

Time to Listen: How Should We Write and Fight?

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Theme: [History](#), [Media Disinformation](#)

Why are the streets of New York, Washington D.C., London and Paris so orderly, so quiet?

Are we - opposition investigative journalists, philosophers and documentary filmmakers - doing such a terrible job? Are we not providing the North American and European public with enough information, enough proof about the monstrous state of the world? Enough so they - the citizens of the Empire - finally get thoroughly pissed off, detach their backsides from their couches and chairs, and flood the capitals and business centers with their bodies, demanding change, demanding the end to atrocities that are being committed all over the world... the end of this imperialist and neo-con madness?



Are we failing, squarely and patently, to give examples and proof of the pain this world is suffering because of the bestiality of market fundamentalism, because of unchecked neocolonialism and shameless Western supremacy? Are we not providing enough stories and images, enough footage, to convince the citizens of the countries that are ruling the world, that something has gone awfully wrong?

The answer is yes, and also, no.

Yes - we work relentlessly and, frankly; we work well... we fight well, day and night, often 25/8 (overtime, 24/7), forgetting about exhaustion, personal life, even our health and danger.

On the side of reason and decency, on the side of the resistance against the oppressive and murderous Empire, are the brightest minds of this world.

There are great philosophers and thinkers like Eduardo Galeano, Alain Badiou, Naomi Klein, Arundhati Roy, and Noam Chomsky, who clearly and precisely define and critique the essential concepts that govern the world.

There are brave international lawyers like Christopher Black, and celebrated economists, including the Nobel Prize laureate, Joseph Stiglitz.

Almost all the great writers are part of the resistance, including those - the greatest ones - who have just recently departed: Jose Saramago, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Harold Pinter.

And there are, of course, investigative journalists, on all the continents, those who are risking their lives, often with no institutional support, working mostly against all the odds.

So Yes – we are providing plenty of information, plenty of images, plenty of proof, that the world is in flames, that tens of millions are dying, that true democracy everywhere is being raped and the natural resources of poor countries are being plundered, so that Western capitalism can flourish.

But No – we are not managing to improve the world. All those tremendous efforts are failing to ignite even those few millions of educated and concerned citizens in the West, to organize and rebel, to demand the end of the global imperialist onslaught.

All the information mentioned above, about the horrors of imperialism and market fundamentalism, is easily available on-line, “just one click away”, to use corporate language.

But nothing is happening. The majority of Europeans and North Americans appear to be thoroughly apathetic towards the state of the world. They keep stuffing themselves on cheap, subsidized food; they amuse themselves with the latest gadgets (including smart phones, sated with Coltan taken from the Democratic Republic of Congo, where some ten million people have died since 1995). They keep voting in those right-wing governments and they believe, increasingly and blindly, that their societies are an inspiration to the rest of the world as the sole examples of democracy and freedom.

The citizens of the Western Empire are actually so lethargic and indoctrinated, that even when billions are stolen from them (not just from the people in their colonies), when banks get bailed-out after their speculative orgies, or after so-called elections get fully subsidized and manipulated by the corporate mafia, they do nothing; absolute nothing!

Go to a pub in the UK or Germany, and ‘everybody knows everything’. You will hear it repeatedly: ‘politicians are swine’, ‘corporations are controlling elections’. If you stay long enough, after several pints of beer someone will perhaps slam his fist on the table: “We need revolution!” Then everybody agrees and they all go home... and the next day – nothing.

‘Occupy Wall Street’ activists got rouged up by the police... And nothing. Everybody goes home. And shouts at the television.

Is there still anything that will outrage people to the point that ‘they would actually not go home’? That they would stay on those bloody streets, build barricades and fight, as they did in the past, even as recently as in 1968?

How many millions have to die in the Western colonies, before the people in Europe and North America pay attention, recognize the massacres and admit that they are actually citizens of a fascist empire, and that it is their moral obligation to fight it and dissolve it? Is 10 million in the DRC not enough? Is one coup after another that the West openly orchestrates, not a sufficient eye opener?

As President Obama pointed out, honestly, on May 28 2014, at West Point, NY:

"In Egypt, we acknowledge that our relationship is anchored in security interests – from the peace treaty with Israel, to shared efforts against violent extremism. So we have not cut off cooperation with the new government."

Or, to put this into perspective, to quote The Economist (May 24, 2014):

"Prodded by a fawning reporter to reveal the extent of American plotting in support of the Muslim Brotherhood, a theory much harped on by Egypt's xenophobic post-coup media, Mr Sisi disarmingly confessed that the only interference he could recall was when the American ambassador requested that last year's coup should be delayed for a day."

