

CounterPunch

ATOMIC POWER'S SILENT SPILLS BY PAUL GUNTER

FROM DECOLONIZATION TO NEO-FASCISM BY PETER LEE

THE RISE OF BIG GENERIC BY STEVE HENDRICKS

MEDICAL CARE IN U.S. PRISONS BY THANDISIZWE CHIMURENGA



CounterPunch

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In Memory of
Alexander Cockburn
1941-2012



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The King

Just read St. Clair's piece on B.B. King. Beautiful, man. Just wanted to thank you for giving some props to B.B.'s longtime concern for the needs of prisoners. Having had the contact I've had with America's absurdly named correctional institutions and with American prisoners, I'm aware of how huge the needs are - getting larger. Thank you for your sensitivity to that and to that part of B.B.'s greatness. As always, great job on CP, first thing I turn to everyday and tell everybody else to do the same.

Terry Swinton

Strong and Soulful

Excellent piece on B.B. King. Strong, soulful, finely writ. Back in the early '90s, I was a Hollywood music supervisor and hired B.B. to perform in a scene in some dreadful Robert Downey Jr. flick whose name has thankfully left my memory. I got to hang with The Man Himself between takes and he graciously signed my vinyl *Live At The Regal*. He was kind, open, friendly, down to earth—something that I can't say for all performers of his magnitude. When I wrote liners for the Michael Bloomfield box set last year, I was reminded how personally supportive B.B. and Michael were of each other. When Michael was having serious dope problems in the early '70s, B.B. intervened after Dottie Bloomfield—Michael's mother—came to a show at Mr. Kelly's in Chicago and

went backstage to ask for his help. She knew that B.B. was the only man Michael would listen to. B.B. called Bloomers and had *the talk* and Michael cleaned up (for awhile anyway). A beautiful cat and a *killer* guitarist!

Michael Simmons

Touching Piece

Thank you Fawzia Afzul-Khan's article *The Horror, The Horror*. It touched me in both an emotional and intellectual level. It really resonated with this 62 year old black male born in America. I apologize for the "Jackass instructor" who insulted you after 9-11. As you know "racist intolerant ignorance" is held in high esteem in this country. This is probably the same type of person who will not call the church assassin who shot 9 people a terrorist or demand the white nationalist terrorist be profiled by the police as if they were people of color or any type of "other" as you phrased it.

Sincerely,

Shaka Lumumba

Dem's Ice Bucket Challenge

Joshua Frank, thanks for throwing a wonderful bucket of ice cold water on many who were, and are just waiting on the next left-leaning Democrat in whom to put our trust in the upcoming election. Yep! Bernie will be making waves and big headlines proving that we have an active democracy going on. Sadly, or hopefully, your recent article in CounterPunch will trigger many of us to seek and find the difficult long term so-

lutions, instead of jumping on another gas guzzling bandwagon that will probably be repossessed, if it hasn't been already, long before the election.

Pablo Assab

New Blood, Old Wounds

Lembcke's article *Nobody spat on American GIs* is another effort by him to reopen old, painful wounds for many vets and to justify his unsupported claims in an untruthful book he wrote. He claims it was a "myth" that veterans returning from Vietnam were spat upon by anti-war radicals or met with jeers, curses and placards in US airports. On my first return from combat infantry service in Vietnam on Sept. 20/21, 1968, after being transferred from Travis Air Base in a military bus to the San Francisco airport with a tired group of war weary young GIs, we were met by a large group of chanting radicals waving placards saying "babykillers", "murderers" and "war criminals" and shouting such slogans at us. We moved along without assaulting them; there was perhaps one policeman keeping them from getting too close. I remember we reacted with surprising dignity. Following my second return from Vietnam on Christmas day 1968 after I was wounded in the Mekong Delta, I was hitchhiking on an on-ramp of the NJ turnpike in January on my way to witness the inauguration of Nixon, with my arm in a cast and sling from a bullet wound. It was very cold in my uniform when a car pulled up

with several Rutgers University stickers and both side windows rolled down right next to me with the faces of at least four "long-haired" people, at least one of whom was a woman, who asked me if I wanted a ride. When I said yes, they all spat on me on me at once and began screaming insults, before speeding off. I was active in the antiwar movement inside the U.S. Army in 1969-1970, a very dangerous thing at the time, and married an antiwar radical leader, Josie Duke, Press Secretary for SDS at the Columbia uprising of 1968 and a founder of the Fort Dix antiwar coffee house and newspaper "Shakedown." She has been my wife for over 45 years now, and the mother of our five children. We subsequently had repeated nasty interchanges with her former comrades who became the "Weathermen," but that is another story; for many years afterward we were followed and harassed by the FBI because of our activism. I have never publicly spoken or written about this incident before because of my love for my wife and our many friends in the antiwar movement, but Lembcke's lies force me to respond in the name of many others who received the same ugly welcome home from an unpopular war. Its obvious from Lembcke's smug self-promotion over the past 18 years that he is seeking attention, by provoking controversy, but by writing that spitting on GIs was a "myth" he has shown himself to be a fraud and a liar. The "College of the Holy Cross" should be ashamed to call him an "associate professor emeritus."

John M.G. Brown



ROAMING CHARGES

Long Time Coming, Long Time Gone

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

On the day Pope Francis released his encyclical on the fate of the Earth, I was struggling to climb a near vertical cliff on the Parajito Plateau of northern New Mexico. My fingers gripped tightly to handholds notched into the rocks hundreds of years ago by Ancestral Puebloans, the anodyne phrase now used by modern anthropologists to describe the people once known as the Anasazi. The day was a scorcher and the volcanic rocks were so hot they blistered my hands and knees. Even my guide, Elijah Naranjo, a young member of the Santa Clara Pueblo, confessed that the heat radiating off the basalt had made him feel faint, although perhaps he was simply trying to make me feel less like a weather wimp.

When we finally hurled ourselves over the rimrock to the top of the mesa, the ruins of the city of Puyé spread before us. Amid cholla cactus, piñon pines and sagebrush, two watchtowers rose above the narrow spine of the mesa top, guarding the crumbling walls of houses that once sheltered more than 1,500 people. I was struck by the defensive nature of the site: an acropolis set high above the corn, squash and beans in the valley below; a city fortified against the inevitable outbreaks turbulence and violence unleashed by periods of prolonged scarcity.

The ground sparkled with potsherds, the shattered remnants of exquisitely crafted bowls and jars, all featuring dazzling polychromatic glazes. Some had been used to haul water up the cliffs of the mesa, an arduous and risky daily ordeal that surely would only have been undertaken during a time of extreme environmental and cultural stress. How did they end up here? Where did they come from? What were they fleeing?

“They came here after the lights went out at Chaco,” Elijah tells me. He’s referring to the great houses of Chaco Canyon, now besieged by Big Oil. Chaco, the imperial city of the Anasazi, was ruled for four hundred years by a stern hierarchy of astronomer-priests until it was swiftly abandoned around 1250 AD. “Why did they leave?” I asked.

“Something bad happened, after the waters ran out.” He won’t go any further and I don’t press him.

The ruins of Puyé sit in the blue shadow of the Jemez Mountains. A few miles to the north, in the austere labs of Los Alamos, scientists still calculate the dark equations of global destruction down to the last decimal point.

This magnificent complex of towers, multi-story dwellings, plazas, granaries, kivas and cave dwellings was itself abandoned suddenly around 1500. Its Tewa-speaking residents moved off the cliffs and mesas to the flatlands along the Rio Grande ten miles to the east, near the site of the current Santa Clara (St. Clair) Pueblo. A few decades later they would encounter an invading force beyond their worst nightmare: Coronado and his metal-plated conquistadors. Again, it was a prolonged drought that forced the egalitarian people of Puyé from their mesa-top fortress. “The elders say that the people knew it was time to move when they saw the black bears leaving the canyon,” Elijah told me.

Elijah is a descendent of one of the great heroes of Santa Clara: Domingo Naranjo, a leader of the one true American Revolution, the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, which drove the Spanish out of New Mexico. Naranjo was half-Tewa and half-black, the son of an escaped slave of the Spanish. That glorious rebellion largely targeted the

brutal policies of the Franciscan missionaries, who had tortured, enslaved and butchered the native people of the Rio Grande Valley for nearly 100 years. As the Spanish friars fled, Naranjo supervised the razing of the Church the Franciscans had erected—using slave labor—in the pueblo’s plaza.

Now the hope of the world may reside in the persuasive powers of a Franciscan, the Hippy Pope, whose Druidic encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, reads like a tract from the Deep Ecology movement of the 1980s, only more lucidly and urgently written. Pope Francis depicts the ecological commons of the planet being sacrificed for a “throwaway culture” that is driven by a deranged economic system whose only goal is “quick and easy profit.” As the supreme baptizer, Francis places a special emphasis on the planet’s imperiled waters, both the dwindling reserves of freshwater and the inexorable rise of acidic oceans, heading like a slow-motion tsunami toward a coast near you.

Climate change has gone metastatic and we are all weather wimps under the new dispensation. Consider that Hell on Earth: Phoenix, Arizona, a city whose water greed has breached any rational limit. Its 1.5 million residents, neatly arranged in spiraling cul-de-sacs, meekly await a reckoning with the Great Thirst, as if Dante himself had supervised the zoning plans. The Phoenix of the future seems destined to resemble the ruins of Chaco, with insipid architecture.

I am writing this column in the basement of our house in Oregon City, which offers only slight relief from the oppressive heat outside. The temperature has topped 100 degrees again. It hasn’t rained in 40 days and 40 nights. We are reaching the end of something. Perhaps it has already occurred. Even non-believers are left to heed the warnings of the Pope. Yet now there is no hidden refuge to move toward. There is only a final movement to build, a last stand against the forces of greed and extinction. It will either be a long time coming or a long time gone. **CP**



DIAMONDS AND RUST

By Their Work Ye Shall Know Them

By JOANN WYPIJEWSKI

A passer-through might think there's not much to the town of Alexander, North Dakota. A post office that's hiring. A couple of motels, one called Tumbleweed; the other, Shut Eye. A few restaurants and taverns, and 223 souls according to the last census. I stopped because of the name and because it was on my way. I had not expected anything, really, except to take a snapshot of my '63 Valiant next to the sign announcing the town—an homage to AC Cockburn, whose intercession on my behalf with the great Dave Eller helped me secure the car back before I had a license to drive it.

I certainly hadn't expected so grand a building as the Alexander High School, circa 1914, on a rise just past the town sign, but if I hadn't been absorbed in book called *Lewis and Clark Through Indian Eyes* I doubt that the school's repurposing as the Lewis and Clark Trail Museum would have beckoned. Invited by coincidence, I stepped into the lower level, and a singularly ferocious passion.

