

# CounterPunch

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN AND JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

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## Hate, Hope and Despair in France

By Larry Portis

She was just an adolescent in the isolated cathedral town of Le Puy-en-Velay, high in a volcanic region somewhere between the equally isolated burgs, called Clermont-Ferrand and Saint Etienne, where nothing ever really happens. Like others, she waited smilingly behind a barrier to have a glimpse of the reigning chief of state. And here he came: Nicolas Sarkozy in person, after having recalled how important Catholicism remains in providing the fundamental values for French civilization. Now, the president of the Republic was to actually touch the hands proffered by a small number of excited citizens kept in place by metal fences, as the inevitable security agents scanned them with cold eyes. When the erstwhile monarch came abreast of the girl, she extended her right hand. But when Sarkozy reached for it, she immediately drew back as if recoiling in self-preservation from communion with the tainted, presidential flesh. Then she laughed.

A small incident, but a telling one. It was not the first time that people have refused to take Sarkozy's hand, and it will not be the last. In fact, it is a standing joke, ever since February 24, 2008, when Sarkozy reached to take the hand of a man at the annual agricultural fair (Salon de l'agriculture) in Paris, only to have it refused with the comment: "Don't touch me. I don't wish to be sullied." To which France's president replied: "*Alors, casse toi, pauvre con*" ("F\*\*\* off, you wretched ass"). The result was that Sarkozy's now rare appearances are often punctuated by cries of "*Casse toi, pauvre con!*" And this is long before the slogan "*Dégage* (get out) Ben Ali" was used by demon-

## How Obama Flacked for Plutonium as Fukushima Burned

By Will Parrish

On the afternoon of March 16, the spiral of events marking Japan's ongoing nuclear catastrophe reached terrifying new depths. A flame erupted at Reactor Number 4 at Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant I, likely from overheating of spent nuclear fuel rods. A white smoke plume began wafting out of Fukushima I Unit 3, indicating a rupture in that reactor's containment vessel. Following a surge in recorded radiation levels, the plant's 50 remaining emergency workers quit the plant for the first time, only to return hours later in a desperate – and probably suicidal – effort to head off even greater disaster.

On the same day, Barack Obama found time to record an interview for a small television news program in southwestern New Mexico. The primary topic was the U.S. president's 2010 proposal to increase funding for new nuclear warhead development to record levels. The plan's centerpiece is funding for a sprawling \$6 billion factory to produce new explosive triggers – plutonium pits – for thermonuclear weapons at the Los Alamos nuclear compound, located roughly 50 miles outside Santa Fe. The pit factory would enable the U.S.A. to develop qualitatively new nukes on a significant scale for the first time since the end of the Cold War.

The previous such facility to exist in the U.S.A., at the Rocky Flats Plant, 15 miles northwest of Denver, Colorado, was shut down in a rare public health-oriented FBI raid in 1989, following four decades of carcinogenic releases into nearby communities and environs. Disasters included a 1957 fire, with attendant public health catastrophe characterized by striking similarities to many events that have unfolded in recent days

at Fukushima.

Obama was defending his proposal against House Republicans, who have outflanked the president from the left by recommending that Los Alamo's funding increase be scaled back to a mere 26 per cent. In a boldly turn, worthy of the pen of Swift, the president has used rhetoric about maintaining the "safety" of the U.S.A.' existing nuclear weapons to justify the creation of the plutonium factory.

At 3:20 p.m., near the end of the segment, interviewer Royale Dá summed up why the president of the United States would grant an exclusive appearance to a local television news program, during this fraught historical conjuncture. "KOAT reaches a very specific Southwest audience," she said, "and it appears ... that that is an audience the president has an interest in speaking directly to."

Greg Mello of the Los Alamos Study Group in Albuquerque, an implacable opponent of the order of political and economic relations that has rendered the state of New Mexico, essentially, as the U.S. empire's domestic nuclear weapons colony, translated the president's intentions as follows, in a letter to supporters: "What, do you suppose, is that 'very specific Southwest audience,' and why does President Obama want to speak to it? Primarily because 'it' has huge coffers of cash, and because Obama fears its opposition – and that of the newspapers and other news media around here, which largely act as propaganda outlets for the nuclear weapons labs and related corporate interests." The names of those corporations? Lockheed Martin, which manages the Sandia National Laboratory and Bechtel, URS Corporation, Babcock & Wilcox, and the University of California which collectively administer Los

Alamos.

