

CounterPunch

AUGUST 1-31, 2011

ALEXANDER COCKBURN AND JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

VOL. 18, NO. 14

Buddy's Story Has a Cop Killed Your Dog?

By Patrick Higgins

When people are witness to animal cruelty, they are advised by many to call the police – but what happens when police officers are themselves the source of animal cruelty? In these police-ruled United States, the crippling, all-consuming fear of siren sounds and red-and-blue lights is as justified in animals as in humans.

Police-perpetrated dog killing is rampant. Use for a starting point the Facebook page “Mr. Policemen, Don’t Shoot My Dog,” which collects these ongoing incidents across the U.S.A. Some of the most recent incidents have occurred in: Lubbock, Texas, where a family’s Saint Bernard named Payton was shot inside his own home by an officer responding to a home invasion call; Winston-Salem, N.C., where a family’s mix named Champion was shot in his own backyard, as cops stormed through in the midst of a foot chase; and Des Moines, Washington, where a Newfoundland named Rosie was shot four times by an officer claiming her to be a threat.

The problem has been given visual representation on YouTube, where one can find a vast catalogue of videos documenting police brutality against dogs. Among the most horrible videos is one titled “Police shoot family dog during ‘felony stop,’” in which a family is stopped on a highway and aggressively commanded by Tennessee state troopers to pull over and exit the vehicle. The scene reaches a gory denouement when the family dog runs from the car (while the family screams for the opportunity to get the dog) and at a police officer, who blasts the small animal with a shotgun, eliciting shrieks from the horrified family.

HIGGINS CONTINUED ON PAGE 5 COL. 2

“I want you to tell me why you killed people” Howard Zinn’s Apologies, Allen Nelson’s Nightmares

By Doug Lummis

“[Dr. Schlichter von Koenigswald] was a camp physician at Auschwitz...”

“Doing Penance at the House of Hope and Mercy is he?”

“Yes ... and making great strides too, saving lives right and left.”

“Good for him.”

“Yes. If he keeps going at his present rate, working night and day, the number of people he’s saved will equal the number of people he let die – in the year 3010.”

Kurt Vonnegut, *Cat’s Cradle*

Why did Howard Zinn, at the age of 87, feel the need to publish *The Bomb* (City Lights Books, 2010)? The book is largely made up of material he had published before – his passionate case against the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the story of his participation as a bombardier in the destruction of the French city of Royan four months earlier. In particular the latter story, which was originally published in the *Columbia University Forum*, was rewritten for Zinn’s *The Politics of History* (1970, 1990), and reprinted in *The Zinn Reader* (1997) and *Howard Zinn On War* (2001). It also gets a chapter in his *You Can’t Be Neutral on a Moving Train* (1994-2002) and a couple of pages in his *Declarations of Independence* (1990). Why tell it again?

To prevent any misunderstanding, let me say at the outset that I am an admirer of Howard Zinn. But I am not an avid reader of his works. I think I started too late. The problem is that, when I read Zinn, I keep getting the feeling that I have read it before, even when I haven’t. There are few surprises: on any issue, you know that he will take a stand, and you pretty much know what stand that will be. But

is this a failing? The man was consistent, he stuck to his principles. Can we accuse him of following political correctness? He didn’t follow it; he was one of its great inventors. It wasn’t correct at the time he began writing, and so it took courage to take a stand. In his great *People’s History of the United States*, he turned the country’s history on its head, or, better, stood it back on its proper feet, the feet of the ordinary folks who had been bearing it all along. His writings and speeches, coupled with the example of his brave activism, have inspired and changed the lives of countless people, young and old. Certainly, much of his power lies in the seeming contradiction between his unflinching criticism of almost every established idea and his unflinching optimism – what he himself called his “absurdly cheerful approach to a violent and unjust world.” Why, he asks at the beginning of *You Can’t Be Neutral*, am I “so curiously hopeful?” Though I don’t know if he read much Gramsci, he seems to have been a living example of Gramsci’s “pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will.”

Thus the question – Why tell that story again? – is not meant to be disrespectful. It’s true that Zinn, like most storytellers, repeated himself outrageously, but this story is obviously not simply in the category of good material. I believe that Howard Zinn’s career as activist and historian is bracketed at the beginning, and motivated throughout, by his experience of bombing cities from the air, so it is fitting that it be bracketed at the end by a final retelling of that tale. If so, perhaps his “absurd cheerfulness” was not, at its deepest level, so cheerful after all.