One card captures the timbre of the room:

In the 1920's, having eradicated large predators, the need to spend tax dollars and please ignorance targeted the Black-tailed Prairie Dog. Labeled 'Public Enemy No. 1' the prairie dog faced an onset of military style campaigned slaughter that rivaled the trench warfare of World War I. Three million pounds of poisoned grain was strewn over 14 million acres of grassland in the late 1920's, killing 100s of millions of prairie dogs and many other animals that ate the grain, or the bodies of the poisoned prairie dogs. The

poison ranged from strychnine to cyanide to Compound 1080, which would be banned under the Nixon administration in 1972. The poison was distributed by government and military units on horseback, spreading it by hand from saddle bags.

No hushed museumese here or professional aesthetic. Instead, a photocopy of a picture of prairie dog carcasses piled up and the lurid mind-picture of state agents methodically spreading death.

Other rough quality photos show heaped wolf and coyote bodies—75,000 of the latter exterminated in 1923 according to an annual report of the government's poisoning operations against predators—and tall mounds of bison skulls, gathered by the side of rail lines at Detroit's Rouge River. There they would be ground into fertilizer or reduced to bone char for use in pigments and sugar refining. In one 1895 photo a Detroit man stands atop 10,000 to 12,000 skulls.

After the slaughter of the bison herds, when there was nothing left to kill for the big game shooters and the hide traders and the railroad swells; after the hunt, then began the gleaning. The animals had been skinned and left to rot. It's debated how many bison roamed the Great Plains in 1806: 30 million? 60 million? In 1889 they could be counted: 541. What had been the vast commons of the Indians became the scrap yard of hard-pressed homesteaders, collecting dry bones and bartering them with industrial agents from east of the Mississippi, who paid \$10 a ton on average but more likely offered goods: fifty pounds of twine for

a ton, a sewing machine for forty tons.

I moved from one vitrine to the next, transfixed. "The Butcher Named 'Fashion,'" one card barks beside a beaver fur toque and a lady's head-dress sprouting an egret feather. "The Extinction of the Prairie", calls out another. "Government Execution", yet another.

Who made this? I'd read that locals had turned the school into a museum in '69. There was some farm equipment out front, and a cabin outfitted with a neat bed, a pair of cross-country skis, and a pair of elk heads. In this downstairs room was a model of the Lewis and Clark expedition's winter camp, some Indian effects, the story of Sakakawea (as per the official North Dakota spelling) and competing claims that Meriwether had killed himself or been murdered. I moved on to the tragedy of the passenger pigeon.

A common creature of the prairie in the 1840s, the last wild bird died in 1900, "shot flying with a flock of mourning doves by a 14 year old boy at Sargents, Ohio." A few relics lived in captivity until, on September 1, 1912, the only one left, Martha, died at the Cincinnati Zoo. "The Passenger Pigeon crashed from 3 billion to zero in 64 years":

...a century of relentless slaughter brought about by man's greatest triumph in his war against nature: clearing the skies.

I went upstairs and across the way to James Gang Java in search of a human presence and iced coffee. It turns out the museum constitutes far more than that lower room—floors of family history, the reliquary of a community's existence, the grand, the quotidian, the grisly. The vivacious Jess James couldn't say who'd assembled the animal exhibits, and after a spirited conversation, though I toured the other floors, I left convinced of that lower room's brilliance at baring the foundation of progress. The prairie is gone, and people still shoot prairie dogs, don't they? **CP**



EMPIRE BURLESQUE

The Pope's New World Order

BY CHRIS FLOYD

We are living in a world gone through the looking glass when the most strident, unequivocal—even scatological!—denunciations of capitalism and its discontents are coming from ... the Bishop of Rome. While Bernie Sanders pushes 1950s centrist notions as “radical” reforms and Britain’s so-called Labour Party tries to recover from the defeat of Michael Dukakis—sorry, Ed Milliband—by sucking up even more abjectly to corporate power, Pope Francis is out there literally likening the capitalist system to shit.

Speaking in Bolivia at the World Meeting of Popular Movements, a gathering of groups representing the poor, and others pushed to the wall—or off the cliff—by the Davos Dominionists who now hold sway over so much of the world, Francis said that behind the neoliberal economic order, “there is the stench of what Basil of Caesarea called ‘the dung of the devil.’”

I don’t suppose we’ll be hearing anything like this from Hillary at her next Wall Street fundraiser. Francis went on to give a perfect description of the system that our bipartisan transatlantic elites have done so much to impose on the world—by force or, as in Greece, by blackmail. Thus saith Mr Bergoglio:

An unfettered pursuit of money rules. The service of the common good is left behind. Once capital becomes an idol and guides people’s decisions, once greed for money presides over the entire socioeconomic system, it ruins society, it condemns and enslaves men and women, it destroys human fraternity, it sets people against one another and, as we clearly see, it even puts at risk our common home.

The pope, introduced by Bolivian President Evo Morales (who was sporting a Che jacket), kept hammering at a slogan that he said must undergird a new economic order: “Land, Lodging and Labor,” guaranteed for all. Lenin would be spinning in his grave (if Stalin hadn’t mummified him) to hear the distinct echoes of the slogan he coined just about 100 years ago: “Land, Peace, Bread.”

In September, Francis is heading to Washington, where John Boehner may now be re-thinking his plans for a gala “inauguration-like setting” for the Pope’s speech to the joint houses of Congress. Barack Obama too might find it awkward when he recalls the Pope’s words in Bolivia about the kind of liberty-stripping, corporate-coddling trade pacts he and Boehner have been pushing. Francis called these treaties by their true name: “the new colonialism,” which, like Old Cloot himself, takes on many forms:

“At times [the new colonialism] appears as the anonymous influence of mammon: corporations, loan agencies, certain ‘free trade’ treaties, and the imposition of measures of ‘austerity’ which always tighten the belt of workers and the poor.” (Francis also apologized for the old colonialism in the “so-called conquest of Americas,” and for the Church’s part in the many evils committed against the indigenous peoples by the European invaders and their successors.)

To escape the capitalist dung we’re now mired in, Francis called for a “truly communitarian economy” where “human beings, in harmony with nature, structure the entire system of production and distribution in such a way that the abilities and needs of each individual find suitable expression in

social life.” All this, plus guaranteed “access to education, health care, new technologies, artistic and cultural manifestations, communications, sports and recreation.”

Ordinary people controlling, *er*, the means of production and distribution? Guaranteed access to all available social goods? Perhaps the pope should have borrowed Morales’ jacket for the speech. But despite the rhetorical resonances, Francis is no Leninist. For one thing, Lenin would never have accepted the idea that the kind of wholesale transformation of society the Pope is seeking could be accomplished without a revolutionary vanguard. Yet Francis concluded his call to action with a remarkable statement from someone who supposedly has a direct line from God on how the world should be ordered:

“Neither the Pope nor the Church have a monopoly on the interpretation of social reality or the proposal of solutions to contemporary issues. I dare say that no recipe exists. History is made by each generation as it follows in the footsteps of those preceding it, as it seeks its own path.”

This actually might be the most radical thing that Francis said in the speech, although it’s unlikely that he grasped the its deeper implications. For, taken seriously and literally, it not only undermines the doctrine of papal infallibility but the authority of any ideology or belief system, religious or secular. It looks not to divine truth or the putative laws of history or economics, but to the creative—and always provisional, ever-changing—attempts of imperfect human beings to make something better of the turbulence of existence they are thrown into.

Francis called the workers and peasants in his audience “social poets,” creating new structures, new realities, in the ruins that “the world market” has made of their lives and their societies. They cheered, then gave him a miner’s helmet, which he promptly put on.

It was the most noble — and hopeful — headgear any pope has ever worn. **CP**



DAYDREAM NATION

Another Fire This Time

BY KRISTIN KOLB

I'm in Vancouver, Canada. Down the street, from my bench at an internet cafe on Main Street, a team of American women just won the World Cup—and on the day after the Fourth of July, with Japan left in their wake. I'm not patriotic, but I'm coughing. They must be, too. Bravo.

But, more importantly, and with a cough in my mouth, this city is engulfed in an eerie haze. The sun is an ugly orange and surrounded by bizarre, ember skies, and the smell of wood smoke everywhere.

Wildfires lately have consumed the Pacific Northwest. As of today, according to the Canadian Broadcasting Company, there are 181 fires, just here, in the province of British Columbia, and 48 of those broke out over the past two days. And south, in Washington state, fires sweep, tragically, through the epic faerie lands in a most remote region—the Queets River, of Olympic National Park (my favorite in the U.S., one of the only rivers in that park where an old-growth forest watershed actually meets the Pacific Ocean), back east in the drier areas of the unkept, quiet wilds of Colville National Forest—one of the last homes for wolf packs in the Lower 48—and even further, near the urbanity of Spokane. And another, in the North Cascades National Park, another home of wolves and bears. And another, near Moses Lake. By the time you read this, there will be another. Guaranteed.

If there ever were a need for an environmental John Brown in the Northwest, it's now, man, woman or child, or all three. And I'm not being provincial. Listen up.

It seems there's little to do, really, except observe the thermometer and watch it go up in smoke. What has

the local, provincial or federal government done to stop the encroachment of climate change in the Canadian portion of the Pacific Northwest, aside from enable it via ram-rod-ding tar sands projects and oil pipelines, or avoid the situation under the grant-making machine of Big Green's smoke and mirrors? If it doesn't make money, pardon my French, it won't come.

And do we really need to mention what Obama has *not* done, wilting under the gaze of the Republican and Democratic National Committees, and not bothering to give the Big Green lobbying machines of the Sierra Club or the Rainforest Action Network, et al, any time, if it really mattered? I've fantasized about dropping him in Olympic National Park, with fire gear and helmet on, so he gets a taste of the cough he's inevitably created among the ancient cedars and firs, after those trees have lived 500 years (and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, for that matter, sunk in the tar sands).

My nostrils are burning. My heart skipped this afternoon as I walked my favorite street in the city, with this local grocer and that local bistro, closed down, and saw elderly people with napkins covering their faces, and even one in a gas mask. There is an air quality warning in the city. A friend of mine is worried about his ailing mother's health. Another friend, way off in the Black Hills of South Dakota, said that a smog advisory descended upon his area last weekend due to the way the wind blew, and the wind blew far—far southeast from Canada.

So, now my immediate question is: How do we brave the haze that is consuming this city, one I've lived in, on and off, for seven years, always with a cool, clean breeze driving off the

summer heat, to a point where I've envied those who sweat in my Midwest homeland?

Now, *We* have it. Here. Weird 90 degree heat and humidity. That's the new normal. And don't tell me it's a random occurrence.

