

spect our rights as indigenous people to this land. The fact of the matter is that the large scale, open-pit cyanide heap leach mining, the pumping of tens of thousands of gallons of water and the purchasing of lands for private property by gold companies has been taking place without our consent and in direct conflict with our concerns – which we have expressed over and over again.

“What we do here, in the U.S., affects all indigenous peoples. We must always keep this in mind. We must expose the illusions that the U.S. and the corporations have created around us all and we must educate people about the sacredness of things and the importance of protecting those things against any amount of money.”

“Now we have the United States of America offering us 15 cents per acre for our life, because the land is life, water is life. But these are all the earth. The first government in the whole world that is making an offer to buy our birthrights – our rights as indigenous people. I wouldn't be surprised to the years that come that this type of practice by other nations of the world are even going to somewhere as to say, ‘We are going to buy your rights whether you like it or not.’ And that is what is facing us today.

“Now, let's look at what happened on the land. In the 1950s, they tested nuclear weapons on our land. Soon afterward, thousands of sheep died and the United States denied that it was nuclear testing. They called it atomic testing at the time. Nuclear testing, atomic testing. Millions of sheep died.

“Nuclear radiation causes cancer. Many people do have thyroid cancer. Many people are affected in different ways from radiation from the nuclear testing. Then they went underground with their nuclear tests.

“And I saw a lot of difference from the time they did put a test ban treaty into effect because we were in the livestock business. It was sad to see little calves come out deformed. It was sad. And then, we started to see the mama cows develop sickness within their own bodies. I think if these kinds of deformities are in the livestock, they can also be in the human children. It can happen to any child of the earth. Any one of us. We are all affected.

“The springs are drier in the mountains. It is devastating. The only life that can be up there is man because he can

carry water on his back when he goes up there. The rest of the animals depend on the natural water source, which won't be there.

“With this nuclear testing, and nuclear waste dump [at Yucca Mountain], I don't feel safe at all. Now we have biological testing done at the test site, chemical warfare, all these kinds of testing are done there. I think it is wrong. I think these are crimes against humanity, and crimes against all life being perpetuated by the governments of the world. They have no right to do that. Governments are against the people, especially the poor, whom they think are weaker.

“The Western Shoshone, other indigenous people, and other people need to stand proud with dignity, and with honor of their families, their tribes.

“Deep inside, your tears fall. But after awhile you run out of tears. I used to hear the old folks talking about crying from within, from your heart. So, I assume now that this is all we have left. There are very little tears that we cry from within.”

CP

## Russia gets its Act Together

By Serge Halimi

**T**he question of responsibility for the hostilities in the Caucasus apparently shouldn't worry us too much. Less than a week after Georgia's invasion, two well-known French commentators said it was old stuff. An influential neoconservative from the United States backed that view: knowing who started things “is not very important”, wrote Robert Kagan. “This war did not begin because of a miscalculation by Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili. It is a war that Moscow has been attempting to provoke for some time.”

One hypothesis deserves another. If, on the day of the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics, somebody else than Saakashvili, a graduate of New York's Columbia Law School, had started a war, would western capitals and their media have been able to contain righteous indignation at such a symbolic act?

History is easier to follow when goodies and baddies are decided in advance. The goodies, such as Georgia, have the right to defend their territorial integrity

against the separatist struggles of their neighbors. The baddies, such as Serbia, must accept the self-determination of minority communities, or expect to be bombed by NATO. The moral of this story is even more enlightening when, to defend his country's borders, the charming pro-American Saakashvili recall some of the 2,000 soldiers he had sent to assist in the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

On August 16, President George Bush, speaking with gravity, rightly invoked the “Security Council resolutions of the United Nations,” including the “sovereignty and independence and territorial integrity” of Georgia whose “borders should command the same respect as every other nation's.” Like Iraq's?

Only the U.S. has the right to act unilaterally when it decides (or claims) that its security is at stake. In reality, events have followed a simpler plan: the U.S. plays for Georgia against Russia; Russia plays for South Ossetia and Abkhazia to “punish” Georgia.

