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The Anti-Empire Report #122

By William Blum

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National Security Agency – The only part of the government that really listens to what you have to say

The *New York Times* (November 2) ran a long article based on NSA documents released by Edward Snowden. One of the lines that most caught my attention concerned “Sigint” – Signals intelligence, the term used for electronic intercepts. The document stated:

“Sigint professionals must hold the moral high ground, even as terrorists or dictators seek to exploit our freedoms. Some of our adversaries will say or do anything to advance their cause; we will not.”

What, I wondered, might that mean? What would the National Security Agency – on moral principle – refuse to say or do?

I have on occasion asked people who reject or rationalize any and all criticism of US foreign policy: “What would the United States have to do in its foreign policy to lose your support? What, for you, would be *too much*?” I’ve yet to get a suitable answer to that question. I suspect it’s because the person is afraid that whatever they say I’ll point out that the United States has already done it.

The United Nations vote on the Cuba embargo – 22 years in a row

For years American political leaders and media were fond of labeling Cuba an “international pariah”. We haven’t heard that for a very long time. Perhaps one reason is the annual vote in the United Nations General Assembly on the resolution which reads: “Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba”. This is how the vote has gone (not including abstentions):

Year	Votes (Yes-No)	No Votes
1992	59-2	US, Israel
1993	88-4	US, Israel, Albania, Paraguay
1994	101-2	US, Israel
1995	117-3	US, Israel, Uzbekistan
1996	138-3	US, Israel, Uzbekistan
1997	143-3	US, Israel, Uzbekistan
1998	157-2	US, Israel
1999	155-2	US, Israel

Year	Votes (Yes-No)	No Votes
2000	167-3	US, Israel, Marshall Islands
2001	167-3	US, Israel, Marshall Islands
2002	173-3	US, Israel, Marshall Islands
2003	179-3	US, Israel, Marshall Islands
2004	179-4	US, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau
2005	182-4	US, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau
2006	183-4	US, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau
2007	184-4	US, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau
2008	185-3	US, Israel, Palau
2009	187-3	US, Israel, Palau
2010	187-2	US, Israel
2011	186-2	US, Israel
2012	188-3	US, Israel, Palau
2013	188-2	US, Israel

Each fall the UN vote is a welcome reminder that the world has not *completely* lost its senses and that the American empire does not *completely* control the opinion of other governments.

Speaking before the General Assembly, October 29, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez declared: “The economic damages accumulated after half a century as a result of the implementation of the blockade amount to \$1.126 trillion.” He added that the blockade “has been further tightened under President Obama’s administration”, some 30 US and foreign entities being hit with \$2.446 billion in fines due to their interaction with Cuba.

However, the American envoy, Ronald Godard, in an appeal to other countries to oppose the resolution, said:

“The international community ... cannot in good conscience ignore the ease and frequency with which the Cuban regime silences critics, disrupts peaceful assembly, impedes independent journalism and, despite positive reforms, continues to prevent some Cubans from leaving or returning to the island. The Cuban government continues its tactics of politically motivated detentions, harassment and police violence against Cuban citizens.” ¹

So there you have it. That is why Cuba must be punished. One can only guess what Mr. Godard would respond if told that more than 7,000 people were arrested in the United States during the Occupy Movement’s first 8 months of protest ² ; that their encampments were violently smashed up; that many of them were physically abused by the police.

Does Mr. Godard ever read a newspaper or the Internet, or watch television? Hardly a day passes in America without a police officer shooting to death an unarmed person?

As to “independent journalism” – what would happen if Cuba announced that from now on anyone in the country could own any kind of media? How long would it be before CIA money – secret and unlimited CIA money financing all kinds of fronts in Cuba – would own or control most of the media worth owning or controlling?

The real reason for Washington’s eternal hostility toward Cuba? The fear of a good example of an alternative to the capitalist model; a fear that has been validated repeatedly over the years as Third World countries have expressed their adulation of Cuba.