Forests burning. Cathedrals. It's a huge loss. If they were Notre Dame, we'd call the cops. But these Northwest forests are far more majestic than a French church. They offer sanctuary, like a healing chapel, and they foster life. Coastal wolves and bears drag salmon carcasses upstream and over banks into the woods, which provide nitrogen in the soil. The soil feeds the plants. The plants feed the animals. That's true sustainability, and it's a tragedy that's going up in smoke. Why? Because of political maneuverings, neglect and greed. Money and handshakes.

I've driven and hiked through forests burnt. Washington's Mount St. Helens—due to the historic volcano blast—and portions of Glacier National Park, Montana, and even a bit of Yellowstone in Wyoming.

And I wonder what my 11-year-old child will have when she gets older, to value, if *We*, like tonight, choose to honor the local Air Quality Warning and stay inside. She's been asking me to write about climate change for a year. So, yeah.

If rainforests burn, like that of the Olympics, *We* are in real crisis. If you don't yet have a handkerchief around your mouth, North America, you will soon enough. **CP**



GRASPING AT STRAWS

The Case of Crummy Incentives

BY MIKE WHITNEY

Central Bank policy has paved the way for another financial meltdown. In its annual report, the Bank For International Settlements (BIS) says that “extraordinarily low” interest rates which were adopted “in response to the unusually weak post-crisis recovery” have led to excessive risk-taking, high stock valuations and increased dependence on central banks. The BIS is worried that perennially low rates will leave policymakers with no tools to deal with an unexpected slump or financial crisis. They’re also worried that accommodative monetary policy will “heighten the risk of financial imbalances” turning a debt-fueled credit boom into an excruciating bust. To great extent, the BIS report confirms that the policies that were implemented following the Crash of 2008, have not only failed to achieve their primary goal, but have also created the conditions for another crisis.

There’s no doubt that the Fed’s ultra-low policy rate has created asset-price bubbles in stocks and bonds. According to Yale Economist Robert Shiller, stock valuations are extremely high, in fact, using his own CAPE Index, “which is the price divided by ten year earnings”, stock valuations are higher than anytime except 1929, 2000 and 2007. The implication is that high-flying stocks could headed for trouble.

Bond prices are even more distorted than stocks. Looking for a safe place to put their life savings following the last downturn, mom and pop investors piled into bonds, unaware that the risks are just as great or greater than they are in the stock market. The recent uptick in bond yields which sent global prices tumbling, reveal the market’s vulnerability to even the slightest fluctua-

tion in rates. Market analysts are concerned that the absence of liquidity in these markets will vanish if there is a sudden shock to the market that triggers a selloff. (“Liquidity” is the degree to which a bond can be bought or sold in the market without affecting the asset’s price.) If there are not enough buyers to purchase these unwanted bonds, then prices will drop dramatically, pushing yields higher and setting off another round of defaults. A run on the bond market is at the very top of everyone’s list of potential threats to financial stability. It explains why, after 6 years of zero rates and trillions in liquidity injections, the Fed is still too afraid to raise interest rates by even 25 basis points. Fed Chairman Janet Yellen knows that if she moves too quickly with rate normalization, she could spark a financial firestorm. A senior banker summed up the apprehensive mood in the market in a recent comment to the Financial Times. He said, “This year “feels like the last days of Pompeii: everyone is wondering when will the volcano erupt.”

Aside from the risks to financial stability, the Fed’s zero rate policy has also put a damper on corporate investment. Business investment is at the heart of the capitalist system. It impacts hiring, wages, productivity, and growth. Unfortunately, zero rates turn the system on its head by inducing CEOs to borrow heavily in order to buy back shares of their own companies. By repurchasing shares with cash borrowed in the credit markets, corporate bosses push stock prices higher thus rewarding shareholders instead of investing in future growth. This is a problem that’s only gotten worse over time, in

fact, according to CNBC: “Stock buybacks in the first quarter increased by 9 percent to a record \$144 billion.” At the present pace, share repurchases should exceed \$600 billion by the end of 2015. Not a penny of this huge sum will be used to buy the tools and equipment businesses need for future expansion. Every cent will be handed back to shareholders. At the same time, corporate borrowing—which has already returned to its precrisis peak—will continue to balloon as companies pile on more debt to push stock prices even higher. The Fed’s zero rates are entirely responsible. Investors are merely doing what one would expect them to do, taking advantage of the availability of cheap cash to boost their own returns.

So how much damage has the Fed done to corporate investment?

Well, if we look at the recent data on Capital expenditure, or Capex—which is the “funds used by a company to acquire or upgrade physical assets such as property, industrial buildings or equipment”—we see that things are pretty bad. In fact, according to a recent report from the country’s second biggest bank, business investment in the U.S. is about half of what it has normally been in every recession since WW2. Businesses have been trimming Capex because there’s no demand for the products they sell. The liquidity the Fed injected into the financial system never trickled down to workers in the form of higher wages, so personal consumption has remained unusually weak. The zero rates have only added to the problem by creating an incentive for CEOs to focus more on executive compensation and stock prices than on the health of their companies. Stock buybacks may pad the bank accounts of the lucky 1 percent, but they do nothing for working people or the real economy.

While most people seem to understand that the Fed’s policies have failed to produce a strong recovery, they don’t see how zero rates have undermined business investment and increased financial instability. **CP**

The Quiet Regulators

Atomic Power's Silent Spills

By Paul Gunter

Tom and Judith Zimmer live next to the Braidwood nuclear generating station in Braidwood, Illinois not far from Joliet. Braidwood nuclear station's property line has been encroaching upon their lives and wellbeing since the plant owner, the Chicago-based atomic power giant Exelon Generation, confessed in 2005 to covering up nearly two dozen uncontrolled and unmonitored radioactive spills between 1996 and 2000. Two of those spills totaled six million gallons of radioactive water from a buried pipe several miles long that connects the two atomic reactors to the Kankakee River.

The pipe is normally used for planned radioactive waste water discharges that are diluted into the river a little over two miles upstream of the drinking water intake and treatment center for the city of Wilmington, IL. Over the years, several unmaintained vacuum breaker valves along the pipeline had failed, releasing fountains of radioactive water into the area. The radioactive water, laced with tritium and cobalt-60, flooded into the public right of way, contaminating neighboring roadside ditches, ponds, cornfields and private drinking water wells.

Exelon quietly allowed millions of gallons of radioactive water that pooled on company property to saturate into the water table without a word from onsite inspectors of the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

Exelon subsequently bought up a number of private properties in the spill area to expand its owner control, including the neighbors around the Zimmers. Now, ten years after an exposé of Exelon's radioactive cover-up, the Zimmers are ill with kidney tumors and undergoing cancer treatment like their neighbors and others downstream of the Braidwood atomic reactors.

The discovery of the Exelon cover-up was the beginning of an industry-wide unraveling, which revealed that uncontrolled radioactive leaks to groundwater and aquifers had been going unreported for decades. By 2007, the national uproar that followed peaked with federal legislation proposed by then freshman Illinois U.S. Senator Barak Obama to require mandatory reporting of even the smallest leaks to the state officials and prompt alerting at the local level.

The bill never got out of committee. But Obama would go on to the White House with Rahm Emanuel, an Exelon incorporator, as The President's Chief of Staff, and David Axelrod, an Exelon top consultant, as the West Wing Senior Advisor.

Meanwhile, the nuclear industry convinced the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) that it would self-report any future leaks through a "voluntary initiative" internally self-policed by its lobbyist and troubleshooter, the Nuclear

Energy Institute.

Today, nuclear power plants are still leaking radioactive water from buried pipes and tanks that largely remain inaccessible, uninspected, and unmaintained. The problem is still mostly out of public sight, only sketchily reported by industry and essentially unregulated by the NRC.

What were originally NRC licensing agreements that nuclear power plant operators "shall" control and monitor radioactive releases, have been substituted by a compliant NRC that allows inaccessible sections of buried pipe to deteriorate until they leak, followed the industry's "voluntarily" report of the accident.

The federal oversight agency—that has essentially deferred enforcement action to industry self regulation—receives industry "special reports" on radioactive leaks that explicitly state, "There are no regulatory commitments contained in this document." If the leak is found, the company can "voluntarily" unearth a section of pipe for a piecemeal fix rather than take proactive action to prevent radioactive leaks from recurring.

These were the conclusions of our report—*Leak First, Fix Later: Uncontrolled and Unmonitored Radioactive Releases from Nuclear Power Plants*. The report was originally published in 2010 and recently updated and re-issued. Disturbingly, we find the situation is virtually unchanged from five years ago.

In the course of normal operation, nuclear power plants continuously emit and routinely release radioactivity into the air and the water. In addition, accidental liquid releases occur in the form of leaks and spills due to the inaccessibility of deteriorating buried pipes, the absence of maintenance and inspections.

Nuclear power plants have an extensive network of buried piping systems and tanks which transport and store liquids that contain radioactive isotopes including tritium—a radioactive form of hydrogen—and long-lived strontium-90. These piping systems are not adequately inspected or maintained due to their inaccessibility.

The NRC defines "buried" pipe as a piping system that is in contact with soil. It defines "underground" pipe as a piping system that is contained within a vault underground. Both buried and underground piping systems at U.S. nuclear plants are experiencing radioactive leaks that contaminate groundwater resources.

This "*spaghetti bowl*" of pipes is fabricated of a variety of materials from fiberglass to corrosion-susceptible materials like carbon steel and aluminum to more corrosion-resistant stainless steel. Because the pipes at today's reactors are aging and corroding simultaneously on both exterior and interior surfaces, many are experiencing hidden, uncontrolled, unpredictable and unmonitored leaks of radioactive water. Earthquakes have also broken buried pipes causing them to leak.

In our original report we documented that since 1963 more than 102 reactor units have leaked radioactive contamination in recurring events. As early as 1979, the NRC publicly identified the need for the nuclear industry to begin a proactive program of inspections and maintenance for the “Prevention of Unplanned Releases of Radioactivity” from reactors. Now, more than three decades later, this earlier call for preventive action is ignored by industry and regulator alike.

The industry goes so far to now claim that self-reporting of recurring radioactive leaks is a welcome voluntary improvement to public awareness through their “Groundwater Protection Initiative”. Voluntary self-reporting on its own is not an acceptable substitute for comprehensive regulatory oversight and enforcement action aimed at protecting water resources through prevention by making piping systems accessible to inspection, maintenance and monitoring programs before they leak and containment if they do.

The presence of radioactive water in groundwater, both on and off the reactor site, raises serious health concerns. Today’s groundwater can be tomorrow’s drinking water. Long-lived manmade radioactive toxins being deliberately and accidentally released from nuclear power plants are incrementally poisoning this important water resource.

