

# CounterPunch

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN AND JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

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## The Dreyfus Affair, Revisited By Israel Shamir

Alfred Dreyfus, a French Jewish officer, was jailed for spying at the end of the 19th century. His case divided France, and ended with a resounding victory for Dreyfus' supporters. Consequently, Dreyfus was exonerated and reinstated in the army. Now, a hundred years later, he has made a comeback. His story is about to become a film directed by Roman Polanski. A brilliant British Catholic writer, Piers Paul Read, published a 400-page book called *The Dreyfus Affair*, written by the superb pen of a master in search of the truth.

Why does this story still attract writers and readers? So many people were and are arrested for security offenses, quite a few of them unjustly, and suffer long prison sentences or worse. Dreyfus spent four years on Iles de Salut in French Guiana, not far from Guantanamo, where hundreds of security prisoners languished for a decade (and some still do). Eighty thousand convicts (including the Papillon) went through the Guiana penal colony; so why is Dreyfus still important?

According to Read, this case was important because it was used against the Catholic Church. Although ostensibly the Church was not involved, the victory of the Dreyfusards was turned into a profound defeat of the Catholic Church. Perhaps an innocent man was saved, but Catholic France was surely lost, a new order came into being, with the media taking the place of the Church in guiding the masses, and moneyed classes taking over for the nobility.

In Read's view, the question of Dreyfus's guilt or innocence was a minor point, in comparison with the historical consequences of the case. Alfred Dreyfus was a precursor of the long line of human rights' martyrs produced by mass media,

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## The Humiliation of JP Morgan Cut to the Chase

By Mike Whitney

“Essentially, JPMorgan has been operating a hedge fund with federal insured deposits within a bank.” That's the opinion of Mark Williams, professor of finance at Boston University.

So why is everyone making such a fuss over JP Morgan's \$6 billion derivatives loss? Compared to the trillions that were lost in the financial crisis, this is just chicken-feed, isn't it? What's sparking the uproar?

The reason JPM's \$5.8 billion loss at its London-based Chief Investment Office (CIO) is getting so much attention, is because the derivatives bets were made with federally-insured deposits which most people assume are being invested in “ho-hum” risk-free Triple A bonds, like

US Treasuries. Now they know that's not always the case. And now they also know that their money can just as easily be diverted into dodgy debt instruments that produce nothing but red ink. Naturally, many people find that unsettling.

It doesn't matter if the investments were “hedged,” as JPM's chief executive Jamie Dimon likes to say. What matters is that the banks are still rolling the dice with other people's money knowing full-well that if they come up snake-eyes Uncle Sugar's going to bail them out. That's what this flap is all about, that nothing has really changed.

Details about JPM's trades are still sketchy, but according to the *New York Times*: “the losing trade...was an intri-

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## Women and Revolution

By Ron Jacobs

The network of a resistance movement is not only multilayered, it is also multidimensional. When one is a participant it can be easy to forget the essentialness of their individual role and its importance in the struggle. This is the message one derives from the recently released memoir of Eleanor Kasrils. Written by her widowed husband and fellow South African freedom fighter Ronnie Kasrils, *The Unlikely Secret Agent* is the story of a brief but important period in the fight against South African apartheid. The year was 1963 and the African National Congress (ANC) had made the decision to engage in armed struggle. Eleanor Kasrils served as a courier of messages between the above-ground and the underground and between various members of the covert network.

She also did reconnaissance work considering targets for potential bombings. In addition, she participated in a couple of the actions.

All of this fell apart—as it often does—when the apartheid government enacted a new security law that took away the rights of any person who participated in the ANC, no matter what their skin color. A series of raids by the Security Branch of the South African government caught dozens of antiapartheid activists in its net, among them Eleanor and Ronnie Kasrils. After her arrest, Eleanor was subjected to endless interrogations and torture, physical and psychological. Much of the latter form revolved around threats to take her daughter (who was staying with Eleanor's parents) and make her a ward of the state. However, she was

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all these refuseniks, dissidents, and wrongly arrested spies. Some of them were guilty and some were innocent, but each case attacked the sovereignty of the state and its traditional structures. Dreyfus' case was also supported by England and helped to entrench pro-British elements in the French establishment.

### The Catholic View

Piers Paul Read provides the reader with a Catholic perspective. Although he gives a detailed and honest presentation of the Dreyfus Affair, the facts of the case are not central to his narrative in the same way that the fate of Catholicism in France is. He discusses what happened to the Catholic Church and its flock in France in those fateful years and has written a very important book for the modern reader precisely for this reason.

