

## The Illusion of Freedom: The Police State is Alive and Well

From humansarefree.com, 10 March 2017

“What happened here was the gradual habituation of the people, little by little, to being governed by surprise; to receiving decisions deliberated in secret; to believing that the situation was so complicated that the government had to act on information which the people could not understand, or so dangerous that, even if the people could understand it, it could not be released because of national security...

“This separation of government from people, this widening of the gap, took place so gradually and so insensibly, each step disguised (perhaps not even intentionally) as a temporary emergency measure or associated with true patriotic allegiance or with real social purposes.

“And all the crises and reforms (real reforms, too) so occupied the people that they did not see the slow motion underneath, of the whole process of government growing remoter and remoter.” — Historian Milton Mayer, [They Thought They Were Free: The Germans, 1933-45](#)

Brace yourself.

There is something being concocted in the dens of power, far beyond the public eye, and it doesn't bode well for the future of this country.

Anytime you have an entire nation so mesmerized by the antics of the political ruling class that they are oblivious to all else, you'd better beware.

Anytime you have a government that operates in the shadows, speaks in a language of force, and rules by fiat, you'd better beware.

And anytime you have a government so far removed from its people as to ensure that they are never seen, heard or heeded by those elected to represent them, you'd better beware.

The world has been down this road before.

As historian Milton Mayer recounts in his seminal book on Hitler's rise to power, [They Thought They Were Free](#):

“Most of us did not want to think about fundamental things and never had. There was no need to. Nazism gave us some dreadful, fundamental things to think about — we were decent people — and kept us so busy with continuous changes and 'crises' and so fascinated, yes, fascinated, by the machinations of the 'national enemies', without and within, that we had no time to think about these dreadful things that were growing, little by little, all around us.”

We are at our most vulnerable right now.

The gravest threat facing us as a nation is not extremism — delivered by way of [sovereign citizens](#) or [radicalized Muslims](#) — but despotism, exercised by a ruling class whose only allegiance is to power and money.

Nero fiddled while [Rome burned](#).

America is burning, and all most Americans can do is switch the channel, tune out what they don't want to hear, and tune into their own personal [echo chambers](#).

We're in a national state of denial.

Yet no amount of escapism can shield us from the harsh reality that the danger in our midst is posed by an entrenched government bureaucracy that has no regard for the Constitution, Congress, the courts or the citizenry.

If the team colors have changed from blue to red, that's just cosmetic.

The playbook remains the same. The leopard has not changed its spots.

Scrape off the surface layers and you will find that the [American police state](#) is alive and well and continuing to wreak havoc on the rights of the American people.

"We the people" are no longer living the American Dream. We're living the American Lie.

Indeed, Americans have been lied to so sincerely, so incessantly, and for so long [by politicians of all stripes](#) — who lie compulsively and without any seeming remorse — that they've almost come to prefer the lies trotted out by those in government over less-palatable truths.

The American people have become compulsive believers.

As Nick Cohen writes for The Guardian:

"Compulsive liars shouldn't frighten you. They can harm no one, if no one listens to them. [Compulsive believers, on the other hand: they should terrify you](#). Believers are the liars' enablers.

"Their votes give the demagogue his power. Their trust turns the charlatan into the president. Their credulity ensures that the propaganda of half-calculating and half-mad fanatics has the power to change the world."

While telling the truth "in a time of universal deceit is," as [George Orwell](#) concluded, "a revolutionary act," believing the truth — and being able to distinguish the truth from a lie — is also a revolutionary act.

[The True Meaning of George Orwell's: "War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength"](#)

Here's a truth few Americans want to acknowledge: nothing has changed (at least, not for the better) since Barack Obama passed the reins of the police state to Donald Trump.

The [police state](#) is still winning. We the people are still losing.

In fact, the American police state has continued to advance at the same costly, intrusive,

privacy-sapping, Constitution-defying, relentless pace under President Trump as it did under President Obama.

1. [Police haven't stopped disregarding the rights of citizens.](#)

Having been given the green light to probe, poke, pinch, taser, search, seize, strip, shoot and generally manhandle anyone they see fit in almost any circumstance, all with the general blessing of the courts, America's law enforcement officials are no longer mere servants of the people entrusted with keeping the peace.

Indeed, they continue to keep the masses corralled, under control, and treated like suspects and enemies rather than citizens.

2. SWAT teams haven't stopped crashing through doors and terrorizing families.

Nationwide, SWAT teams continue to be employed to address an astonishingly trivial array of criminal activities or mere community nuisances including angry dogs, domestic disputes, improper paperwork filed by an orchid farmer, and misdemeanor marijuana possession.

With more than 80,000 SWAT team raids carried out every year on unsuspecting Americans for relatively routine police matters and federal agencies laying claim to their own law enforcement divisions, the [incidence of botched raids](#) and related casualties continue to rise.

3. [The Pentagon](#) and the [Department of Homeland Security](#) haven't stopped militarizing and federalizing local police.

