealing the brutality of the U.S.-backed counterinsurgency in El Salvador), *Building Bombs* (on nuclear weapons proliferation), *Coverup* (on the Iran-contra conspiracy), *Deadly Deception* (an Academy Award-winning critique of General Electric and the nuclear arms industry) and *Panama Deception* (an Academy Award-winning exposé of the U.S. invasion of Panama) were, with a few local exceptions, denied broadcast rights on both commercial and public television.

A rightist perspective dominates commentary shows like NBC's "McLaughlin Group" PBS's "One on One" (with McLaughlin as host), CNBC's "McLaughlin Show" (with guess who), PBS's "Firing Line" with William F. Buckley, CNN's "Evans and Novak" and "Capital Gang," and ABC's "This Week with David Brinkley." The spectrum of opinion on such programs, as on the pages of most newspapers, ranges from far right to moderate right or center, in a display of false balancing. Facing Pat Buchanan on CNN's "Crossfire," Michael Kinsley correctly summed it up: "Buchanan is much further to the right than I am to the left."

On foreign affairs the press's role as a cheerleader of the national security state and free-market capitalism seems almost without restraint. Virtually no favorable exposure has ever been given to indigenous Third World revolutionary or reformist struggles or to protests at home and abroad against U.S. overseas interventions. The

media's view of the world is much the same as the view from the State Department and the Pentagon. The horrendous devastation wreaked upon the presumed beneficiaries of U.S. power generally goes unmentioned and unexplained—as do the massive human rights violations perpetrated by U.S.-supported forces in dozens of free-market client states.

“Dirty Truths” (1996), City Lights Books, pp. 101-102

On one of the rare occasions it has acknowledged the existence of media censorship, the New York Times (11/27/88) noted that while network "production and standards" departments have reduced their policing of sexual and other cultural taboos, "the network censors continue to be vigilant when it comes to overseeing the political content of television films.'

Censorship is far more widespread than the few publicized incidents suggest. According to a poll conducted by the Writers Guild of America 86 percent of the writers who responded found from personal experience that censorship exists in television. Many claim that every script they have written, no matter how seemingly innocuous, has been censored. And 81 percent believe that "television is presenting a distorted picture of what is happening in this country today—politically, economically and racially'

Ibid., p. 109

The notion that the media are manipulated by those with money is dismissed by media apologists as a "conspiracy theory" or "devil theory," but there is nothing conspiratorial about it. Being the people who pay the bills, advertisers openly regard their influence over media content as something of a "right." Media executives like Frank Stanton, CBS president, readily say as much, "Since we are advertiser-supported we must take into account the general objective and desires of advertisers as a whole."

“Inventing Reality: The Politics of the Mass Media” (1986), St. Martin’s Press, p. 48

### *Rambo and the Swarthy Hordes*

Make-believe. The term connotes the playful fantasies of our childhood, a pleasant way of pretending. But in the world created by movies and television, make-believe takes on a more serious meaning. In some way or other, many people come to believe the fictional things they see on the big and little screens. The entertainment media are the make-believe media; they make us believe.

Today, very little of our make-believe is drawn from children's games, storytelling, folktales, and fables, very little from dramas and dreams of our own making. Instead we have the multibillion-dollar industries of Hollywood and television to fill our minds with prefabricated images and themes. Nor are these just idle distractions. I will argue that such images often have real ideological content. Worse still, they discourage any critical perception of the great and sometimes awful realities of our lives and sociopolitical system, implanting safe and superficial pictures in our heads. Even if supposedly apolitical in its intent, the entertainment industry is political in its impact.

“Make-Believe Media: The Politics of Entertainment” (1992), St. Martin’s Press, p. 1

People are affected by social forces sometimes far removed from their immediate perceptions. They perceive only a relatively small portion of the influences that play upon them. In modern mass society, people to a great extent rely on distant image makers for cues about a vast world. In both their entertainment and news shows, the media invent a reality much their own. Our notion of what a politician, a detective, a corporate executive, a farmer, an African, or a Mexican-American is like; what rural or inner-city life should be; our anticipations about romantic experience and sexual attractiveness, crime and foreign enemies, dictators and revolutionaries, bureaucrats and protestors, police and prostitutes, workers and Communists, are all heavily colored by our exposure to the media.

Many of us have never met an Arab, but few of us lack some picture in our minds of what an Arab is supposed to be like. This image will be more a stereotype than a reality, and if drawn largely from the mass media, it is likely to be a rather defamatory stereotype. As Walter Lippmann noted, stereotypic thinking "precedes reason," and "as a form of perception [it] imposes a certain character on the data of our senses. When we respond to a real-life situation with the exclamation, "Just like in the movies," we are expressing recognition and even satisfaction that our media-created mental frames find corroboration in the real world.

Ibid., pp. 3-4

Despite a vast diversity of cultures, languages, ethnicity, and geography, the nations of Latin America, Africa, and Asia, with some exceptions, show striking similarities in the economic and political realities they endure. Lumped together under the designation of the "Third World," they are characterized by (1) concentrated ownership of land, labor, capital, natural resources, and technology in the hands of rich persons and giant multinational corporations; (2) suppressive military forces financed, trained, equipped, and assisted by the United States—their function being not to protect the populace from foreign invasion but to protect the small wealthy owning class and foreign investors from the populace; (3) the population, aside from a small middle class, endure impoverishment, high illiteracy rates, malnutrition, wretched housing, and nonexistent human services. Because of this widespread poverty, these nations have been mistakenly designated as "underdeveloped" and "poor" when in fact they are overexploited and the source of great wealth, their resources and cheap labor serving to enrich investors. Only their people remain poor.