Read's story begins with a broad picture of the persecution of Catholics in 19th century France. What? Catholics were persecuted? We all know that Catholics persecuted Jews; some savants know that the Catholics were hunted in Elizabethan England, but few are aware of the persecution of Catholics in mod-

ern times because it has been largely overshadowed by the twin peaks of the Inquisition and the Holocaust.

Read tells of terrible persecution during the French Revolution, when priests were drowned in droves (it was called "patriotic baptism"), and believers stripped naked, tied together and flung off boats in what they called "Republican marriages." Monks and nuns were executed en masse. Many priests were interred in "floating Bastilles," those predecessors of the U.S. prison-ships, or transported to West Africa, "the Guantanamo of its time," where they quickly died of diseases. This persecution abated only under Napoleon.

Less well known is that this persecution did not cease after the Republic was restored; it simply changed its form. Catholic believers were no longer beheaded at the Place de la Concorde, but many were barred from any advancement in their careers by an anti-Catholic bloc. Read writes:

"In 1879 a government in which six out of ten members were Protestants... passed laws banning Catholic clergy from teaching in either state or private schools, [though] Jewish and Protestant children continued to receive instruction in their faith... The higher strata of the old bourgeoisie were excluded from power for being Catholic or Royalist or both. The gap they left was filled by Protestants and Jews.

"A Jewish prefect could with impunity observe Passover, but a prefect who was openly zealous in observance of Easter might find himself under violent attack. 'Taking Easter communion under the Third Republic was an affirmative, even a courageous act; government employees who did so were unlikely to be promoted.'"

This is the historical background of the Dreyfus Affair according to Read: Catholics were often denied positions of influence in French society. Catholics were identified as Royalists, while anti-Catholics were viewed as Republicans. "Each side had its bogeymen. For the anti-Dreyfusards, it was the Syndicate, the secretive network of world Jewry, for the Dreyfusards it was the Catholic Church, in particular the Jesuits." Thus the struggle around Dreyfus was not so much about an individual injustice, but about the future of France. The case was used to purge Catholics from their last

positions in the Army and to intensify the attack on the Church.

Read explores the reasons behind the hatred of the Church. In the eyes of public opinion, the Catholic Church was associated with the *ancien regime*. People often aligned against the Church as the priests tried to forbid girls to dance and would ask intrusive personal questions during confession. He mentions the anti-Catholic attitude of the Jews, but offers no opinion as to what extent it influenced events.

For me, it was surprising to learn that at the beginning of the Dreyfus Affair, Jews were rarely persecuted and that the Catholics played the role of underdog in *fin de siècle* France. The Catholic position only worsened with the case's conclusion. The Church was out-manuevered, and despite the deep religiosity that still existed in the provinces, the voters regularly elected an anti-religious government. Read notes that if women were entitled to vote (they weren't) the result could have been different.

The defeat of the Church is described by Read in rich detail. After the 1903 elections, an even more radically anti-Catholic government was elected, and it promptly expelled priests from schools and nuns from hospitals. Nuns worked for free; others had to be paid, but hatred of the Church was stronger than greed. Churches were robbed, monasteries besieged, and repossessed. It is a sad story, which should be learned in order to understand the 20th century and its oppression of the believers virtually everywhere, from Russia to France and from Turkey to Mexico.

### Geopolitics of the Affair

Read, a Catholic, is a good source for understanding the geopolitical aspect of the Dreyfus Affair. He notes that England, the foremost Protestant power, was traditionally anti-Catholic, and so it supported the French Jews who certainly were hostile to the Church. England was as powerful and influential in those days as the US today.

England made a lot of mileage out of the Dreyfus Affair. Just like the US now, the British mobilised "the international community" against France. Anti-Dreyfusards were anti-British, pro-Dreyfusards were for Britain; so it made sense. Interestingly, English Catholics and even

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non-Catholic Anglo-Irish like GB Shaw were not carried away by pro-Dreyfus propaganda. So, the Anglo-Jewish alliance began many decades before the Balfour declaration.

A precursor of the Dreyfus Affair was the Damascus Affair of 1840, where some Jews were accused of killing a Catholic priest for his blood. In order to save them, prominent and powerful French Jews colluded with England (and English Jews) and undermined France's positions in Syria. France was humiliated; the pro-French Muhammad Ali was forced to leave Syria and Palestine; and the country reverted to the Ottoman rule.

