

# New Year's Message and Warning from a War Correspondent

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Theme: [History](#)

*Sometimes it is useful to take a break from news bulletins and newspapers, and even from 'friendly' Internet publications.*

*Occasionally it is good to realize that there are actually two parallel realities that are constantly competing for the 'hearts and minds' of people living all over the world. There is real life and 'fake life'. There is reality and elaborately manufactured pseudo-reality, which is designed to appear more real than the reality itself. It is like that chemically produced green apple shampoo that smells more authentic than the fruit itself.*

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Periodically I disappear into some jungle or a war zone, in Afghanistan, Southern Philippines or in the middle of plundered Borneo Island. When I return to what some people would readily describe as the 'normal world', and a news bulletin unexpectedly confronts me at some airport lounge, everything suddenly appears to be bizarre, grotesque, totally surreal, at least for the few initial but excruciating moments.

It is because most of the mainstream news communiqués and analyses are produced in the plush comfort of an armchair, or at a mahogany writing table, thousands of miles from shrapnel, sweat, torn flesh, blood, burning forests, polluted waterways, and the other horrors which are, in fact, nothing other than the *true* reality for billions of human beings inhabiting our planet.

Remembering how things really feel, taste and smell I get desperate. I don't recognize places described by the mass media. We are talking about two different universes; yes, about two absolutely opposite realities.

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If mainstream reporters go to the field, they are well equipped with bulletproof vests, helmets, with 4x4 vehicles (some of them also bulletproof), with excellent life and health insurances that include airlifts and other evacuation clauses, as well as with hefty salaries and other compensation schemes. On their chests and their backs, it says loudly and explicitly "PRESS".

So what am I bitching about? Is it wrong to compensate people who are risking their lives, or to try to protect them?

No, it is not; of course it is not wrong.

Except, there is that one tiny 'but'... You can never, ever get 'too close' to anything real, this way. You cannot turn yourself to a buffoon or a walking media Rambo, and expect to uncover something hidden, something important, and something thoroughly groundbreaking.

If you over-protect your life, over-insure your each and every step, you'd build a thick wall between yourself and the real life.

If you go into the field looking like this, you will be spotted and questioned, and you will need all sorts of permits and stamps. It is almost like declaring: "I'll play by your rules, I'll not rock the boat, and I'll let you monitor each step that I take". Imagine arriving while being decked out like that and attempting to cover genocide in Papua! Good luck, really. About official permits, if you are from a 'friendly' mainstream agency, you can get them almost immediately. Yes, of course, organizations such as the BBC or CNN could easily supply you with all the necessary credentials. You could even count on an official government armed 'escort', or you could count on an escort supplied by friendly (to the West) 'rebel groups'. Not to speak of all those 'all you can eat' press briefings.

However, the chances that real people would talk to you would be slim. But would you care about hearing from real people if you work for an official mainstream newspaper or a television channel? I doubt it. Real people could, God forbid, say real things, instead of what you are ordered to 'discover' in such places as Bosnia, Rwanda, Syria or Afghanistan. In the end, you'll hear what you came to hear and report, and your writing and clips would be mainly in accordance with the established stereotypes.

Then what, how? Who could do it; who could describe reality, and actually stay alive?

In a brilliant film directed by Oliver Stone, *Salvador* (1986), one of the main characters declared:

"You got to get close to the truth. You get too close, you die."

He died, but what he said – that is precisely it! There is this invisible, imaginary line, in the air or on the ground, somewhere. You never see it, but if you have worked in many war zones before, you sense it, and it is what actually saves your life. It saves it often, most of the times, but of course not always. Those who usually die are men and women who make crucial mistakes during their first attempts, before developing their instincts. What I'm talking about cannot be taught; it is not logical – it's just 'there'.

To get as close to the truth as possible, one has to work, fast, decisively and with certain precision, avoiding obvious blunders.

People around you have to trust you, and you yourself have to know whom to trust and from whom to hide.

You are on your own, or at least most of the time you are.

All this guarantees nothing, but these are some of the basic preconditions, if you want to understand a conflict, a war.

Working in devastated places is very emotional, very deep, and sometimes you get

overwhelmed, and sometimes your glasses get blurry. You make mistakes; hopefully not too many. Occasionally you go after a particular story, or you know generally what you want to find and a story bumps into you, or you stumble over it, or it just hits you frontally, brutally and at full strength.

If it is good, it is never just 'reporting'. It is much more than journalism, or it is simply shit. There must be some poetry in what you are doing, there has to be also philosophy and humanism, as well as plenty of context and ideology and passion.

