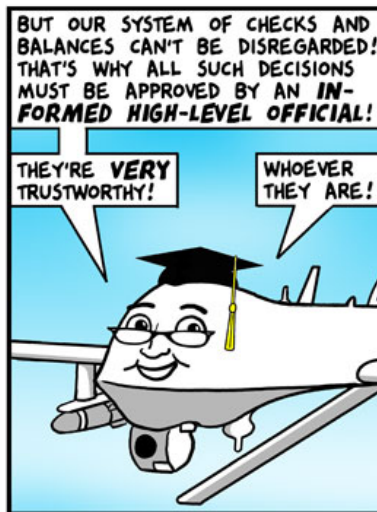
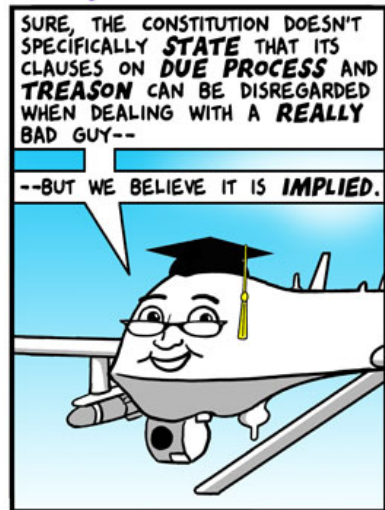
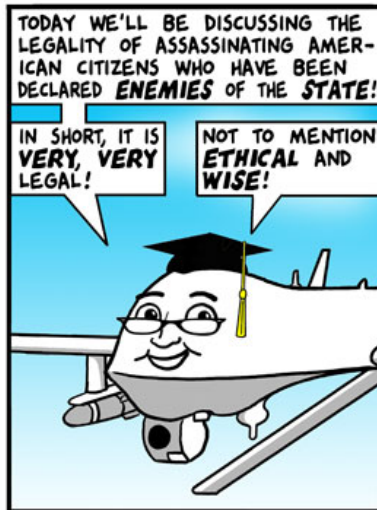
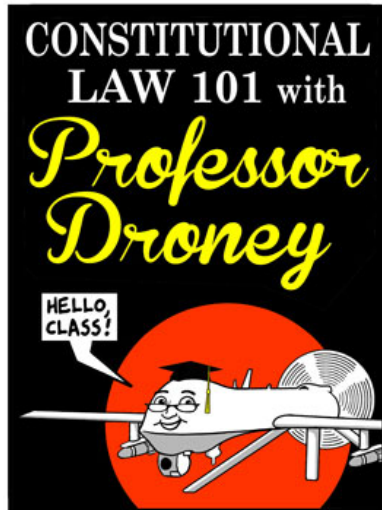


## Military Resistance 11B14

### THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



### Troops Invited:

Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or email [contact@militaryproject.org](mailto:contact@militaryproject.org): Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe.

## AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

**“The Afghan Government Has Never Been So Paralyzed By Greed And Crime”**

**“He Sounded Like Thousands Of Afghans Whose Experiences With Corrupt Officials Have Left Them Dispirited”**

**“Last Year Half Of Afghan Adults Paid Bribes While Requesting Public Services, And Handed Over A Total Of \$3.9 Billion”**

**“This Makes It Easier For Insurgents To Give A Bad Name To The Government”**

February 17 By Kevin Sieff, The Washington Post [Excerpts]

In a country where Western accusations of corruption have been lobbed at high-ranking officials and public institutions, the malfeasance that drives Afghans against their own government happens every day on a much smaller scale.

Munir, a 37-year-old former police officer, stood last week in front of the traffic department, railing against corruption and malfeasance.

The Afghan government has never been so paralyzed by greed and crime, he said.

“The system is broken,” he said.

He sounded like thousands of Afghans whose experiences with corrupt officials have left them dispirited.

Last year, according to a report released this month by the United Nations and the Afghan government's anti-graft agency, half of Afghan adults paid bribes while requesting public services, and together those Afghans handed over a total of \$3.9 billion. That figure is twice as large as Afghanistan's domestic revenue, the report said.

With average annual income in Afghanistan standing at less than \$1,000, many cannot afford to pay bribes.

Criticism of the Afghan government is often articulated in terms of what people here call "petty corruption." Accusations of multimillion-dollar graft involving ministers and governors occasionally grab local headlines, but for many, those stories are less personal and less offensive.

"The petty corruption is something tangible. It's how people see the government in their daily life, and it is a great source of anger," said Shafiq Hamdam, director of the Afghan Anti-Corruption Network, an independent research organization.

"This makes it easier for insurgents to give a bad name to the government."

"When I voted in our elections, I thought our system would improve. But now there is even more disorder," he said. "Without making bribes, it is impossible to get anything done in this country."

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**Car Guantánamo:  
“Things That Have Landed Cars In  
The Slammer: Illegal Left Turns,  
Parking Violations, Involvement In  
Fender-Benders And, Perhaps  
Most Egregious, Failure To Pay A  
Bribe”**

**“I’ve Been Waiting Two Months To  
Get My Van Back. How Do You Think  
I Feel About The Government?”**

**“The Rules Are Unevenly Applied,  
Punitive To Those Who Can Least Afford  
It, And Mostly Irrelevant To Those With  
Money And Power”**  
**“Here In This Country, There Is No Rule Of  
Law. This Is Not Even A Government.”**



Kabul traffic officers among cars and motorbikes seized during often routine traffic stops for violations that include invalid licenses and out-of-date registrations. Bryan Denton for The New York Times

February 17, 2013 By AZAM AHMED, The New York Times [Excerpts]. Jawad Sukhanyar and Sangar Rahimi contributed reporting.