Many Frenchmen were shocked to realize that French Jews preferred the interests of their brethren in Syria to the interests of their own country. We are not so surprised, because the activity of the Jewish lobby in Washington has accustomed us to the fact that many Jews indeed are ready to sacrifice the interests of their own country for the sake of their Middle Eastern brothers and sisters. For the citizens of 19th century France, this came as a painful surprise.

This story is vividly recounted by Read, as well, but he sees this mainly as a British, rather than a Jewish, victory: Britain decided to protect the Jews, while France protected Catholics and Russia defended the Orthodox. Read is not looking for any theological explanation of Jewish-British connection: he argues this was strategic opportunism according to the principle of "Britain has no friends, Britain has interests." British gunboats rather than Jewish pleas chased Muhammad Ali out of Syria and Palestine, as the ruined walls of Acre attest even today.

*The Dreyfus Affair* is an interesting and well-told story, full of colorful personalities that allows the reader to trace the origins of the defeat of the Catholic Church in France, a defeat which is especially relevant to the US Catholics.

## The Jewish Angle

For me, the Dreyfus case was an integral part of the Zionist education I received. His "unjust trial" supposedly moved Theodor Herzl to Zionism. In the words of a Jewish historian: "In the ordinary course of [Herzl's] duties as a correspondent he witnessed the degradation of Captain Alfred Dreyfus of the French

General Staff, who had been sentenced on a trumped-up charge of high treason and exiled to a living death on Devil's Island solely because he was a Jew." So Dreyfus begot Herzl, and Herzl begot the State of Israel.

Yet Read's book demonstrates that Dreyfus was not accused and sentenced solely because he was a Jew. There was evidence pointing to Dreyfus's involvement, as valid as in many other security-related cases.

At this point we should recall the lurid details of the affair. In 1894, the French counter-intelligence service had planted a cleaning lady in the apartments of the German military attaché in Paris (the Germans were then the greatest enemies of the French anticipating the Great War), and she duly brought home whatever she found in the waste paper basket. Read's writing is full of rich and entertaining details which make this story highly readable. He tells us all about the mustache of the military attaché and about his love affairs and gives the story of the "cleaning lady," who was quite an accomplished woman and whose greatest accomplishment was that she succeeded in passing for an idiot.

At one point, she brought in a torn piece of paper, which contained a list ["bordereau" in French, as it became known] of military secrets which somebody offered to sell to the attaché. After concluding that the letter could only have been written by a very small group of officers probably connected to the General Staff, the French secret service ran a graphology analysis and concluded that the only person with matching handwriting was an Alfred Dreyfus, a wealthy, well-educated, rather arrogant artillery captain of Alsatian Jewish origin who was on temporary duty on the General Staff. The graphologist came to this conclusion without knowing whose handwriting sample he was asked to examine or whether that person was Jewish.

Among the experts who checked the handwriting was Alphonse Bertillon, the father of modern criminalistics. He concluded that Dreyfus was the most likely culprit. Albert Lindemann (in his concise *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs*) remarks that "[Dreyfus] was one of a small number who had access to [that] kind of information," and "of that small number, he was the only one whose handwriting resembled that on the [let-

ter]. In fact, to an untrained eye, the resemblance between [Dreyfus] handwriting and that of the [letter] is striking."

That would be enough to convict a man even today, but there was other supportive evidence as well. French counter-intelligence turned around an Italian diplomat, and he offered some support for Dreyfus's guilt. There was also a letter to the German military attaché referring to "this rascal D," and it was considered to point to Dreyfus.

At the trial, a counter-intelligence officer said that they had evidence they couldn't disclose, namely, the words of a French mole in a foreign embassy implicating Dreyfus. The defense went into an uproar, and demanded full disclosure. They never got it: the officer, Colonel Joseph Henry, said the mole's name (the Italian Count the French had turned) was too sensitive to disclose. Read thinks that this precluded a fair trial. However, this is a common feature of security-connected trials in Israel, where the defence – as a rule – is not allowed to view classified evidence. Ditto in terrorist trials in the US, as we learned from the Guantanamo Papers released by Wikileaks: the accused had no idea what they were being accused of.

Nowadays, the accused must consider himself lucky to be tried at all: there are people in Israel, in the US and elsewhere, who spend years in prison on suspicion of security offences but with no evidence admissible in court. In the world of spies and counter-spies, real hard evidence rarely comes up; they have to act upon their suspicions. If they have to go to court, they are as likely as not to falsify evidence and lie.