There can be no 'objectivity' in this work: objectivity is just an illusion, a fairytale dispersed by mainstream media. But you should never lie: you witness and say what you have to say, the way you believe it should be said, and while you do it, it is your obligation to inform your readers and viewers where precisely you stand.

As a human being, as an artist and thinker, you *should always take sides*. But your position – on which side of the 'barricade' you stand – has to be clear and honest. Otherwise you are a liar.

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The bitter but essential truth is: Even if you put your life on the line, even if you get badly injured or psychologically exhausted, do not expect much gratitude or support.

Many local victims – people whom you came to defend – will suppose and even tell you straight to your face that 'you came to get rich using their suffering and misery'.

Your readers in wealthy countries will imagine that you are being generously funded. They were conditioned to believe that there are no altruistic individuals, governments and countries left on this earth.

The reality is quite different: if you work independently, if you refuse to repeat lies and take orders, to merge with the mainstream, if you go against the interest of the West and its allies and 'clients', the chances are that you will get zero financial support, no protection whatsoever and absolutely no perks.

You may get millions of readers, of course. And you can recycle your reports in your books and films, as I did in my more than 800-page long [\*"Exposing Lies Of The Empire"\*](#) and [\*"Fighting Against Western Imperialism"\*](#). If your writing is good, your books will sell, somehow, even if they attack the establishment frontally. But don't count on any support from 'friendly governments' or wealthy but 'left leaning individuals'. There is no Engels around, these days. You are really on your own. Trust me, you are.

You and your determined work may save several villages, or if you are very good, you could make a difference on a global scale. Your writing or your films may help to stop a war. But never expect any official recognition, any practical backing or even mercy from your readers. In 2015, after making several films and writing books about several particularly horrid war zones, mostly in Africa, I totally collapsed. For several weeks, I was not able to move. I thought it was the end. There was no help at all coming from those millions of my readers living in all parts of the world. At that time I made my condition public. Still nothing. Few letters of 'moral support' arrived. Few: "Be strong, the world needs you!" In the end, it was my close family circle that literally pampered and rescued me and put me back to my

feet and into fighting order.

This is not a reproach, just a warning to those who are getting ready to fight for the survival of humanity: “You will be totally on your own. You will most definitely collapse on several occasions.”

Still, I know no other way how to live meaningfully. I would never trade my life with the life of anyone else.

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There is another very important and revealing piece of information, which I’d like to share with you, my readers.

In 2017 I worked in several extremely dangerous parts of the world, including Afghanistan, the Pakistani-Afghan border during the exchange of fire between the two countries, on the Turkish-Syrian border in Euphrates area during the Turkish invasion, in the war-torn southern Philippines, in Lebanon and in the fully devastated (by logging and mining) Indonesian part of the Island of Borneo.



Afghanistan Soviet tanks cemetery

I drove all around Afghanistan, with no protection, no security and no one covering my back. My friend who doubled as my driver and interpreter was the only man I could count on. Sometimes I held the wheel myself. We even made it into the Taliban controlled territories and drug-infested slums of Kabul. All in a 20 year old, beat up Toyota Corona.

In all these places, I did not see one single Western mainstream reporter. Not one!

Where were they, all those media superstars, I don’t know, but most likely they were holed up somewhere at the NATO headquarters, or at least in the only remaining plush hotel in Afghanistan – *Serena*. The same can be said about the southern Philippines, although there, to be ‘objective’, one Aussie colleague actually got hit by a sniper’s bullet, just couple of days before I arrived.

Do never trust those who write about the suffering of others exclusively from the safety of their living room couches. It is fine to write from there, of course, but only after you have actually seen the people you are talking about; after you have seen them at least once, for a substantial amount of time, after you have listened to their stories, to their desperate cries, and after you have got very dirty and very scared yourself, and truly desperate, in short: after you have got *right there*, near that invisible line which separates life from death, and after you have tasted the water of the proverbial river Lethe.

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But back to where I began.

Imagine: I leave the places where people are fighting for survival, or where they are fighting for true freedom, or against imperialism. I hardly have time to take a deep breath, to recover from food and air poisoning, to change into some presentable clothes, and it all hits me directly in my face: I see some news bulletin, I read articles published by mainstream media, and while doing it, I absolutely don't recognize the world, which I have witnessed in all its rainbow of colors, with all its glory and its misery.

I feel 'out of place'.

I know, some call it 'Vietnam Syndrome'. There are many other definitions for these feelings, or for this outrage, or desperation, or whatever you want to call it.