Tritium, as isotopic hydrogen, is the smallest and lightest element of the Periodic Table. It is extremely pervasive and easily permeates most kinds of materials including concrete and many grades of steel. Tritium reduction in nuclear power plants has not been historically pursued by the industry primarily because of the difficulty, the cost and an industry-championed assumption that tritium can be diluted to inconsequential low-dose radiation exposure. In fact, chronic exposure to tritium releases is a universal health risk from every nuclear plant.

Tritium has a half-life of 12.3 years, meaning that is a biological hazard for at least 120 years (roughly ten half-lives). Tritium in its radioactive gas form (HT) is routinely vented from operating nuclear power stations as well as permeating through steel and concrete containment structures to escape into the atmosphere. Its liquid form, tritiated water (HTO), is chemically and physically identical to water in all its states including ice, rain, fog, and vapor. It can be commonly described as radioactive water. Tritium is routinely diluted and deliberately discharged by industry into adjacent surface water in rivers, reservoirs, lakes and the ocean.

Once escaped, tritium is considered to be the most highly effective distributor of radioactivity in the environment because it is highly mobile, going anywhere the hydrogen molecule can go. Tritium is by far the largest volumetric routine radioactive release from nuclear power plants.

While both the NRC and the nuclear power industry admit that tritium exposure “health risks include increased occurrences of cancer and genetic abnormalities in future generations,” they continue to trivialize how significant a health risk

there is to neighboring populations from chronic tritium exposure and from ground and surface water contamination.

Tritium is often described as a “low-energy” beta particle emitter but it is disingenuous to describe it as “weak” and harmless as nuclear power promotion materials claim. More accurately, tritium is “low-range” beta particle emitter that is clinically shown to be more effective at damaging and destroying living cells even than gamma rays. Because tritium is hydrogen, it rapidly exchanges with hydrogen molecules in nature. The cellular makeup of the human body is 70% water (H₂O). Hydrogen is by far the most common element in the makeup of the DNA molecule. As such, chronic tritium exposure is clinically recognized to be a cause of cancer, genetic damage and birth defects.

Radioactive leaks migrating into the water table and aquifers remain dangerous for decades and longer. The recurring contamination of groundwater further results in the spread of contamination to soil discovered after nuclear power plants are permanently closed. Excavating and removing radioactive soil substantially increases decommissioning and environmental cleanup costs where the industry is already facing significant funding shortfalls.

After the Connecticut Yankee nuclear power plant was closed in 1996, and well after the decommissioning process began, the discovery of strontium-90 in radioactive leaks that migrated into the soil was responsible for an increase from the \$410 million that the utility had set aside in its decommissioning fund to a \$1.2 billion cleanup cost that state electric ratepayers had to absorb.

Despite both the known health risks and unpredictable public cost increases, the NRC routinely fails to acknowledge the full extent of its own regulatory responsibilities to require and enforce the control of radiological releases at nuclear power plants. In fact, federal licensing agreements with nuclear power plant operators have established “*minimum requirements*” in the Code of Federal Regulation not only for the safety performance of reactor systems, structures, and components, but also for the radiological consequences of reactor operations and occurrences to assure and demonstrate that radioactive effluents to the air and water are controlled and discharge pathways monitored. To the contrary, the NRC has chosen to selectively ignore its own radioactive effluent control and monitoring regulations in acquiescence to industry financial and production interests that ultimately comes at the expense of undue risk to the public health and safety.

A national crisis of public confidence arising out of uncontrolled and undisclosed radioactive leaks from nuclear power plants has pushed both the NRC and the industry into damage control of failed policy and practice, arguably more for rebuilding public image than actually addressing reactor infrastructure degradation and the radioactive pollution issue. The nuclear industry and the NRC have resolved

that simply disclosing the radioactive leaks, without concrete action plans with enforcement requirements to prevent leaks, is sufficient to bolster public trust.

However, trusting the nuclear industry to voluntarily disclose radioactive leaks was never more fully exposed as misguided when representatives of Entergy, the owner of the now closed Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant, denied under oath the very existence of buried pipes carrying radioactive water, let alone the fact they were leaking.

In a more recent example, Exelon was once again in the news when a groundwater monitoring well at its Pennsylvania's Peach Bottom nuclear power plant tested positive on April 17, 2015 for a significant level of tritium contamination. According to Exelon's voluntary report to the NRC, the "possible" source of contamination of outside groundwater was from the accumulation of tritium on the floor inside one of the turbine buildings. The "special report" did not identify which reactor system or component had originally leaked or spilled the radioactive liquid, nor how it got out of the turbine building structure and detected in a monitoring well. Given this was a recurring leak from 2009 outside the turbine building, there is no indication that the NRC raised any questions about Exelon's recurring inadequate control of radioactive releases.

There is precedence in the nuclear industry for pro-active preventative upgrades that can better protect water resources from radioactive leaks. On April 15, 2009, only days after receiving a 20-year operating license extension from the NRC, and again on August 25, 2009, Exelon's Oyster Creek nuclear generation station in Toms River, New Jersey discovered it was leaking hundreds of thousands of gallons of radioactive water into the area water table. These leaks contaminated the Cohansey Aquifer, which is used for Southern New Jersey's drinking water, at 50 times the state's protective standard for tritium.

After the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection threatened to intervene with public funds for cleanup and hold the company liable for three times the cost, Exelon agreed in 2011 to a \$13.3 million project to transfer its 45 buried pipes carrying radioactive water to grade-level accessible and monitored concrete trenches and vaults to prevent future leaks from getting into the environment. Exelon chose "the solution to pollution is dilution," the standard "acceptable" industry response. The tritium pollution in the area water table and the Cohansey Aquifer was pumped out and diluted with reactor cooling water released into the Barnegat Bay that is already being environmentally degraded by that same 1.5 billion gallon per day thermal pollution discharge.

However, rather than similarly retrofit vulnerable uninspected and unmaintained piping systems, the nuclear industry continues to study plans that largely focus on predicting the remaining service life on inaccessible pipes before replac-

ing them with more corrosive resistant materials and/or relocating them above ground for surveillance, inspections and maintenance.

For the indefinite time being, the industry and the NRC are content to continue with the "leak first, fix later" piecemeal approach to replace sections of pipes as the radioactive leaks percolate to the surface or are detected migrating into onsite test wells. As recent as January 2015, according to the industry's internal shadow regulator, the Institute for Nuclear Power Operations (INPO) noted that uncontrolled radioactive leaks continue to spring from unknown and unanticipated sources along largely still inaccessible piping systems.

An increasingly non-competitive and financially strapped nuclear industry will admit that its primary resistance to making miles of now inaccessible buried pipes and tanks accessible to inspection and maintenance is the cost. It is cheaper to simply install more onsite groundwater monitoring test wells and speculate on the life expectancy of uninspected and unmaintained systems before they leak again.

Leak First, Fix Later concluded that given that unpredictable and uncontrolled radioactive releases to groundwater and surface water continue and are likely to increase; and that nuclear power plant operators have allowed radioactive leaks to disappear into the groundwater table and aquifers around many nuclear power stations; then the NRC should be held accountable for enforcing its own regulations and implementing its own preventive recommendations now almost 30 years old.

If the leaks and contamination are to stop, short of ultimately shutting down nuclear power entirely, there needs to be a prompt return of effective state and federal oversight and enforcement of the original licensing agreements and water protection standards. The prevention and containment of both routine and accidental radioactive releases must supersede the nuclear industry's economic considerations that presently rely on a "leak first, fix later" approach. The piecemeal replacement of damaged sections of buried and underground pipe as leaks occur, followed by mopping up as best as the industry is willing to afford, does nothing to protect the public and the environment, only industry self-interest.

There should be mandatory routine radiological sampling of area drinking water supplies around leaking nuclear power plants in order to monitor the concentration of tritium, and possibly other harmful radioactive substances.

Standardized NRC regulations can universally require that inaccessible buried pipes and tanks carrying and storing radioactive waste be promptly replaced with newly-installed above ground systems in vaulted corrosion-resistant materials. Once above-grade, vaulted pipes and tanks can be proactively inspected, monitored, maintained and, should a radioactive leak occur, contained in isolation from water, air, soil and the biological environment.

There must be more public transparency through manda-

tory reporting requirements and prompt local alerting that describes the source of the radioactive leak (routine or otherwise), its cause, and the extent of radioactivity released from nuclear power plants. Inspection findings that reveal operator mistakes, accidents and events affecting the protection and quality of water resources under and near nuclear power plants should not be locked away from public disclosure as “proprietary” company documents.

As the nuclear industry looks to further distance itself from any and all liability from the known health risks and ultimate cleanup costs to neighboring communities potentially caught in the path of a radioactive discharge, public health and environmental protection advocates must deliver the counter-punch.

Even reactor operators like Constellation Energy acknowledge that, “The true risk is legal. The plants do not have legal authorization to release radioactive material to the groundwater. Groundwater flows through and off the plant property, potentially contaminating private property.” Constellation, the operator of five reactor units at three reactor sites in Maryland and New York, recognizes that an uncontrolled radioactive leak means, “You have put your radioactive waste on my property and damaged my property value.”

At this stage, any more recurring, uncontrolled, and unmonitored radioactive leaks from nuclear power plants can be regarded as radioactive trespass. The water migrating beneath and around nuclear power plants is not their private property— it is a protected natural resource now and for future generations. It is not acceptable for the nuclear industry and the federal regulator to leave others to bear the health risks and the cleanup costs. But we have to fight for it. Beyond Nuclear offers its revised publication *Leak First, Fix Later* as preparation for that battle plan. **CP**

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The Rise of Big Generic

How we got to the \$1,200 knockoff prescription

By Steve Hendricks

Our best budgetary aphorism—“A billion here, a billion there, and pretty soon you’re talking real money”—has taken a beating of late. For a start, it has become generally known that the long departed Senator Everett Dirksen, to whom the quotation is almost always attributed, almost certainly did not say it. (And if he did, he wasn’t the first, the general wording having been around since he was a mere jasper, as young Midwesterners of a certain rusticity were called back then.) For another thing, the adage can no longer be applied with any sting to either the federal government or large multinational corporations, such has been the growth of each. Now we learn that even the merely substantial corporation may be beyond the adage so that soon it will be applicable only to heiresses of the second rank and certain orthodontists.

The event that signaled the latest erosion came on May 28, when the Federal Trade Commission reached a whacking settlement of \$1.2 billion—the largest such settlement in the FTC’s history, by a factor of ten—with Teva Pharmaceuticals, to which Teva responded with a shrug. The company even declared itself “pleased” with the deal, which might have been taken for bravado but for the concurrence of Teva’s investors, who kept the price of the company’s stock steady as could be. It is not news that a billion dollars is chump change to Big Pharma, but Teva isn’t Big Pharma. It’s Mid Pharma. Such, however, has been the consolidation in Mid Pharma, that even its players are now behemoths.