For the better part of a century now, successive administrations in the United States have talked about bringing democracy and economic advancement to the "less-developed" peoples of the Third World, when in fact, the overriding goal of US policy toward these countries has been to prevent alternate social orders from arising, ones that would use the economy for purposes of social development and for the needs of the populace, rather than for the capital accumulation process. The purpose of US policy has been not to defend democracy, in fact, democracies—as in Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954), Indonesia (1965), and Chile (1973)—are regularly overthrown if they attempt to initiate serious economic reforms that tamper with the existing class structure. The US goal is to make the world safe for multinational corporate exploitation, to keep things as they are while talking about the need for change and reform.

In all this, the US corporate-owned news media have been, intentionally or not, actively complicit.

"Inventing Reality: The Politics of the Mass Media" (1986), St. Martin's Press, p. 173

For centuries such images of Third World peoples have been propagated in Western society. In North America, racism was embraced by the early Puritan settlers who slaughtered Native American Indians in order to consign their souls to what the Puritans felt was their proper place in hell, thus clearing the land for incorporation by the Puritan leaders and the settlers who followed. Colonialist atrocities were going on for many centuries before the invention of cinematography and television.

The racist images of Third World peoples found in the entertainment media, therefore, cannot be seen as the cause of the atrocities. But in their relatively short history, the media have done their part in making Western imperialism seem like an okay thing.

Lecture, "Images of Imperialism: Media, Myths and Reality" (30 November 1989)

It could be happening in the American Wild West, in the Amazon jungle, the North African desert, the Sudan, the South Pacific jungles, or Indochina: The scene is generally the same—there's a fort, or an encampment, or a wagon train. And inside that encampment are the human beings. They are white—they're human. They're warm, they're attractive, they talk and they're nice. Outside come the swarthy hoards. The savages. They can be Indians,

Bushmen, Arabs on camels and horses, or whatever else—and they are the subhumans, [...]attacking the human beings. And the wagons form their circle, and the human beings know what to do, they level their guns and they begin to knock off, shoot and kill these screaming savages who attack them.

Why do the swarthy hordes attack the white people? [Audience laughter] You don't know? Did they never tell you? Is it to protect their lands, their herds, their villages, their towns, and their families, and their children? No, it's just 'cause they like doing that. That's their thing. They like to attack. And so they have to be killed.

Now, the trouble with this paradigm is that it turns the history of the last 400 years on its head. That it reverses the roles of usurper and usurped. It reverses the roles of victim and victimizer. Of those who are massacred, and those who are doing the massacring. It was the European and North American so-called "Civilizers" who went in there and destroyed the villages, their industries, and their townships. Read Engels on North Africa, on what happened to the Arabs and Berbers, and when he goes in and describes the beautiful towns with the fine, hard stone and plaster, woolen and mining industries, and their arts, and crafts, and all that... And then read the descriptions of the French troops coming in and systematically destroying it, and killing every man, woman and child. Read about how the Germans went into South Africa and killed the Hararo Tribe—80,000 people, they killed 60,000 of them, and the other 20,000 they used as slave labor in their mines. Read Mark Twain's angry, raging comments about King Leopold of Belgium, calling him a mad dog in what he did to the innocent, unoffending people of the Congo, taking them and enslaving them. A million of them a year dying in the mines in the Congo.

That's what the history and John Wayne are about, and what these films do, is that they reverse that history and stand it on its head. They do what Joseph Goebbels said, they give you a big lie, embellish it, and make you root for the guys in the wagon train."

Lecture, "Rambo and the Swarthy Hordes" (1989)

Over the decades, first the motion-picture industry and then television have produced a wide variety of action-adventure films that contain the same basic scenario. The enemies are Indians on the American plains or The homeland, the safe place, is American White Anglo-Protestant, or at least White. It is inhabited by people who are sane and care about life. The enemies are maniacal and careless with lives, including their own.

In a wonderful article entitled "Ambush at Kamikaze Pass," Tom Engelhardt notes the underlying common theme of the cowboy movie, the war movie, and the adventure film. They all portray the non-Caucasian world through the lens of the colonizer, offering us an archetypal scene: a circle of covered wagons or sometimes a fort or camp wherein humanity rests warm and secure. Suddenly, on the periphery emerge the screeching savages to kill the humans for no reason other than to quench their own bloodthirsty propensities. The White men, be they cowboys or cavalry, ready their rifles, knowing what to do: exterminate the attackers. This scenario "forces us to flip history on its head. It makes the intruder exchange places in our eyes with the intruded upon." In real life, of course, the Indians faced ruthless invaders who were ready to exterminate them. But in these films, it is the Indians "who must invade, intrude, break in upon the circle—a circle which contains all those whom the film has already certified as 'human.'"

Whether in the Amazon jungle, the North African desert, the Sudan, the Transvaal, the South Pacific, or Indochina, the scene is the same: a group of Whites (usually Americans) fight off the swarthy hordes, killing enormous numbers of (Red, Brown, Yellow, Black) "devils," while, to the tune of plaintive music, losing but a few of their precious own. The swarthy hordes throw themselves against vastly superior firepower, not out of any desperate concern to defend their homelands and their people, but because they are propelled by a fanatical lust to kill and destroy. As Engelhardt notes: "It is not even 'bravery' as we in the West know it (though similar acts by Whites are portrayed heroically)."



---

## More From Michael Parenti and the Compilers

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200201054744/http://www.tucradio.org/parenti.html#Parenti/>

<https://www.michael-parenti.org/>

<https://www.michaelparenti.org/>

<https://www.youtube.com/@themichaelparentilibrary/>

<https://www.facebook.com/parentiposting/>

<https://www.teezily.com/stores/unsettlingempire/>

<https://www.patreon.com/UnsettlingEmpire/>

<https://www.redbubble.com/people/parentiposting/>