The twin drivers of the nuclear industry have always been corporate greed, as manifested in the American military-industry complex, and a will to absolute global dominion. The early history of Japan's nuclear industry is a case in point.

Less than a decade after the United inflicted a nuclear *iki-jigoku* ("hell on earth") upon the Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki, instantaneously killing at least 150,000 and delivering countless more Japanese people to the grim reaper of gruesome radiation sickness, three of America's leading nuclear technology boosters embarked on a promotional tour across Japan. Their purpose was to help swing Japanese public opinion in favor of the country's infant civilian nuclear power industry, which was poised for a windfall of technological and financial assistance from the United States.

The international liaison was part of U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace program, a Cold War diplomatic offensive aimed at providing nuclear technology loans and exports to so-called developing nations, so as to render them reliant on Western capitalism for development of their energy infrastructures rather than on the Soviet Union. A 1955 National Security

Council directive framed the matter thus: "[Atoms for Peace will] strengthen American world leadership and disprove the Communists' propaganda charges that the [U.S.A.] is concerned solely with the destructive uses of the atom."

The American promotional contingent in Japan, which arrived in May 1955, was comprised, respectively, of the man perhaps most responsible for coordinating the Manhattan Project during World War II, a nuclear-industry entrepreneur and a financial adviser from Chase Manhattan Bank. To wit, UC Berkeley physicist Ernest O. Lawrence, General Dynamics President John Jay Hopkins of San Diego, and nuclear-technology financing expert Lawrence Hafstead. Their visit was funded and coordinated by the

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Japanese media mogul and member of the Japanese Diet (Senate) Matsutaro Shoriki. Shoriki's ownership of both Japan's largest circulation newspaper and its first television station rated him as the country's most well-endowed propagandist, and thus as the person best positioned to give nuclear power there a boost in public confidence.

A public address by the three men at Hibya Park in Tokyo was partially disrupted by protesters, who expressed their concern about plutonium and other nuclear fission products being used in the production of their country's electricity. America's atomic peddlers found a more receptive audience with leading Japanese politicians and industrialists. Six months after their visit, the Diet voted to form the Japanese Atomic Energy Commission, with Shoriki as inaugural chairman. In the early 1960s, Japan finally parlayed the technology and financial assistance from the Atoms for Peace program into its first nuclear power plant, the now-infamous Tokai facility on the northeastern coast.

Last week, Tokai was one of four

Japanese nuclear power plants that sustained major damage from the Sendai earthquake and tsunami. Shortly after the quake, which measured 9.0 on the Richter scale, the plant's cooling system failed. As this newsletter goes to press, it is in imminent danger of melting down. The facility that has sustained the worst damage is Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant No. 1, located slightly to Tokai's north, where four reactors have partially melted down. Radioactive debris from these plants has already been deposited in perilous concentrations across the northern coastal regions of Japan, and most likely throughout other areas of the East Asian island nation. As power plant workers attempt to head off even more dangerous meltdowns, the fates of millions of Japanese people and much of the remaining nonhuman life in the country hang in the balance.

It is more than a matter of academic interest to examine the United States' part in causing this human and environmental tragedy. If not for the Atoms for Peace program, the nuclear energy industry throughout the world would be vastly different, including in Japan. The liberal nuclear export policies initiated by the U.S. and other Western suppliers in the mid-1950s dramatically reduced the costs of undertaking serious nuclear research and development for dozens of nations around the world. The nuclear power installations of Argentina, Brazil, Taiwan, and South Korea resulted directly from this program. No country parlayed it into a greater reliance on nuclear energy, however, than Japan, which rose to become the world's third largest nuclear energy producer, after the U.S.A. and France. Combined, these three countries are home to roughly half of the world's existing nuclear power plants. The U.S.A. alone features nearly a quarter of all such installations, with 104.

Of course, it would be grossly inadequate to explain nuclear power's central role in Japanese society by way of a 1950s U.S. foreign aid program. Japan got a decisive early boost from the U.S.A. on its path toward nuclear energy development but Japan has been a global economic powerhouse in its own right for the past half-century. Its own internal history and political dynamics are the primary reason its leaders made the catastrophic error of basing the domestic energy supply on nuclear power.