Teva has been a consolidator among consolidators, Hoovering up half a dozen companies in the last fifteen years at a cost of more than \$30 billion. If you haven’t heard of Teva, that’s because they mostly make generic drugs. Merck, Pfizer, and other familiar firms make name-brand drugs, which is why you have heard of them. Headquartered in Israel, Teva does most of its business in the West. In the United States it employs 7,500 people and fills 1.5 million prescriptions a day, more than half a billion a year. It fills nearly twice that in Europe, and it has become the biggest seller of generics in the world. Teva has plans to grow bigger still and has cast acquisitive eyes on, among others, its nearest rival, Mylan, which has so far resisted Teva’s overtures. By one slightly hyperbolic assessment, if the Mylan purchase were to go through, “Every man, woman and child in the U.S. will eventually take a pill manufactured by the new entity.” This is not good news for any man, woman, or child—unless she or he holds stock in Teva.

As Big Generic has consolidated, competition has of course dropped, and makers of generics have raised prices flam-

boyantly. In October 2013, a month's supply of doxycycline, a widely used antibiotic that has been available in generic form for three decades, cost hospitals \$1.20. Just six months later, it cost \$111.00, an increase of 9,150 percent. In July 2013, a month of tetracycline, another antibiotic long generically available, cost pharmacies \$1.50, but a year later it was \$257.70, an increase of 17,080 percent. These are extreme instances, but they are not aberrant. According to Medicare and Medicaid data, from July 2013 to July 2014 the price of half of all generics went up, and nearly 10 percent of them went up by double or more. Among this 10 percent, the average increase was 448 percent. By remarkable coincidence, the most frequently prescribed generics were among the more dramatic risers. One report found that in 2010 the fifty most popular generics cost an average of \$13.14 per prescription, but by 2014 it was \$62.10, a 373-percent spike. Big Generic is wont to point out that although the prices of half of all generics have gone up, half have gone down. Less often do they point out that the increases have far outpaced the declines. They are like the grocer who advertises the dime knocked off his cauliflower while quietly trebling the price of bread.

Naked price-gouging is indisputably behind the price hikes, but to give the pharmaceutical devils their due, it is not always the only thing behind the hikes. Shortages of raw materials, subcontracted factories that fail inspection, surges in demand due to unexpected outbreaks, backlogs at the Food and Drug Administration in processing applications by would-be manufacturers, and other circumstances can contribute to high prices. But which circumstance is responsible for what part of the price of any given drug is mostly unknown because manufacturers rarely release the data that would tell us. When Senator Bernie Sanders, the Democrat of Vermont now running for president, held a hearing on the scandalous price of generics last fall, three manufacturers of some of the most appallingly priced drugs refused to testify. Teva, which makes doxycycline and tetracycline, was one of them. What can be said with certainty is that, even setting aside rank greed, consolidation in the industry makes all of the above challenges worse. The closure of a single factory or the disruption of a single supply line doesn't much matter when six or eight companies make a drug. It's a different story when only two or three do.

It may, then, come as a surprise to those familiar with oligopolistic pricing to learn that Teva's share of the U.S. generics market in recent years has ranged from just 13 to 22 percent. Second-place Mylan has held a mere 8 to 13 percent. The four biggest generics manufacturers combined control only 40 to 50 percent. Those numbers don't have the ring of oligopoly, but the generic market is different from most, chiefly because even the biggest manufacturers can make only a modest fraction of the thousands of generic drugs in existence. Teva and Mylan, for example, make 400 or so each, many overlapping. Other manufacturers make but a few dozen. The industry as a

whole may not be oligopolistic, but the production of particular drugs most assuredly is.

Teva's troubles with the FTC date to 2002 when the company applied to the FDA to make modafinil, a generic version of Cephalon's name-brand Provigil. Modafinil is used to combat severe daytime sleepiness caused by debilitating diseases like narcolepsy, sleep apnea, and idiopathic hypersomnia. Idiopathic hypersomnia can keep sufferers perpetually groggy or, worse, asleep for up to twenty hours a day, and modafinil is the only drug that helps some sufferers. But modafinil is perhaps best known as a "smart drug" used by students, with varying degrees of legality, to stay alert when cramming for exams. (Recent research, by the way, has cast a dubious light on the efficacy of modafinil for studying.) Cephalon held the exclusive patent to modafinil and had been selling it since 1998, but the patent was set to expire in 2006. Teva wanted a piece of the action when it did. Cephalon, however, wasn't ready to give up its monopoly, so in 2005 and 2006 it paid more than \$300 million to Teva and three other makers of generics to stay out of the market until 2012. That only four firms wanted to sell one of the world's most lucrative pills speaks to the industry's consolidation—and the four have since been reduced to three because Teva bought one of them. Teva's target Mylan is one of the other two survivors.

Generic firms love "pay to delay" deals, as they are known in the trade, because of the guaranteed profit. Name-brand firms of course love the extension of their monopoly. In certain narrow circumstances, the deals are legal, the key being that consumers don't get fleeced. But after buying off its competitors, Cephalon's profits on Provigil took on a fleecelike texture. In 2005, when the first deal was struck, annual U.S. sales of the drug were \$475 million. Just two years later, they topped \$800 million. By 2011, the last full year of Cephalon's monopoly, they reached \$1.1 billion. The growth was only partly due to an increase in prescriptions. It is the vulgar norm in the pharmaceutical industry to raise the price of a drug that is about to go over the patent cliff. Cephalon was vulgarly normal. In 2004, a month's supply of Provigil cost about \$166 (drug prices vary from pharmacy to pharmacy), but by 2007 it was \$272, by 2009 it was \$409, and by the last year of Cephalon's patent it was \$1,001. The gross take—an altogether apt phrase—during the extra years of Provigil's monopoly came to about \$5 billion, not a shabby return on \$300 million in *baksheesh* to the generic companies.

But the immediate money wasn't the half of it. Another trick of the pharma trade as a drug approaches the patent cliff is to develop a new drug to replace the old one, often by making the merest of tweaks, like putting an extended-release coating on an immediate-release tablet. Sometimes the benefits are more substantial, but even then they may be outweighed by new side effects or may be helpful only to a small subpopulation of patients. Regardless, the drug maker will tout its new pill—often spending millions, even tens of

millions, to herald its improvements (and minimize its flaws), and a lot of doctors and patients will be swayed. Those who aren't swayed may migrate to the new drug anyway because the price of the old one has been jacked up so high, as Cephalon did with Provigil, that even the spendy new drug is a bargain. The value of all this is not just the short-term profits but getting a base of doctors and patients hooked on the new drug before the old one turns generic. As a rule, doctors and patients don't care to fix what ain't broke, so if the new drug works OK, they're less likely to use the old drug even after it goes generic and its price plummets.

This was essentially Cephalon's strategy for Provigil and its lightly tweaked replacement, Nuvigil. Trouble was, in 2005 Cephalon was running behind in getting FDA approval for Nuvigil. By buying off Teva and the rest, Cephalon was buying time to get the drug approved and market it to doctors and patients. Nuvigil finally arrived in pharmacies in mid-2009 (priced at \$269 a month, compared to Provigil's \$409) and grossed \$39 million over the remainder of the year. By 2012, when Provigil went generic, annual sales of Nuvigil had reached \$437 million. In all, Cephalon took \$1 billion from Nuvigil during the extra years of its Provigil monopoly—and along the way established a solid base of doctors and patients from which to wring future profits.

At first, the FTC's investigation into these shenanigans encompassed all the firms involved. But when the FTC brought suit in 2008, it declined to prosecute Teva and the other generics makers that Cephalon bought off and instead sued only Cephalon, the fattest of the mischievous cats. Why, then, does Teva now have to pony up \$1.2 billion to the FTC? The answer is that, so promising was Cephalon's growth, Teva bought the company in 2011 (at a price of \$6.8 billion). Teva is thus in the unusual position of having to pay the feds for fixing prices with itself—yet another testament to the consolidation of the industry. It is also a harbinger of the future because generics firms, flush with their oligopolistic profits, are getting into the name-brand game, while name-brand firms, themselves mega-consolidated, are getting into the generics game they had once scorned for its penny-a-pill profits. Teva, engorged, could shrug off the \$1.2 billion payout because it amounted to just three months of companywide profits or, put another way, less than a year of the six years of ill-gotten gains on Provigil and Nuvigil. And taking that hit was far better than going to trial and chancing that a judge would order Teva to disgorge all of its Provigil plunder. Looked at from a certain light, the FTC's mighty settlement was a bit like catching a bank robber with \$1 million in loot and asking if he wouldn't mind surrendering \$200,000 and keeping the balance.

The habitual leniency of the government's settlements is only part of the problem. A far bigger concern is that the feds have done little to curb the consolidation in the generics industry. What happened to modafinil after Provigil went generic in 2012 is emblematic. By the end of that year, things

looked good: a month's supply of modafinil dropped from Provigil's larcenous peak of \$1,101 to as low as \$5. But the descent was ephemeral. Only months later, the price soared to more than \$1,200—seven times the true value of even name-brand Provigil (if you take as its true value the cost, \$166, before Cephalon made the pay-for-delay deals and started hiking up Provigil's price). The price has since dropped again, but only from the stratospheric to the tropospheric. On a recent day in my city, Boulder, Colorado, the lowest advertised price for the most common dose was \$706. Even in more competitive precincts—lower Manhattan and downtown San Francisco, for example—the cost was \$520. Big Generic has yet to offer an explanation for the grisly prices, but surely it is no coincidence that when prices reached their nadir in 2012, more manufacturers seem to have sold generic modafinil than sell it today. Just how many more is not clear since data is scant on which firms made which drugs in which years.

The federal government could put an end to this nonsense by keeping markets competitive, either by blocking the merger of companies that make the same drugs or by requiring merging companies to share the rights of production for such drugs with competitors. Regulators sometimes take these steps, but their efforts fall far short of what's needed—a state of affairs that won't change anytime soon, because the free-marketeers who run Congress and the White House like nothing so much as markets free of competition.

Another, more straightforward reform would be to simply make drug companies sell their wares at lower prices, as nearly every other developed country does. Price caps on drugs might seem a long shot in the United States, but modest variations on the theme are making the rounds. President Obama's most recent proposed budget, for example, would allow Medicare to negotiate prices with drug companies—a practice banned by George W. Bush and the Republican-controlled Congress when they enacted Medicare's prescription drug benefit in 2003. A related proposal, introduced in Congress last month by Sanders and Representative Elijah Cummings, a Maryland Democrat, would essentially bar drug companies from charging Medicaid for increases in the prices of generics that surpass the rate of inflation. A similar law already exists for Medicaid's purchases of brand-name drugs.