[Police forces continue to be transformed into heavily armed extensions of the military](#), complete with jackboots, helmets, shields, batons, pepper-spray, stun guns, assault rifles, body armor, miniature tanks and weaponized drones.

In training police to look and act like the military and use the weapons and tactics of war against American citizens, the government continues to turn the United States into a battlefield.

4. [Schools haven't stopped treating young people like hard-core prisoners.](#)

School districts continue to team up with law enforcement to create a "schoolhouse to jailhouse track" by imposing a "double dose" of punishment for childish infractions: suspension or expulsion from school, accompanied by an arrest by the police and a trip to juvenile court.

In this way, the paradigm of abject compliance to the state continues to be taught by example in the schools, through school lockdowns where [police and drug-sniffing dogs enter the classroom](#), and zero tolerance policies that punish all offenses equally and result in young people being expelled for childish behavior.

5. [For-profit private prisons](#) haven't stopped locking up [Americans and immigrants alike](#) at taxpayer expense.

States continue to outsource prison management to private corporations out to make a profit

at taxpayer expense.

And how do you make a profit in the prison industry? Have the legislatures pass laws that impose harsh penalties for the slightest noncompliance in order keep the prison cells full and corporate investors happy.

6. Censorship hasn't stopped.

First Amendment activities continue to be pummeled, punched, kicked, choked, chained and [generally gagged](#) all across the country.

The reasons for such censorship vary widely from political correctness, safety concerns and bullying to national security and hate crimes but the end result remained the same: the complete eradication of what Benjamin Franklin referred to as the "principal pillar of a free government."

7. The courts haven't stopped [marching in lockstep](#) with the [police state](#).

The courts continue to be dominated by technicians and statisticians who are deferential to authority, whether government or business.

Indeed, the Supreme Court's decisions in recent years have most often been characterized by an abject deference to government authority, military and corporate interests.

They have run the gamut from suppressing free speech activities and justifying suspicionless strip searches to warrantless home invasions and conferring constitutional rights on corporations, while denying them to citizens.

8. Government bureaucrats haven't stopped [turning American citizens into criminals](#).

The average American now unknowingly commits three felonies a day, thanks to an overabundance of vague laws that render otherwise innocent activity illegal, while reinforcing the power of the police state and its corporate allies.

9. The [surveillance state hasn't stopped spying](#) on Americans' communications, transactions or movements.

On any given day, whether you're walking through a store, driving your car, checking email, or talking to friends and family on the phone, you can be sure that some government agency, whether it's your local police, a fusion center, the National Security Agency or one of the government's many corporate partners, is still monitoring and tracking you.

**Vault 7 Bombshell:** [The CIA Can Spy Through TVs, iPhones, Smart Phones and Windows PCs](#)

10. The [TSA hasn't stopped groping or ogling travelers](#).

Under the pretext of protecting the nation's infrastructure (roads, mass transit systems, water and power supplies, telecommunications systems and so on) against criminal or terrorist attacks, TSA task forces (comprised of federal air marshals, surface transportation security

inspectors, transportation security officers, behavior detection officers and explosive detection canine teams) continue to do random security sweeps of nexuses of transportation, including ports, railway and bus stations, airports, ferries and subways, as well as political conventions, baseball games and music concerts.

Sweep tactics include the use of x-ray technology, pat-downs and drug-sniffing dogs, among other things.

11. Congress hasn't stopped enacting draconian laws such as the USA Patriot Act and the NDAA.

These laws — which completely circumvent the rule of law and the constitutional rights of American citizens, continue to re-orient our legal landscape in such a way as to ensure that martial law, rather than the rule of law, our U.S. Constitution, becomes the map by which we navigate life in the United States.

12. The Department of Homeland Security hasn't stopped being a “[wasteful, growing, fear-mongering beast](#).”

Is the DHS capable of plotting and planning to [turn the national guard into a federalized, immigration police force](#)? No doubt about it.

Remember, this is the agency that is notorious for militarizing the police and SWAT teams; spying on activists, dissidents and veterans; stockpiling ammunition; distributing license plate readers; contracting to build detention camps; tracking cell-phones with Stingray devices; carrying out military drills and lockdowns in American cities; using the TSA as an advance guard; conducting virtual strip searches with full-body scanners; carrying out soft target checkpoints; directing government workers to spy on Americans; conducting widespread spying networks using fusion centers; carrying out Constitution-free border control searches; funding city-wide surveillance cameras; and utilizing drones and other spybots.

13. The military industrial complex hasn't stopped profiting from [endless wars](#) abroad.

America's expanding military empire continues to bleed the country dry at a rate of more than \$15 billion a month (or \$20 million an hour).

The Pentagon spends more on war than all 50 states combined spend on health, education, welfare, and safety.

Yet what most Americans fail to recognize is that these ongoing wars have little to do with keeping the country safe and everything to do with enriching the military industrial complex at taxpayer expense.