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In truth, the U.S.A.'s partial involvement in the development of Japan's sprawling nuke power industry says far more about the U.S.A. than it does about Japan. In what I reckon to be Noam Chomsky's most penetrating book on American foreign policy, *Hegemony or Survival: The U.S. Quest for Global Dominance*, he examines how U.S. political elites' overarching commitment to imperial global expansion and military dominance even trumps survival of life on the planet, as evidenced by those historical moments when nuclear holocaust was a possible or likely outcome of American actions abroad.

Chomsky's main example comes from the Cuban Missile Crisis. In October 1962, a U.S. destroyer attacked a Soviet submarine carrying a torpedo tipped with a thermonuclear weapon. Amid panic, two of the submarines' captains issued an order to fire the weapon in retaliation. The U.S.A. would have almost certainly responded by unleashing thermonuclear bombs on the Soviet Union. Terminal nuclear warfare would have ensued. Fortunately, a third commander rescinded the order to fire, convincing his peers to await authorization from Moscow before launching the assault. The U.S. destroyer eventually withdrew; a global catastrophe was barely averted.

"The lesson from this," National Security Archive Director Thomas Blanton asserted in 2002, "is that a guy called Vasili Arkhipov [the Russian submarine commander] saved the world."

Another case in point of Chomsky's hegemony-or-survival thesis is the role of Atoms for Peace in the development of the nuclear arsenals of Pakistan and India. Both of these countries received tens of millions of dollars in direct nuclear energy infrastructure aid from the U.S.A. from the 1950s through the 1970s. Absent the foreign assistance, it is highly unlikely either country would have developed nuclear weapons. In the late-1990s, the two countries came close to nuclear war, principally stemming from their dispute over the small bordering country of Kashmir.

The region remains a flashpoint of nationalistic tensions. Yet, in 2007, the U.S. Congress approved a huge nuclear technology transfer agreement with India. It serves as a quid quo pro for India's support of U.S. military strategy aimed at containing the allegedly expansionary

ambitions of China.

As California's various nuclear installations make clear, the hegemony-over-survival thesis also extends to the supremely profit-driven domestic energy industry. The Diablo Canyon power plant, located 15 miles outside San Luis Obispo, is situated on four active earthquake faults, including the San Andreas. As with the reactors now melting down in Japan, Diablo Canyon was designed only to withstand a 7.5 earthquake. Yet, the San Andreas caused at least a 7.7 in San Francisco in 1906. The San Onofre nuclear plant just outside San Diego – one of the country's densest population areas – is designed to survive only a 7.0 quake. Yet, it also sits on one of California's most active fault lines. Southern California already has a history of nuclear mishap. While the accident at Three Mile Island nuclear

## **The U.S.A. would have almost certainly responded by unleashing thermonuclear bombs on the Soviet Union. Terminal nuclear warfare would have ensued.**

power plant in March 1979 was the most serious public health crisis involving a commercial nuclear development in the U.S.A., a perhaps even larger meltdown occurred in 1959 at an experimental reactor in Santa Susana, only 35 miles north of Los Angeles. In keeping with the nuclear industry's persistent mantra of "Let Them Eat Plutonium," the meltdown was covered up. Untold thousands of people were unknowingly exposed to contamination, leading to a large regional spike in cancers and deformities.

Then, there's the Lawrence Livermore nuclear weapons laboratory, located roughly 40 miles east of Berkeley, which houses an untold quantity of plutonium. Livermore is a vital installation to the U.S. nuclear weapons complex, being one of two facilities that have designed every nuclear weapon in the U.S. arsenal. The Los Alamos compound in New Mexico is the other. In January 1980, an earthquake measuring just 5.5 on the Richter Scale rattled the Livermore Valley, causing a release of radiation from a 30,000-gal-

lon tank containing tritium at a rate of a quart per minute into local groundwater. The carnage that might result should a larger earthquake strike the facility should be clear. More than seven million people live within a 40-mile radius of the lab.

The entire nuclear industry is insane. It relies on mining and milling uranium, then transporting that uniquely dense element across great distances so that it can produce fission products to heat water for electricity. The mining and milling processes are themselves highly toxic. In the U.S.A., they have occurred disproportionately on American Indian reservations, which have quietly experienced their own versions of the Three Mile Island disaster multiple times over. For example, a huge mill tailings pond on the Navajo reservation in Church Rock, New Mexico, collapsed in 1979, dumping a huge quantity of contaminated water into the Rio Puerco River, resulting in a public health catastrophe.