But these temperate proposals would do little for the 200 million Americans who aren't covered by Medicare or Medicaid and whose prescription benefit (when they have insurance at all) grows more niggardly each year. Abetting this niggardliness is one of Obamacare's great failures. Under the most basic Obamacare plan, the average copayment for generic drugs is 32 percent, which would leave the patient who has a \$700 modafinil prescription stuck paying \$224 out of pocket each month, nearly \$2,700 a year. (Out-of-pocket costs aren't capped until \$6,600 for an individual and \$13,200

for a family.) This is in addition to the plan's annual premium, which, depending on one's age, health, income, and state of residence, runs from \$1,000 to \$8,000. Tough luck for the hypersomniac of modest means whose unbearable stupor threatens her relationships, job, sanity, even her life.

Naturally, price controls on drugs won't come about tomorrow—or rather, unnaturally, since not long ago it was in the natural order of things for Americans to firmly regulate essential goods and services. That's why all fifty states have public utility commissions that cap utility rates. Even today, in our seemingly *laissez-faire* age, PUCs are so embedded in our political subconsciousness that if you asked the voters of any state, from bluest Massachusetts to reddest Alabama, whether to dissolve their PUC and let electric companies charge what they will, you'd be hard pressed for takers. But precisely because such parallels endure, and because their mechanism is easily understood (unlike the chain of events leading from the government's busting of an oligopoly to the consumer's paying less at Walgreen's), price caps on drugs might well win popular approval. Indeed, it's already happening. In April, a poll by Princeton Data Source found that 60 percent of Americans, including 51 percent of Republicans, want the government to bring down drug prices. The numbers rose to 76 percent of Americans and 66 percent of Republicans when the question was about high-cost drugs for chronic conditions. These super-majorities can only grow as Pharma's rapaciousness continues unchecked, and eventually even our lawmakers, steeped though they are in a marinade of Pharma money and Ayn Rand fantasy, will have to take heed. **CP**

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From Decolonization to Neo-Fascism

WWII Is Finally Over...Not

By Peter Lee

Winners write history...but sometimes losers get a chance to rewrite it. Especially when the world's only hyperpower, the United States, decides to make friends of its enemies and turn its allies into adversaries.

It's happening today with World War II as the simple and satisfying (to the victors) narrative of the triumph of Good over Evil is challenged by a more complex and loser-friendly discourse of decolonization in Europe and Asia.

First, Europe. By the traditional standard, my dad had a Good War. He served with bravery and distinction in the US armed forces and participated in the D Day invasion at Normandy. He came home in one piece, proud and confi-

dent, and enjoyed the postwar economic (and baby!) boom as a member of the Greatest Generation.

My uncle Rudy had a bad war. He served in the German army on the eastern front, and never came home. Officially, he died instantly of a head wound. My grandparents learned from a survivor that he was actually wounded and abandoned by his unit during a retreat in 1943 and met his end miserably and alone. The shame and guilt of his death (my grandmother had fruitlessly begged my grandfather to help Rudy desert and flee Germany the one time he came home on leave) shadowed what was left of his family for the remainder of its days.

But political and national exigencies are combining to question and reshape the old narratives. Maybe my father was simply a pawn in Churchill's failed gambit to save the British Empire. Admittedly, my father spent 1943 sailing around North Africa complicating German efforts to threaten British imperial assets in Egypt and East of Suez instead of fighting the second European front that Stalin so desperately wanted...or the Jews of Europe so desperately needed.

Indeed, by the time the US and Great Britain got around to grunting out the D Day invasion in 1944 it was too late to save most of Europe's Jews and many of its Roma and other marginalized minorities.

Meanwhile, Rudy was dead somewhere near the border of Belarus. Maybe Uncle Rudy was another martyr in the Long War to defend European civilization against Russian imperial despotism, a modern struggle that began in 1917, fought largely by the Germans, and continues to this day... in Ukraine.

Thanks to the exigencies of the Cold War, the central role of the Soviet Union in the defeat of Germany has been downplayed in the West almost from the moment the guns fell silent. Russian official opinion was recently roused to indignation by a 2015 French poll in which 54% of respondents attributed the defeat of Germany primarily to the United States, and only 23% to the Soviet Union. The pollsters cited a switch away from disdainful Gaullism to eager Atlanticism inaugurated by Francois Mitterand (the first official French commemoration of the D Day landings only occurred in 1984) and a France in which "the cultural influence of the United States is well established" to explain the deterioration of the Soviets' numbers.

And deteriorate they did. postBack in 1945, just after the end of the war and 53 years BSPR (Before Saving Private Ryan), when understanding was perhaps a bit clearer, the numbers were somewhat different: 57% for the Soviet Union and 20% for the United States. Soft power, baby!

Minimizing the Soviet role in World War II has always been part and parcel of a campaign led by the United States to shift the focus away from Red Army heroics to serial Soviet offenses against the freedom, wellbeing, and dignity of the people and states the USSR ground under its heel before, during, and after World War II.

But the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union into largely democratic states was not the “end of history” as far as wrangling over Russia was concerned. Contention over the World War II legacy, and delegitimization of the Russian presence in central Europe as a tainted Soviet artifact, have simply evolved to become core components of local European nationalism.

Antagonistic attitudes toward Russia are underpinned by conceptualization of middle-European history as a 150 year decolonization struggle in which the central European states were whipsawed between Austro-Hungarian, Nazi, and Soviet imperial ambitions, and whose most recent if not final iteration is the current effort of the ex-Soviet states to throw off the lingering yoke of Russian imperial colonization.

Moving the suffering of what historian Timothy Snyder terms “the bloodlands” to center stage has renewed focus on the 1939 Ribbentrop-Molotov pact—a non-aggression treaty that dismayed the Atlantic powers and dumbfounded the global Communist movement, which had made resistance to fascism a core element of its brand. The pact also included a secret annex (only officially acknowledged by Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union) that divvied up eastern Europe into Soviet and German spheres of influence and greenlit, albeit indirectly, the partition of Poland and the Soviet occupation of the Baltic States upon the German invasion of Poland a few weeks later.

Middle-European governments agitated for the anniversary of the date of the signing of the pact as a day of remembrance of Soviet perfidy. In 2009, the European Parliament obliged, establishing August 23 as “European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism”. One consequence of the campaign to assert the moral equivalence of Stalinism & Nazism has been to rehabilitate the reputations of national figures whose collaboration with the Germans can be explained or excused on the grounds of resistance to the Soviets.

However, it is clear that the central drama of the war was not neo-colonial fiddling with the “bloodlands” either jointly or separately by Germany and the Soviet Union; it was Hitler’s “Generalplan Ost” to break the power of Russia and the Soviet Union forever and extend the German sphere of influence to the Urals at the cost of well over 10 million Slavic lives. There is also a strong argument to be made that the Final Solution was triggered by the realization that Nazi Germany’s limits in the east had been reached considerably earlier than hoped for, and it was time to proactively exterminate the Jewish populations of Europe rather than entertain the fantasy they could be worked to death productively and at Hitler’s leisure in some fantasy slave-empire on the Russian steppes.

So, the decolonization narrative has a few awkward elements, encouraging a rather ahistorical minimization of the Holocaust as well as Soviet suffering since they detract from

the focus on the national struggle.

In Ukraine concerted efforts to elevate the Holodomor—the 3 million Ukrainians killed as a result of Stalin’s brutal agricultural collectivization campaign in the 1930s—to the category of a genocide, is not only an attempt to achieve recognition for the immense suffering of Ukrainians in their national struggle. It also seeks to submerge otherwise embarrassing elements of World War II history—in which many Ukrainians collaborated with the Nazis not only from outrage at the Russians but due to their own sizable reserves of anti-Semitism and opportunism—under the narrative of Ukrainian victimhood

The greatest challenge for the Eastern-Europe decolonization narrative is that it requires large-scale ethnic cleansing to restore national agency and dignity. The poster child for successful de-Sovietization, Poland, owes much of its success to the fact that Hitler eradicated the Polish Jews, and the Communist regime was able to evict hundreds of thousands of Germans from within post-World War II borders that bore little relation to the boundaries of the historic Polish state.

This means that the decolonization process relies on an understanding of the character of the nation-state that appears more fascist (single-race) than democratic (multi-ethnic group hug). Indeed, the nationalist narrative out of Ukraine assumes that ridding the country of Russian influence will require cooperation between fascist & democratic elements.

As one democratic commentator, Anton Shekhovstov, wrote during the Maidan demonstrations (when fascist formations provided the muscle to evict the elected but insufficiently Euro-friendly Viktor Yanukovych from the presidency): “Thus, a fight against fascism in Ukraine should always be synonymous with the fight against the attempts to colonise the country. Those who separate these two issues or crack down on the Ukrainian far right without recognising the urgent need for national independence will never be successful in their attempts to neutralise the far right.”

It seems liberal democrats would like to fast-forward over the ugly parts of decolonization so they can romp guilt-free into their glorious Euro-future. In reality, it has often been a grim, grinding, multi-decade process littered with corpses, no more so than in Ukraine.

Ukrainian nationalists not only fought the Soviets; they collaborated with the Germans, participated in execution of Jews, and slaughtered over one hundred thousand Poles in an effort to ethnically cleanse the Galician precincts of Ukraine in the 1940s. Today, the Ukrainian government has cut off budget payments, state agencies and banking services i.e. government salaries, state pensions, and access to their bank accounts for the inhabitants of Eastern Ukraine—some of them ethnically Russian, many Russophone, more than a few ethnic Ukrainians sympathetic to close ties with the Russian Federation, and a good number of loyal Ukrainians-- implying that the Kyiv government would at the very least like

to boot the troublesome Donbass region out of Ukraine Russian-kit-and-Ukrainian-kaboodle to achieve the homogenous ethnic state its decolonization philosophy dictates.

As the Ukrainian government floundered through its first year in a carnival of brutal incompetence, Shekhostov recognized that it was nowhere near “the end of history” for the fascists, who had chosen to work to their strengths as armed muscle for oligarchs and factions to advance their agenda:

“While Svoboda and the Right Sector have failed in the 2014 parliamentary elections, the infiltration of some other far right organisations in the law enforcement is possibly a more advanced long-term strategy in their fight against not particularly well established liberal democracy in Ukraine.”

Russia has endeavored, with little success in the West, to reawaken concern about European fascism and highlight the fascist component of the Ukrainian polity as a litmus test for its legitimacy.

The Western campaign to denigrate the significance of the Soviet role in World War II in the service of indignation at Russia’s unquenchable devotion to neo-colonialism in Eastern Europe reached its apogee, at least for now, with the Western boycott of Putin’s massive Victory Parade in Moscow on the 70th anniversary of the surrender of Germany.