In 1945, Zinn was a bombardier on a B-17 stationed in East Anglia, and par-

ticipated in bombing missions on the continent including, most memorably, a raid of no apparent military value on the French city of Royan, where some German troops were dug in. Judging from Zinn's account of it, the raid would not pass even the most lenient test devised by the just war theorists. Military necessity: the troops were bunkered in, surrounded, fighting no one; their commander was proposing a partial cease-fire. Proportionality: more than a thousand planes attacked 5,500 German troops, outside a town where some 1,000 civilians were living. That's around one plane per five German soldiers; more than one per civilian. The excuse the French Command gave later for the attack was "troop morale." This amounts to saying that they attacked the town because to do so made them feel good.

Zinn also reports that, after the bombing, French troops looted the homes of their countrymen. This was, he says, the first time that napalm was used on a city. In describing this experience, he labors to find the words to express the mentality of the bombardier. "I was ... oblivious of the human consequences of our bombing. ... I had mindlessly dropped bombs on cities without thinking of what human beings on the ground were experienc-

ing." I was "unthinking and unfeeling, like a programmed robot. ... Up there, in the sky, I was just 'doing my job...'" Questioning what we were doing "would not have entered my mind. ... [S]eeing no human beings, hearing no screams, seeing no blood, [I was] totally unaware that down below there might be children dying, rendered blind, with arms or legs severed."

Notice the word "might": like the member of a firing squad where one of the rifles is loaded with blanks, Zinn allows himself a small escape hatch. This simultaneous confession of guilt and protest of innocence expresses well the mystery of the consciousness of the modern warrior. How is it that monstrous acts are carried out by people who are not merely banalities, but innocents? How is it possible for a person to napalm a city and be "totally unaware" that the people below are being torn apart and burned alive? But the important thing is that it is possible – at least in a certain state of mind that combines knowing and not knowing. That state of mind has been recognized from ancient times ("Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do").

Zinn writes as though – as a bombardier – his mind was a total blank ("mindless," "unthinking," "unfeeling," etc.), but elsewhere, when he describes himself as an anti-fascist, the picture is different. Calling himself "an eager bombardier," he writes of his decision to join the Air Corps, "I could not bear to stay out of a war against fascism. I saw the war as a noble crusade..." So, his mind was not blank after all: it was filled with a passion to carry out the war, which, in his case, meant to drop bombs. To repeat the obvious, there is no such thing as a bombardier who is totally unaware of what bombs do. It is possible, however, to drive from your consciousness, at least for most of the time, any clear image of what that entails. But you cannot drive out the knowledge altogether. It is a well-known characteristic of the state of denial that you have to know what you are denying in order to deny it. (In his discussion of repression, Freud notes, "The subject matter of a repressed image or thought can make its way into consciousness on condition that it is *denied*. ... The result is a kind of intellectual acceptance of what is repressed, though in all essentials the repression persists." Zinn's repeated insistence that he was "completely

unaware" fits this description closely.)

It is also a characteristic of denial that, should you experience having the thing denied being forced into your awareness, the main shock of that moment is the realization that, actually, you knew it all along. Zinn says that his doubts about the war and the bombings came to him gradually, and mentions his reading of John Hersey's *Hiroshima*. More persuasive, however, is his account of his and his wife's actual visit to that city, in 1966, where, among other things, they were invited to a gathering of atomic bomb survivors.

"We were expected to say a few words of greeting to the people there, and, when it was my turn, I started to say something, then looked at the men and women sitting on the floor, their faces turned to me, some without legs, others without arms, some with sockets for eyes, or with horrible burns on their faces and bodies. My mind flashed back to my work as a bombardier, and I choked up, could not speak."

Note that his list of wounds (missing arms, missing legs, blindness, burns) is about the same as his list of things of which he said he was "totally unaware" as a bombardier. It was only in the following year that Zinn traveled to Royan, talked to survivors, and searched out the documents that became the basis for his article on the city's bombing, which was printed and reprinted in a variety of forms, and whose final version appears in *The Bomb*.

In trying to understand this, I am reminded of another war veteran who became an anti-war activist, and who told of his wartime experiences again and again. This is Allen Nelson, who died just about a year before Zinn did. Nelson, unlike Zinn, was by no means a public figure in the U.S.A., but in Okinawa, where I live, he was probably the better known. From 1995 right up to his death in 2009, he traveled repeatedly to Japan, and especially to Okinawa where he was once stationed, telling over and over – to peace groups and at elementary, junior-high and high-school classes – about what he did as a U.S. Marine in Vietnam. Having been on the ground rather than 30,000 feet in the air, he didn't have the option of imagining that he had been unaware of what he was doing. His descriptions have a rawness not often encountered in accounts of warfare. "You know what sur-

CounterPunch

EDITORS

ALEXANDER COCKBURN
JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

ASSISTANT EDITOR
ALEVTINA REA

BUSINESS
BECKY GRANT
DEVA WHEELER

DESIGN
TIFFANY WARDLE

COUNSELOR
BEN SONNENBERG
1937-2010

CounterPunch
P.O. Box 228
Petrolia, CA 95558
1-800-840-3683
counterpunch@counterpunch.org
www.counterpunch.org
All rights reserved.

prised me the most about combat?" he would ask. "No music!"