Alas, it is not unusual to be wrongly suspected or accused of a "security offence." In Israel, thousands in prisons are only suspects who never have been charged with an offence. What is unusual is to get out of this intact. Read mentions that Dreyfus's accusers forged documents and lied in order to improve their case. Here again, it would make sense to add that it is not unusual for police to invent details, plant evidence, and lie in order to make their case stick. The accusers of Dreyfus were neither better nor worse than our contemporary policemen and security officers. Dreyfus's defenders also lied and falsified as much as they could, says Lindemann.

We do not know for sure whether

some papers were complete forgeries. Colonel Henry was accused of that, arrested, and promptly cut his throat in jail. Mysteriously, the razor he used neatly folded itself after he had slashed his throat with it. To this day no one knows who visited him an hour before his alleged suicide, for the record of the visitor was removed. In his last note, Henry claimed that he had copied, but not forged the letters – as was common before the advent of Xerox copiers. While copying he added some details he knew or thought he knew from another source, as copyists of bygone days regularly used to do.

If Dreyfus didn't write the incriminating letter, then who did? It has been claimed that the letter was written by another officer, Charles-Ferdinand Esterhazy. He denied the charge and claimed that he had been offered an enormous bribe of 600,000 francs to take the fall for Dreyfus. Esterhazy, who was tried and found not guilty, said that he had communicated with the Germans on the orders of his commanders in order to mislead them. Read notes that Esterhazy, who apparently did communicate with the Germans, never betrayed

any real information and never thought that Dreyfus had been sentenced for his, Esterhazy's, misdeeds. This Esterhazy was a make-believe spy who simply supplied the Germans with open source coverage of the French newspapers and magazines; "chickenfeed", in spies' parlance. So Read implies, there was no crime to start with.

Was there a case against Dreyfus? Well, yes. Was he guilty? We do not know and probably never will.

Can we be certain that he was innocent? PP Read thinks so. But in the end, there was so much outside interference in the case, it remains difficult to decide. "At his retrial, the Prime Minister pressured the military prosecutor and even judges to arrive at not-guilty verdict" (Lindemann). Both sides, Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards believed that "an

**"No evidence has ever emerged of an anti-Semitic plot against Dreyfus by intelligence officers."**

end justifies the means".

G.K. Chesterton was a strong believer in the innocence of Dreyfus, but he was swayed, not so much by the facts of the case, but by the unanimous pro-Dreyfus position of the British press. While "there may have been a fog of injustice in the French courts; I know that there was a fog of injustice in the English newspapers," he wrote and added that he was unable to reach a final "verdict on the individual," which he came "largely to attribute" to the "acrid and irrational unanimity of the English Press."

Dreyfus's supporters (including, most of all, his brother) spent millions of francs to set him free. There were a few retrials, but every retrial confirmed the conviction. Still, Dreyfus supporters did not relent, and eventually he was paroled.

Prominent historians do not think that Dreyfus was sentenced because he was a Jew, not even Jewish historians: Barbara Tuchman, for one, wrote: "The trial of Alfred Dreyfus... was not a deliberate plot to frame an innocent man. It was an outcome of reasonable suspicion...." Albert Lindemann, the most prominent expert on anti-Semitism alive, concluded: "no evidence has ever emerged of an anti-Semitic plot against Dreyfus by in-

telligence officers, especially not of a premeditated effort to convict someone they knew from the beginning to be innocent."

Read is quite nuanced when answering the question of whether Dreyfus was accused merely because he was a Jew. He says: though he was not accused because he was a Jew, it is not impossible that if he were not a Jew, his accusers would have been more cautious before deciding his fate. Actually Read's own writing offers a different explanation: Dreyfus was not accused because he was a Jew; he was accused because he was a schmuck. His stiff manners, his aloofness, his arrogant, non-comradely attitude to fellow-officers, as well as his boasting about his money and connections made his accusers less cautious while deciding his fate. His Jewishness was much less important than his arrogance, for other Jews had great military careers in the French Republic, including positions on the General Staff, and they were not customarily accused of spying.

Read describes a few interesting personalities on both sides of the divide. Bernard Lazare was a friend of Drumont, a Jew very critical of Jews. At a certain point, he reversed his position and began to fight anti-Semitism. He was one of the first Dreyfusards who said Dreyfus was imprisoned because he was a Jew. His conversion was so complete and sudden that many who knew him thought he was bought by the Dreyfus family to serve as a liaison with intellectuals.

Emile Zola, the writer who turned the tide with his *J'Accuse*, is depicted as a quite unpleasant man, constantly quarreling with other authors. The Goncourt Brothers called him "a false, shifty, hypocritical creature, an Italian, yes, an Italian!" Marcel Proust joined the Dreyfusard cause, and his father was so annoyed with that decision that he did not speak to him for a week.