KABUL, Afghanistan —

On the northern edge of Kabul, down a road riddled with mammoth potholes, is a secure site that bears all the marks of a prison: high stone walls topped with concertina wire, police officers barking into walkie-talkies, forsaken visitors pacing the compound's edge, waiting for a sign of hope.

Residents here call it Car Guantánamo.

Behind these walls are thousands of cars, trucks, vans, motorcycles and even bicycles, lined up in vehicular purgatory after falling afoul of the Kabul traffic police.

Things that have landed cars in the slammer: illegal left turns, parking violations, involvement in fender-benders and, perhaps most egregious, failure to pay a bribe.

“I’ve been waiting two months to get my van back,” said Sayed Wahid, whose quest to reclaim it, after it was impounded for an expired international permit, propelled him on an exhausting odyssey through no fewer than six different government agencies.

“How do you think I feel about the government?”

Mr. Wahid’s experience is far from isolated.

**Some Kabul residents describe efforts spanning many months and big money to free their vehicles, only to win back a chassis long since stripped down for its parts.**

**Keenly aware of the horror stories, most people here go to great lengths to avoid any interaction at all with the traffic police.**

**Taken as a case study of trust in government, then, Car Guantánamo has only a grim prognosis to offer.**

**“Here in this country, there is no rule of law,” said Prof. Wadir Safi, director of the Independent National Legal Training Center. “Traffic incidents are the smallest part of it.”**

Bad experiences with the police are, of course, not specific only to Afghanistan.

**But the stakes here are among the highest: the international community has poured more than a decade of intense effort and aid into building an accountable justice system in Afghanistan, calling it crucial to government efforts to draw support away from the Taliban and local warlords.**

**Despite that, most Afghans still say they have little faith that their government can honestly enforce the law.**

**The rules are unevenly applied, punitive to those who can least afford it, and mostly irrelevant to those with money and power.**

Transparency International recently ranked Afghanistan as the third most corrupt country in the world, after Somalia and North Korea.

For their part, police officers — the most ubiquitous faces of government for everyday Afghans — insist they are doing their job.

“If someone makes a wrong turn, what should we do, give them a basket of flowers?” asked Gen. Asadullah Khan, the chief of traffic police in Kabul. “Those who break the law typically complain about the police.”

On the streets of Kabul, though, pessimism prevails. When it comes to accidents, the prudent driver is most likely to try, if at all possible, to settle the dispute on the spot, well before officers arrive.

And accidents are only growing more common. Kabul's population has exploded over the past decade, and the mayor's office estimates that there are 650,000 vehicles vying for the right of way on a network of narrow streets built to accommodate about 30,000. The city's tricky traffic circles, omnipresent potholes and pedestrian overflow have created a knot of smog and frustration. International institutions have attempted to assist the city with traffic management, but progress can be hard to find.

The police force's main strategy to thin the glut of vehicles has been to crack down on drivers without licenses, no longer simply fining them, but sending them to jail for up to six months. Cars without proper registration are confiscated and impounded — Guantánamo bound.

The traffic has become big business in Kabul, with the city raking in about \$40 million a year in fees and fines, according to General Khan.

Among the most notorious prongs of the traffic division is the Incident Unit, which rolls around the city from accident to accident, making determinations of blame and plucking errant cars from the road.

"The Incident Unit, they are now famous," acknowledged Sidiq Sidiqqi, the spokesman of the Interior Ministry, which oversees the police.

He even had his own experience to recount.

Shaking his head, he told of how his government vehicle had recently been hit by another car. He quickly called the traffic police to the scene, he recounted. But both drivers became frantic, warning him that if the Incident Unit came, there would be trouble. The driver of the other vehicle quickly paid up for the damage and went on his way.

As for the infamous impound lot, General Khan, the traffic police chief, knows the widely held nickname for it. But he bristles and insists on using its official title: the Kabul Traffic Police Parking Lot.

By any name, it is busy.

Every year, about 3,000 cars, 3,000 motorcycles and an undetermined number of bicycles are imprisoned in Car Guantánamo, according to government figures. General Khan did not have readily available figures for how many are released, but suggested visiting the lot to ask people their thoughts about the system. A steady drizzle accompanied a throng of dejected car owners during a recent visit to the impound lot.

The men stared at a half-dozen police officers stationed behind the gates, sipping chai and chatting casually.

Rows of vehicles fill the lot in varying states of degradation — scores of the omnipresent Corollas of Kabul, armored S.U.V.s, a few colorfully painted Pakistani transport trucks.

Hundreds of motorcycles line the edges of the mud lot. A mangled mass of metal sits in the center of the area, the size of several football fields, where wrecked motorcycles are piled.

A confiscated bicycle pokes through the top of the heap.

The men waiting outside share similar stories. Illegal parking. Expired tags.

Arguing with the traffic police.