"We would attack the villages early in the morning or very late at night while the people were still asleep. We would set the villages on fire; we would shoot and kill anyone who was on the run... After we had killed the Vietnamese men, we had to go into the jungles to find where the women and children were hiding. It was always easy to find their hiding places. After three or four days of no water and no rice, the children would be screaming and crying because of hunger pain. ... We would go into the jungle and stand and listen.

"After we attacked the villages, ... we had to gather all the dead people together and count them ... all the men in one pile, all the women in one pile, and all the children in one pile. And of the dead bodies with missing parts like heads, arms or legs, we had to find these parts and put them with the dead bodies that are missing them.

"There are two ways of finding dead people. The first way is to go into the jungle, stand still and listen for flies. ... The second way is ... to start smelling with your nose. The smell of the rotten bodies is so powerful that it will make your food jump from your stomach ...

"Death on the battlefield is a terrible thing because ... the moment life leaves your body, the bugs come. ... And so when your friend dies. ... If he's alive and you're talking with him and he's talking to you, you can fan the flies away. ... But the minute he dies, it seems like the bugs understand that this is food. And so, they just gather and you can't fight them off and the next thing you know, you got a hundred flies on your friend's face, and it's horrible."

Allen's most memorable tale, famous in Okinawa, is about the incident that began his long journey from killing machine to Quaker pacifist. His company, passing through a Vietnamese village, came under enemy fire. Behind a house he found a bunker and jumped in. Someone else was there.

"It was a young Vietnamese girl, maybe 15 or 16 years old. [Nelson would have been 18 or 19 then.] She was very afraid of me, but for some reason she would not get up and run away. She was breathing very hard, and she was in great pain. ... I looked between her legs, and I saw the little head of a baby. ... I took my hands

and put them between her legs. And ... a baby came out of her body and into my hands, ... steam was rising from its body. The girl snatched the baby from my hands, ... bit the umbilical cord with her teeth, ... crawled out of the bunker, and ran away into the jungle. ... [W]hen I looked at my hands, I still had the after-birth from the baby. When I came out of the bunker, I was a different person."

I first met Allen Nelson in 2000, at an anti-war concert in Okinawa (where he gave a performance on the slide guitar). We knew of each other as fellow ex-Marines turned against war, and, when I introduced myself, we fell into each other's arms. Immediately he began to talk about Vietnam. And once he got started, he couldn't turn it off. I thought, this guy is supposed to have been cured, but he's not. He's curing himself now. This is his

"There are two ways of finding dead people. The first way is to go into the jungle, stand still and listen for flies. ... The second way is ... to start smelling with your nose."

therapy, and it's endless.

And probably because I had also been a Marine (though had never seen combat), he told me stories that he didn't tell in his anti-war talks.

"What really bothered me was what we would call the Living Dead. Say, you go out on patrol, rockets come in, you hit the dirt. It quiets down, and you get up. One of the guys has the back of his head blown off; you can see the brains coming out. He's still alive, but he won't last. He's yelling and screaming. But you gotta get out of there. You can't have him following you, yelling and screaming. You sit him down on a rock and say, 'Look, I'm sorry, but you're dead. We have to go. Here's a cigarette. Just sit here, OK?' Then you start back, and the son of a bitch gets up and follows, yelling and screaming. You go back and you say, 'Look, dammit.' You wave your hand in front of his eyes, 'Helloooo! You're dead, OK? Here's another cigarette. Sit back down and smoke it.' But when you start to go, he follows you again. Finally [here Allen, in a fading

voice, mumbled something vague] "you do what you gotta do."

Allen told this as an example of what "would" happen. I don't know if he ever gave a man his last cigarette, or saw someone else do so, or whether the story is a kind of urban legend (jungle legend?) from the Vietnam War. In either case, the story gives the lie to the slogan, "Marines always take care of their own."

Allen Nelson returned from Vietnam with an extreme case of what is now called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He was crazy and violent; his mother threw him out of the house; he lived for about a year and a half on the street, or in abandoned buildings. One day he met one of his old schoolmates, now an elementary school teacher. She asked him to come to her class and talk about the war. This became the second big turning point in his road to (relative) recovery. As with Zinn, it came while facing an audience.