If anti-Semites hadn't used the Dreyfus case as a pretext to attack Jews, the Dreyfusards would most probably have never come into existence, since practically everybody, including Bernard Lazare and Theodor Herzl, were convinced that Dreyfus might have been guilty. The attacks on the French Jews woke up their fighting spirit, and eventually they won their great victory. CP

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cate position that included a bullish bet on an index of investment-grade corporate debt. That was later combined with a bearish wager on high-yield securities.”

Right. Can we all agree that this is not an example of traditional banking; that it’s high-stakes gambling pure and simple? So, why is the US government still underwriting this type of activity? It makes no sense.

And why hasn’t congress addressed the problem? Weren’t we assured that the Dodd-Frank Act was the gold standard of financial system regulation, and that from here-on-out derivatives trading would be strictly regulated, that federal oversight would be increased, that the rating agencies would have to comply with new guidelines, that consumers would be protected from predatory lending, that a system would be put in place for the “orderly liquidation” of Too Big To Fail financial institutions, and that the banks would be prevented from making risky bets with depositors’ money?

And after Dodd-Frank passed didn’t President Barack Obama say: “We are poised to pass the toughest financial reforms since the ones we passed in the aftermath of the Great Depression,” and that the bill “represents 90 percent of what I proposed when I took up this fight”?

“90 percent”? If that was true, then Dimon would be frog-marching his way to the big house right now. But it’s not true. In fact, Dodd-Frank doesn’t do much of anything. It’s a joke. The tag-team of Wall Street lobbyists and GOP hardliners gutted the gigantic reform bill and rendered it into a toothless charter that leaves the present system largely unscathed.

It’s no wonder Dimon and Co. continue to dabble in these financial time-bombs. They know they’ll never get any more than a painless slap-on-the-wrist for their involvement in multi-billion dollar blow ups.

True, there is a criminal investigation currently underway, but—according to Reuters— it “is focused on whether three JPMorgan employees in London committed fraud in reporting on their transactions.” The SEC also wants to know more about JPM’s failure to report “\$459 million in losses from the trades in its first quarter report”, but, so what? Like all the other SEC big bank investigations, the

case will fizzle out with zero convictions.

Sure, Dimon might get slapped with a hefty fine for failing to disclose the full extent of the London unit’s losses to shareholders, but there’s no chance he’ll be criminally prosecuted. The law only applies to the little people, not *le grand fromage*. For all practical purposes, the bankers are the new untouchables.

JPM’s troubles go far beyond its botched swaps operations. The financial house is also being investigated in connection to the Libor interest rate-rigging scandal, where allegedly some of the world’s biggest banks colluded to fix rates in a way that either made them look like they were in better financial condition than they really were or to boost profits on derivatives transactions.

The magnitude of the crime is staggering. Libor sits at the center of the financial universe, serving as a global benchmark on hundreds of trillions of dollars in loans, credit cards, mortgages, and other complex financial products. This could easily be the biggest financial heist of all time, and guess who’s right there in the thick of things?

The SEC is also investigating whether JPM financial advisers were encouraged to sell clients JPMorgan mutual funds even though it was not in their clients’ interests.

Meanwhile, the US Federal Energy Regulatory Commission is investigating the “possible manipulation of power markets in California and the Midwest by J.P. Morgan Ventures Energy Corp.” According to *Bloomberg News*: “The agency is investigating JPMorgan for potential violations that were reported to FERC between March and June of last year, identified after power-grid operators reported unusual trading offers for the supply of energy. JP Morgan Ventures Energy Corp. allegedly made bids that resulted in at least \$73 million in improper payments to the generators, according to FERC.”

Sounds a lot like Enron, doesn’t it? Then there’s the credit card flap. This is from *Businessweek*: “Visa, MasterCard and 13 of the country’s biggest banks have agreed to pay \$7.25 billion to settle accusations by retailers that they engaged in price-fixing on credit card transaction fees.

“The settlement, on behalf of about 7 million retailers, could be the largest antitrust class-action settlement in U.S.

history and is expected to alter the price structure around the plastic cards that are a central feature of U.S. commerce.

“Retailers alleged that the collusion resulted in a monopoly, with merchants forced for years to fork over ever higher fees to process the credit cards their customers use, driving up costs for consumers.”

JPM was one of ten defendants in the case. And then there’s this disclosure from the BBC:

“JP Morgan Chase is to pay \$228m (£143m) to settle claims it rigged auctions, its second fraud payout in a month. The deal was reached with regulators, tax authorities and 25 US states, who accused it of fixing bids for state and municipal contracts on 93 occasions.