How the embargo began: On April 6, 1960, Lester D. Mallory, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, wrote in an internal memorandum: “The majority of Cubans support Castro ... The only foreseeable means of alienating internal support is through

disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship. ... every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba.” Mallory proposed “a line of action which ... makes the greatest inroads in denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government.”³ Later that year, the Eisenhower administration instituted the suffocating embargo against its everlasting enemy.

The Cold War Revisited

I’ve written the Introduction to a new book recently published in Russia that is sort of an updating of my book *Killing Hope*.⁴ Here is a short excerpt:

The Cold War had not been a struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union. It had been a struggle between the United States and the Third World, which, in the decade following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, continued in Haiti, Somalia, Iraq, Yugoslavia and elsewhere.

The Cold War had not been a worldwide crusade by America to halt Soviet expansion, real or imaginary. It had been a worldwide crusade by America to block political and social changes in the Third World, changes opposed by the American power elite.

The Cold War had not been a glorious and noble movement of freedom and democracy against Communist totalitarianism. It had typically been a movement by the United States in support of dictatorships, authoritarian regimes and corrupt oligarchies which were willing to follow Washington’s party line on the Left, US corporations, Israel, oil, military bases, et al. and who protected American political and economic interests in their countries in exchange for the American military and CIA keeping them in power against the wishes of their own people.

In other words, whatever the diplomats at the time thought they were doing, the Cold War revisionists have been vindicated. American policy had been about imperialism and military expansion.

Apropos the countless other myths we were all taught about the Soviet Union is this letter I recently received from one of my readers, a Russian woman, age 49, who moved to the United States eight years ago and now lives in Northern Virginia:

I can’t imagine why anybody is surprised to hear when I say I miss life in the Soviet Union: what is bad about free healthcare and education, guaranteed employment, guaranteed free housing? No rent or mortgage of any kind, only utilities, but they were subsidized too, so it was really

pennies. Now, to be honest, there was a waiting list to get those apartments, so some people got them quicker, some people had to wait for years, it all depended on where you worked. And there were no homeless people, and crime was way lower. As a first grader I was taking the public transportation to go to school, which was about 1 hour away by bus (it was a big city, about the size of Washington DC, we lived on the outskirts, and my school was downtown), and it was fine, all other kids were doing it. Can you even imagine this being done now? I am not saying everything was perfect, but overall, it is a more stable and socially just system, fair to everybody, nobody was left behind. This is what I miss: peace and stability, and not being afraid of the future.

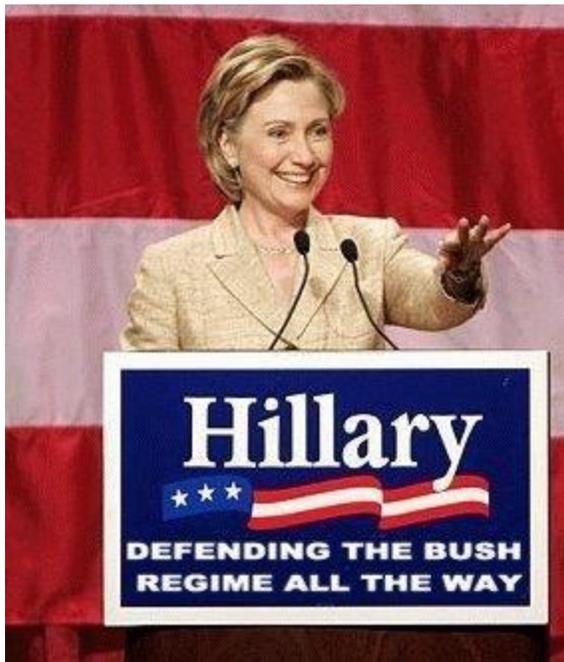
Problem is, nobody believes it, they will say that I am a brainwashed “tovarish” [comrade]. I’ve tried to argue with Americans about this before, but just gave up now. They just refuse to believe anything that contradicts what CNN has been telling them for all their lives. One lady once told me: “You just don’t know what was going on there, because you did not have freedom of speech, but we, Americans, knew everything, because we could read about all of this in our media.” I told her “I was right there! I did not need to read about this in the media, I lived that life!”, but she still was unconvinced! You will not believe what she said: “Yes, maybe, but we have more stuff!”. Seriously, having 50 kinds of cereal available in the store, and walmarts full of plastic junk is more valuable to Americans than a stable and secure life, and social justice for everybody?