"[A] little girl raised her hand ... looked me right in the face, and asked me this question, 'Mr. Nelson, did you kill people?' ... I remember just closing my eyes and answering, 'Yes.' To my amazement, all the children got out of their seats, came up to me, and they started hugging me. ... I started crying, the children started crying, and the teacher was crying too."

It was then that Allen realized he needed treatment for PTSD. This met with variable success, but after some two decades of medication and counseling, his doctor posed the forbidden question: "Allen, I want you to tell me why you killed people."

"I broke down and started crying, weeping, and I looked at him and I said, 'Because I wanted to kill them.' It was like a key went into my brain and unlocked something – I felt free from that point."

Allen Nelson was raised in the black ghettoes of Brooklyn; he joined the Marines in large part to get some decent clothes and three meals a day. If there was ever anyone who had the right to say, "Look, I had no choice," it was Allen. But for him, that evasion didn't work. In the end, he decided that though the choice he faced in combat was a terrible one, with terrible consequences on either side, it was still a choice, and he was responsible for what he chose to do.

"I was happy that I could get those words out of my mouth. ... When you're in combat, ... you're making these choices

on your own. And no one can make you do what you don't want to do, regardless if they kill you, put you in prison. You do what you want to do. That realization was so painful for me: that I was killing people ... not because America was making me do it, not because I was a Marine, not because I was in combat, not because it was a war, not because he was shooting at me – I wanted to do it. But that was the freeing point for me.”

It was after that realization he joined the Quakers and began coming to Japan and Okinawa, giving talk after talk, largely to children, about war. And it was after that experience that I met him, and realized that his “cure” was not over and done with but rather an endless process: telling his story again and again was his ongoing therapy, and it kept him sane.

Howard Zinn's experience was very different. From 30,000 feet in the sky, he was not able to see what he had done: he got no mud on his boots, and carried home with him no image of the sights, the sounds, the smells on the ground below. Probably the napalm he dropped destroyed more life, and produced more horrors than anything Allen Nelson could have done with his M16. But it

required a courageous act of imagination for him to grasp this. At the end of *The Bomb* he wrote, “One can see in the destruction of Royan that infinite chain of causes, that infinite dispersion of responsibility, that can give infinite work to historical scholarship and sociological speculation, and bring an infinitely pleasurable paralysis of the will.”

“Infinitely pleasurable” is of course meant in irony, but still it is the wrong word. There is no such thing as infinite pleasure; certainly not the pleasure that comes from release from pain. In this case, a more apt word is “absolute,” but it applies not to the perpetrator but to what happened to the victims. The question is, is there any point at which you are as remorseful as they are dead? The answer, of course, is “never.” So, the only thing that is “infinite” is the need to repeat the therapeutic process, to confess and apologize, again and again, to the end.

The notion that if you are in a society doing wrong, you collaborate or resist, defined Zinn's practice.

Whether one who kills people from the air by burning them or blowing them apart with bombs and one who kills people on the ground by shooting holes in them with a gun bear equal guilt for their acts is an ethical question with which I will not presume to wrestle here. From the standpoint of the bodies of the victims, the experience is much the same; from the standpoint of the experience of the perpetrators, the experience is quite different. For Nelson, the memory of what he saw and did haunted him to his grave. Like Zinn, he became an anti-war activist, but his activity consisted largely of telling and retelling his nightmare stories. Zinn was able, I believe, to transform his nightmare – to harness its energy, as it were – into the force behind some of the most creative aspects of his work as a scholar and teacher.

For example, at a time when “value-free scholarship” was all the fashion in American academia, Zinn courageously – and repeatedly – argued that posing as neutral was a fraud, and that what was important was to announce your beliefs openly so that students and readers could

judge your work with that in mind. He even went so far as to use that notion as the title to his autobiographical sketch, *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*. But the image he chose is not, I think, so successful, because it is hard to see why a moving train has ethical content. People don't generally get on a train unless it is going where they want to go. The right title would have been (and I wonder whether this might have been his original title, rejected for being too raw), *You Can't Be Neutral on a Bombing Plane*. Especially true if you are the bombardier: you either drop the bombs and kill people, or refuse to and risk a court martial; there is no in between.

This notion, that if you are in a society that is doing wrong, you either collaborate or resist, defined Zinn's theory and practice of political action. Though, of course, he was always ready to make speeches and sign petitions, the people he praised the most were the civil disobedients. “What kind of person can we admire ... the strict follower of law or the dissident who struggles, sometimes within, sometimes outside, sometimes against the law, but always for justice? What life is best worth living – the life of the proper, obedient, dutiful follower of law and order or the life of the independent thinker, the rebel?”

And he himself was not afraid to join the rebels. During the Vietnam War, he was arrested and jailed more than once for such offences as blocking traffic during anti-war demonstrations. Moreover, he proposed an ethical system under which civil disobedience was not only for extremists but an option open to everyone, which meant that people who did not choose it could be held responsible for that.