“It comes after the bank agreed to a \$154m payout to settle charges of misleading buyers of its mortgage investments. The bank had agreed to co-operate with the US Justice Department, and blamed former employees for the offences.....

“The US lender was accused of paying to have a sneak preview of rival bids to win contracts to invest cash on behalf of local and state governments, including those of California, Texas and New Jersey.”

Given its involvement in all these dubious activities, you wouldn’t think that JPM would be scrounging welfare hand-outs from the federal government, too, but they are. According to a research paper published by the International Monetary Fund, JPMorgan is on the receiving end of a government subsidy worth about \$14 billion a year. Some of the money goes to pay the bloated salaries and bonuses of the bank’s executives. But according to Bloomberg News, this huge subsidy also “distorts markets, fueling crises such as the recent subprime-lending disaster and the sovereign-debt debacle that is now threatening to destroy the euro and sink the global economy.”

Can you see how twisted this thing is? And JPM is not alone, the entire investment bank cartel is rotten to the core. There’s not a salvageable franchise among the lot of them.

CP

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not beaten like many of the male detainees and did not suffer permanent physical damage as they did. Besides ridding the apartheid government of some of its most militant foes, the raids also exposed an informer in their midst. Indeed, it was this man's testimony in later show trials that put many ANC members in prison and sent some to the gallows.

Eleanor did not go meekly. She played various interrogator against each other and, when she saw a comrade badly beaten, went on a hunger strike. The response of the security forces was to place her in a mental institution. Working with ANC members and sympathizers both inside and outside the institution, she escaped from the asylum. Naturally, her escape infuriated the authorities while inspiring her friends and allies. The ANC leadership decided it was best for her, Ronnie and another white ANC member to exile themselves from the country. This part of the adventure reads as vividly as any top-notch thriller.

All too often the role of women in revolutionary movements is ignored or diminished. This is despite the fact that women are involved in virtually every facet of those movements. Theoretician to pamphleteer; at the barricades and the battlefields, women's involvement is as varied and important as that of men. Eleanor is one such woman. In a similar yet very different manner, so were the women of the German urban guerrilla gang, the Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF).

I recently viewed the 2008 German film *The Baader Meinhof Complex*. This film is a dramatic portrayal of the urban guerrilla gang known alternatively as the Baader Meinhof Gang and the Rote Army Fraktion (RAF). Although factually fairly accurate, the filmmaker did take liberties in the way he portrayed the conflicts within the group, especially between the two dominant women—Ulrike Meinhof and Gudrun Ennslyn. He also assumes that the German government's story that the RAF members committed suicide in prison, in the so-called Death Night at Stammheim. This latter story has never been absolutely verified and will remain a mystery, probably forever. While viewing the film, I was struck by certain parallels between the RAF and the story told in *The Unlikely Secret Agent*. In both stories, the individuals made conscious decisions that put them on the other side of the

law. It's clear to us now that the apartheid government was certainly more authoritarian than the West German government, yet the film reminds the viewer that the repression unleashed by western governments against the antiwar and antiracist movements in their own countries was not so far from that undertaken by Johannesburg. Furthermore, the historical memory of a Germany under Hitler reminded many of their nation's potential to embrace fascist policies. Torture was used by both regimes in their pursuit of domestic terrorists. So was outright murder and blanket repression. The manipulation of fear was essential to both regimes control. So was a methodology that aimed to destroy the **All too often the role of women in revolutionary movements is ignored or diminished. This is despite the fact that women are involved in virtually every facet of those movements.**

minds of the guerrilla. The filmmakers of *The Baader Meinhof Complex* argue that this methodology worked. This is why they emphasize the conflict between Meinhof and Ennslyn in the film. It is also why they chose to adopt the German government's story regarding the suicide of the RAF members in Stammheim prison.

Politically, the major difference between the armed struggle waged by the ANC and that waged by the RAF has to do with the support they did or did not enjoy. Even when it was a small part of the struggle, the armed wing of the ANC enjoyed support within the greater organization and was at least not opposed by the larger anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. In Germany, the peak of the RAF's support was broad but nowhere near that shared by the ANC amongst the African peoples of the nation. Furthermore, much of the RAF's backing was based on their mistreatment by the security apparatus and not their purported goals. On the other hand, the bulk of support for the ANC was for its goal of ending apartheid and the antagonism towards the police repression only reinforced that support.