In some cases, "Let Them Eat Plutonium" is almost a literal proposition. The Palisades nuclear power plant in southwest Michigan, to take only one

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example, stores its high-level radioactive waste in outdoor silos on the beach of Lake Michigan, only a hundred yards from the water. This is the main source of drinking water for more than 40 million people in the Midwest and Canada.

Already, the disaster in Japan has prompted governments in Germany and Switzerland to scuttle plans for new nuclear reactor development. However, the new chorus demanding an end to nuclear power will succeed only if enough people recapture the sense of urgency that Lewis Mumford voiced in 1946, as the Nuclear Age was dawning: "You cannot talk like sane men around a peace table while the atomic bomb itself is ticking beneath it. Do not treat the atomic bomb as a weapon of offense; do not treat it as an instrument of the police. Treat the bomb for what it is: the visible insanity of a civilization that has ceased ... to obey the laws of life." Nuclear power plants, each and every one of them, constitute their own ticking nuclear time bombs, producing long-lasting wastes that assault the building blocks of life: DNA.

Given the systemic lack of regard for life on display, it stands to reason that meaningful curbs on nuclear power development have only come because people organized to demand them. As late as 1974, in the midst of the Arab Oil Embargo, the consensus proposal of the California Public Utilities Commission, Stanford Research Institute, and the RAND Corporation was that California's coastline would soon be studded with 70 nuclear power plants, supplied by two inland processing facilities, a fast breeder reactor near the Imperial Valley, and uranium mining in the San Joaquin Valley near Bakersfield. If that number of reactors seems far-fetched, consider that Japan is roughly the size of California, and that it has had a nearly comparable number of plants in operation, 56.

Probably the main reason California's supremely ambitious proposal never came to pass is that it made virtually no economic sense, being that the state has had access to more than enough electricity, much cheaper than the notoriously inefficient nuclear industry is capable of furnishing. But it was also successfully opposed by an active anti-nuclear movement, which won meaningful restrictions on new power plants in the state legislature.

In fact, the first successful envi-

ronmental battles against the nuclear power industry to occur in this country took place near where I write, here, on the North Coast of California. In 1964, PG&E's plan to build a nuclear power plant at Bodega Bay was defeated by environmentalists, including the San Francisco attorney David Pesonen. A few years later, PG&E was busy proposing a nuclear power facility a little farther up the North Coast, this time in Point Arena, which Pesonen and kindred environmentalists, again, halted in its tracks. Each time, these projects were stopped on the grounds that they were proposed for active earthquake faults.

My own insights into American anti-nuclear politics stem from my two-and-a-half-year tenure on the staff of an

## **The entire nuclear industry is insane. It relies on mining and milling uranium, then transporting that uniquely dense element across great distances so that it can produce fission products to heat water for electricity.**

(unfortunately lackluster) anti-nuclear nonprofit based in Santa Barbara, the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. My ex-wife and close friend, Julia Moon was a co-founder of Shundahai Network in 1992. The organization worked with the Western Shoshone Nation – on whose land the Nevada nuclear test site is located – to oppose the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste dump in southern Nevada. Shundahai played a major role in finally compelling U.S. Senator Harry Reid – who sang a welcoming refrain to the nuclear lobby early on in his tenure – to become that same lobby's most stalwart legislative foe.

In early 2009, the Obama administration formally eighty-sixed the Yucca Mountain waste dump. But that hasn't stopped the Obama crowd from proposing the most ambitious expansion both of nuclear power plant and nuclear weapons development in the U.S.A. in many years. Obama has carried favor with the nuclear lobby in ways the Bush admin-

istration never could have dreamed of, including making a record level of loan guarantees available for nuclear power plant construction – up to \$33 billion.

Hence, there's the president's abominable new nuclear warhead agenda. The president agreed to the funding increases at the New Mexico and Tennessee nuclear plants in large part to ensure the nuclear-industrial lobby's support of his administration's toothless new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with Russia. Thousands of nuclear bombs remain deployed by nine different countries throughout the world, and here the president who promised "hope" and "change" has adopted the most destabilizing nuclear posture of them all – with all the attendant hazards that can result in New Mexico and elsewhere. The distinction between "destructive" and "peaceful" uses of the atom has never appeared more arbitrary than during the past week. A power plant built partly with Atoms for Peace funding in Japan threatens a meltdown, endangering the lives of possibly millions.