They have waited anywhere from a single day to more than two months to retrieve their vehicles. Confused by the byzantine system, most simply plead with the police to return their cars. No luck there.

In November, Mr. Wahid had driven his van from Kunduz down to Kabul when he was pulled over at a checkpoint in the capital.

**His license and car tags were clean, but a permit to cross international borders, though not needed for that specific trip, had expired.**

**For a moment, he said, he considered bribing the officer. He has regretted every day for the past two months his decision not to.**

Mr. Wahid caught the bus back north to sort out his paperwork. But when he got back to Kabul, the Foreign Ministry officials would not accept it: They did not believe it was authentic. So he went for help to the traffic department, but that, too, proved fruitless.

A hustler by nature, Mr. Wahid tried a multipronged approach. He visited the Interior Ministry, the Kabul police chief and the Parliament, where he found a helpful member from Kunduz. He received letters urging the authorities to release his vehicle. When that failed to work, he applied again for his international permit with the government.

Now, \$1,600 into his grim journey, he says he is still not sure he is any closer to getting his vehicle back.

He has been holed up in Kabul, borrowing money to live and taking the long bus ride to see his family on the weekends.

**Despite it all, he somehow seems mostly unruffled. He simply doesn't expect the government to work for him.**

**"What can I say?" he asked, plucking at the embroidery on his clothing. "This is not even a government."**

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**MILITARY NEWS**

**\$250 Million Army Program  
Designed To Aid U.S. Troops In  
Iraq And Afghanistan Riddled  
By “Payroll Padding, Sexual  
Harassment And Racism”  
“The Program Recruited The  
Human Flotsam And Jetsam Of  
The Discipline And Pretended It  
Was Recruiting The Best”  
“It Paid Under-Qualified 20-  
Something Anthropologists More  
Than Even Harvard Professors”  
“The Army Is Planning To Use The  
Teams In Other Potential Hot Spots  
Around The World”**

Feb 18, 2013 By Tom Vanden Brook - USA Today [Excerpts]

A \$250 million Army program designed to aid U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan has been riddled by serious problems that include payroll padding, sexual harassment and racism, a USA Today probe has found.

As the Pentagon plans for sizable budget cuts beginning next month, the Army is planning to use the teams in other potential hot spots around the world despite the allegations outlined in an unreleased Army investigation obtained by the newspaper and in subsequent interviews.

The program, known as the Human Terrain System, sends civilian social scientists overseas to help U.S. troops better understand the societies in which they are operating, avoid bloodshed and smooth relations with local populations.



A 2010 Army investigation shows the program was plagued by severe problems, including:

- **Team members were encouraged to maximize their pay and comp time by inflating time sheets.**
- **Allegations of sexual harassment and racism were made against the government contractors who recruited and trained Human Terrain teams and a soldier who worked in the program.**
- **The program relied on unaccountable contractors and inadequate government oversight.**
- **Many commanders deemed worthless — or worse — the reports the teams produced.**

The problems drew the attention of Gen. Martin Dempsey, then the commander of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC).

Dempsey, now the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, wrote in an April 2010 memo that the Human Terrain System program needed government oversight of "all phases including recruiting, training, organizing, deploying and redeploying, and in all aspects of employment including hiring and compensation."

But years later, the program is still rife with problems, according to Hugh Gusterson, an anthropology professor at George Mason University who has studied the program and its impact on anthropology.

"It's another example of a military program that makes money for a contractor while greatly exaggerating its military utility," Gusterson said in an email.

"The program recruited the human flotsam and jetsam of the discipline and pretended it was recruiting the best. Treating taxpayer money as if it were water, it paid under-qualified 20-something anthropologists more than even Harvard professors. And it treated our ethics code as a nuisance to be ignored."

**The Army's 2010 investigation also said that many commanders found the teams' work of little value. Or worse.**

One brigade commander in Iraq is quoted in the report as saying that he "relied very little on his (Human Terrain teams) and viewed them as incapable or of little value. He never looked at his team's products and believed their survey efforts actually cause anxiety among the local Iraqi populace."

**Today, 79 Human Terrain specialists work in Afghanistan. Kubik and Army documents show that the Army wants to set up pilot programs in other parts of the world.**

**The investigation documents numerous cases in which team members earned salaries that outstripped that of even the secretary of Defense. (Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta's salary is \$199,700.)**

Team members were encouraged to maximize their pay and comp time by inflating time sheets, according to the Army probe.

**An 84-hour workweek “became the de facto or the desire standard of project leadership. This standard approximates a salary of between \$224,000 and \$280,000 per year.”**

**The program also entitled them to six months of paid leave after a nine-month deployment.**

Four former Human Terrain team members confirmed time-sheet abuse in interviews with USA Today.

**One of those four, a retired senior military officer who worked on such a unit in Iraq, confirmed that he made more than \$200,000 on a tour and knew of other “horrendous six-figure salaries.”**

**He spoke on condition of anonymity because he still works for the military.**

In a sworn statement, contained in the Army’s investigation, an unidentified team leader stated that attempting to enforce government rules on overtime resulted in dismissal.

**Members of the team “conspired together to have me fired (because) I refused to bow to their wishes for unconstrained overtime (and) comp time hours.”**

**A separate sworn statement said a Human Terrain System employee worked 1.5 hours but claimed on a time sheet to have worked 12.**

Kubik, the Army spokesman, said an internal review determined that some supervisors had been inadequately trained in recording time sheets while deployed and that irregular hours were kept in war zones.