As history proved, the conditions existed in South Africa to make a movement engaged in armed struggle successful, a context that did not exist in West Germany. If the conditions aren't right and popular support either doesn't exist or fades, then the insanity that the RAF became can all too easily be mistaken for revolution. As *The Baader Meinhof Complex* makes clear, the results can be fatal for both the movement and the individuals involved. CP

**Ron Jacobs** is the author of *The Way the Wind Blew: a History of the Weather Underground*.

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## The Fake War on Police

By Kevin Carson

Since early 2011 the mainstream press has expressed moral panic over an alleged "War on Cops." That panic was sparked by a rash of police killings in January 2011. According to a March *Christian Science Monitor* article, 24 cops were killed on the job compared to only 15 during the same period in 2010. Speculation as to the cause included rising anti-government sentiment, or disrespect for law enforcement.

The panic itself apparently fostered a "shoot first" mentality among police, reflected in a record number of so-called "justifiable homicides." US Attorney General Eric Holder called this state of affairs – the spike in cop deaths, not the over-reaction – unacceptable, promising federal action.

Like most moral panics used to justify government "just doing something," this one turned out to be – to say the least – quite overblown. Smith County, Texas, Sheriff J.B. Smith was quoted as saying: "I think it's a hundred times more likely today that an officer will be assaulted compared to twenty, thirty years ago. It has become one of the most hazardous jobs in the United States, undoubtedly – in the top five."

Well, not quite. In fact on-the-job police deaths had declined by almost half over the previous twenty years, at the same time as the number of police nearly doubled. The short-term upward fluctuation

tuation in police deaths was an anomaly, albeit a very visible one against the background of such low levels. That's why statisticians look for large sample sizes.

Libertarian columnist Radley Balko reported in April of this year that police officer deaths were down 48% from last year – the lowest in sixty years. The death rate for cops is actually lower than that of the general population in 36 of America's 74 largest cities. The job-related death rate for police is below that of several other occupations, including firefighter, coal miner and sanitation worker (from the carbon monoxide fumes they breathe walking behind garbage trucks).

But if violence against cops hasn't increased, violence *by* cops certainly has. Complaints of police brutality rose 25% in the seven-year period after 9/11, compared to the previous seven-year period. Despite an overall decline in crime rates and danger of on-the-job injury, police have developed an intensified sense of entitlement to minimize risk to themselves by any available means – no matter how unreasonable.

Nearly every day Balko, who specializes in stories of police abuse, cites accounts of police shooting non-hostile dogs and even unarmed citizens. Grounds? "The officer felt threatened." Every day another story of a person tased or beaten to death – while in an epileptic seizure or diabetic coma – for "resisting arrest." Police do whatever they feel necessary to avoid "feeling threatened" under any circumstances, and their political masters back them up.

With crime and on-the-job police deaths at their lowest rates in decades, cops defend their hyper-militarization, aggressiveness and SS-chic aesthetic with siege mentality rhetoric about an "unprecedented danger" to police. Frankly, they sound like Lt. Calley psyching himself up to massacre the inhabitants of My Lai.

Situations that cops thirty years ago would have defused with talk and reason are now resolved with "less lethal force" such as the use of tasers on agitated 80-year-old women whose homes were invaded at 3AM. Even talking to a confused or upset person apparently poses a monstrous threat to life and limb – or at least an unacceptable inconvenience for someone in a hurry to reach the donut shop – justifying instant resort to boots and batons, tasers or bullets.

In recent years police resentment has escalated against the growing use of cell phone video to hold cops accountable for brutal assaults on non-violent citizens, perjury, and falsification of evidence. The proliferation of recorded police misconduct on YouTube is forcing a sea change in law enforcement culture, and they don't like it. They grouse that they "can't do anything" any more, that they're "on a leash," due to constant public scrutiny.

This sense of bruised entitlement is reflected in constant reports of police violence and harassment against citizens legally recording their activities. Other than accidentally witnessing a Mob execution, being spotted recording a cop in the process of brutalizing a prone citizen is about the single biggest danger to your health imaginable. This sense of entitlement to brutalize the citizenry whom they allegedly "protect and serve" resembles nothing so much as that of a big whiny baby, overdue to be weaned from the teat.

This is all typical of government activities aimed at "protecting" the citizenry: At a time of record-low objective danger, police attempt to whip the public into a frenzy of fear (cough cough TSA cough) to justify treating us with unprecedented indignity.

Eighty years ago H.L. Mencken explained that government constantly instigated fear campaigns against imaginary hobgoblins to secure public acquiescence in the assault on their liberties and pocketbooks.

