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## How Deep Throat Fooled the FBI

*During the most heated moments of the Watergate scandal, W. Mark Felt was assigned the mission of unearthing and stopping Deep Throat.*

By [David Corn](#) and [Jeff Goldberg](#)

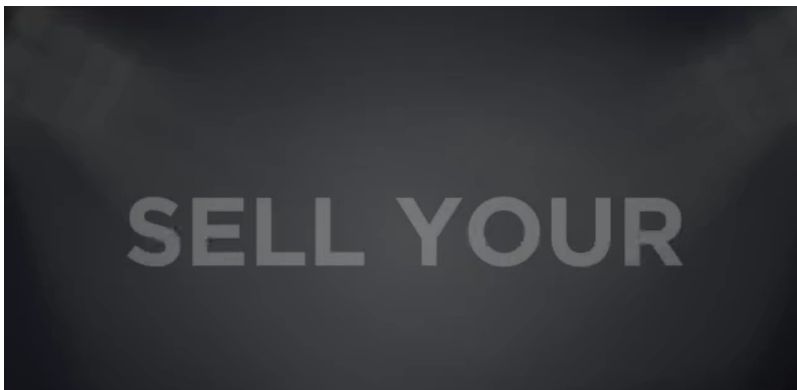
JUNE 14, 2005

The recent dramatic revelation about W. Mark Felt—the former top FBI man who has confessed to being Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein’s secret source during the Watergate scandal—has yielded what seems to be the final chapter in the Deep Throat saga, and thus the conclusion to a three-decade-long whodunit rich in detail, psychology and irony.

But Felt’s role as the most famous anonymous source in US history was even more complex and intrigue-loaded than the newly revised public account suggests. According to originally confidential FBI documents—some written by Felt—that were obtained by *The Nation* from the FBI’s archives, Felt played another heretofore unknown part in the Watergate tale: He was, at heated moments during the scandal, in charge of finding the source of Woodward and Bernstein’s Watergate scoops. In a twist worthy of *le Carré*, Deep Throat was assigned the mission of unearthing—and stopping—Deep Throat.

This placed Felt, who as the FBI’s associate director oversaw the bureau’s Watergate probe, in an unusual position. He was essentially in charge of investigating himself. From this vantage point Felt, who had developed espionage skills running FBI counterintelligence operations against German spies in World War II, was able to watch his own back and protect his ability to guide the two reporters whose exposés would help topple the President he served.

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Felt at different points became an FBI plumber—in the parlance of the Nixon White House, a “plumber” was an operative who took care of leaks—even though he was the number-one leaker. He was in the perfect spot to deflect any accusations that might implicate him and to misdirect suspicion. And when President Nixon and his top aides became convinced that Felt was a key source for the *Washington Post*—they still couldn’t touch him, because of what he knew about their skulduggery.

The Felt memos do not cover the entire time period (from right after the June 17, 1972, break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters to November 1973) during which Felt assisted Woodward. But when placed alongside the recent disclosure and the previously available accounts—most notably, the Woodward and Bernstein book *All the President’s Men*; Felt’s 1979 memoir, *The FBI Pyramid* (in which he denied he was Deep Throat); and the Nixon White House tapes—these memos (snapshots from inside Felt’s world) significantly expand and shift the view that historians and the public now have of the unique, secret space Felt occupied during Watergate.

Immediately after the June break-in, Woodward covered the arraignment of the five burglars. Two days later he called Felt, whom he had been cultivating as a mentor and contact for two years. Woodward had gotten a clue from Watergate burglar Bernard Barker’s seized address book that Howard Hunt of the White House might have been involved in the break-in. He was hoping that Felt could confirm his suspicion about Hunt, or steer him off if he was wrong. Felt reported that Hunt was definitely involved in the burglary. He added that things were going to “heat up.” Later that day, a nervous Felt assured Woodward that “the FBI regarded Hunt as a prime suspect in the Watergate investigation for many reasons.” Thus, Felt had a hand in the first *Post* front-page story that tied the White House to the break-in.

From June to early September, Woodward and Bernstein produced more than twenty Watergate-related stories based on interviews with a variety of confidential sources. In *All the President’s Men* Woodward and Bernstein are vague about Woodward’s meetings with Felt that summer. The two rendezvoused at a parking garage in Rosslyn, Virginia. Felt’s guidance was fairly general. At one meeting he said that “the FBI badly wanted to know where the *Post* was getting its information.” He warned Woodward and Bernstein “to take care when using their telephones” and to be aware that they “might be followed.” He advised that the White House was very worried.