One of the primary reasons the U.S.A. decided to promote civilian nuclear power development in the first place, during the 1950s, was that the power plants would produce a much-needed supply of fissionable materials for thermonuclear weapons. Plutonium, widely known as the most toxic substance on earth, is an inherent byproduct of all nuclear reactors. Yet, the U.S.A. and other powerful states continue to treat nuclear energy as merely another bargaining chip in a twisted game of global power projection.

If we are to effectively head off future disasters like those unfolding in Japan, we need to be clear. The nuclear power and its first cousin, the nuclear weapons enterprise, continue to be celebrated by those in power only because they help to concentrate greater wealth and authoritarian power in the hands of a few. But those two things – greed and authoritarian power – are invariably toxic to life in all their forms. CP

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strators in Tunisia. The sequel was that, in France, demonstrators carrying signs reading “*Casse toi, pauvre con*” have been singled out and at least one was arrested and taken to court on charges of defamation – like the philosophy professor who witnessed police brutalizing a man in the train station in Marseille and called out, “I see Sarkozy!” He, too, was arrested. Oh, such minievents are many.

But how to foresee or detect signs of change, those obscure indicators that something is percolating beneath the seamless surface? I’m reluctant to predict. What I can do is recount, as Victor Hugo called them, “*Choses vues*” – things seen and heard. In his book with this title, Hugo wrote about the period between 1830 and 1848. The historical reference is a good one. This was the period between two political revolutions, during which popular movements confusedly blundered to some sort of reckoning with a political authority, namely the “constitutional monarch” Louis Philippe, considered by more and more people throughout the period as being without imagination or solutions to outstanding problems, as well as boring and corrupt.

The parallel with the flailing Sarkozy government seems accurate enough. On March 6, it was announced that a new poll accorded Sarkozy an approval rating of 22 per cent. Two days later, yet another poll put him at 20 per cent. Did George Bush II ever fall that low? Yes, he did. But it was just days before the 2008 election, in which he was not a candidate, and after eight years of lying, amid other exposed atrocities. These polls in France also projected Sarkozy as unlikely to survive the first round of voting in the 2012 election.

Moreover, the polls reveal Marine Le Pen – new president of the neofascist National Front – as the leader of the current pack of presidential candidates. She is the daughter of the party’s founder, an acknowledged torturer (in the Algerian War) Jean-Marie Le Pen. In the wake of the worldwide economic difficulties following the financial shakedown of 2008, populist rhetoric is the way to go, but only Le Pen is allowed to go for it.

Although some on the Left – like Jean-Luc Mélançon of the somewhat low-profile Le Parti de gauche (The Left Party), formed of “left socialists” and allied with the largely defunct Communist Party, and Olivier

Besancenot of the floundering Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste, the former Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire of Trotskyist inspiration – are willing to rail against the “oligarchy,” the “plutocrats,” and “capitalism” more generally, they can’t reach the people. The media carefully keep them closeted behind the scenes. As in the presidential election of 2002, the political and economic status quo is best served by allowing the extreme Right to work as a spoiler between the two major parties: the scarecrow of neofascism will – the power brokers are betting – at the very least result in a run-off election pitting Le Pen against either Sarkozy or the socialist candidate. In either case, the eventual winner will preserve the present program of accelerating deregulation, declining social

## **In France, demonstrators carrying signs reading “*Casse toi, pauvre con*” have been singled out and at least one was arrested and taken to court on charges of defamation.**

services, control by international finance, the European Union and adherence to NATO.

So much for the high-level manipulations and orchestrations structuring political action and thinking.

But there is one major consideration that these manipulations cannot suffocate direct action by the populace. Here is the fear that haunts virtually all politicians and the labor unions in France: what if a sufficient number of people decide to take matters into their own hands? The influence of popular uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere was immediately compared to the astonishing decorum that characterized the massive demonstrations in France in October and November 2010. Although the movements in North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean have been prudently vaunted as “peaceful” and “democratic” in contour, one needs to suspend imagination not to take into account the range of direct actions employed there: self-immolation, civil disobedience entailing the risk of torture, death and injury by

gunfire or beating, the burning of police stations, the stoning of police, the sacking of official buildings and, at least in the case of Libya, armed insurrection.