**But he said there was not enough evidence to prove fraud, and subsequent investigations by the FBI and Defense Criminal Investigative Service did not prove that fraud had been committed.**

A separate investigation of racial discrimination at the training base at Fort Leavenworth was “investigated and founded,” according to the Army report.

**A white employee, whose name was redacted from the report, referred to the training section’s personnel and administration department as a “ghetto, stating that there were too many black people in the (personnel) section, stating that he would not hire any more black soldiers in the training directorate, and finally, for attempting to intimidate those who spoke or might speak against him.”**

Unqualified, poorly trained teams have been deployed to war zones, according to a senior adviser to the military with a long history in social sciences. He asked not to be identified because he still works with commanders.

If the contract called for 20 teams, the adviser said, recruiters and trainers filled the teams with business majors and economists if they could not find enough anthropologists. Some lacked experience conducting field research, and commanders would simply disregard their reports, he said.

**Despite the myriad problems documented in the 2010 report, the Army is exploring the possibility of sending teams to other countries, Kubik said.**

**Indeed, in November, the Army's Special Operations Command gathered military and academic experts to determine how to deploy Human Terrain teams throughout the Army's special operations.**

Kubik says the quality of the teams has been high and continues to improve with lessons learned in the field incorporated into training.

**Three external assessments, Kubik said, have "resulted in favorable reviews of the HTS program and significant improvement in HTS team effectiveness."**

**However, an analysis of the military reviews of the program that Kubik cites shows that the details of the scathing internal Army report were not passed on to others reviewing the program.**

**A May 2010 study by the TRADOC's Office of Internal Review and Audit Compliance at the Army's Training and Doctrine Command did not cite the problems with fraudulent time sheets, harassment or racism.**

Nor did a November 2010 study by the Center for Naval Analyses that Congress demanded from the Pentagon.

**The details were also missing in a June 2012 Pentagon inspector general's analysis.**

While the National Defense University report, to be published by the Institute for World Politics, praised the military's interest in cultural understanding, it concluded that the Army is expanding a program without a cogent strategy for success.

**The report's damning conclusion: "It is quite likely that the future of socio-cultural knowledge in U.S. military forces will be much like its past — a story of too little knowledge, obtained and disseminated at great cost, but too haphazardly, and often too late to ensure success."**

## **MILITARY RESISTANCE BY EMAIL**

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## FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

“The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

A revolution is always distinguished by impoliteness, probably because the ruling classes did not take the trouble in good season to teach the people fine manners.  
-- Leon Trotsky, History Of The Russian Revolution

## ***The Chino Hills Murders And The Framing Of Kevin Cooper***

**[Book Review]**  
**“This Is A Simple Story Of Racist  
Scapegoating At Its Worst”**  
**“The Only Living Witness, Josh Ryen,  
Initially Said That Cooper Wasn’t The  
Killer”**  
**He “Told A Social Worker In The Emergency  
Room That The Murders Were Committed By  
Three Or Four White Men”**



Protesters marching to stop the execution of Kevin Cooper in 2004 (Josh On, ISO)

J. Patrick O’Connor; Scapegoat: *The Chino Hills Murders and the Framing of Kevin Cooper*, Strategic Media Books, 372 pages, \$24.95

\*\*\*\*\*

February 14, 2013 by Dan Sharber, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

Kevin Cooper is an innocent man on death row in California. If you’ve been around the movement to end the death penalty, you’ve likely heard his name. Now, thanks to the spellbinding new book *Scapegoat* by J. Patrick O’Connor, many, many more people will hopefully know his story, too.

This book is fantastic for a few different reasons. The first is that O’Connor is simply a talented writer. He uses the facts of the story to reconstruct it in such a way as to build a tension-filled legal thriller in the vein of John Grisham.

But unlike a Grisham novel or other true crime books, O'Connor doesn't just relay the story--he also spends a lot of time critiquing events and pointing out where things went wrong. This elevates the book above the level of a garden-variety true crime story and situates it firmly in the realm of political critique of the criminal justice system.

O'Connor's strength is his unwillingness to simply let the facts of the mishandling of Cooper's case speak for themselves. Instead, he hammers home the police misconduct, the prosecutorial shenanigans and Cooper's own defense attorney's screw-ups.

Mainly, this is a simple story of racist scapegoating at its worst.

\*\*\*\*\*

On the morning of June 5, 1983, Douglas and Peggy Ryen, their 10-year-old daughter Jessica and Christopher Hughes were found dead in the Ryens' home.

They had been chopped with a hatchet, sliced with a knife and stabbed with an ice pick. Josh Ryen, the 8-year-old son of Douglas and Peggy, had survived, though his throat had been cut.

It's important to note right away two things about this uncontested account. First, one person couldn't possibly have wielded that many weapons and subdued that many people. It's not humanly possible.

**And secondly, the only living witness, Josh Ryen, initially said that Cooper wasn't the killer and even told a social worker in the emergency room that the murders were committed by three or four white men.**

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department deputies who responded to the call decided almost immediately that Kevin Cooper was the likely killer because he had admitted that he'd hidden out in the vacant Lease house next door to the crime scene for two days (leaving on June 4). Cooper was also a convenient scapegoat since he was a Black man in predominately white San Bernardino.