But in the summer of 1972, the White House already suspected that someone in the bureau was leaking to the *Post* (though it’s unclear whether Felt was providing Woodward the information causing this suspicion). Woodward and Bernstein often cited “sources close to the investigation” or “federal sources” in their stories. White House officials presumed this mainly meant FBI officials, who were the primary investigators. FBI Acting Director L. Patrick Gray—who had been appointed by Nixon immediately after J. Edgar Hoover’s sudden death in May—was cooperating with the White House to thwart a full FBI investigation, and the White House was pressuring him to shut off the various leaks to the media. According to FBI records, Gray held a meeting to chastise angrily all of the twenty-seven FBI field agents working on Watergate and told them not to talk to the press.

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criminal division] to personally grill the men under oath.” And when Gray was out of town, White House counsel John Dean would call Felt and demand that he stop the leaks. In one instance in late June, Felt, already helping the *Post*, ordered an investigation of whether any FBI official had leaked information to the Washington *Daily News*, but that inquiry produced nothing.

Through the summer of 1972, no one at the White House yet suspected Felt, according to the public record; but it was reasonable for him to fear the Nixon team was focusing on him, Bates, their underlings and the agents working on the Watergate case—the people with direct knowledge of the investigation.

On Saturday, September 9, the *Post* ran a major page-one story by Woodward and Bernstein reporting that federal sources were indicating that the Watergate criminal investigation was now “completed”—“without implicating any present officials of either the White House or the Committee to Re-elect President Nixon.” FBI agents, the story added, were not being allowed to investigate allegations involving illegal campaign contributions to Nixon. (In *All the President's Men* there is no indication that Woodward spoke to Felt while preparing this story.) Two days later, in response to that article, Felt wrote a one-page memo to Assistant Director Bates that had at least two purposes. One was to make sure that senior officials inside the bureau understood that the FBI’s investigation, despite the *Post*’s claim, was not finished. The other was to suggest that Woodward and Bernstein might have been receiving secret FBI information from someone outside the FBI. Deep Throat was shrewdly taking this opportunity to direct suspicion toward another Woodward and Bernstein leaker.

In the September 11, 1972, memo, Felt noted that the county prosecutor in Miami, Richard Gerstein, might be the *Post*’s main source. Gerstein was investigating how a \$25,000 check from Nixon’s campaign had ended up in the account of a Watergate burglar. Felt wrote: “It appears that much of the information which has been leaked to the press may have come from [Dade] County Prosecutor Gerstein in Florida.” To search for the *Post*’s leaker(s), Felt instructed the FBI’s Special Agent-in-Charge (SAC) in Miami to interview every FBI official who had been in contact with Gerstein. Felt also expressed concern in the memo that the *Post* reporters had obtained information directly from an FBI report (called a “302”) based on an official interview with a Watergate conspirator. Felt wrote, “I personally contacted [Washington] SAC [Robert] Kunkel [who was supervising the agents probing Watergate] to point out that it appeared the Washington Post or at least a reporter had access to the...302. I told him he should forcibly remind all agents of the need to be most circumspect in talking about this case with anyone outside the Bureau.”

In retrospect, Felt’s memo looks like an attempt to convince Pat Gray and other senior officials at the bureau that he was on top of the leak issue. But the leak probe he had triggered in Miami was a wild goose chase. A county prosecutor could not be the type to supply inside information to Woodward and Bernstein about the FBI’s Watergate probe. (In late July Bernstein had obtained information from Gerstein about the suspicious bank transactions, but nothing about the federal investigations in Washington.) No FBI leakers were ever found via the Miami inquiry Felt orchestrated.

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John Mitchell (Nixon's close confidant who had suddenly resigned as his campaign manager on July 1) had been in charge of the campaign money that financed the Watergate break-in, that these funds also supported "other intelligence-gathering activities" and that these same aides had seen wiretap logs from the Watergate bugging. So while the FBI officials in Miami, spurred on by Felt, were busy trying to plug the supposed leak to the *Post* with a going-nowhere investigation, Felt was handing page-one information to Woodward. He was not just a high-level leaker or undercover whistleblower. He was a master manipulator. (Whether Felt had accomplices within the FBI, as has been alleged recently by former FBI agent Paul Daly, remains a matter of speculation, especially since the main suspects—Kunkel, Bates and another assistant director—are dead.)