Sarkozy kept a low profile after the passage of his partial reform of the retirement laws and the ongoing cutbacks in social programs in general. He then rearranged his ministerial cabinet, hoping to overcome revelations of corruption and conflicts of interest among them. But the unexpected uprisings broke out in Tunisia and Egypt, where his prime minister (François Fillon) and his minister for foreign affairs (Michèle Alliot-Marie) had recently or were taking vacations as guests of one or the other of the dictators then in residence (Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak). When the revelations were made – only under the impetus of *Le Canard enchaîné*’s investigative journalism – Alliot-Marie was forced to resign, and Sarkozy compelled to reshuffle the cabinet once again.

A providential man was available to replace the disgraced foreign minister, in the form of Alain Juppé, immediately touted as supremely competent, and even independent – a decidedly innovative qualification for a Sarkozy dream team. But who is Alain Juppé? Independent, yes, but his competence and his honesty are subject to serious question. Close collaborator of former President Jacques Chirac, minister of several departments and prime minister, in 1995 Juppé was accused of nepotism and misuse of public funds in the allocation of swanky apartments to himself and his son, and was forced to vacate the premises. More seriously, also in 1995, as Chirac’s prime minister, his attempts to reform the social security system resulted in a general strike that shut France down for almost two months and forced withdrawal of the regressive reform. In 2004, he was sentenced to 18 months in prison (that he was not required to serve) and a period of ineligibility for political office for financial manipulations based on falsified municipal employment records.

Just before his appointment as foreign minister in February, Juppé was named Sarkozy’s new defense minister. In January 2011 two French hostages were killed in Niger, according to Juppé, by members of an organization linked to al-Qaeda. It then came out that bullets fired from a French weapon killed one of the hostages, besides the fact that it

is Sarkozy's policy to not negotiate with kidnappers, a decision fraught with danger to the kidnapped. So, it is questionable whether Juppé's supposed experience and competence will reassure the French electorate.

In spite of Sarkozy's efforts to influence fellow heads of state, his foreign policy is generally acknowledged to have been catastrophic. From his statement in Dakar on July 26, 2007 – in the presence of his Senegalese hosts – that Africans have not yet succeeded in entering the modern world, to his frenetic and largely futile efforts to sell his friends' – Arnaud Lagardère and Serge Dassault – airplanes, Sarkozy is known for letting business deals override any principle or human value. When, for three days in December 2007, he hosted Muammar Qaddafi in Paris – sucking up to the desert dictator in every figurative way, even to the extent of allowing him to set up a Bedouin tent on the presidential lawn – compelling his own minister for human rights, Rama Yade, to remark, "France is not a doormat." Wrong. Sarkozy has made a career of licking any boot necessary for his own advancement, and especially that of his fat-cat friends and patrons. For him, Qaddafi is just another pigeon. No sentiments are involved.

All this must be kept in mind when attempting to make sense of his more recent Libyan escapade. Here, Sarkozy was assisted by the dandy Bernard-Henri Lévy, who seized the opportunity – as he had done in Bosnia – to pose as André Malraux in revolutionary Spain.

The game plan went like this. Arriving in Benghazi on March 3, two days later BHL was then interviewed on various television networks. He appeared before the camera in his habitual uniform – white shirt with unturned collar, black suit coat, and disheveled hair. This was, after all, a potential combat zone.

His message was urgent but reassuring. "No," he said, "Qaddafi is not capable of launching an offensive against the opposition. He does not have the means to do so. He no longer has a real army but is rather surrounded by well-paid mercenaries. This is not the equivalent of the Egyptian army. However, he does have planes. This is the real danger." BHL thereby called for the scrambling of radio communications, the destruction of landing strips in all regions of Libya, and the bombardment of Qaddafi's personal

bunker. In brief, this would be a humanitarian intervention, the modalities of which he did not – and, to be fair, could not – specify.

Next step, as BHL explains: "I called him [Sarkozy] from Benghazi. And when I returned, I went to the Elysée Palace to see him and tell him that the people on the National Transition Council are good guys. ... I'm someone who goes all the way. I go where the action is and, when I come back, I'm ready for anything, really anything, which means go see Sarkozy, the Pope, or whoever you want in order to stop the bloodshed."