The criminal justice system, and specifically the application of the death penalty, is full of racial bias. This bias extends not only to the race of the defendants singled out for death sentences but also to the race of the victim.

African Americans are 12 percent of the U.S. population, but 42 percent of prisoners on death row. In Pennsylvania, Louisiana and Maryland, and in the U.S. military and federal system, more than 60 percent of those on death row are Black. Virginia, Arkansas, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Ohio all have death rows in which more than 50 percent are African American. Although Blacks constitute approximately 50 percent of murder victims each year, 80 percent of the victims in death penalty cases were white, and only 14 percent were Black.

So the cards were stacked against Cooper before his name was even known. Likewise, the misconduct in this case also began even before Cooper was pegged as the perpetrator.

In a shocking example of prosecutorial overreach, District Attorney Dennis Kottmeier had the crime scene torn down after only a couple of days of investigation. This prevented any experts from reconstructing or re-enacting what happened that night in the Ryen's home. Further, even the little bit of forensic work that was done was totally botched and contaminated at every stage of the process.

O'Connor does an especially good job of pointing out the shocking level of incompetence of both the police force and the district attorney's office, even prior to the racist scapegoating that occurs once they discover Cooper was in the area. That's when things really heat up, as evidence is pretty conclusively planted in the house that Cooper was hiding in.

A blood-stained khaki green button identical to the buttons on field jackets issued at the state prison from which Cooper had escaped was found on the rug at the Lease house, a hatchet covered with dried blood and human hair that was found near the Ryens' home was reportedly missing from the Lease house, and the sheath for the hatchet was found in the bedroom where Cooper had stayed.

**The button and the sheath--which appeared a day after the house had been searched and no such evidence had been found--were clearly planted in the Lease house. In addition, it was established at trial that the prison jacket Cooper was wearing was tan, not green.**

It was never established that the sheath matched the hatchet that was used in the crime.

\*\*\*\*\*

The tragedy, though, isn't simply that Kevin Cooper could be executed for a crime he didn't commit but also that the Ryen family murders haven't been solved and the perpetrators are still at large.

**The local police had access to evidence and multiple accounts from witnesses at various times pointing to a group of three to four white men who were most likely the killers, but because this didn't conform to their hardened view that Cooper was the murder, they disregarded all of it.**

What's more, the police even went so far as to destroy evidence. While destroying exculpatory evidence by crooked cops is probably not all that uncommon, the disregard they show for finding the real killer is shocking.

**Shortly after the murders, a woman came forward saying she thought her (white) boyfriend was involved, because he'd left a pair of bloody overalls at her house.**

**She had to try many times to merely get the police interested enough to come and pick up the overalls.**

**However instead of using this new lead to expand the search away from Cooper, the police destroyed the overalls--what was likely the largest single piece of exculpatory evidence in their possession.**

**This witness also claimed that a hatchet was missing from her garage.**

**In a recent interview with Prison Radio, O'Connor pointed out, "While Cooper's trial was in progress, an inmate in a California prison told prison authorities and a San Bernardino County Sheriff's detective that his cellmate had confessed to the Chino Hills murders, stating it was an Aryan Brotherhood hit but the three killers had gone to the wrong house."**

At this point, the case just gets totally absurd.

The defense attorney, David Negus, clearly didn't know what he was doing and made mistake after mistake both procedurally and argumentatively. Even with a large amount of tainted evidence and clear misconduct on the part of the police and the DA's office, Negus still didn't put together a coherent defense. Cooper was unsurprisingly convicted and sentenced to death row.

But the misconduct isn't over.

Clearly Cooper had some solid grounds for appeals, but those too were thwarted at every turn--from the incompetent police lab techs willfully destroying evidence (only to find it again when it served their case) to the appellate judge maliciously denying Cooper all sorts of legal maneuvers for no other reason than spite.

I'm an anti-death penalty activist, and I was even shocked at the level of unfairness, corruption and general incompetence that riddled this case.

There is so much more to discuss on this case that I don't have the space to get into here. Suffice it to say, this book is well worth reading. It gives an inside view of not just how one man was railroaded and could be murdered by the state for a crime he didn't commit, but it's also a glimpse into the very real way that this racist scapegoating happened and continues to happen throughout the criminal "justice" system.

Get mad and then get involved.

*For more information on Kevin Cooper's case, visit the [Free Kevin Cooper](#) website.*

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## **ANNIVERSARIES**

**February 19, 1942:  
A Day That Will Live In Infamy:  
"112,000 Citizens Of Japanese Ancestry  
Were Relocated, Losing Their**



# Businesses, Homes, And Belongings To Whites”



Bookmice.net

Carl Bunin Peace History Peace History February 18-24

Executive Order 9066 was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt 10 weeks after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, ordering all Japanese Americans (Nisei) evacuated from the West Coast of the U.S. and forcing them to live in concentration camps.

The document authorized the Secretary of War and military commanders “to prescribe military areas...from which any or all persons may be excluded.”

There was strong support from California Attorney General Earl Warren (later U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice), liberal journalist Walter Lippmann and Time magazine—which referred to California as “Japan’s Sudetenland”

112,000 citizens of Japanese ancestry were relocated, losing their businesses, homes, and belongings to whites.