At one point (probably in the early phase of Watergate), Felt even met officially with Woodward—in what appears to have been another move to cover himself. In his 1979 memoir—in which he declared, "I never leaked information to Woodward and Bernstein or to anyone else!"—Felt noted that he spoke to Woodward "on one occasion." He claimed that after Woodward requested an interview, he agreed to see him; Felt then asked his assistant, Wason Campbell, a senior-level, twenty-five-year-veteran FBI agent, to be present "to make sure what I said would not be misquoted." In this account, Woodward "was not looking for information." He "simply wanted" Felt to confirm information he and Bernstein already had obtained. "I declined to cooperate with him in this manner," Felt wrote, "and that was that." It now seems obvious that Felt (probably with Woodward's cooperation) staged this meeting to make it look as if Felt was not assisting Woodward. (Perhaps Woodward will explain this in his forthcoming book on Deep Throat.)

Today Campbell, retired since 1974, is in the advanced stages of Alzheimer's and has no memory of those days. His wife, Mary, told *The Nation* that whenever the subject of Felt and Deep Throat came up in the post-Watergate years, her husband never indicated he believed Felt could have been this source. "I am sure that Wason never knew it," she says. "He's not that good an actor. Mark was able to keep this a secret from his assistant."

Unbeknownst to Felt, Nixon and his chief of staff, H.R. Haldeman, began talking about him in the White House weeks after Felt wrote that September 11, 1972, memo. In a taped conversation on October 19, Nixon complained to Haldeman that Gray could not stop the media leaks. Haldeman told Nixon that Felt had been identified as the primary leaker—but they could not do anything about it. Haldeman explained: "If we move on him, he'll go out and unload everything. He knows everything that's to be known in the FBI."

Continuing the conversation, Nixon asked, "What would you do with Felt?" Haldeman replied that he had been advised by Dean that Felt could not be prosecuted. "The bastard," Nixon called him. Later that afternoon, Nixon asked, "What's the conveyor belt for Felt?" "The Post," Haldeman replied. He explained that an unnamed "legal guy" for the *Post*, who formerly worked at the Justice Department or FBI, had contacted an official in Nixon's Justice Department because he was "deeply concerned" about the FBI leaks to Woodward and Bernstein, and this person maintained that Felt was leaking to the *Post*. The Justice Department official slipped the information to Dean, who told Haldeman. The next day, Nixon

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in 1974, and the character Deep Throat was created, Haldeman instead mistakenly fingered Fred Fielding, Dean's assistant, as Deep Throat, and Dean proposed a variety of candidates other than Felt. "It was right under our nose," Dean sighed to *The Nation*.

Felt continued to assist Woodward during the last three months of 1972; they met four times in the garage in Rosslyn and spoke once on the phone. In those conversations, Felt provided extensive information on Nixon's "dirty tricks" campaign—which went beyond Watergate—and the cover-up, and he urged Woodward on. In early January Gray confronted Felt with the first direct accusation that Felt was the *Post's* covert source. As Felt wrote in his memoir, Gray warned him that Attorney General Richard Kleindienst, a Nixon loyalist who had replaced John Mitchell, had said to Gray that Felt might have to be fired. The reason, Gray explained, was that Kleindienst "says White House staff members are convinced that you are the FBI source of leaks to Woodward and Bernstein." Felt wrote that he replied, "Pat, I haven't leaked anything to anybody. They are wrong!" Gray responded that he believed Felt, "but the White House doesn't." Gray, according to Felt, stood up for Felt, telling Kleindienst that Felt was "very competent" and "completely loyal," and that he was not going to remove him. A few weeks later Nixon complained to Gray that Felt had to be removed because he was still suspected of leaking. He told Gray to have Felt "take a lie detector test." Gray countered that Felt was the innocent victim of a "gossip mill" at the FBI. Subsequently, Gray never ordered Felt to be polygraphed; he remained loyal to his number two. Felt had dodged a bullet.

Meanwhile, in late January, when Felt met Woodward again late at night in the parking garage, he revealed that the FBI had confirmed that Charles Colson, Nixon's special counsel, had played an "active" role in the burglars' illegal activities. "Colson and Mitchell were behind the Watergate operation," Felt said. Afterward, Woodward and Bernstein debated whether to publish a story. Bernstein was eager, but Woodward wanted to wait until they could better document the information.

Then, on February 21, Woodward and Bernstein wrote a page-one story linking Colson to the operations of the so-called "plumbers"—the secret White House/Nixon campaign team specializing in targeting leaks and spying, bugging and break-ins. In that article, Woodward and Bernstein cited "sources close to the Watergate investigation," "Department of Justice sources," "Federal sources," "Republican sources" and Colson's secret testimony given to "federal investigators" (meaning the FBI).