Indeed, on March 6, Lévy returned to France and met with Sarkozy. Four days later, on March 10, he saw Sarkozy again, this time with three Libyans whom he had encouraged to visit France, along with Sarkozy's top advisors. On March 11, Sarkozy declared the Libyan National Transition Council the only legitimate representative of the Libyan people. History was made. Back in Benghazi, people screamed in relief and cheered Sarkozy's name. Soon after, the resistance began to fall back. Not only did Qaddafi have planes, he had armored vehicles and heavy artillery.

As throughout the almost four years of Sarkozy's presidency, official announcements took precedence over analysis, preparation and effective action. When interviewed on *al-Jazeera* during these events, BHL was asked about the accusation that Sarkozy was attempting to use the situation in Libya for electoral purposes. The mediagenic popinjay only smiled, saying the French are a cautious people, and that Sarkozy would not be so opportunistic as to think he could manipulate them by engaging in such a purely humanitarian, idealistic endeavor.

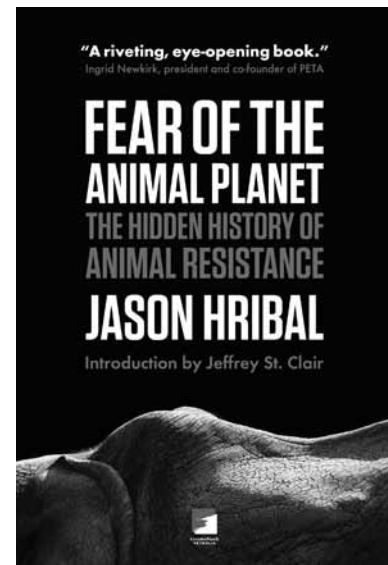
In the midst of declining real income, rising unemployment, and generalized insecurity about an economy unable to withstand the strains of a new global division of industrial and agricultural production, French people are perhaps, at last, slowly and groggily emerging from a fog of perplexity. As in Madison, Wisconsin, and elsewhere, seeing repining populations rise up in places where authoritarian rule has a sharper profile is undoubtedly inspirational in France. CP

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## Why Was Raymond Davis Destabilizing Pakistan?

By Shaukat Qadir

It seems to have been more or less accepted by now that the man who calls himself Raymond Davis was stoking unrest in Pakistan. (Davis is currently imprisoned in the custody of local police in Lahore, Pakistan, and charged with the January 27 murder of two young men, whom he allegedly shot eight times through his car windshield.) What is more, he certainly isn't the only one. Two of his henchmen responsible for a hit-and-run death of another youngster have returned to the U.S.A. According to the local media, more than thirty Americans have also followed, due to investigations of all U.S. citizens residing in Pakistan started by the Inter-Service Intelligence

If all this is true, stoking unrest in Pakistan had to be part of U.S. policy. But why should it be in the interest of the U.S.A. to stoke unrest in Pakistan? Conspiracists in Pakistan immediately start worrying about "Pakistan's nuclear assets." There is little doubt that a nuclear Pakistan causes considerable concern in Israel, and there is also little doubt that, in many instances, U.S. foreign policy bows to Israel's concerns, even at the expense of its own interests. However, in this instance, while Pakistan's nuclear assets might be a priority to the Indo-Israel nexus, I do not think this governs the U.S. (CIA) policy in Pakistan. A simpler explanation might be more appealing.

Let us go back to the concept of "the Great Game," a concept that is a couple of centuries old. The expansion of empires, throughout the annals of history, has been dictated by the location of riches. Inhospitable territories, which are invariably inhabited by seasoned warriors who are fiercely independent and proud, became battle grounds only if they lay between the empire and the land harboring riches. The Great Game has always been governed by the dictates of geography.

While the Great Game remains the same, its actors change, and today's riches might be different: energy and mineral resources top the list, in that order. Enough has been written by many an American journalist on the flimsy ex-

cuses offered by the U.S.A. for invading Iraq and Afghanistan. And many of them have pointed to the resources of Iraq, Afghanistan, and of those states that lie beyond Afghanistan, as the real reasons for these wars. If this explanation is accepted as true (and I subscribe to it), we can begin to look for the real reason for the many Raymond Davises in Pakistan.

Pakistan has some mineral resources in Balochistan, but these are far from significant. However, Pakistan does provide a passage to resources in Central Asia and in Afghanistan, where the U.S.

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geological survey in 2007 confirmed long-held suspicions that the former USSR had discovered enormous mineral resources. Central Asia has not only mineral resources, but could collectively hold the largest untapped energy resources available to the world today. Hence the frequently invoked "strategic location" of Pakistan!