“...[T]he mass production of massive evil requires an enormously complicated division of labor. No one is positively responsible for the horror that ensues. But everyone is negatively responsible, because anyone can throw a wrench into the machinery.”

I think it best to take with a grain of salt Zinn's “no one” here; reading through his works, it is easy to see that he judges some people to be far more “responsible for the horror” than others – see, for example, his account of the actions of Selma, Alabama, Sheriff Jim Clark in 1963 (*You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*), or of Secretary of

Subscription Information

Subscription information can be found at www.counterpunch.org or call toll-free inside the U.S. 1-800-840-3683

Published twice monthly except July and August, 22 issues a year.

1 - year hardcopy edition \$45
2 - year hardcopy edition \$80
1 - year email edition \$35
2 - year email edition \$65
1 - year email & hardcopy edition \$50
1 - year institutions/supporters \$100
1 - year student/low income \$35

Renew by telephone, mail, or on our website. For mailed orders please include name, address and email address with payment, or call 1-800-840-3683 or 1-707-629 3683. Add \$17.50 per year for subscriptions mailed outside the U.S.A.

Make checks or money orders payable to:

CounterPunch
Business Office
PO Box 228, Petrolia, CA 95558

State Henry Kissinger's behavior during the Nixon administration (*Declarations of Independence*). I can't help suspecting that part of the motivation for this formulation is his search for a way of understanding his own responsibility in World War II – not so much the positive responsibility of one who bombed as the negative responsibility of one who failed to refuse to bomb. While Nelson solved the mystery by declaring that everyone, in the end, does what they want to do, Zinn solved it with the opposite formulation: all these things happen without any of the participants positively wanting them to. Still, aside from the use of the words “negative” and “positive,” the two agreed on the main point, and held themselves responsible for failing to disobey orders by refusing to kill.

Finally, at the risk of pushing the notion too far, I can't help wondering if Zinn's war experience didn't also contribute to the vision of his *People's History*. He writes that, after he got his discharge, he put all his wartime mementos into a folder and, on an impulse, scrawled on it, “Never again.” This could and certainly does mean never again make war, never again bomb, but it could also mean never again separate yourself from the world where people live by so great a distance; never again place yourself above that world and look down on it from 30,000 feet. In *A People's History*, Zinn plants his feet on the ground and walks through American history, through cities and towns and countryside, knocking on doors as it were, and listening to ordinary people's stories. The book is a long attempt to discover and relate what, at each point in the country's history, it was like to be on the losing side, to be among the forgotten, to be on the ground. This, too, can be understood as another aspect of his long penance for his failure to understand what was happening on the ground during the bombing of Roan.

Allen Nelson died in March 2009 of cancer caused, his friends assume, by Agent Orange. Several people from Okinawa traveled to his New York home to stand vigil with him in his last days, and I talked to one after she returned. He wept and wept, she told me, a great flood of tears that would not stop. He said to her, “These tears on my hands are mixing with the afterbirth of that girl in Vietnam.” Anyone who knew him would say that he had done enough, that he de-

HIGGINS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Officers too often get away with the careless or sadistic killing of dogs by resorting to the all-purpose explanation that the animals had acted “aggressively.” But, as I was told by an Animal Control employee, deadly force against a dog is *never* necessary, given the alternatives of snaring and, as a last resort, running the dog until he or she is too exhausted to fight.

So, it was a troubling moment coming across my old friend Terry Boyle on the local news, his eyes thick with tears and voice cracking with sadness, speaking about the several bullets that were fired into his dog, a Labrador-mix named Buddy, by police officers of the suburb of Birmingham, Michigan.

According to all accounts, Buddy had gotten out of the backyard while Terry was having dinner a few blocks away on the night of Saturday, July 30. The cops came across Buddy around 10:30 p.m.; the dog was eventually shot at the side

Many who have heard about the police's claims wonder why neither a tranquilizer nor a Taser could have been used.

LUMMIS CONTINUED FROM COLUMN 1

served to be a peace with himself. But for him, it could never be enough. After all those years of struggle, the image was as vivid, the pain as fresh as ever.

Howard Zinn died a little less than a year later, just a month after finishing the introduction to his final book, *The Bomb*. Anyone who knew him, or had read his works, would say that he had done enough, that he didn't need to put himself through the pain of telling that story again. But for Zinn, as for Nelson, it could never be enough. This, I believe, is the meaning of Howard Zinn's last work, and the reason it should be respected.