Of course there are people who lived in the Soviet Union who disagree with me, and I talked to them too, but I find their reasons just as silly. I heard one Russian lady whose argument was that Stalin killed “30, no 40 million people”. First of all it’s not true (I don’t in any way defend Stalin, but I do think that lying and exaggerating about him is as wrong)*, and second of all what does this have to do with the 70s, when I was a kid? By then life was completely different. I heard other arguments, like food shortages (again, not true, it’s not like there was no food at all, there were shortages of this or that specific product, like you wouldn’t find mayo or bologna in the store some days, but everything else was there!). So, you would come back next day, or in 2-3 days, and you would find them there. Really, this is such a big deal? Or you would have to stay in line to buy some other product, (ravioli for example). But how badly do you want that ravioli really that day, can’t you have anything else instead? Just buy something else, like potatoes, where there was no line.

Was this annoying, yes, and at the time I was annoyed too, but only now I realized that I would much prefer this nuisance to my present life now, when I am constantly under stress for the fear that I can possibly lose my job (as my husband already did), and as a result, lose everything else – my house? You couldn’t possibly lose your house in Soviet Union, it was yours for life, mortgage free. Only now, living here in the US, I realized that all those soviet nuisances

combined were not as important as the benefits we had – housing, education, healthcare, employment, safe streets, all sort of free after school activities (music, sports, arts, anything you want) for kids, so parents never had to worry about what we do all day till they come home in the evening.

** We've all heard the figures many times ... 10 million ... 20 million ... 40 million ... 60 million ... died under Stalin. But what does the number mean, whichever number you choose? Of course many people died under Stalin, many people died under Roosevelt, and many people are still dying under Bush. Dying appears to be a natural phenomenon in every country. The question is **how** did those people die under Stalin? Did they die from the famines that plagued the USSR in the 1920s and 30s? Did the Bolsheviks deliberately create those famines? How? Why? More people certainly died in India in the 20th century from famines than in the Soviet Union, but no one accuses India of the mass murder of its own citizens. Did the millions die from disease in an age before antibiotics? In prison? From what causes? People die in prison in the United States on a regular basis. Were millions actually murdered in cold blood? If so, how? How many were criminals executed for non-political crimes? The logistics of murdering tens of millions of people is daunting. 5*



Let's not repeat the Barack fuckup with Hillary

Not that it really matters who the Democrats nominate for the presidency in 2016. Whoever that politically regressive and morally bankrupt party chooses will be at best an uninspired and

uninspiring centrist; in European terms a center-rightist; who believes that the American Empire – despite the admittedly occasional excessive behavior – is mankind’s last great hope. The only reason I bother to comment on this question so far in advance of the election is that the forces behind Clinton have clearly already begun their campaign and I’d like to use the opportunity to try to educate the many progressives who fell in love with Obama and may be poised now to embrace Clinton. Here’s what I wrote in July 2007 during the very early days of the 2008 campaign:

Who do you think said this on June 20? a) Rudy Giuliani; b) Hillary Clinton; c) George Bush; d) Mitt Romney; or e) Barack Obama?