But it is not just in Egypt, although Egypt as well... It is one coup after another, these days, all over the world. Coups financed and arranged by the US and Europe... and all those countries ruined, bombed or run to the ground. We can see them clearly, as we are shown images (with twisted commentaries) every day: from Egypt to Ukraine to Thailand. Destroyed Libya and crippled Syria. Bleeding Bahrain. Countless attempted coups against any progressive Latin American governments. A multitude of African nations terrorized by the West – from Mali to Somalia, to DRC to Uganda.

France is increasingly behaving like a bandit nation. Entire regions covered by blood and pus, governed by gangsters who are maintained and armed by the Empire, decades after many great leaders had been either assassinated or shamelessly overthrown.

There is plenty of evidence and information about all that I am talking about.

If the West cannot murder or overthrow a government in a powerful country, it risks lives in its client states: I have just left Manila, Philippines, where two leading academics, Eduard and Teresa Tadem, explained to me how the United States is pitching Southeast Asian nations against China; their historic and natural ally.

The country's press is servile and so, all the terror of European colonialism and of the US extermination campaign against the Philippine people has been miraculously forgotten. Propaganda works. China is the villain! Western propaganda is brilliant, professional, and deadly. Nobody knows anything about the disputed islands; nobody studies history or legal documents. But China is simply wrong. It must be wrong, because that is what has been repeated on television and in the newspapers every day, for years.

The West is antagonizing China, relentlessly, while spreading anti-Chinese propaganda everywhere, totally discounting the country's enormous achievements and the fact that it is undergoing some profound socialist reforms, related to medical care, education, housing, arts and public transportation, just to mention a few. Of course, any notion that China is a successful socialist state has to be destroyed (it either has to be a failure, or it has to be portrayed as capitalist).

These provocations, many of them of a military nature, are now using the old regional imperialist power, Japan (and its extreme right-wing Prime Minister), which is in sudden need of 'protection'. Needless to say, all this can easily lead to WWIII.

The same provocations are taking place against Russia – against Latin America...and

Zimbabwe, Iran, Eritrea – basically against any country that is unwilling to succumb to intimidation, or to sacrifice its own people and lick the boots of the Empire.

And the Western public is blind and deaf. Or it pretends that it does not know and does not see.

There are two possibilities why: either, as I wrote in my earlier analyses (including “The Indoctrinated West”), the Western public is totally lost and overrun by corporate propaganda (it appears to be the most ignorant and misinformed public I have encountered anywhere in the world). Or it simply pretends to be like that, because the status quo suits its interests – it can take advantage of the looting and plundering done by its governments and companies, while pretending that it is still morally superior to the rest of the world... with hardly any feeling of guilt.

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We write and write, film and talk... Huge accusations are made, crimes confirmed... But again: nothing happens!

The most disturbing fact is that no revelation, no discovery of crimes committed by Western governments and companies is upsetting enough, or monstrous enough, for the men and women of the Empire, to demand the immediate resignations of their governments, or of the changing of their entire political and economic system.

Genocides are apparently not sufficient reasons to demand the disbanding of the regime.

The overt nature of thieving, the perverse, nihilist economic and social system controlled by kleptocrats, provokes no major revolutionary actions, no nation-wide rebellions. Even demonstrations are diminishing in size. If there are actually any demonstrations, they tend to be of a pathetic caliber – for higher wages, for instance, but hardly ever for ideological reasons.

How often, do we see huge protests in Europe, against the plundering and murdering of people in Africa or Asia... or against, say, the “French New Wave” of imperialism? Or against the monstrous AFRICOM that sits right in the middle of Europe – in the city of Stuttgart? That monstrosity is, according to its own words: ‘responsible for U.S. military operations and military relations with 53 African nations – an area of responsibility (AOR) covering all of Africa except Egypt’, and it is crammed into the Kelley Barracks, on the outskirts of the city of Stuttgart... which in turn produces all those Mercedes and Porsche cars for the corrupt elites and their children, all over the world.

Nobody protests and nobody gives a damn. I have witnessed some demonstrations against a new train station in Stuttgart, because a few trees had to be cut down in order to build a new terminal... there were demonstrations against the destruction of the ‘historic character of the station’, but I never saw any substantial demonstration against AFRICOM or against the destruction of millions of lives, all over the world, by German companies.

Europeans (and North Americans) appear to be totally ‘bullet-proof’ against any information that could lead to making them feel co-responsible for the plunder and devastation that their Empire is and has been spreading, for years, decades, even centuries, all over the world.

As there is hardly any retrospective feeling of guilt, outrage and horror for colonizing, raping and looting basically the entire planet (including North America, as the killing of native people there was done mainly by the first and second generation of European migrants), there seems to be very little chance that Westerners will now rise and demand an end to the terror they are responsible for having imposed on Africa, Asia, Middle East, Latin America, including Oceania.