Howard Zinn and Allen Nelson, you did all that you humanly could. Troubled souls, may you rest in peace. **CP**

Douglas Lummis is a political scientist living in Okinawa and the author of *Radical Democracy*, (Cornell University Press, 1996).

of the house, near the backyard gate. He then crawled to the front porch, where he was snared and shot once more for “euthanasia” purposes. Riddled with all the common explanations and excuses, the story of Buddy's death serves as an example of the kinds of apologia employed in the aftermath of the senseless police killing of dogs. The exact circumstances serve as a kind of, if you will, Anatomy of a Canicide.

Upon arriving back at his home, Boyle was greeted by the vestiges of a death scene: a front porch and lawn where shell casings were scattered and pink blood stains were splattered, and a still-running hose that had clearly been used for clean-up duty.

Boyle's father, Terry Boyle Sr., had contacted the police department on Sunday, July 31, the morning after Buddy was shot. Boyle himself arrived that day at the station to inquire. Both father and son were given the same story by one Kathleen Long – the police had received a call about a loose dog and responded promptly. The story changed days later, with the police officers happening upon the loose dog. From the police report made by officer Gina Potts: “I was sitting on Eton and Bowers in my patrol vehicle when I heard a dog barking loudly...”

The police say the dog lunged at one officer, Marc Jewell (who was, according to the police report, opening the side gate so Buddy could re-enter the backyard), thus necessitating the first two bullets that entered the dog's body. Many who have heard about the police's claims wonder why neither a tranquilizer nor a Taser could have been used – or, what's more, why a Taser gun, rather than a pistol, was not prepared for what the police claim was a dog growling upon their arrival.

In response to the former question, Birmingham Police Commander Terry Kiernan claimed that Jewell, the officer who fired the initial shots at Buddy, could not have possibly had the time to pull his Taser gun out, charge it, and fire an accurate shot. But, in her report, Potts claims that she had a Taser gun on her body, and even had it drawn and ready to zap as she was standing in close proximity to Buddy when he, as claimed by police, lunged at Jewell and into two bullets.

So, here it becomes apparent that the best-case scenario, from the police point of view, involves an unacceptable level of police incompetence. (The worst-case

scenario involves a level of police sardism.) The event was by all accounts a veritable gallery of grotesqueries, as even the police report makes reference to this family dog crying and walking about with his intestines hanging out.

The story told by Heidi Cosentino, who lives directly across the street from the location of the killing, differs somewhat from the police's claims in that it is more a tale of police aggression than of dog aggression. "I noticed that there was a car," she told me. "There were headlights from a car going back and forth. Eventually, a police car pulled up next to that car. I saw a dog on the front porch. It didn't leave the front porch." She said flashlights were flashed at the dog for some minutes. Then, three or four police officers emerged from the cars and, by foot, converged on the animal. A neighbor who was present – and who had made every phone call that had been made in the past to the police about Buddy – went inside of her house just before the shots went off, Cosentino added. "I don't think that the dog was aggressive," Cosentino said, maintaining that the dog tried to escape the officers.

The police have made several statements impugning the reputation of both the owner and the dog. Cops had been to Boyle's house three previous times in relation to Buddy because of phone calls made by the aforementioned neighbor. Boyle was fined once, for not having a Birmingham dog license. Boyle's dog-owner credentials, whatever they may be, are of scant bearing on the issue of whether it was necessary to kill Buddy. More interesting is a claim made about the dog, that it was, in fact, a "Rottweiler-mix." The tactic is common. The police have not specified how exactly they know that Buddy, whose pictures betray standard Lab features, was a Rottweiler-mix.

Of course, for what it's worth, consensus seems to have it that Buddy was a dog of sociable and serene and noble character, more Lassie than Cujo. A coworker of Boyle's informed me that he took Buddy with him to work – where employees would spend their breaks with the dog – every day for about a year. "Best dog ever," she told me, before stating that her anger over Buddy's death prevents her from being able to talk about the topic with any ease.

Richard Angelo, a Michigan attorney who deals in animal law, says he has

had to deal with several cases similar to Boyle's just this year. He called the problem "a growing issue nationwide." "A lot of people don't call or don't think anything will come of it," he told me. The concern, he continued, is that courts will decide that the party harmed was "just a dog."

I spoke with a Michigan woman who said she had to clean up the "blood and guts" of her brother's dog, killed by police in her brother's home; she said the case was not pursued partially for the reason given by Angelo.

But there are two elements involved in these kinds of cases. First, there is the Fourth (and sometimes Fourteenth) Amendment aspect related to the problem of out-of-control cops, all too willing to pay insufficient mind to the rights, liberties, and overall lives of private citizens. The violation here is of the rights of the owner, especially in districts in which dogs are considered, for better or worse, traditional property of their owners, in which case the killing of owned dogs may, depending on the circumstances, qualify as an unlawful seizure. The offense against the owner lacks even a moral justification, because the intrusion into privacy has not been committed to alleviate suffering but rather to inflict suffering. Second, there is the animal cruelty aspect. There has, indeed, been some success in bringing cops up on animal cruelty charges, such as those made just this year against a former Ohio County sheriff for the beating of a dog.