Two Pentagon position papers have indicated a desire to prevent the resurgence of Russian power ever since 1992, when it was in ruins. To ensure that U.S. hegemony, which began with the first Gulf War and the disintegration of the Soviet bloc, became permanent, the Pentagon announced that it would be necessary to “convince likely rivals that they no longer need aspire to a greater role.” If that didn't work, the U.S. would know how “to dissuade” them. And the main target was Russia, “the only power in the world which could destroy the U.S.”

So, can we chide Russian leaders for bristling against Western help for the “color revolutions” of Ukraine and Georgia, the inclusion of former members of the Warsaw Pact in NATO, and the prospect of U.S. missiles on Polish soil – all of which were elements of the old U.S. strategy to weaken Russia, whatever its regime or its politics.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, the architect of the U.S.A.'s risky strategy in Afghanistan, recently explained the other part of the U.S. grand design: “We have access through Georgia ... to the oil and soon also the gas that lies not only in Azerbaijan but beyond it in the Caspian Sea and beyond in Central Asia. So, in that sense, it's a very major and strategic asset to us.” He can't be accused of inconsistency: even in the days of Boris Yeltsin, when Russia was still floundering, he ad-

vocated driving it from the Caucasus and Central Asia so that energy flows to the West could be guaranteed.

Nowadays Russia is doing better, the U.S. is doing less well, and oil prices have taken off. Victim of its president's provocative actions, with U.S. encouragement, Georgia has just been hit from three directions.

**CP**

**Serge Halimi** is the director of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, where this piece also appears.

Translated by Robert Waterhouse.

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rations?

Actually, Todd seems to us a sign that things have moved on from the gloomy portrait of the American working-class male, offered us by Susan Faludi in her book *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*. Faludi's blue-collar, backlashing male lived in rage and anguish at his lost estate as breadwinner and lord of the hearth. We don't detect signs of this kind of angst from Todd, a member of the steelworkers' union, who seems at ease as a supportive

husband and, more importantly, father. (Frankly, we worry about Bristol's guy, Levi Johnson. This may not have been a wise pick. But we do know that Sarah and Todd will be there to take Bristol and her child in, if all does not prosper with Levi.)

We wish Obama had made the same sort of bold throw as McCain. He could have picked a populist like Senator Jim Webb of Virginia, or Gov. Brian Schweitzer of Montana, or Clare McCaskill, the first-term senator from Missouri, or the Kansas governor, Kathleen Sebelius. Instead, he bowed to establishment pressure, nowhere more than from the Israel lobby, and picked that vizier of the permanent government, Joe Biden. "Change" and "hope" are not words one associates with Senator Joe Biden, a man so ripely symbolic of everything that is unchanging and hopeless about our political system that a computer simulation of the corporate-political paradigm senator in Congress would turn out "Biden" in a nanosecond.

If she makes it to the vice president's office, Sarah Palin will no doubt shake things up. Liberals gasp with rage that she's had friendly relations with the

Alaska Independence Party and put on a Buchanan button when he came to Anchorage. These are encouraging signs of independence and, hopefully, of some reserve about the neocons.

Of course the bottom line for liberals, particularly women, is her position on Choice. Which is the image you prefer: a story that Sarah Palin had aborted her baby once she was told of its Down syndrome, and had counseled Bristol to abort her baby so as not to discomode the mother's political campaign? Or, the course that Sarah Palin did take, consistent with her outlook on life and her beliefs?

So, someone opposed to Choice might become vice president. What about all the politicians nominally favoring choice, who have made it virtually impossible since *Roe v. Wade* for working women to have practical, effective choice? The liberals attack Palin for her position on sex education. But when Jocelyn Elders, Clinton's surgeon general, spoke publicly about the merits of masturbation and condoms, she was immediately fired. There are postures, and there are principled positions. We prefer the latter.

**CP**

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