The West’s refusal to recognize the ugly elements of the neo-colonial narrative will probably make for many fraught moments over the next decade, including making common cause with European nationalists and fascists who provide the most committed and energetic opposition to Russia’s attempts to secure its western flank.

A similar-but-different decolonization revisionism has expressed itself in Asia. As it has in Europe, the United States has kicked the World War II narrative to the curb in order to cultivate relations with a World War II enemy in order to confront a nettlesome World War II ally. In the Asian case, of course, the equation is United States + Japan – China.

The PRC has tried to rekindle the World War II allied romance (and remind the US of its traditional role as “honest broker” between Japan and China) without success. Li Keqiang, the Chinese premier, journeyed to Germany to commemorate the Potsdam Declaration and call upon the US to reaffirm the postwar dispensation by which Russia and China helped keep down German and Japanese militarism.

No sale for the United States, of course. With the rise of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to power, World War II revisionism in Asia has become more promising for the US, but also more problematic.

Abe stands at the center of group of youngish Japanese hawks seeking to shed the restrictions imposed by the so-called “Peace” constitution on Japanese military action and restore Japan’s status as a “normal” nation.

Abe came to the United States in April 2015 determined to put World War II—and the constitutional and moral baggage and anxieties about Japanese militarism that came with it-- in

the rear view mirror. In order to enable and justify a broader mandate for Japanese military operations beyond the nation’s territorial seas and airspace, Abe declared Japan’s wholehearted support for the US containment strategy for the PRC, known as “the rebalancing”, “first, last, and throughout”.

Abe’s visit was greeted with paroxysms of joy and relief for the US milsec crowd, a phenomenon I termed the Abamagasm, because it meant that the United States finally had a security partner with the resources and commitment to put some teeth into the anti-PRC policy. Sure enough, the US has steadily escalated its confrontations with the PRC in the South China Sea since then, relying on the expectation that Japan is ready to support it and also rally and smaller and more equivocal nations to the cause.

To seal the deal, Abe spoke at length about the tragedy of World War II and the miracle of reconciliation...while hinting it was time to move on.

In a key passage, Abe stated:

“Post war, we started out on our path bearing in mind feelings of deep remorse over the war. Our actions brought suffering to the peoples in Asian countries. We must not avert our eyes from that. I will uphold the views expressed by the previous prime ministers in this regard.”

Japan did unimaginably horrible things during World War II, especially in Asia’s “bloodlands”—the Korean peninsula and Manchuria--and in continental China. In 1995, the Japanese government issued the Murayama statement, a pivotal document which accepted the reality of Japanese aggression during World War II and expressed Murayama’s “feelings of deep remorse” carefully voiced in the first person.

Attention was paid to Abe’s checking the “remorse” box as acknowledgement of the Murayama statement; maybe more attention should have been paid to the qualifier “we started out on our path...”

After his visit to the United States, Abe has hinted his definition of “upholding” the Murayama statement might involve revisiting it in August on the 70th anniversary of Japan’s surrender. His remarks in the US imply he might qualify Murayama’s statement as a historical and individual artifact of when Japan “started out on our path” to restoration of its full potential as a post-World War II nation-state but should not be taken as an authoritative statement of fact. Prime Minister Abe’s dislike for the statement’s use of the term “aggression” (“the definition...has yet to be established academically” per Abe) is well-known and underpins his geopolitical worldview.

Conservatives in Japan have never accepted the US “victor’s justice” narrative of Japan as an aggressor in World War II. Now with the PRC casting a menacing shadow over Asia, they have been emboldened to return to their favored narrative for World War II: a regional decolonization struggle driven by Japan’s need to resist US coercion.

Japanese World War II “revisionism” should best be understood as “Great Pacific War Fundamentalism”: a historical

viewpoint that was never repudiated, partially suppressed for geopolitical reasons, and then openly reasserted.

This provides the context for the insistence of conservative Japanese politicians to patronize the Yasukuni shrine to Japan's war dead. Yasukuni is not Japan's Arlington Cemetery, a repository for war dead. That role is filled by the Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery. Ostensibly, Yasukuni is a Shinto shrine to honor the spirits of those who died on behalf of Japan.

Actually, Yasukuni is a right-wing theme park, a private foundation whose board forms a reliable source of sinecures for members of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party.

Not even the Japanese emperor will go there. But Abe will, when he can. And when he can't, he sends an offering.

But it would be a mistake to believe that in Asia fear of Japanese militarism is universal, or that affection for the decolonization narrative is limited to unrepentant Japanese ultranationalists.

As a not-insignificant matter, the only foreigner enshrined at Yasukuni is an Indian jurist, Radhabinod Pal, who served on the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal in 1946.

Enamored of the anti-colonial rhetoric that accompanied the Japanese "advance" into SE Asia, Pal believed the United States had provoked Japan into war (the Japanese response was therefore not "aggressive"), was concerned about Allied wartime atrocities, and declined to endorse the "triumph of civilization" narrative of Japan's defeat or the creation of "Class A" war criminal category that the Occupation used to prosecute the Japanese military and civilian leadership. While acknowledging the commission of atrocities in the field (though a Nanjing Massacre skeptic), Pal voted for acquittal of the "Class A" defendants and prepared a 1235-page dissenting opinion—suppressed by the Occupation until 1952—stating that the trial was a "victor's justice" travesty.

In 1966, the Emperor of Japan conferred upon Pal—who stated his lifelong admiration of Japan as the one Asian country that stood up to the West-- the First Class of the Order of the Sacred Treasure.

After his dissent was published, Pal, unsurprisingly, became a hero to Japanese nationalists, including current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, whose grandfather, ex-Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke, had been detained after the war as a suspected Class A criminal but never indicted or tried.

Prime Minister Abe made a pilgrimage to Kolkata in 2007 to meet with Pal's son and receive two pictures of Pal with Kishi.

For Americans raised on the Gandhi epic of Indian independence indefatigably promoted by the Congress Party, it might seem that Pal's fondness for the Japanese decolonization narrative made him an outlier.

However, at least 60,000 Indians fought with the Japanese in the "Indian National Army", an effort to drive the British out of South Asia. Their military efforts were not very effec-

tual, but British efforts to punish them to signal the return to the pre-war colonial status quo triggered a patriotic fury inside India.

The "Red Fort trials" of INA officers in 1945 triggered an outpouring of national revulsion in India and became the central feature of the freedom movement in India. The trials also sparked mutinies in Indian naval and army forces and made it clear to the British that local forces could no longer be relied upon to suppress organized agitation for independence.

Reflecting on the factors that led to Indian independence, Clement Attlee pointed to the reaction to the Red Fort trials and the subsequent mutinies as the key factors that persuaded him British rule in India was no longer tenable (and, in a dismissive statement cherished by foes of the Congress Party, dismissed Gandhi's role as "minimal").

With the defeat of the Congress Party and the rise of Narendra Modi to the post of Prime Minister, the INA alternative history is receiving the expected burnishing.

When Modi visited Tokyo in September 2014, he was introduced to the last surviving associate of Chandra Bose, the independence visionary who formed the INA to fight alongside Japan against British rule in South Asia during World War II, and a touching scene occurred:

"A humble Narendra Modi was caught on camera kneeling down to the war veteran as a mark of respect. The Prime Minister was seen peering into the eyes of Saichiro Misumi."

Yes, Saichiro Misumi. Not an Indian, but a Japanese Indologist who served as Bose's minder when he came to Japan in 1943.

In many countries, Asian nationalists were often willing to work with Japan, especially in the early stages of World War II when things were going well.

Aung San, father of Burmese democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi, was in charge of anti-British guerilla operations on behalf of the Japanese government, served as War Minister in the occupation cabinet, and was personally awarded the Order of the Rising Sun by Emperor Hirohito before he came to his liberal democratic senses (or realized that Japanese rule was headed for collapse) and became leader of the resistance.

The Japanese presence in Burma is remembered nostalgically by a lot of Japanese and apparently more than a few Burmese locals and sustained a flood of Japanese veteran tourism and government and private aid projects since the 1950s. Japan cultivated a special relationship with Myanmar even during the worst junta years, and Abe has taken advantage of Myanmar's opening to the West to jump in diplomatically and commercially and work to displace Chinese influence.

Taiwan enjoyed a relatively benign and prolonged Japanese occupation, from 1895 to 1945. Indigenous Taiwanese who resent both the carpetbagging KMT and the overbearing PRC find much to appreciate in Japan. Taiwan independence

stalwart Lee Teng-hui—who served as President of the ROC during the transition from single-party KMT rule—went to Japan to honor his deceased brother...at Yasukuni, since he had died in the service of the Japanese colonial administration on Taiwan. There is also talk that the DPP may renounce ROC claims to the Senkaku Islands in favor of Japan if the independence-friendly party wins legislative and presidential power in the upcoming elections.

So “Japan as the champion of Asian de-colonization and self-determination” enjoys considerable resonance with politically influential or dominant factions in many Asian states.

That narrative wrongfoots the People’s Republic of China, which operates a classic colonial empire with respect to its western holdings of Tibet and Xinjiang, and arguably in the South China Sea as well (though I suppose whether uninhabited rocks, reefs, and sandbars are valid protagonists in a decolonization struggle is open to question). In Xinjiang, particularly, the PRC is desperately struggling to keep local Uyghur unrest from evolving into a classic decolonization struggle a la Soviet-occupied Afghanistan that draws on the sympathy and resources of the global Muslim ummah.

At its height, PRC penetration of Myanmar in cahoots with the junta probably came close to defining that state as a genuine neo-colonial appendage, and has triggered a powerful Sinophobic reaction from a broad swath of Myanmar opinion. And it is also not difficult to characterize aggressive PRC economic and security policies as a form of aspirational neo-colonialism as far as Southeast Asia and Africa are concerned, albeit still deficient in the regime change/proxy war capabilities that the US has been able to inject into its international dealings.

So the PRC finds itself in the same boat as the Russian Federation, with local ethnic and national sentiment chipping away at acceptance of its rule and regional reach and with few regional states willing even to pay lip service to its historical role as guarantor of the World War II victory over fascism.

The fragmenting of the monolithic World War II Good v. Evil narrative into a messy collection of localized decolonization struggles at the expense of America’s designated Russian and Chinese enemies is not necessarily unalloyed good news for the United States.

The US was able to drive the anti-fascist, anti-Communist, and pro-democracy bandwagons. But decolonization, with its assertively nationalistic ethos, often with a bracing dose of fascism, has not proven to be a particularly happy partner for the US. In Europe, the US, EU, and NATO labor to channel local nationalism into predictable and US-friendly democratic regimes. As the example of Ukraine shows, easier said than done and there’s a good chance liberal-democratic Euro-unity might collapse before fascism is conclusively wrung out of the continent’s system.