In the entire course of the war, 10 people were convicted of spying for Japan, all of whom were Caucasian.

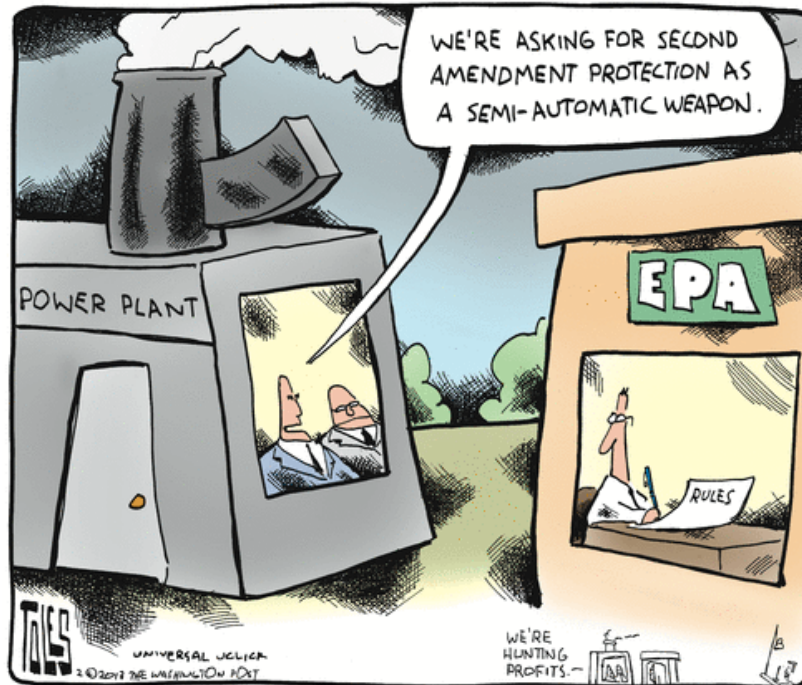
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# DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



# CLASS WAR REPORTS



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**Massive Social Uprising In  
Slovenia Continues:  
“An All-Slovenian Uprising  
Composed Of Unprecedented  
Masses Across The Country”  
“Tens Of Thousands People Hit The  
Streets, Occupying Central Squares  
And Chanting Now Famous Political  
Slogans: ‘It Is Enough!’ ‘It Is Over  
With Them, They Are Done!’ ‘They  
Are All Crooks!’”  
“Shouldn’t We Again Be Allowed To  
Dream And Think Of Revolution?”**



All-Slovenian uprising - protest in Ljubljana, February 8. Credit: Bojan Stepančič

**The initial moral critique of the corrupt state officials shifted to a critique of the political class and the system as a whole. Protesters have recognized that something is rotten in the state of Slovenia, and the leading puppets are only the most visible symptoms of a deeper underlying and structural crisis of capitalism.**

16 February 2013 By Gal Kirn, New Socialist [Excerpts]

Gal Kirn currently lives in Berlin but in his hometown of Ljubljana he participates in the Workers-Punks' University. He co-edited the book Encountering Althusser (Bloomsbury, 2013) and Surfing the Black, Transgressive Moments in Yugoslav Cinema (Jan van Eyck Academie, 2012), and edited the publication Post-Fordism and its Discontents (JvE Academie, 2010).

\*\*\*\*\*

At the moment that I am writing this text, the massive social uprising in Slovenia continues and enters, with even fiercer political determination, into a new stage of political maturity.

What began as an isolated sparkle in late November 2012 in Maribor, the second biggest city of Slovenia, spread to other cities and weeks later culminated in an all-Slovenian uprising composed of unprecedented masses across the country.

The images of riots, broken windows, tear gas and police repression spoke of unprecedented political violence on the streets.

Behind the mirage of the brand new world, neoliberalism with a European face has finally shown its most real and brutal shape. The fairy tale of the free market society and of fair elections in the legal state supposed to guard young democracy, has been drowned in once tasty "Cabernet Slovignon."

**In the weeks of December 2012 tens of thousands people hit the streets, occupying central squares and chanting now famous political slogans: "It is enough!" "It is over with them, they are done! (Gotov je, Gotovi so!)" "They are all crooks!" "We give the Parliament, but not the street!"**

The political condemnation of the corrupt political class received material confirmation in the report of the public Committee Against Corruption, which found strong evidence implicating both major figures of the Slovenian political arena, Janez Janša (Prime Minister and president of right-wing Slovenian Democrats) and Zoran Janković (mayor of Ljubljana and president of major centre-Party Positive Slovenia) in major corruption scandals.

Instead of taking full responsibility and resigning, they and many others continue their illegitimate political mandates. The corruption report brought additional fuel to the fire, and even radicalized the demands of the social movement.

**The initial moral critique of the corrupt state officials shifted to a critique of the political class and the system as a whole. Protesters have recognized that**

**something is rotten in the state of Slovenia, and the leading puppets are only the most visible symptoms of a deeper underlying and structural crisis of capitalism.**

The last three months of mass protest have brought together many different social groups and individuals of different political affiliations and generations, young and old, workers and students, queers and precarious, ecologists, anarchists and socialists.

