

Orwellian Police State USA: Getting your History from Hollywood

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[The Anti Empire Report](#)

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"If nature were a bank, they would have already rescued it." – Eduardo Galeano

What do you think of this as an argument to use when speaking to those who don't accept the idea that extreme weather phenomena are man-made?

Well, we can proceed in one of two ways:

1. We can do our best to limit the greenhouse effect by curtailing greenhouse gas emissions (carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide) into the atmosphere, and if it turns out that these emissions were not in fact the cause of all the extreme weather phenomena, then we've wasted a lot of time, effort and money (although other benefits to the ecosystem would still accrue).
2. We can do nothing at all to curtail the emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, and if it turns out that these emissions were in fact the cause of all the extreme weather phenomena (not simply extreme, but getting downright freaky), then we've lost the earth and life as we know it.

So, are you a gambler?

Whatever we do on a purely personal level to try and curtail greenhouse gas emissions cannot of course compare to what corporations could do; but it's inevitable that the process will impinge upon the bottom line of one corporation or another, who can be relied upon to put optimization of profit before societal good; corporate "personhood" before human personhood. This is a barrier faced by any environmentalist or social movement, and is the reason why I don't subscribe to the frequently-voiced idea that "Left vs. Right" is an obsolete concept; that we're all together in a common movement against corporate and government abuse regardless of where we fall on the ideological spectrum.

It's only the Left that maintains as a bedrock principle: People before Profit, which can serve as a very concise definition of socialism, an ideology anathema to the Right and libertarians, who fervently believe, against all evidence, in the rationality of a free market. I personally favor the idea of a centralized, planned economy.

Holy Lenin, Batman! This guy's a Damn Commie!

Is it the terminology that bothers you? Because Americans are raised to be dedicated anti-communists and anti-socialists, and to equate a "planned economy" with the worst excesses of Stalinism? Okay, forget the scary labels; let's describe it as people sitting down and discussing what the most serious problems facing society are; and which institutions and

forces in the society have the best access, experience, and resources to offer a solution to those problems. So, the idea is to enable these institutions and forces to deal with the problems in a highly organized and efficient manner. All this is usually called “planning”, and if the organization of it all generally stems from the government it can be called “centralized”. The alternative to this is called either anarchy or free enterprise.

I don't place much weight on the idea of “libertarian socialism”. That to me is an oxymoron. The key questions to be considered are: Who will make the decisions on a daily basis to run the society? For whose benefit will those decisions be made. It's easy to speak of “economic democracy” that comes from “the people”, and is “locally controlled”, not by the government. But is every town and village going to manufacture automobiles, trains and airplanes? Will every city of any size have an airport? Will each one oversee its own food and drug inspections? Maintain all the roads passing through? Protect the environment within the city boundary only? Such questions are obviously without limit. I'm just suggesting that we shouldn't have stars in our eyes about local control or be paranoid about central planning.

“We are all ready to be savage in some cause. The difference between a good man and a bad one is the choice of the cause.” - William James (1842-1910)

So, George W. Bush is now a painter. He tells his art teacher that “there's a Rembrandt trapped inside this body”. [1](#) Ah, so Georgie is more than just a painter. He's an *artiste*.

And we all know that *artistes* are very special people. They're never to be confused with mass murderers, war criminals, merciless torturers or inveterate liars. Neither are they ever to be accused of dullness of wit or incoherence of thought.

Artistes are not the only special people. Devout people are also special: Josef Stalin studied for the priesthood. Osama bin Laden prayed five times a day.

And animal lovers: Herman Goering, while his *Luftwaffe* rained death upon Europe, kept a sign in his office that read: “He who tortures animals wounds the feelings of the German people.” Adolf Hitler was also an animal lover and had long periods of being a vegetarian and anti-smoking. Charles Manson was a staunch anti-vivisectionist.

And cultured people: This fact Elie Wiesel called the greatest discovery of the war: that Adolf Eichmann was cultured, read deeply, played the violin. Mussolini also played the violin. Some Nazi concentration camp commanders listened to Mozart to drown out the cries of the inmates.

Former Bosnian Serb politician Radovan Karadzic, on trial now before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, charged with war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity, was a psychiatrist, specializing in depression; a practitioner of alternative medicine; published a book of poetry and books for children.

Al Qaeda and other suicide bombers are genuinely and sincerely convinced that they are doing the right thing. That doesn't make them less evil; in fact it makes them more terrifying, since they force us to face the scary reality of a world in which sincerity and morality do not necessarily have anything to do with each other.

Getting your history from Hollywood

Imagine a documentary film about the Holocaust which makes no mention of Nazi Germany.