Observe the spectacular backwardness in the Buddy scenario, in which an animal – surveying his neighborhood from his porch, mindful of no business other than his own, and displaying no overt signs of aggression – is cornered and harassed, and tortured and murdered by law enforcement officers whose reasoning is limited to grumbles about animal aggression. Inherent in the reasoning of the law enforcement officers who shot Buddy is an assumption that all animal violence is "aggressive" violence; the notion of "defensive" animal violence is left unconsidered.

It is easy for police to get away with extended attacks on and ultimate slaughters of animals like Buddy on account of anti-dog hysteria that rules neighborhoods, with loose dogs being posited as enemies of the Lawful and Orderly.

"Homeless dogs should be left alone

like homeless humans, unless they are wreaking havoc in the community," Gary Yourofsky, founder of Animals Deserve Absolute Protection Today and Tomorrow (ADAPTT), wrote me in an email. "For the record, eating out of garbage cans or spilling the cans over looking for food is *not* havoc. Defecating or urinating in a park is *not* havoc, either."

For sake of elucidation: documentary filmmakers Monica Martino and Dan Carlisle estimated that today there are roughly 50,000 stray dogs in Detroit alone. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention found that there were 279 fatal dog attacks in the U.S. between 1979 and 1994. (Care to compare these numbers with the human statistics?) Stray dogs are actually more likely to be victims than aggressors. Some that wander the street may very well be sick, although overcrowding, and not sickness, is the reason given for why something like 81 per cent of strays picked up by Animal Control in Detroit are euthanized.

The response to dog problems of any kind has at times drifted toward the irrational and has spilled over the top, such as the call for ordinances banning specific breeds typically used in dog-fighting (such as pitbulls) from entire cities – a tactic that pointlessly attempts to eradicate whole sections of dog-kind for the misdeeds of individual humans. (For all of those interested, consult filmmaker Samuel Fuller's unjustly neglected 1982 masterpiece *White Dog*, in which a character played by Paul Winfield hopelessly attempts to rehabilitate a dog trained to attack black people; the film remains a piercing tragedy, an extended exploration of the less appetizing components of the *human* character as encapsulated in the existence of a single dog.)

Boyle has launched a "Justice For Buddy" campaign. The campaign's antecedent is the "Justice for Rosie" campaign that was launched in reaction to the Newfoundland killed in Washington State, which has been supplemented by a civil case brought by Rosie's owners against the officers responsible for her death. These campaigns have generated waves of public support, along with calls for fully functioning animal control departments and the proper education of police officers about dog behavior. **CP**

Patrick Higgins is a writer living in Detroit.

Just Look at a Map and the Numbers England: Why Riots Now? What to Do

By Adam Coutts and David Stuckler

London

Prime Minister David Cameron's speech and the recent riots signify more than just a wake-up call for policy and a moral breakdown across Britain. They expose the vacuous nature of the Big Society and the fact that government does not really understand what is actually going on in communities and the labor market nor how to tackle these problems. The absence of the words "social cohesion" and "unemployment" and the 16 references to "behavior" in the speech were a notable slide away from addressing the social context of behavior: poor neighborhoods, unemployment and deprivation. Much like the French response to the Paris riots in 2005, Cameron's approach has been to promote a more "robust" police response (no easy task given extensive budget cuts!) because the polls say so, while punishing rioters by withdrawing welfare benefits.

And how could the government know what's going on? The Home Office Citizenship survey, which provides our only reliable source of information on the civic health and quality of life in local communities, has been abolished. However, the available data are strikingly clear: draw a map of the outbreak of riots, and a map of the places with high youth unemployment and low levels of social cohesion and sense of neighborhood in the U.K., and you will realize immediately that you are staring at the same picture.

Youth have borne the brunt of the global financial downturn of 2007. Those who went to school find a job market where routinely 100 candidates apply for 1 spot. Those without skills have even dimmer prospects, as manufacturing and low-skilled jobs have been on the decline since the 1980s. The U.K. average unemployment rate is about 7 per cent. However, in each of the riots areas Jobseeker Allowance claimant rates among young people 16-24

are often 4-5 per cent higher. Add to this those outside of the formal welfare system, those Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEETS) whose numbers in areas such as Enfield nearly doubled between 2008-09. Similar figures are found in Salford (24 per cent), Birmingham (23 per cent), Hackney (26 per cent), and Haringey (23 per cent), with neighboring areas such as Tower Hamlets also displaying high levels.