All are demanding a deeper social change. The “all-Slovenian uprising” gave birth to the new sense of solidarity.

Instead of the usual complaining from the couch, people stepped into the realm of public protest.

It would be wrong to immediately relate the “people” that compose the movement to some previous ideal or truer Slovenian nation.

On the contrary, the “people’s” movement is complex and riven with splits and ambivalences. If the common cause is clear, namely, the overthrow of the political class, it has to be stated that the paths and goals of the new political project are less defined.

This conflictual moment opens political space outside the pragmatic and established rules of the official political process. Thus, we are witness to diverse perspectives that range from moralism (the conservative liberal stance that “we need new good people and the real legal state”), to nationalism (“protest for a better Slovenia”), to an even stronger radical tendency in support of social transformation.

People are struggling under dismal social conditions in the new Slovenia, and many groups have been working to formulate socio-economic alternatives to the existing order.

**Aspirations that used to be unthinkable only few months ago, such as demands for direct democracy and democratic socialism, have come to the centre of mainstream public media.**

The popular political agenda is no longer defined and molded by existing institutions or parties.

It is now also being shaped by people on the streets, in numerous public performances, cultural events and political discussions of new popular councils, committees, and initiatives that take extremely seriously the search for the broadest possible democratic platform.

These include the Committee for Direct Democracy, the Coordinating Committee for Cultural Slovenia, the General Assembly of all-Slovenian Uprising, and the Committee for Justice and Solidarity in Society.

There are also other already existing cultural and political groups that have called for engagement in civil disobedience and protests against the current regime: university trade unions, the student organization Iskra, Workers-Punks University, the Federation of Anarchist Organizing, and many others.

Protests and discussions strengthen and expand the politics beyond representative democracy and its defunct policies. Many weeklies (the section Revolt in Sobotna Priloga, Dnevnik, Mladina, etc.) and also daily newspapers have started publishing more alternative contributions for the first time.

### **“Even Those Living In The Deep Apathy Of Recent Years Have Become Political, Organizing, Discussing, Meeting And Creating”**

People in Slovenia have found the official political class guilty not only of misrepresentation, but also of attacking what remains of the welfare state, basically begging for foreign intervention.

To be more precise, both the present right-wing government (Janez Janša) and the previous center-left government (current president Borut Pahor) have both participated in the imposition of the worst possible austerity programs.

These were recently even criticized by same International Monetary Fund that promotes austerity, and launched horrendous policies across the European periphery in the first place.

They have included: privatization of banks (even manipulating a public referendum on setting up a “bad bank” to handle defaulted loans); imposition of special “holding”- “expert” institutions that would sell all domestic capital to the foreign investment firms ; massive layoffs and dissolution of collective bargaining agreements in all social sectors; and drastic cuts in the social budget (for example, the budget for research and universities fell from 10-20%; cuts in the field of culture are in some fields as high as 50%; endangered groups of pensioners receive merely 250 Euros or just over \$300 CAD per month).

**Austerity, in short, is financial discipline sanctioning unprecedented exploitation of labour.**

**It is intended to ease the re-investment of capital in crisis.**

**It comes as no surprise, then, that in the time of ever more severe economic crisis the heaviest burden is falls on ordinary people.**

Slovenia registers ever-higher unemployment (12-13% by Eurostat or higher) and has witnessed the most drastic rise of the youth unemployment in Europe, which went from 15% to 25% in last months of 2012.

For over two decades the political class of Slovenia has been congratulating itself for undertaking the most successful transition to a market economy.

But the success story of the “Switzerland of the Balkans” has fallen apart like a paper-house. The mythical figures and actions of Slovenian independence have been stripped naked. Even people who “fought” for democratic transformations of the crippled Yugoslav state in late 1980s have finally seen the great robbery: the dispossession of social wealth both by local tycoons and foreign capital; gradual dismantling of the welfare state; social exclusion of underprivileged and vulnerable social groups.

Waking up from the Slovenian dream came late. However, it seems that even those living in the deep apathy of recent years have become political, organizing, discussing, meeting and creating.

The movement has already had successes: the mayor of Maribor, Franc Kangler, resigned due to the pressure of public protest, and three coalition partners from the current government stepped down.

All this is happening not in a situation of abundance and free time, but on the contrary during the winter months when people struggle not only to pay their bills but also to find enough food to survive.

**At a time when the number of people demanding food stamps and charity is at an all-time high and evictions are common, the situation is ready to explode into clear alternatives: social disaster or social transformation, barbarism or socialism.**

### **30% Of Population “See Revolution As Legitimate”**

Obviously, the path and the process of the future uprising cannot be anticipated.

As mentioned above, there remain many conflicting strategies at play in the movement.

Even if they all agree on the overthrow of political class, there are some that want a gradual reform of the system (60% of all interviewed from the established Slovenian Public Opinion) and others who see revolution as legitimate (30% of those interviewed).

Some currents insist on strengthening direct democracy and popular institutions, taking lessons from Iceland.

Others want to launch a project similar to Greece’s Syriza, to establish a real left-wing party that would emerge from today’s social movements and develop a long-term strategy.

**These diverse perspectives bring conflict into the core of the uprising, paradoxically making it stronger. Through constant debate and struggle the movement is experimenting with different political forms and gaining in political strength.**

Also, importantly, in recent times the role of trade unions, especially in the public sector (SVIZ), has been radicalized.