Now for a look at the map: apart from Turkmenistan, which can access the Indian Ocean just as easily through Iran, for all other Central Asian States the most geographically logical route to warm waters is via Afghanistan and Pakistan. Obviously, this also applies to Afghanistan. If Afghanistan remains unstable for the foreseeable future, as seems most likely, the next most geographically logical route to the world for all such states is via Iran. However, this is totally unacceptable to the U.S.A. – and U.N. sanctions on Iran have effectively blocked

this exit; therefore, while goods continue to be smuggled through Iran, there is no official commerce.

If both Afghanistan and Iran are denied as export routes for the Central Asian States, the next most logical route out for these states is through China to Pakistan. Almaty, ex-capital of Kazakhstan, already has a rail link to Urumqi, capital of the Chinese province of Xinkiang adjoining Pakistan. What is most important to note is that, even though the U.S.A. would like to deny this route also to the Central Asian States, it is in no position to do so.

In October 2004, I wrote an article explaining why it would be in the mutual interest of China and Pakistan for China to construct a railway line running parallel to the Karakoram Highway, KKH. Apparently, this article caught the attention of Pakistan's foreign office as well as of the Chinese. I was contacted by both, asking me to elaborate on my article. Though I had nothing further to do with the project, I kept abreast of the news and, in 2005, a Memorandum of Understanding for the project was signed by the two countries; since then a feasibility study highlighting the technical difficulties has been carried out and, though expensive, a solution to these has been found. The project is scheduled to start in 2012, unless it hits snags.

China is the emerging superpower of the future, the largest growing economy of the world, the largest direct investor in the U.S.A., and is responsible for propping up the tottering U.S. economy by holding its foreign exchange of over 2 trillion dollars, out of which 1.6 trillion is in securities, in U.S. dollars. Were China to put its dollars on the market, the U.S. economy would collapse overnight.

Were China to provide the commercial route for the Central Asian States, its economic and strategic growth could only accelerate. What is more, if China decides to have a naval presence at Pakistan's strategic port of Gwadar, it would not only encircle India but would reverse positions with the U.S.A. militarily. So far, U.S. naval presence in the Far East, Philippines, and Japan are a constant threat to Chinese commerce via the Strait of Malacca. With a naval presence at Gwadar, China would be in a position to pose a similar threat to all commerce flowing through the Arabian/Persian Gulf.

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Now, that we have all the background information, let us try to examine the U.S.A.'s dilemma with regard to Pakistan. If Afghanistan was a stable, peaceful country, favorably inclined to the U.S.A., the latter could reap the benefits of the flow of commerce and energy of the Central Asian States via Afghanistan-Pakistan to the outside world, providing a much needed boost to the U.S. economy. In which event, the U.S.A. would do everything within its power to ensure stability in Pakistan.

But Afghanistan is unlikely to see stability for many years to come and, militarily, the U.S.A. is staring a "denial of victory" in the face, to put it very mildly. Moreover, even were Afghanistan to stabilize, not even the most ecstatic of American optimists could think that the Afghans will be sympathetic to U.S. strategic interests.

On the other hand, having fought in Afghanistan for over a decade, having spent trillions of dollars, multiplying its internal and external debt by a factor of two, if the U.S.A. finds that all the benefits accruing from the Central Asian States will enrich China – the one coun-

try that could challenge U.S. hegemony in the world – a few decades from now, would it not do everything in its power to prevent that from happening? Already, as the U.S.A. bleeds in Afghanistan, China

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has won the copper mining rights in Afghanistan: copper extraction is scheduled to start this year and peak in 2013, when Afghanistan might join the list of

the 15 largest copper-exporting countries of the world.

The U.S.A. has no leverage over China and is in no position to prevent the Central Asian States from taking advantage of the secure strategic commercial corridor provided to them by China through Pakistan to warm waters, and the world. So, how can the U.S.A. prevent that from happening? The only way this can be prevented is if the vital link to that strategic commercial corridor, the country with the strategic location linking the commercial corridor to the world and access to warm waters, Pakistan, is destabilized. Thus, the proliferation of numerous Raymond Davises in Pakistan, with their bags full of dirty tricks, in a desperate attempt to assist this most strategic of all the U.S.A.'s "strategic allies" in the war on terror! This also explains the U.S. desperation in trying to get Davis back, before he spilled the beans about his mission. CP

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