Responding to a request from Attorney General Kleindienst, Gray ordered another investigation to uncover Woodward and Bernstein's sources. And he handed the job to Felt. This was a bizarre decision, given Kleindienst's and Nixon's earlier fears that Felt was leaking. Once more, Felt was on his own trail. He wrote a memo to his subordinate ordering a full and immediate investigation. Given Felt's secret role as Deep Throat, his memorandum was full of irony and dissembling:

*As you know, Woodward and Bernstein have written numerous articles about Watergate. While their stories have contained much fiction and half truths, they have frequently set forth information which they attribute to Federal investigators, Department of Justice sources, and FBI sources. We know*

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Acting Director Gray, Felt wrote, “has instructed that you immediately institute an analysis of this article to determine those portions which could have come from FBI sources and in such instances to set forth the persons having access to that particular bit of information.”

Felt was going through the appropriate motions. Did he wonder if such an analysis would point to him? Was he confident that his underlings wouldn't catch on or that they wouldn't dare suspect—or cast suspicion upon—their boss? Did he have a plan for what to do if the net closed in?

Later that same day, a detailed four-page reply was sent to Felt that reviewed all the *Post* article's possible sources. It concluded there were alternative sources, besides FBI personnel, for everything reported. The analysis did not mention any FBI sources as potential leakers. Felt routinely forwarded this analysis to Gray. Two days later, Gray sent a memo to Kleindienst suggesting that possible sources for the leak were the US Attorney's office in Washington and a White House official. The inquiry Felt launched ended up leading not to Felt but to possible leakers at the Justice Department and 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

No sooner was the latest leak investigation finished than Felt was again feeding information to Woodward. On February 25, Felt and Woodward met in a bar. Felt cautioned Woodward to be careful and patient, noting that the White House was now very concerned that the full story would soon come out. Inside the White House, meanwhile, Nixon and his men were indeed worrying that Felt could on his own bring them down. In a taped conversation on February 28, Nixon asked Dean what would happen if “Felt comes out and unwraps the whole thing.” Then Nixon answered himself: “Everybody would treat him like a pariah.” Dean agreed: “He can't do it.”

Woodward and Felt spoke briefly by phone twice in April, with Felt giving advance warning of the bombshell announcement that Dean and Haldeman would soon resign. (Ehrlichman and Kleindienst left with them.) And on April 27 Gray resigned from the FBI after disastrous confirmation hearings (and after the press reported he had burned Hunt's secret office papers at the behest of Ehrlichman and Dean). Nixon quickly named William Ruckelshaus, then head of the Environmental Protection Agency, to be the new acting FBI director.

Ruckelshaus, who wanted to reform the bureau, and Felt, the leader of the pro-Hoover faction at headquarters, clashed immediately. Meanwhile, Nixon was still fretting about Felt. On May 11 Nixon, who was now politically wounded by Watergate, expressed his frustration to his new chief of staff, Alexander Haig. They believed Felt had leaked damaging information, but they could not expose him. “We've got to be careful as to when to cut his nuts off,” Haig said. Nixon responded: “He's bad.” The next day Nixon told Haig that Felt was a “goddamn traitor.” “Just watch him damned carefully,” Nixon added. He said that he would let the “new man”—Ruckelshaus—“clean house” at the FBI. Presumably, that would take care of the Felt problem.

On May 16 Felt and Woodward met briefly in the garage; it was the night before the Senate Watergate hearings were to begin. Felt hurriedly delivered an apocalyptic message full of new allegations and warnings: “everyone's life is in danger”; watch out for “electronic surveillance” by the CIA; Nixon had threatened Dean with jail; the list of Mitchell's illegal activities was

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After further conflict with Ruckelshaus—during which the new director accused Felt of leaking to the press to undermine Ruckelshaus and to position himself to become director—Felt left the bureau on June 22, 1973, ending thirty-two years with the FBI. According to the book *FBI* by Sanford Ungar, he retired to a home boasting an elaborate collection of Hoover memorabilia, and he went on to lecture at colleges, where he would decry Gray’s mishandling of the Watergate investigation. He was also subjected to an FBI investigation looking for inside-the-bureau leakers. But that endeavor did not amount to much; Felt dismissed it as a “tempest in a teapot.”

By Woodward’s account, Felt met with the reporter only one more time during Watergate, in early November 1973, when Felt told Woodward there were “deliberate erasures” on the White House tapes.