Don't fall for it. CP

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## **Attn: Subscribers**

Please remember that during July and August we are on the summer publishing schedule of one issue per month. We resume the regular two issues per month schedule in September.

## **Rape in the Congo** **Giséle's Story**

By Victoria Fontan

**G**iséle is 15 years old. She is an orphan from Bukavu, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. She lives near Panzi, the hub where most female victims of sexual violence receive treatment after being raped by soldiers, paramilitaries, and also civilians.

After the plight of Congolese women was exposed internationally a few years ago, dozens of NGOs all congregated towards Panzi, the local El Dorado of the peace industry, where one's exposure as an NGO in this fashionable area of suffering will be able to generate millions of dollars of funding.

While most of the money collected to "fight" sexual violence in DR Congo will be used to generously remunerate Western NGO workers, pay for their luxurious villas on the banks of the Kivu Lake, and buy their precious state-of-the-art SUVs, every NGO has "operational costs", indeed, a fraction of the remaining funding will, of course, go to the women in question.

Giséle's sister, however, was not that lucky. MONUSCO soldiers, sent to Congo by the United Nations Department of Peace Operations to specifically protect civilians, raped and impregnated her. This meant that there was no way that any of these well-meaning NGOs would actually financially assist her for the birth of her baby, last October.

It happened last year, in February. Giséle and her sister Espérance, who was then fifteen years old, went out to fetch water. It was dark, around 6:30 PM, when they were ambushed by five soldiers, three from the MONUSCO, and two Congolese.

Giséle remembers it all happened very quickly. The two Congolese soldiers took her away: she was the youngest. They beat her up, tied her hands and feet, and gagged her mouth so that she would not be able to call for help.

Meanwhile, Espérance was also taken away, in a different direction, and gagged raped by the three white MONUSCO soldiers. She was crying for help, but no one came. She pleaded with her assailants who did not seem to understand her, only to receive more blows.

**return service requested**

Badly wounded, she returned home and found out a few days later that she was pregnant. She had no idea what to do, since she knew that the presence of both Congolese and MONUSCO soldiers was enough for her to have no voice with the Congolese police. She was scared that something would be happening to her and her sister if she spoke, and she also knew, like many Congolese, that MONUSCO soldiers can behave with complete impunity.

While many cases of rape by UN peacekeepers were widely publicized in 2005, Thérèse, an NGO representative working on sexual violence, argues that the arrival of Pakistani soldiers in Bukavu has significantly reduced the number of rape cases. There is after all a zero tolerance policy, and the Pakistani contingent seems to be keeping a tight rein on its soldiers. This, however, does not mean that a Military Police officer can be behind every soldier.

Thérèse received a woman a few months ago, who claims to have been repeatedly raped by an Indian man while working as a cleaning lady at the MONUSCO headquarters. She too be-

came pregnant, and was unable to press charges after the birth of her child as the Indian man returned home. Had she pressed charges earlier, the peacekeeper would have been sent home anyhow, since all UN staff are immune from prosecution under Congolese law.

Part of the zero tolerance policy of the UN in Congo, should any case be successfully reported, is to sweep any bad news under a rug by sending the culprits home, and supposedly have them face their own legal system.

Patèrne, a Congolese lawyer specializing in such cases, suggests that very few peacekeepers are actually prosecuted once they reach home. A few years ago, ten Moroccan soldiers expelled for sexual abuses walked out Scott-free once they returned to their country.

I met Gisèle in a theatre workshop for reconciliation. At the end of the rehearsal, I asked the entire group if any of them, or people they knew, had been subjected to sexual violence by MONUSCO staff or soldiers. The first girl who raised her hand dutifully replied that MONUSCO had been sent to the Congo to protect people and bring peace. After a few girls

were struggling to escape my gaze, the second hand, defiant, was that of Gisèle. She then told me, and everyone, her sister's story.

Last October, Espérance gave birth by a cesarean section to a sick baby. Her son died two days later. After recuperating, she was unable to leave the hospital since she could not afford her medical fees. Then, the miracle of democracy took place: a deputy seeking re-election, the Honorable Bulambu Kilochu, visited the hospital. He sent everyone home for free in an unprecedented act of generosity, and promised all that, should they trust him to represent them again, he would not let them down.

Espérance knew that it would be foolish to expect so much from a politician. However, she still hopes that lightning does not strike twice. As a Congolese child, and as her forefathers more than a century ago, she has paid her dues to the MONUSCO and all benevolent muzungus, white people, for the rest of her life.  
**CP**

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