Great proof was provided by John Perkins when he wrote, "Confession of an Economic Hit Man", a book that made it to The New York Times bestseller list. Several million copies were sold in various languages, and... nothing!

I met John at the studios of INN in New York City. He was interviewed about 'Confession' and I was interviewed about my documentary film "Terlena - Breaking of a Nation", which was about the insanity and brutality of the Indonesian regime after the US-sponsored coup of 1965/66.

We exchanged notes. In his book, John wrote a first-hand account about his former activities and duties. Working for the State Department, he used money, sex and alcohol to corrupt governments in places such as Ecuador and Indonesia, so they would accept totally useless and unserviceable loans that would disappear into the deep pockets of the elites, and bring nothing else other than total misery to the poor and middle classes. Why? The answer was simple: Because indebted countries were easier to control.

Of course, in any normal country or society, such a revelation would bring down the government along with the entire political and economic system. There can be no question that this is the pinnacle of 'immorality', and a system that produces this kind of global scenarios, should never even be trusted with governing, its own nation.

But nothing has happened in the United States. As far as I am concerned, there were no major demonstrations triggered by Perkin's book.

In Budapest, much, much less, triggered the 'uprising' of 1956 - an uprising that was partially provoked by the West (including by the propaganda arm of the US government - 'Radio Free Europe'), and later glorified as the fight against Soviet rule in Eastern Europe.

An extremely uncomfortable but definitely honest conclusion is that the citizens of the West are incapable of, or unwilling to fight and defend the lives of those whom their Empire destroys. They cannot be trusted, anymore. They have failed for centuries.

People all over the planet have waited and hoped that opposition will come from within the Empire.

It took China to rise up, in order to stop military attacks against its territory. Russia had to regain its strength and to get rid of all the horrible rot that was turning the nation into yet another "client state" of Washington - from naïve nitwits like Gorbachev to the tyrant and alcoholic, Yeltsin. And it took Latin America several decades of fights and revolutions, and hundreds of thousands of martyrs, to finally forge a huge united front against the colonialists and fascists from the North.

But what I want to ask today is: how, if until now, nothing has worked... how do we deal with

the Western public; how do we address it?

Does it really make any sense to speak to them, to appeal to them, even after they had shown such ignorance, such vicious stupidity, indifference and servility?

Would bombarding them - Europeans and North Americans - with facts change anything?

If I show them what they have done in Eastern and Central Africa, would they rebel? We know the answer, and it is: no, they will not.

If we tell them what they are doing to Ukraine, would they demand that all aid to those gangsters who are now holding power there (including that 'newly elected President'), stops? Definitely not! For most of them, Ukraine is nothing else other than a bit of titillating news they watch in the evening, while stuffing themselves at their dining tables.

Most of them do not pay attention. They do not know and do not want to know... all the while pretending that they are the best-informed part of the world. That's not good enough for the citizens of the countries that are ruining the world.

I do believe in collective guilt and collective responsibility. The more I see of European culture, its evasiveness and deception; the more I believe, the more I am convinced that it has to be insisted on. They don't like it, naturally. Tell them about collective guilt and they turn against you like a mad bunch of pit bulls... for very logical reasons. To be a citizen of the continent that is guilty of the destruction of the planet, for many long centuries, is not a joke; it is quite a serious responsibility, and burden... Tell a rapist that he is a rapist, and he breaks your skull. Tell gangster that he is a gangster and just wait and see what will happen.

So what to do? Should we stop writing? Of course not!

There are decent people out there, too. Our readers... For them, and only for them, we write, we labor and risk our lives.

But how and where do we go from here? What is the strategy?

Frankly, I think that facts wrapped in academic writing can change nothing. Absolutely nothing. They can get someone a tenure or even put things 'on the record', but do not expect that those facts and 'records' could trigger a revolution, real change.

As it is, all the crimes of the Empire are already very well documented. Information can be effortlessly accessed, read and understood. So we can very easily conclude that pure facts are not moving anyone, anymore. Otherwise the whole field, the entire situation would be quite different by now.

'Facts' are now effectively used only against Communist countries and parties by the elaborate and pointed Western propaganda machine, and here we are talking about inflated, exaggerated and twisted 'facts'. They are repeated thousands of times, over and over again, and as in Nazi Germany, they became truth: the globally accepted truth.

But even many left-wing intellectuals, as Badiou confirms, are readily accepting those re-invented and re-conditioned 'facts', although they also claim that they also know that the

individuals and companies that are spreading them, have a clear interest in perverting the truth through their corporate media and corporate universities, which makes it all one great contradiction.

Working in all those places that are used as examples, as the ‘proof of evilness of Communism’, I can testify that the ‘facts’ presented by the Western propaganda apparatus, range from being inflated, to being absolute lies. That goes for Ukraine (including the ‘famine’ of the 1930’s), Cambodia, and North Korea, the Soviet Union’s gulags, the Chinese famine and the Cultural Revolution. Half-truth is, as we know, much more dangerous than outright falsehood.