Woodward and Felt kept Felt’s identity as Deep Throat a secret for more than three decades. The pre-revelation account of Deep Throat’s derring-do (*All the President’s Men*) and the recent stories about Felt’s days as Deep Throat do not convey all that Felt had to do to survive during Watergate. He was much more than a secret sharer. He was an operator. Nixon, Dean, Haldeman, Mitchell, Kleindienst and Haig—they were all dead-on correct in suspecting Felt of being a chief source for Woodward and Bernstein. But he actively engaged in bureaucratic ploys so he could come across as the loyal soldier and cover his tracks. His cunning worked. He fooled Pat Gray. Nixon never came after him. And this clever bureaucrat continued to do exactly what Nixon feared: tell Woodward and Bernstein secrets that would help destroy a presidency.

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**David Corn** is *Mother Jones*’ Washington bureau chief. Until 2007, he was Washington editor of *The Nation*.

**Jeff Goldberg** Jeff Goldberg is an author and independent television producer of documentaries for PBS, BBC and the Discovery Channel.

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## The US and Europe Aren't Interested in Diplomacy

*A conversation with Noam Chomsky on the war in Ukraine.*

By [David Barsamian](#)

JUNE 17, 2022



Antonina Kaletnyk waits for the body of her son in front of a collapsed building in the town of Borodianka. (Ronaldo Schemidt / AFP via Getty Images)

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This article originally appeared at [TomDispatch.com](#). To stay on top of important articles like these, [sign up](#) to receive the latest updates from TomDispatch.com.

**C**an you even remember when it began? Doesn't it seem like forever? And the timing—if forever can even be said to have timing—has been little short of miraculous (if, by miraculous, you mean catastrophic beyond measure). No, I'm not talking about the January 6 attack on the Capitol and everything that led up to and followed it, including the ongoing

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And yet, a seemingly never-ending war near the heart of Europe is also proving a disaster beyond measure globally, as Rajan Menon was perhaps the first to note right here at *TomDispatch*, threatening starvation across much of what used to be known as “the Third World.” Meanwhile, barely noticed but more disastrous, the latest news on the carbon an embattled humanity is pouring into the atmosphere is anything but cheery.

Consider all of this context for the remarkable 93-year-old Noam Chomsky, a *TomDispatch* regular, to put the Ukraine War in the largest and most devastating context possible. He did so recently in an interview titled “Chronicles of Dissent” with Alternative Radio’s David Barsamian, which appears, edited for length, below.

—Tom Engelhardt

**DAVID BARSAMIAN:** Let’s head into the most obvious nightmare of this moment, the war in Ukraine and its effects globally. But first a little background. Let’s start with President George H.W. Bush’s assurance to then-Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO would not move “one inch to the east”—and that pledge has been verified. My question to you is, why didn’t Gorbachev get that in writing?

**NOAM CHOMSKY:** He accepted a gentleman’s agreement, which is not that uncommon in diplomacy. Shake-of-the-hand. Furthermore, having it on paper would have made no difference whatsoever. Treaties that are on paper are torn up all the time. What matters is good faith. And in fact, H.W. Bush, the first Bush, did honor the agreement explicitly. He even moved toward instituting a partnership in peace, which would accommodate the countries of Eurasia. NATO wouldn’t be disbanded but would be marginalized. Countries like Tajikistan, for example, could join without formally being part of NATO. And Gorbachev approved of that. It would have been a step toward creating what he called a common European home with no military alliances.

Clinton in his first couple of years also adhered to it. What the specialists say is that by about 1994, Clinton started to, as they put it, talk from both sides of his mouth. To the Russians he was saying: Yes, we’re going to adhere to the agreement. To the Polish community in the United States and other ethnic minorities, he was saying: Don’t worry, we’ll incorporate you within NATO. By about 1996–97, Clinton said this pretty explicitly to his friend Russian President Boris Yeltsin, whom he had helped win the 1996 election. He told Yeltsin: Don’t push too hard on this NATO business. We’re going to expand, but I need it because of the ethnic vote in the United States.

In 1997, Clinton invited the so-called Visegrad countries—Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania—to join NATO. The Russians didn’t like it but didn’t make much of a fuss. Then the Baltic nations joined, again the same thing. In 2008, the second Bush, who was quite different from the first, invited Georgia and Ukraine into NATO. Every US diplomat understood very well that Georgia and Ukraine were red lines for Russia. They’ll tolerate the expansion elsewhere, but these are in their geostrategic heartland and they’re not going to tolerate expansion there. To continue with the story, the Maidan uprising took place in 2014, expelling the pro-Russian president, and Ukraine moved toward the West.