### **“January 23 Saw A Massive General Strike And 20 000 Workers On The Streets Of 14 Different Cities Across Slovenia”**

**January 23 saw a massive general strike and 20 000 workers on the streets of 14 different cities across Slovenia. They have joined the struggles of the social**

**uprising. What was fragmented and divided before has become more articulate and united today.**

**The insistent and powerful social movement that is connected with progressive political forms has become worst nightmare of the ruling class.**



Ljubljana protest, February 8. Credit: Bojan Stepančič

**This is why the government responded without arguments, but with repression.**

Out of the fear of its own decay and burial, it launched a series of repressive measures.

The list is long: criminalizing the Committee Against Corruption, spreading fear among protesters by imposing fines for alleged organizers and participants of the protests, telling public servants not to join protests, criticizing media for their independent reports, manipulating the public in all the media, and massively recruiting for the security services.

The newest measure was implemented on February 8, the Day of Culture in Slovenia, when the third “all-Slovenian Uprising” took place in Ljubljana.



What remained of the government, Catholic Church and their civil society organ "Assembly for Republic" decided to organize a street protest on the same day and time. The Party of Slovene Democrats headed by PM Janez Janša demanded that their members participate in a pro-government rally under threat of expulsion from the party.

However, the anti-government, anti-corruption and anti-crisis protests showed their political maturity by meeting hours later in the same day.

The images from the two protests could not have been more different.

**The pro-government rally saw a few thousand aging "supporters" with a mass of Slovenian flags and ultra-nationalist slogans listening to Janez Janša speaking from the Brussels EU budget summit about the threat of "left fascism" in Slovenia.**

**A few hours later, one of the most massive protests in Slovenian history took place: around 25 000 people marched through the streets with impressive cultural performances, raising the demand for "the spring to come, and Janša and the political class to leave" once and for all.**

Against their rulers' weapons of mass destruction and repression, the uprising responded with weapons of mass creation.

**Let me conclude with the last strophes of the anthem of uprising written by Ksenija Jus, and sung by the self-managed women's choir Kombinac - "The Song of Resistance":**

*The battles of the brave-hearted people,  
are not forgotten stories of bygone days.  
For them our poem should live on,  
For them we raise our fists to the sun.*

*Poem of resistance spread your voice  
the dreams of millions are springing forth  
Freedom is the thought as special as Karst,  
Freedom is the fire that warms our faces.*

**The Song of Resistance seems to have awakened another ghost of the past that was forgotten in 20th century.**

**Shouldn't we again be allowed to dream and think of revolution?**

Even if still very young, the uprising seems to have survived more than one winter, and it is likely here to stay for much longer.

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## **Mass Protest Strikes Close Down Egypt's Port Said Work For Second Day**

18 Feb 2013 Ahram Online [Excerpts]

**Mass protests continue in Egypt's Port Said for the second day on Monday causing a stoppage in schools and the closing down of the Public Free Zone, which holds at least 29 factories.**

'Green Eagles' fans of Al-Masry club and families of those killed in last month's clashes with the police have called for protests pushing for seven demands, including the dismissal of the Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim and the termination of the night-time curfew imposed on the three canal cities last Month.

According to Ibrahim El-Masry, a former Masry club player and spokesman of the families of Port Said's residents sentenced to death, the demands include the appointment of an independent judge to oversee the ongoing investigations of the 'Port Said massacre,' holding those responsible for the recent killing of Port Said residents accountable, and demanding that the state pays for the medical treatment of all those injured in the bloody confrontation that took place last February.

Furthermore, protesters are demanding a construction of a memorial statue to commemorate the recent deaths of Port Said residents and to include their names on the list 'martyrs of Egypt's revolution' so their families would receive honours and compensations.

The protests in the canal city have caused estimated losses worth at least \$18 million on Sunday after around 37,500 workers failed to reach their factories, according to Magdi Kamel, general director of the Businessmen Association.

Meanwhile, several workers of the ships arsenal in the nearby town of Port Fouad have joined the protesters and abstained from work.

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# Police Firing Tear Gas Clash With Hundreds Of Youths Demonstrating Against The Bahrain King's Dictatorship



A molotov cocktail explodes and burns in front of a riot police armoured personnel carrier during clashes after the funeral procession of Hussain Al Jazeeri in the village of Sanabis, west of Manama February 16, 2013. Al Jazeeri, 16, was killed on February 14 during clashes on the second anniversary of an uprising to demand democratic reforms in Bahrain. REUTERS/Hamad I Mohammed

Feb 16, 2013 Reuters

Police firing tear gas clashed with hundreds of stone-throwing youths in Bahrain on Saturday in heightened unrest.

Witnesses said the confrontation, in which some of the hundreds of opposition demonstrators also threw petrol bombs at police, followed the funeral of a teenager the killed in clashes by police on Thursday.

The disturbance in the village of Sanabis west of the capital Manama was the latest in a series of skirmishes between youths and police since Thursday, when opposition activists commemorated the second anniversary of a pro-democracy revolt in the U.S.-allied state.

The kingdom, base for the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet, has been in political turmoil since the protests erupted in 2011, led by majority Shi'ites demanding an end to the monarchy's political domination and full powers for parliament.

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