To contradict those fabrications in one or two publications is pointless. It would be just you, and couple of those who know what you know, and are ready to risk everything and go public with it, against those hundreds of thousands repetitions and reprinted falsehoods, against their trolls, even their establishment academia and press. You cannot win.

I tried with the Rwanda genocide: that outright complex lie, manufactured by Western propaganda, which I have perfectly documented. You cannot win – trust me, even if you have unlimited evidence.

Then what else?

Would the books of confessions of those Western apparatchiks help? If Perkins failed, who can do better?

Investigative journalism? The same as academic writing: it does not seem to move anybody, anymore. Definitely not to ‘move them to action’...

I personally went through hell, through fire, and few of those sniper attacks, through death sentences and through being tortured, even being “disappeared” once... all this, in order to inform, to fire-up people, to outrage them, to piss them off. So they do their part and help to stop the genocides that I witnessed all over the world. But did I change much? Did I manage to stop Western invasions or to prevent their ‘coups’? I don’t think so...

I am giving up on journalism and on academic writing. I actually gave up on them, totally, at least two years ago.

I am back to where it all used to be, before corporate journalism. I am a left-wing writer and a filmmaker. I do not hide it; do not lie. That is what I am, and proud of it. Tradition is great, and I am honored by our tradition, too: from Hemingway and Orwell, to Ryszard Kapuściński and Wilfred Burchett!

I go to warzones to fight for revolution, to be in the resistance against imperialism. I don’t go there to ‘write objective articles’ (that stuff is total lunacy, ‘objective reports’). Tripods, computers, cameras, recorders – all of them are my weapons; our weapons.

In many of the places where I go, people are dying. Many of them are dying. Women are being ravished, villages and cities bombed and burned.

All of us, including Hemingway, Orwell and Burchett were, of course, artists and poets. And

this is how they wrote.

And this is the conclusion to which I am now arriving:

When in war, when defending revolutions, when fighting imperialism: one has to be, and to write as a poet... Each report has to be part of a great novel which will be written in the future, or which is being written right there, as one prepares his or her reports. Otherwise it is all shit, and will touch nobody and change nothing.

This is where our only advantage is, against those corporate whores: we are human and alive and we have a heart that is on the left and blood that is red, and all that we do is because we love this world passionately... we love this humanity... and we fight and are ready to die for it.

Every report should have at least one poem hidden inside it. It has to touch. It has to offer warmth and relief, and it has to outrage and lead people onto the barricades.

We have to learn how to write like that, again. Otherwise everything is really lost!

And then, instead of recycling as those corporate scribes and academia do, we have to listen to the people, and not to the establishment, not to each other.

The greatest Latin American storyteller, Eduardo Galeano, once told me, deep in the wilderness of his old café in Montevideo: "Why do I write like this? Because I am a passionate listener."

Yes. Human stories are subversive, honest and mostly revolutionary. If a writer truly listens to the people, he knows what to write and how. And he knows how to fight for the people and how to defend them, instead of serving corporations.

I listen, too. Wherever I go, I listen. I don't watch television. Instead I listen to stories.

I have asked many questions today. I'm not sure I know the answers:

How to be effective? How to move people? How to inspire them, so they join the struggle for a better world, even if it were against their own immediate interests and privileges?

What I write is for you, my readers. I do not write in order to hear myself speak, but to convey to you what others have said, as well as how others are suffering and dreaming.

To quote a great poem and song by the Chilean artist, Violeta Parra:

Thanks to life, which has given me so much
It gave me laughter and it gave me longing
With them I distinguish happiness and pain
The two materials from which my songs are formed
And your song, as well, which is the same song
And everyone's song, which is my very song

I want you to talk to me, my readers. I have written so much; you have read what I have written, patiently. Now write to me. I want to listen. How do we go forward? You and I, together... What touches you? What makes you cry? What would make you rise up and

struggle for a better world? How do we coordinate our steps and walk forward, together?

Andre Vltchek is a novelist, filmmaker and investigative journalist. He has covered wars and conflicts in dozens of countries. His discussion with Noam Chomsky [On Western Terrorism](#) is now going to print. His critically acclaimed political novel [Point of No Return](#) is now re-edited and available. [Oceania](#) is his book on Western imperialism in the South Pacific. His provocative book about post-Suharto Indonesia and the market-fundamentalist model is called "[Indonesia - The Archipelago of Fear](#)". He has just completed the feature documentary, "[Rwanda Gambit](#)" about Rwandan history and the plunder of DR Congo. After living for many years in Latin America and Oceania, Vltchek presently resides and works in East Asia and Africa. He can be reached through his [website](#) or his [Twitter](#).

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