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NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, bragged about it. He said: This is what we were doing since 2014. Well, of course, this is very consciously, highly provocative. They knew that they were encroaching on what every Russian leader regarded as an intolerable move. France and Germany vetoed it in 2008, but under US pressure, it was kept on the agenda. And NATO, meaning the United States, moved to accelerate the de facto integration of Ukraine into the NATO military command.

In 2019, Volodymyr Zelensky was elected with an overwhelming majority—I think about 70 percent of the vote—on a peace platform, a plan to implement peace with Eastern Ukraine and Russia, to settle the problem. He began to move forward on it and, in fact, tried to go to the Donbas, the Russian-oriented eastern region, to implement what's called the Minsk II agreement. It would have meant a kind of federalization of Ukraine with a degree of autonomy for the Donbas, which is what they wanted. Something like Switzerland or Belgium. He was blocked by right-wing militias which threatened to murder him if he persisted with his effort.

Well, he's a courageous man. He could have gone forward if he had had any backing from the United States. The US refused. No backing, nothing, which meant he was left to hang out to dry and had to back off. The US was intent on this policy of integrating Ukraine step by step into the NATO military command. That accelerated further when President Biden was elected. In September 2021, you could read it on the White House website. It wasn't reported but, of course, the Russians knew it. Biden announced a program, a joint statement to accelerate the process of military training, military exercises, more weapons as part of what his administration called an "enhanced program" of preparation for NATO membership.

It accelerated further in November. This was all before the invasion. Secretary of State Antony Blinken signed what was called a charter, which essentially formalized and extended this arrangement. A spokesman for the State Department conceded that before the invasion, the US refused to discuss any Russian security concerns. All of this is part of the background.

On February 24th, Putin invaded, a criminal invasion. These serious provocations provide no justification for it. If Putin had been a statesman, what he would have done is something quite different. He would have gone back to French President Emmanuel Macron, grasped his tentative proposals, and moved to try to reach an accommodation with Europe, to take steps toward a European common home.

The US, of course, has always been opposed to that. This goes way back in Cold War history to French President de Gaulle's initiatives to establish an independent Europe. In his phrase "from the Atlantic to the Urals," integrating Russia with the West, which was a very natural accommodation for trade reasons and, obviously, security reasons as well. So, had there been any statesmen within Putin's narrow circle, they would have grasped Macron's initiatives and experimented to see whether, in fact, they could integrate with Europe and avert the crisis. Instead, what he chose was a policy which, from the Russian point of view, was total imbecility. Apart from the criminality of the invasion, he chose a policy that drove Europe deep into the pocket of the United States. In fact, it is even inducing Sweden and Finland to join NATO—the worst possible outcome from the Russian point of view, quite apart from the criminality of the

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There's only one way to bring it to an end. That's diplomacy. Now, diplomacy, by definition, means both sides accept it. They don't like it, but they accept it as the least bad option. It would offer Putin some kind of escape hatch. That's one possibility. The other is just to drag it out and see how much everybody will suffer, how many Ukrainians will die, how much Russia will suffer, how many millions of people will starve to death in Asia and Africa, how much we'll proceed toward heating the environment to the point where there will be no possibility for a livable human existence. Those are the options. Well, with near 100 percent unanimity, the United States and most of Europe want to pick the no-diplomacy option. It's explicit. We have to keep going to hurt Russia.

You can read columns in *The New York Times*, the London *Financial Times*, all over Europe. A common refrain is: We've got to make sure that Russia suffers. It doesn't matter what happens to Ukraine or anyone else. Of course, this gamble assumes that if Putin is pushed to the limit, with no escape, forced to admit defeat, he'll accept that and not use the weapons he has to devastate Ukraine.

There are a lot of things that Russia hasn't done. Western analysts are rather surprised by it. Namely, they've not attacked the supply lines from Poland that are pouring weapons into Ukraine. They certainly could do it. That would very soon bring them into direct confrontation with NATO, meaning the US. Where it goes from there, you can guess. Anyone who's ever looked at war games knows where it'll go—up the escalatory ladder toward terminal nuclear war.

So, those are the games we're playing with the lives of Ukrainians, Asians, and Africans, the future of civilization, in order to weaken Russia, to make sure that they suffer enough. Well, if you want to play that game, be honest about it. There's no moral basis for it. In fact, it's morally horrendous. And the people who are standing on a high horse about how we're upholding principle are moral imbeciles when you think about what's involved.