“The American military has done its job. Look what they accomplished. They got rid of Saddam Hussein. They gave the Iraqis a chance for free and fair elections. They gave the Iraqi government the chance to begin to demonstrate that it understood its responsibilities to make the hard political decisions necessary to give the people of Iraq a better future. So the American military has succeeded. It is the Iraqi government which has failed to make the tough decisions which are important for their own people.” [6](#)

Right, it was the woman who wants to be president because ... because she wants to be president ... because she thinks it would be nice to be president ... no other reason, no burning cause, no heartfelt desire for basic change in American society or to make a better world ... she just thinks it would be nice, even great, to be president. And keep the American Empire in business, its routine generating of horror and misery being no problem; she wouldn’t want to be known as the president that hastened the decline of the empire.

And she spoke the above words at the “Take Back America” conference; she was speaking to liberals, committed liberal Democrats and others further left. She didn’t have to cater to them with any flag-waving pro-war rhetoric; they wanted to hear anti-war rhetoric (and she of course gave them a bit of that as well out of the other side of her mouth), so we can assume that this is how she really feels, if indeed the woman feels anything. The audience, it should be noted, booed her, for the second year in a row.

Think of why you are opposed to the war. Is it not largely because of all the unspeakable suffering brought down upon the heads and souls of the poor people of Iraq by the American military? Hillary Clinton couldn’t care less about that, literally. She thinks the American military has “succeeded”. Has she ever unequivocally labeled the war “illegal” or “immoral”? I used to think that Tony Blair was a member of the right wing or conservative wing of the British Labour Party. I finally realized one day that that was an incorrect description of his ideology. Blair *is* a

conservative, a bloody *Tory*. How he wound up in the Labour Party is a matter I haven't studied. Hillary Clinton, however, I've long known is a conservative; going back to at least the 1980s, while the wife of the Arkansas governor, she strongly supported the death-squad torturers known as the Contras, who were the empire's proxy army in Nicaragua. [7](#)

Now we hear from America's venerable conservative magazine, William Buckley's *National Review*, an editorial by Bruce Bartlett, policy adviser to President Ronald Reagan; treasury official under President George H.W. Bush; a fellow at two of the leading conservative think-tanks, the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute – You get the picture? Bartlett tells his readers that it's almost certain that the Democrats will win the White House in 2008. So what to do? Support the most conservative Democrat. He writes: "To right-wingers willing to look beneath what probably sounds to them like the same identical views of the Democratic candidates, it is pretty clear that Hillary Clinton is the most conservative." [8](#)

We also hear from America's premier magazine for the corporate wealthy, *Fortune*, whose recent cover features a picture of Clinton and the headline: "Business Loves Hillary". [9](#)

Back to 2013: In October, the office of billionaire George Soros, who has long worked with US foreign policy to destabilize governments not in love with the empire, announced that "George Soros is delighted to join more than one million Americans in supporting Ready for Hillary." [10](#)

There's much more evidence of Hillary Clinton's conservative leanings, but if you need more, you're probably still in love with Obama, who in a new book is quoted telling his aides during a comment on drone strikes that he's "really good at killing people". [11](#) Can we look forward to Hillary winning the much-discredited Nobel Peace Prize?

I'm sorry if I take away all your fun.

Notes

1. *Democracy Now!*, "U.N. General Assembly Votes Overwhelmingly Against U.S. Embargo of Cuba", October 30, 2013 [↔](#)
2. *Huffington Post*, May 3, 2012 [↔](#)
3. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960, Volume VI, Cuba (1991)*, p.885 [↔](#)
4. Copies can be purchased by emailing kuchkovopole@mail.ru [↔](#)
5. From William Blum, *Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire* (2005), p.194 [↔](#)

6. Speaking at the “Take Back America” conference, organized by the Campaign for America’s Future, June 20, 2007, Washington, DC; this excerpt can be heard on Democracy Now!’s website ↵
7. Roger Morris, former member of the National Security Council, *Partners in Power* (1996), p.415 ↵
8. *National Review Online*, May 1, 2007 ↵
9. *Fortune* magazine, July 9, 2007 ↵
10. *Washington Post*, October 25, 2013 ↵
11. *Washington Post*, November 1, 2013, review of “Double Down: Game Change 2012” ↵