

RESIST

John Perkins

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'ECONOMIC HITMEN ARE THE FIRST STEP'.

Economic Hitmen have created the world's first truly global empire and done it for the first time, primarily, without the military. And we worked many different ways but perhaps the most common was that we would identify a country with resources the corporations covet, like oil, and arrange a huge loan to that country through the World Bank or one of its sisters. However, the money doesn't actually go to the country, it goes to our own corporations that build the infrastructure projects in that country - power plants, roads, ports, industrial parks - things that benefit a few of the rich people in that country, as well as our own corporations, but don't help the poor who don't have enough money to use much electricity, or use the ports or the highways, or don't have a job in the industrial park, but they, the whole country, is left holding a huge debt. It's a debt that's so big they can't repay it. And so at some point we go back and say, "Look, if you can't pay your debt you owe us a pound of flesh. Sell your oil real cheap to our oil companies. Vote with us on the next critical United Nations bill, let us build a military base on your land or send troops in to some place in the world like Saudi Arabia, and in that way we really created this empire. We brought these people under our control, one way or another.

On the few occasions when economics have failed, and they did in Panama with Omar Torrijos, then the 'Jackals' go in and the 'Jackals' are secret, CIA-supported operatives who will either overthrow a government or assassinate the leader. So if the Economic Hitmen are not successful in corrupting those leaders, the 'Jackals' go in and get rid of them one way or another. Omar Torrijos was assassinated because I failed with him. On the very few occasions when the 'Jackals' also fail then, and only then, will the military go in, and that's exactly what happened in Iraq. 'Economic hitmen' failed to bring Saddam Hussain around, the 'Jackals' were unable to take him out, and so the military went in.

'THE AMERICAN EMPIRE HAS BEEN BUILT IN SECRET'.

I consider myself to be extremely loyal and patriotic to this country and I hate the fact that we've conducted a clandestine empire building manoeuvre in my lifetime. This is not democratic, it is not what the United States of America stands for, it is not what our Declaration of Independence talks about.

I think since World War Two, we in the United States have actually been kind of driven into this empire building by people I call 'subversives'. These are not good Americans. We, the public, have actually been defending the corporatocracy. We've been willing to stand behind brutal dictators if they were willing to help our corporations. On the other hand we've been willing to overthrow democratically elected presidents who try to keep more of the profits from their country's resources for their people.

Most people living in the United States have no idea that they are enjoying the fruits of an empire, complete with tremendous forms of slavery all over the world, incredible exploitation, incredible suffering, in order to get the goodies here in America.

This has been clandestine. It's the first, I think, truly clandestine empire in the history of the world. And this raises some very serious questions about democracy. If the United States claims to be a democracy, which we do claim to be, then we have to ask ourselves, "Can we really have democracy if we don't have an informed electorate?" It's the premise of democracy that the electorate is informed and can vote intelligently. But in this case the electorate doesn't understand one of the basic premises of our foreign policy, which is 'empire building'. And if the electorate understand that, how can they vote intelligently? If they don't understand that, then what kind of democracy do we really have? So I think the implications of this empire, are huge, and very, very different from empires of the past.

'WE THE PEOPLE' HAVE A POWER WE'VE NEVER HAD BEFORE'.

It gives me great hope that this empire has been built through economic activity rather than through the military. It means 'we the people' have a power we've never had before. In the past the only way to resist empires was through violence, militarily, or through very, very active civil disobedience, as Gandhi preached.

But today, because the empire has been built by corporations, the modern equivalent of the emperor is what I call the 'corporate conscience', the group of men and women who run our biggest corporations. Incidentally, this is not a conspiracy theory, these people don't have to get together and conspire to do things. They all realise that their modus operandi is the same - to maximise profit regardless of the social and environmental cost. Once they all recognise this, they know in what direction they have to move. They don't have to get together and conspire to make it happen - they just make it happen.

This structure is totally dependent on 'we the consumer' as well as the employees of the corporations. These big corporations can only exist as long as we buy their goods and services and as long as people are willing to work for them. They don't exist because of military imposition and power. And so we can easily change them, get them to come around, and every citizen in the United States for example, or in Europe, or in England, has a tremendous amount of power. Every time we shop we're executing our power, every time we speak to someone, every time we drive a car, we're exercising that power. And I think it's really important that we realise that. Now we simply need to wrench that up a notch and say, "You know that the real problem is dedication to making profits regardless of the social and economic costs." We need to say to them that profits are fine, take profits, but only in the context of creating a socially just, environmentally sustainable and peaceful world. Make profits within that context. And if, once we force the corporations to do this, or encourage them to do it, then everything in the world is going to change, we're going to see significant changes in every aspect, most of our biggest problems, at that point are going to go away.