**DB: In the media, and among the political class in the United States, and probably in Europe, there's much moral outrage about Russian barbarity, war crimes, and atrocities. No doubt they are occurring as they do in every war. Don't you find that moral outrage a bit selective though?**

**NC:** The moral outrage is quite in place. There should be moral outrage. But you go to the Global South, they just can't believe what they're seeing. They condemn the war, of course. It's a deplorable crime of aggression. Then they look at the West and say: What are you guys talking about? This is what you do to us all the time.

It's kind of astonishing to see the difference in commentary. So, you read *The New York Times* and their big thinker, Thomas Friedman. He wrote a column a couple of weeks ago in which he just threw up his hands in despair. He said: What can we do? How can we live in a world that has a war criminal? We've never experienced this since Hitler. There's a war criminal in Russia. We're at a loss as to how to act. We've never imagined the idea that there could be a war criminal anywhere.

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Afghanistan. Remember, this was an entirely unprovoked invasion, strongly opposed by world opinion. There was an interview with the perpetrator, George W. Bush, who then went on to invade Iraq, a major war criminal, in the style section of *The Washington Post*—an interview with, as they described it, this lovable goofy grandpa who was playing with his grandchildren, making jokes, showing off the portraits he painted of famous people he'd met. Just a beautiful, friendly environment.

So, we know how to deal with war criminals. Thomas Friedman is wrong. We deal with them very well.

Or take probably the major war criminal of the modern period, Henry Kissinger. We deal with him not only politely but with great admiration. This is the man, after all, who transmitted the order to the Air Force saying that there should be massive bombing of Cambodia—"anything that flies on anything that moves" was his phrase. I don't know of a comparable example in the archival record of a call for mass genocide. And it was implemented with very intensive bombing of Cambodia. We don't know much about it because we don't investigate our own crimes. But Taylor Owen and Ben Kiernan, serious historians of Cambodia, have described it. Then there's our role in overthrowing Salvador Allende's government in Chile and instituting a vicious dictatorship there, and on and on. So we do know how to deal with our war criminals.

Still, Thomas Friedman can't imagine that there's anything like Ukraine. Nor was there any commentary on what he wrote, which means it was regarded as quite reasonable. You can hardly use the word "selectivity." It's beyond astonishing. So, yes, the moral outrage is perfectly in place. It's good that Americans are finally beginning to show some outrage about major war crimes committed by someone else.

**DB: I've got a little puzzle for you. It's in two parts. Russia's military is inept and incompetent. Its soldiers have very low morale and are poorly led. Its economy ranks with Italy's and Spain's. That's one part. The other part is Russia is a military colossus that threatens to overwhelm us. So, we need more weapons. Let's expand NATO. How do you reconcile those two contradictory thoughts?**

**NC:** Those two thoughts are standard in the entire West. I just had a long interview in Sweden about their plans to join NATO. I pointed out that Swedish leaders have two contradictory ideas, the two you mentioned. One, gloating over the fact that Russia has proven itself to be a paper tiger that can't conquer cities a couple of miles from its border defended by a mostly citizens' army. So, they're completely militarily incompetent. The other thought is: They're poised to conquer the West and destroy us.

George Orwell had a name for that. He called it doublethink, the capacity to have two contradictory ideas in your mind and believe both of them. Orwell mistakenly thought that was something you could only have in the ultra-totalitarian state he was satirizing in *1984*. He was wrong. You can have it in free democratic societies. We're seeing a dramatic example of it right now. Incidentally, this is not the first time.

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of course, we still had to have a huge rearmament program to counter the Kremlin design for world conquest.

That's one document and it was a conscious approach. Dean Acheson, one of the authors, later said that it's necessary to be "clearer than truth," his phrase, in order to bludgeon the mass mind of government. We want to drive through this huge military budget, so we have to be "clearer than truth" by concocting a slave state that's about to conquer the world. Such thinking runs right through the Cold War. I could give you many other examples, but we're seeing it again now quite dramatically. And the way you put it is exactly correct: These two ideas are consuming the West.

**DB: It's also interesting that diplomat George Kennan foresaw the danger of NATO moving its borders east in a very prescient op-ed he wrote that appeared in *The New York Times* in 1997.**

NC: Kennan had also been opposed to NSC-68. In fact, he had been the director of the State Department Policy Planning Staff. He was kicked out and replaced by Paul Nitze. He was regarded as too soft for such a hard world. He was a hawk, radically anticommunist, pretty brutal himself with regard to US positions, but he realized that military confrontation with Russia made no sense.