[USA Has Killed More Than 20 Million People in 37 'Victim Nations' Since World War II](#)

14. The Deep State's [shadow government](#) hasn't stopped [calling the shots behind the scenes](#).

Comprised of unelected government bureaucrats, corporations, contractors, paper-pushers, and button-pushers who are actually calling the shots behind the scenes, this [government within a government](#) continues to be the real reason “we the people” have no real control over

our so-called representatives.

It's every facet of a government that is no longer friendly to freedom and is working overtime to trample the Constitution underfoot and render the citizenry powerless in the face of the government's power grabs, corruption and abusive tactics.

[Ex US Presidents and High Officials Warn About the 'Invisible Government' Running the USA](#)

15. And the American people haven't stopped acting like gullible sheep.

In fact, many Americans have been so carried away by their [blind rank-and-file partisan devotion to their respective political gods](#) that they have lost sight of the one thing that has remained constant in recent years: our freedoms are steadily declining.

Here's the problem as I see it: "we the people" have become so trusting, so gullible, so easily distracted, so out-of-touch and so sure that our government will always do the right thing by us that we have ignored the warning signs all around us.

In so doing, we have failed to recognize such warning signs as potential red flags to use as opportunities to ask questions, demand answers, and hold our government officials accountable to respecting our rights and abiding by the rule of law.

Unfortunately, once a free people allows the government to make inroads into their freedoms, or uses those same freedoms as bargaining chips for security, it quickly becomes a slippery slope to outright tyranny.

And [it doesn't really matter whether it's a Democrat or a Republican at the helm](#), because the bureaucratic mindset on both sides of the aisle now seems to embody the same philosophy of authoritarian government.

As I make clear in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#), this is what happens when you ignore the warning signs.

This is what happens when you fail to take alarm at the first experiment on your liberties.

This is what happens when you fail to challenge injustice and government overreach until the prison doors clang shut behind you.

In the [American police state](#) that now surrounds us, there are no longer such things as innocence, due process, or justice — at least, not in the way we once knew them. We are all potentially guilty, all potential criminals, all suspects waiting to be accused of a crime.

So you can try to persuade yourself that you are free, that you still live in a country that values freedom, and that it is not too late to make America great again, but to anyone who has been paying attention to America's decline over the past 50 years, it will be just another lie.

The German people chose to ignore the truth and believe the lie.

They were not oblivious to the horrors taking place around them. As historian Robert

Gellately points out:

“[A]nyone in Nazi Germany who wanted to find out about the Gestapo, the concentration camps, and the campaigns of discrimination and persecutions need only read the newspapers.”

The warning signs were definitely there, blinking incessantly like large neon signs.

“Still,” Gellately writes, “the vast majority voted in favor of Nazism, and in spite of what they could read in the press and hear by word of mouth about the secret police, the concentration camps, official anti-Semitism, and so on... [T]here is no getting away from the fact that at that moment, ‘the vast majority of the German people backed him.’”

Half a century later, the wife of a prominent German historian, neither of whom were members of the Nazi party, opined: “[O]n the whole, everyone felt well... And there were certainly eighty percent who lived productively and positively throughout the time... We also had good years. We had wonderful years.”

In other words, as long as their creature comforts remained undiminished, as long as their bank accounts remained flush, as long as they weren't being discriminated against, persecuted, starved, beaten, shot, stripped, jailed and turned into slave labor, life was good.

This is how tyranny rises and freedom falls.

As [Primo Levi, a Holocaust survivor](#) observed:

“Monsters exist, but they are too few in number to be truly dangerous. More dangerous are the common men, the functionaries ready to believe and to act without asking questions.”  
Freedom demands responsibility.

Freedom demands that people stop sleep-walking through life, stop cocooning themselves in political fantasies, and stop distracting themselves with escapist entertainment.

Freedom demands that we stop thinking as Democrats and Republicans and start thinking like human beings, or at the very least, Americans.

Freedom demands that we not remain silent in the face of evil or wrongdoing but actively stand against injustice.

Freedom demands that we treat others as we would have them treat us. That is the law of reciprocity, also referred to as the Golden Rule, and it is found in nearly every world religion, including Judaism and Christianity.

In other words, if you don't want to be locked up in a prison cell or a detention camp — if you don't want to be discriminated against because of the color of your race, religion, politics or anything else that sets you apart from the rest — if you don't want your loved ones shot at, strip searched, tasered, beaten and treated like slaves — if you don't want to have to be constantly on guard against government eyes watching what you do, where you go and what you say — if you don't want to be tortured, waterboarded or forced to perform degrading acts — if you don't want your children to grow up in a world without freedom — then don't allow

these evils to be inflicted on anyone else, no matter how tempting the reason or how fervently you believe in your cause.

As German theologian and anti-Nazi dissident [Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#) observed:

“We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself.”

By John W. Whitehead, [Rutherford.org](#)

*About the author: [John W. Whitehead](#) is an attorney and author who has written, debated and practiced widely in the area of constitutional law and human rights. Whitehead's most recent books include [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) and [A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State](#).*