'LATIN AMERICAN LEADERS ARE NOW HAVING PRESSURE EXERTED ON THEM BY ECONOMIC HITMEN'.

Latin America in the last few years has done an incredible job of resisting corporate power. It's been a people's revolution and it's been a great model for what I'm talking about here. There are now eight countries in Latin America that in the last democratic elections have voted in the candidate who said, "No more exploitation by foreign corporations." Ecuador's oil must be used to help Ecuador's people. Profits from Bolivia's gas must be used to help Bolivia's people, and so on. These countries represent more than 80% of the population of South America. It's an amazing revolution and it's happened democratically and peacefully. There's been no bloodshed and in fact very diverse groups have come together so they've been very, very successful at doing this.

Rafael Correa, the President of Ecuador is really clamping down on oil companies and the way they've been polluting the Amazon Basin there and taking oil out and only giving Ecuador a very, very, very small percentage of the profits. He's insisting that changes. He's also insisting the US remove its military base from Ecuador. Correa's saying, "We're not going to renew the lease on this base. The only way we'll let you renew the lease is if you give us permission and a lease to build an Ecuadorean military base in Florida", and I think that really strikes home! Quid pro quo! Of course that's not going to happen! So, Correa's standing up very strongly to American exploitation.

Evo Morales in Bolivia is doing the same, he has some very serious internal struggles there, and of course the most famous case is Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, who not only stood up to the United States but verbally abused President Bush! We're also seeing similar things, though perhaps of less magnitude, in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and now in Nicaragua and Guatemala and certainly in Mexico.

Of course, there's a tremendous amount of pressure being exerted against all these new presidents by people who have my old job, economic hitmen, who are offering them tremendous perks if they go along with the system, and also reminding them what happened to leaders that did not go along with the system, leaders like Salvador Allende of Chile, Jacobo Arbenz Guzman of Guatemala, both of whom 'died in plane crashes'.

'COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD SHOULD CLUB TOGETHER AND REFUSE TO REPAY THEIR DEBTS'.

Most of the countries of the South are so burdened by debt really don't owe that money. Corrupt leaders in their countries took on that debt to get rich themselves. I was part of that process as an economic hitman. I was encouraging those corrupt leaders to do that. I was corrupting them. And the people of those countries should not owe that money; they haven't done anything with that money. The wealthy people have, and our corporations have, but the people haven't. They shouldn't have to owe that money. That debt should be forgiven and what I advocate when I travel to other countries and other continents, is that these countries should get together in Latin America and in Africa and in Asia and as a group, as an alliance, say, 'We're not going to pay this debt. It's not really owed by us. The bankers are the ones who owe this money, the people who corrupted our officials and those corrupt officials perhaps. But the people of Ecuador and the people of Nigeria and the people of Indonesia do not owe this money therefore they have no obligations to pay it', and I think if enough countries got together and did this, as a unit, they would have a lot of success.

'IT WAS BECAUSE OF MY EXPERIENCE OF THE INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEW THAT I COULD SEE THROUGH OUR LIES'.

I experienced the 'indigenous worldview' before the 'economic hitman worldview' because I was in the Peace Corp from 1968 to 1971 in the Amazon and the Andes living with a lot of indigenous people.

When I went into becoming an Economic Hitman I think one of the reasons I was able to finally understand the subversiveness of what we were doing, was because I had had that indigenous experience and I knew that these people were not benefiting from these huge loans to their countries we were making, even though that was the spin that was given to us, that everyone was going to benefit, that all the ships would rise with the tide. I knew from having been there that wasn't happening, and I also developed an appreciation for the holistic view that indigenous people have.

For example, you know an indigenous person just doesn't do anything that's going to hurt future generations even if it means you've got to go hungry. You don't kill a bird that's sitting on a nest of eggs because you know you're kids are going to be dependent on the future of that bird. I think they're very aware of these things and in more recent times as I have gone back to these kinds of cultures and organised and supported a lot non-profit organisations that've worked with and learned from these cultures, I've become more and more appreciative of this concept and what they have to teach us about the need to really look at our relationships, not only with other human beings, but to every plant and animal that's out there. That relationship is extremely important.

This 'worldview' has contributed to the hope that I have. I realise that we do have tremendous power over the corporations, each of us as an individual, as well as all of us communally. To create what the indigenous people would call a shapeshift, in other words to transform ourselves and our society.

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