You suddenly feel it, you know it: somewhere far away where you had been living and working just several hours ago, there is still what could be defined as the 'real world', inhabited by real people. And then, right now, there is this other world, which over imposes, almost fully covers (and even dwarfs) that real one, by using its mainstream clichés and false mass-produced certainties.

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This year - this 'departing year' 2017 - has definitely not been a good year for our planet.

A group of nations, which has been controlling the world for already several centuries brutally and shamelessly, is pushing us, our entire human race, closer and closer towards complete disaster, towards a showdown, towards a confrontation that may abruptly terminate millions of innocent human lives.

I'm concerned. I'm very concerned. I have already witnessed indescribable calamities in so many places. I know, I can perfectly well imagine, where all this could lead.

Colonialism is always wrong. Imperialism is always wrong. Cultural, religious or economic supremacy theories are wrong, with absolutely no exceptions.

If a group of nations from one relatively small continent has been continuously usurping the entire world, shaping it to its advantage and enslaving people of other colors, beliefs and values, it is all unmistakably wrong.

But the world is like that - brutal, unjust, and controlled by one aggressive, greedy, sly and arrogant minority. The world is still like that. Once again, it is increasingly like that.



And I cannot stand such an 'arrangement'.

I don't want it to be like that. I'm tired of covering grief, pain, horror and violence. I'm exhausted of filming or photographing perpetual destruction and downfalls.

That's why I'm writing this, at the very end of the year 2017. Perhaps it is just one more futile attempt to stop something inhuman and unnecessary from happening.

Perhaps it is almost impossible to cut through the pseudo-reality manufactured by the mainstream media, academia and 'culture'. Or maybe it's not impossible. I actually believe that 'it is never too late', as I believe that nothing in life is truly 'impossible'.

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2018!

Let me inform you that the world is totally different, actually much more beautiful and diverse than you have been told. Even most of those places that are now in flames are beautiful. And if left in peace, they'd thrive.

The world is worth fighting for. It is worth defending.

Don't ever trust the "news" and "information" which is being disseminated by those who are continuously trying to loot and enslave the world. Trust only what you see and hear, and what you feel. Trust people who are in love with this world, if you manage to identify them. Trust your own senses, your inner logic, and your emotions.

Do not vote for bombing or putting sanctions on any foreign country, anywhere on Earth, before you see it with your own eyes, before you are really convinced, before you talk to its people, and before you truly understand what they are saying. Do not make decisions or conclusions after staring at the television set only. Remember: pseudo-reality kills! And it wants you to participate in this murder.

Go!

Discover!



See for yourself. I hope to encounter you, at least some of you, in Syria, in North Korea, in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Venezuela, Russia, China, South Africa, Cuba, and Eritrea –also in hundreds of other great places, which have been brutalized and smeared by those who are dreaming about making this entire world thoroughly banal, consisting only of a few super-wealthy nations served and fed by all those “others” that have been reduced to slavery.

After seeing the world with your own eyes, after understanding it, I’m almost certain that you will agree with me: right now there are two parallel realities on this planet. One consists of true human lives and human stories, the other one only of trivial but manipulative interpretations of the world. One (true) reality is longing for progress, kindness, optimism and harmony; the other (fake one) is constantly spreading uncertainty, nihilism, destruction and hopelessness.

It is not only what they call “fake news”, it is an entire ‘fake reality’ that has been manufactured by the establishment and upheld by men and women with helmets, bulletproof vests, 4WD’s and prominent PRESS insignia.

Once again, HAPPY NEW YEAR 2018!

Happy Discovery Of The World!

Happy Struggle For Survival Of Our Precious Planet!”

Year 2018 will be crucial. Let us all join forces in order for Humanism and that beautiful lady called ‘The True Reality’ survive, to prevail, and to triumph.

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## About the author:

Andre Vltchek is a philosopher, novelist, filmmaker and investigative journalist. He covered wars and conflicts in dozens of countries. His latest books are: "Exposing Lies Of The Empire" and "Fighting Against Western Imperialism". Discussion with Noam Chomsky: On Western Terrorism. Point of No Return is his critically acclaimed political novel. Oceania - a book on Western imperialism in the South Pacific. His provocative book about Indonesia: "Indonesia - The Archipelago of Fear". Andre is making films for teleSUR and Press TV. After living for many years in Latin America and Oceania, Vltchek presently resides and works in East Asia and the Middle East. He can be reached through his website or his Twitter.

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