These findings echo previous work by the authors, which looked at the relationship between rises in unemployment and homicides in Europe over the past 3 and half decades. In general, each 1 percentage point rise in unemployment was linked to

about a 0.8 per cent rise in homicides.

The diagnosis as relating to the economy and cuts to youth provision could be viewed as a damning indictment of Big Society policies. At a time when people look to governments for help, their leaders point the finger at those who are suffering. The current response to social problems is to ask individuals to change their behavior, with a little "nudge" here and there. That approach may work in normal circumstances for certain behaviors, but the U.K. is undergoing an exceptional period of very high youth unemployment.

Riots reflect the failure of political classes on the left and right to invest in youth and their economic futures. Yes, work is at the heart of a responsible society but so, too, is the provision of social protection for those who are outside of the labor market, who are socially excluded and who lack sufficient access to opportunities. Yes, government alone cannot fix social problems, but nor can individuals and communities do it themselves. The first step for policy makers is to realize that there is a deeper economic problem.

Any forthcoming policy needs to look

Annual Population Survey of people aged 16 to 24 not in education, employment or training by Local Authority.

	Numbers			Percentages		
	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
England	849,000	854,000	972,000	14.4%	14.3%	16.2%
Birmingham	30,000	28,000	31,000	20%	20%	23%
Enfield	4,000	3,000	6,000	14%	12%	22%
Hackney	4,000	5,000	5,000	17%	20%	26%
Haringey	4,000	6,000	7,000	16%	21%	23%
Islington	4,000	3,000	5,000	15%	13%	19%
Manchester	12,000	13,000	12,000	15%	16%	15%
Salford	4,000	6,000	8,000	16%	22%	24%
Tower Hamlets	10,000	7,000	8,000	25%	22%	25%
Trafford	3,000	3,000	5,000	12%	13%	20%

CounterPunch

PO Box 228
Petrolia, CA 95558

Get your summer reading
www.counterpunch.org

1st Class

Presort
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 269
Skokie, IL

First Class

return service requested

at how the economic downturns and budget cuts have affected the ability to design and deliver effective social and economic policies. Why does unemployment among youths in Manchester affect levels of social cohesion and rates of antisocial behavior? What data do we need to monitor the social changes occurring within communities? Do these data already exist?

Encouraging the Cabinet Office Behavioral Insights Team (Nudge Unit) to extend their remit to look at why people join gangs, engage in antisocial behavior, stay in education, take up jobs, remain on welfare, or, in fact, take up the proposed Citizen Service scheme would be a more effective long-term option than changing immediate health and safety legislation.

Yes, Cameron is correct to say that we should talk honestly about behavior and that it is not created in a vacuum. However, he adopts an asocial approach and assumes it's all about legislation, rules and incentives. Indeed, the conceptual framework behind much of the behavioral approach Cameron has adopted never mentions poverty, unemployment or deprivation as behavioral determinants. Government and

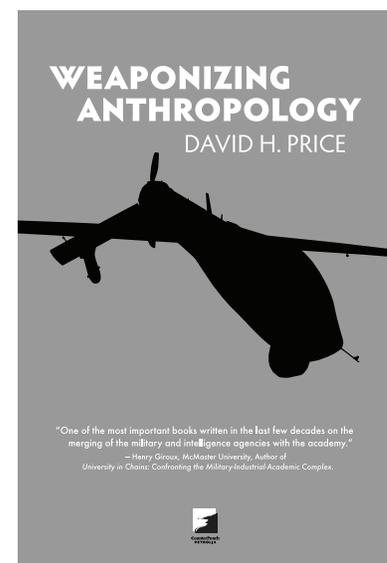
the services it delivers shape the social and economic environments in which individuals are able to make decisions about their employment, health, and life chances.

Policy changes need to be tailored around a more realistic and honest socio-economic understanding of how people really do make choices, interact with each other, enter the labor market and education, and engage with society at large. In addition, social protection for those left behind needs to be maintained, not cut, while continuous and transparent dialogue is needed over how to reconcile the contract between state and individual responsibilities. Do we meet somewhere in the middle and coproduce healthy, productive and safe communities? This would lead not only to more effective and preventive policy but also enable the rioting youth to feel more in control of their own lives. **CP**

Adam Coutts, Ph.D. is a policy consultant specializing in employment, social welfare and public health.

David Stuckler, Ph.D. is a lecturer in sociology at the University of Cambridge specializing in political economy.

CounterPunch Books



To order **CounterPunch** books & newsletter subscriptions, call

1 (800) 840-3683

or visit our website

www.counterpunch.org