Imagine a documentary film about the 1965-66 slaughter of as many as a million “communists” in Indonesia which makes no mention of the key role in the killing played by the United States.

But there’s no need to imagine it. It’s been made, and was released this past summer. It’s called “The Act of Killing” and makes no mention of the American role. Two articles in the *Washington Post* about the film made no such mention either. The Indonesian massacre, along with the jailing without trial of about a million others and the widespread use of torture and rape, ranks as one of the great crimes of the twentieth century and is certainly well known amongst those with at least a modest interest in modern history.

Here’s an email I sent to the *Washington Post* writer who reviewed the film:

“The fact that you can write about this historical event and not mention a word about the US government role is a sad commentary on your intellect and social conscience. If the film itself omits any serious mention of the US role, that is a condemnation of the filmmaker, and of you for not pointing this out. So the ignorance and brainwashing of the American people about their country’s foreign policy (i.e., holocaust) continues decade after decade, thanks to media people like Mr. Oppenheimer [one of the filmmakers] and yourself.”

The *Post* reviewer, rather than being offended by my intemperate language, was actually taken with what I said and she asked me to send her an article outlining the US role in Indonesia, which she would try to get published in the *Post* as an op-ed. I did so and she wrote me that she very much appreciated what I had sent her. But – as I was pretty sure would happen – the *Post* did not print what I wrote. So this incident may have had the sole saving grace of enlightening a *Washington Post* writer about the journalistic standards and politics of her own newspaper.

And now, just out, we have the film “Long Walk to Freedom” based on Nelson Mandela’s 1994 autobiography of the same name. The heroic Mandela spent close to 28 years in prison at the hands of the apartheid South African government. His arrest and imprisonment were the direct result of a CIA operation. But the film makes no mention of the role played by the CIA or any other agency of the United States.

In fairness to the makers of the film, Mandela himself, in his book, declined to accuse the CIA for his imprisonment, writing: “The story has never been confirmed and I have never seen any reliable evidence as to the truth of it.”

Well, Mr. Mandela and the filmmaker should read what I wrote and documented on the subject some years after Mandela’s book came out, in my own book: *Rogue State: A Guide to the World’s Only Superpower* (2000). It’s not quite a “smoking gun”, but I think it convinces almost all readers that what happened in South Africa in 1962 was another of the CIA operations we’ve all come to know and love. And almost all my sources were available to Mandela at the time he wrote his autobiography. There has been speculation about what finally led to Mandela’s release from prison; perhaps a deal was made concerning his post-prison behavior.

From a purely educational point of view, seeing films such as the two discussed here may well be worse than not exposing your mind at all to any pop culture treatment of American history or foreign policy.

Getting your history from the American daily press

During the US federal government shutdown in October over a budgetary dispute, *Washington Post* columnist Max Fisher wondered if there had ever been anything like this in another country. He decided that “there actually is one foreign precedent: Australia did this once. In 1975, the Australian government shut down because the legislature had failed to fund it, deadlocked by a budgetary squabble. It looked a lot like the U.S. shutdown of today, or the 17 previous U.S. shutdowns.” [2](#)

Except for what Fisher fails to tell us: that it strongly appears that the CIA used the occasion to force a regime change in Australia, whereby the Governor General, John Kerr – a man who had been intimately involved with CIA fronts for a number of years – discharged Edward Gough Whitlam, the democratically-elected prime minister whose various policies had been a thorn in the side of the United States, and the CIA in particular.

I must again cite my own writing, for the story of the CIA coup in Australia – as far as I know – is not described in any kind of detail anywhere other than in my book *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and C.I.A. Interventions Since World War II* (2004).

Americans are living in an Orwellian police state. Either that, or the greatest democracy ever.

There are those in the United States and Germany these days who insist that the National Security Agency is no match for the East German Ministry for State Security, or Stasi, which, during the Cold War, employed an estimated 190,000 part-time secret informants, and an additional 90,000 officers full time, in a spying operation that permeated both East and West Germany. Since the end of the Cold War, revelations from the Stasi files have led to thousands of collaborators being chased from public life. Even now, new accusations of a Stasi association can hound politicians and celebrities in Germany. [3](#)

All that of course stems from an era before almost all information and secrets became electronic. It was largely labor intensive. In the digital age, the NSA has very little need for individuals to spy on their friends, acquaintances, and co-workers. (In any event, the FBI takes care of that department very well.)

Can we ever expect that NSA employees will suffer public disgrace as numerous Stasi employees and informants have? No more than war criminals Bush and Cheney have been punished in any way. Only those who have exposed NSA crimes have been punished, like Edward Snowden and several other whistleblowers.

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