Russia, he thought, would ultimately collapse from internal contradictions, which turned out to be correct. But he was considered a dove all the way through. In 1952, he was in favor of the unification of Germany outside the NATO military alliance. That was actually Soviet ruler Joseph Stalin's proposal as well. Kennan was ambassador to the Soviet Union and a Russia specialist.

Stalin's initiative. Kennan's proposal. Some Europeans supported it. It would have ended the Cold War. It would have meant a neutralized Germany, non-militarized and not part of any military bloc. It was almost totally ignored in Washington.

There was one foreign policy specialist, a respected one, James Warburg, who wrote a book about it. It's worth reading. It's called *Germany: Key to Peace*. In it, he urged that this idea be taken seriously. He was disregarded, ignored, ridiculed. I mentioned it a couple of times and was ridiculed as a lunatic, too. How could you believe Stalin? Well, the archives came out. Turns out he was apparently serious. You now read the leading Cold War historians, people like Melvin Leffler, and they recognize that there was a real opportunity for a peaceful settlement at the time, which was dismissed in favor of militarization, of a huge expansion of the military budget.

Now, let's go to the Kennedy administration. When John Kennedy came into office, Nikita Khrushchev, leading Russia at the time, made a very important offer to carry out large-scale mutual reductions in offensive military weapons, which would have meant a sharp relaxation of tensions. The United States was far ahead militarily then. Khrushchev wanted to move toward economic development in Russia and understood that this was impossible in the

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The US concocted a “missile gap.” Russia was about to overwhelm us with its advantage in missiles. Well, when the missile gap was exposed, it turned out to be in favor of the US. Russia had maybe four missiles exposed on an airbase somewhere.

You can go on and on like this. The security of the population is simply not a concern for policy-makers. Security for the privileged, the rich, the corporate sector, arms manufacturers, yes, but not the rest of us. This doublethink is constant, sometimes conscious, sometimes not. It's just what Orwell described, hyper-totalitarianism in a free society.

**DB: In an article in *Truthout*, you quote Eisenhower's 1953 “Cross of Iron” speech. What did you find of interest there?**

NC: You should read it and you'll see why it's interesting. It's the best speech he ever made. This was 1953 when he was just taking office. Basically, what he pointed out was that militarization was a tremendous attack on our own society. He—or whoever wrote the speech—put it pretty eloquently. One jet plane means this many fewer schools and hospitals. Every time we're building up our military budget, we're attacking ourselves.

He spelled it out in some detail, calling for a decline in the military budget. He had a pretty awful record himself, but in this respect he was right on target. And those words should be emblazoned in everyone's memory. Recently, in fact, Biden proposed a huge military budget. Congress expanded it even beyond his wishes, which represents a major attack on our society, exactly as Eisenhower explained so many years ago.

The excuse: the claim that we have to defend ourselves from this paper tiger, so militarily incompetent it can't move a couple of miles beyond its border without collapse. So, with a monstrous military budget, we have to severely harm ourselves and endanger the world, wasting enormous resources that will be necessary if we're going to deal with the severe existential crises we face. Meanwhile, we pour taxpayer funds into the pockets of the fossil fuel producers so that they can continue to destroy the world as quickly as possible. That's what we're witnessing with the vast expansion of both fossil fuel production and military expenditures. There are people who are happy about this. Go to the executive offices of Lockheed Martin, ExxonMobil—they're ecstatic. It's a bonanza for them. They're even being given credit for it. Now, they're being lauded for saving civilization by destroying the possibility for life on Earth. Forget the Global South. If you imagine some extraterrestrials, if they existed, they'd think we were all totally insane. And they'd be right.

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**David Barsamian** David Barsamian is the director of Alternative Radio in Boulder, Colorado ([www.alternativeradio.org](http://www.alternativeradio.org)).

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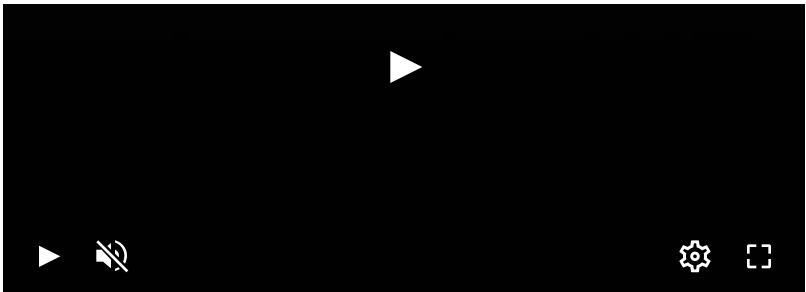
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