In Asia, US efforts to knit together an anti-PRC coalition under US leadership are shadowed by a certain amount of

“Asia for Asians” resistance among the populous and ancient nations of the region. Japan’s emergence from seventy years of geopolitical quarantine to an active role in Asian security affairs, in particular, means that the Asian democracies will not dance to an American tune, at least not if Japanese conservatives can help it.

It is perhaps not surprising that the rhetoric of decolonization will affect the global fortunes of the United States, the ultimate neo-colonial power. As to whether US global leadership is buttressed or undermined by this phenomenon in the end, well, maybe we’ll have to wait until the next war to find out for sure. **CP**

PETER LEE edits *China Matters*.

The Masked Face of American Racism Of Mimicry and White Women

By Ruth Fowler

I think the weirdest thing about the Rachel Dolezal / Andrea Smith debacle is that it’s news. Ever since landing on these shores back in 2005, clutching a backpack and looking anxiously around Astor Place as if it might eat me, I have been amazed by the sheer number of white Americans who are desperate to claim a heritage which ‘de-whites’ them. That might be Irish or Italian—citing long, and for most of us, forgotten prejudices which cannot and should not be held up as comparable to the brutal oppression of slavery. It might be German or French: there is, after all, something inherently chic about us Europeans, who had the “good” sense to profit from slavery without bringing its brutal indignities onto our own shores to wrench a nation in two. More often than not, White Americans like to declare themselves an eighth Cherokee, a sixteenth of Sasquat. That a white woman with a complicated relationship with abusive white Christian parents decided to identify more with her oppressed adopted siblings than her mom and Dad sounds like a metaphor for modern day neoliberal privilege politics. Dolezal is, of course, an extreme and utterly bizarre case, but my point is, it’s not without precedent.

The micro aggressions of disavowing one’s white privilege—and being forced into that position by a rudimentary and incomplete understanding of privilege politics and its execution which tends towards the ‘Oppression Olympics’—is a daily occurrence in liberal circles. Andrea Smith, a woman who spent a great deal of time fruitlessly searching for Native American ancestry, and when she didn’t find any, just forged ahead with her deception anyway, is the very epitome of the White Liberal Racist. The “look I’m not racist, racist!” which

only really exists in such absurd manifestations in America, this pressure cooker of complicated and screwed up social and racial relations. Dolezal and Smith are interesting to me only in that they represent White America's utterly delusional denial that racism exists. Both these women demonstrated a complete ignorance of what it is to be white: to have the ability to decide your own identity as either the oppressed or the oppressor, to have your whiteness be the apex of a country's social and cultural existence, even when you yourself are pretending it isn't.

I was a postcolonial literature research student at Cambridge University specializing in Indian literature written in English, and while I'm sure it would have been more helpful to have had fluent Hindi and a familial, rather than academic acquaintance with Indian culture, it never really crossed my (or my fellow [predominantly white] students' minds) to change our names to Shiva or Chinua, get a great weave, start dissing white people and get on the tanning bed even when our most respected, brilliant professors were—rightly—some of the few people of color in an academic sea of privileged white upper class males, from the erudite Ghanaian Dr Ato Quayson, to the fiery Dr Priyamvada Gopal from Delhi.

To we Europeans, the notion of racism in America is a relatively simple and uncomplicated concept. It exists, and it's disgraceful, disgusting and pretty terrifying. We have the benefit of distance and the advantage of having grown up in countries which - in comparison to the United States—look almost like Utopia. Our black and brown friends in Europe will still experience racism of course, and let's not go down the dubious path of defining some racism as "better" than others. But it's safe to assert that our black and brown friends in Europe do not have live in daily fear of their brains blown out because a Police Officer is having a shitty day or a lunatic on neighborhood watch has got trigger finger. Our black and brown friends in Europe will most likely not have to fear that the woman teaching them African Studies in university has any reason to black up, or that the curious sight of a hijab wearing white lady is anything but a woman who is genuinely an observer of Islam. Our black friends in Europe are more likely to be in an interracial marriage than their American counterparts. In 2007, 4.6% of all married Blacks in the United States were wed to a White partner, and 0.4% of all Whites were married to a Black partner. Not directly comparable, but evident of quite a considerable social difference, is a 2011 census finding in the U.K. which showed that almost one in 10 people in Britain were either married or living with someone from a different ethnic group, with proportions ranging from 85% of mixed-race people to 4% of white people.

America's abusive relationship with race is utterly unique. I am flabbergasted to see that even as Treyvon, Ferguson, Missouri, Charleston and Doleful elicit urgent and eerily similar Op-Eds explaining how best to talk to our children

about race, scientists poking black people to figure out if systemic racism can cause "race based trauma", un-ironic videos in the New York Times interviewing white people about how they feel about race. We don't need to see churches burning and unarmed teens clutching skittles lying dead on the floor. We don't need videos telling us not to touch a black person's hair and how to self-flagellate in front of a Person of Color who you can randomly appoint as today's arbiter of whether you're a good white person or a bad white person "or a Jew, so like, beige".

Comparisons are not that helpful except to explain to America that yes, the rest of the world considers you an extremely racist country, if not the most racist country, and partly that is because of systemic oppression, and partly it's because of people who are not afraid to express their racist views KKK style, and partly it is because even those white people who don't think they are racist demonstrate that they are racist by their convoluted attempts to prove they're not, ranging from the absurd - Rachel Dolezal - to the pathetic—white kids appropriating the 'N' word because they have a black friend and it's OK then.

To White Americans - and particularly those on the left—race and racism is a concept they struggle with everyday without ever really comprehending the impact it has on its victims. It is rather something they wish to disassociate with—and to 'de-white' in some small way allows them the luxury of claiming some kind of allegiance and solidarity, to identify with the victim of racism, without ever having to experience their pain.

The liberal American doesn't want to be the "skinny white girl" butt of jokes. They don't want to be Iggy Azalea. They clammer over each other to check their privilege, and when they get called out on a little bit they forgot about, they shake their heads in shame and horror, get to the back of the queue. They struggle with the concept of cultural appropriation as a negative thing—with belly dancing class, and henna tattoos, and yoga, and Kendrick Lamar on repeat. They ask their friends of color if they've experienced racism and listen with a serious and sobering expression to the response as if it's news. And to black Americans, so tired of being shot, hung, ridiculed, burnt, lynched, laughed at, looked over, pretty much every interaction with a white person becomes tinged with racial undertones.

How can it not be? It's the very foundation of American society, this, centrality of whiteness. Even amongst all the tragedy, America's response is what does the white person think? What does Rachel Dolezal think? What is her motivation? Who gets to decide if she's a racist or just a moron? My black friend Erica, who laughs at the whole thing and would tell Rachel "Come on over to our side. Welcome. The more the merrier" or those who find her deception the most insidious kind of white betrayal—the kind of antithetical process of Homi Bhabha's definition of mimicry. Rachel Dolezal is

Thomas Macaulay's perfect colonial subject inverted, as outlined in his 1835 Minutes: "a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect". She - and Andrea Smith - are the mimic men of modern American Liberalism: "white in blood and color, but black in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect." As Bhabha points out, they are a disrupting influence—the other who is almost, but not quite. Almost, but can never be. Dolezal and Smith are thus representative of the new face of American racism: the masked face. **CP**

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Par For the Course Medical Care in US Prisons

By Thandisizwe Chimurenga

"Health care in prison would be a good idea," says Bret Grote. Grote is the director of the Abolitionist Law Center. The Center has clients throughout much of the eastern seaboard. Journalist, author and former Black Panther Party member Mumia Abu Jamal is one of Grote's clients.

In March of 2015, Abu Jamal suffered a medical emergency: he was on the verge of slipping into a diabetic coma. His blood sugar level was abnormally high and he was also suffering from a severe case of eczema, which caused discoloration and bleeding on his arms and neck. The response to Abu Jamal's crisis has been typical of medical care in U.S. prisons and jails; his diabetes and skin condition went undiagnosed and untreated for months by officials at the State Correctional Institution at Mahanoy. Due to Abu Jamal's worldwide recognition and the organized response of his supporters however, his condition was stabilized at an outside facility. The struggle to secure the specialists and treatment regimen needed to restore Abu Jamal to full health continues.

The same can be said of Robert Seth Hayes and Russell 'Maroon' Shoatz. Both men, also former members of the Black Panther Party, have health challenges that have been neglected while incarcerated. Supporters of Hayes clamored for attention to his poorly controlled diabetes in early May. Hayes also suffers from Hepatitis C. By late June, he had begun to receive medical intervention for those conditions at Sullivan Correctional Facility in New York. But his supporters also say that Hayes has additional medical concerns that have been ignored by the prison. In an e-mail blast sent out on July 6 they note that Hayes is still suffering from undiagnosed and untreated "chronic bleeding and abdominal growths," and that he has reportedly been "coughing up blood." His supporters state that Hayes has received no response as of yet regarding these other conditions.

Medical officials at Sullivan had not returned calls by the time CounterPunch went to press.

Shoatz, another Pennsylvania-held prisoner, was eventually able to rally his supporters to demand a treatment regimen for his prostate cancer. His condition was diagnosed in late 2013 and his treatment didn't begin until late 2014. "We knew something was wrong about a year and a half, close to two years ago," said Shoatz's son, Russell III. Shoatz had been held in solitary confinement in Pennsylvania prisons for close to 30 years. The Abolitionist Law Center filed suit against the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections challenging the conditions of Shoatz's confinement which was settled in the Spring of 2013. "It was basically a negotiation, your health for some years in solitary confinement," said Shoatz III. "How much 30 years of your life is worth."

All three of these men face the same challenges as others who are confined in receiving decent, timely medical attention and follow-up care. The trio's outcomes however are radically different from the vast majority of those whose lives are now in care of the state.

"For people that aren't relatively well known political prisoners, you're just gonna get sick and its gonna spread further and you'll die sooner," said Grote.

According to Grote, the typical fare for those seeking medical care while imprisoned is that illnesses and symptoms are permitted to go undiagnosed, misdiagnosed or under-treated. This then creates a scenario where people are at much greater risk for catastrophic health problems and death.

On the other side of the country, advocates say that the housing of prisoners in isolation units is not only torture, but a serious form of medical neglect. Prisoners in isolation at various facilities in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) report a variety of conditions that have gone untreated.

Surveys of inmates in solitary confinement in California prisons conducted by Legal Services for Prisoners with Children (LSPC) reported a litany of untreated conditions: enlarged heart, trigeminal neuralgia, fatigue, severe sight problems including becoming legally blind, high blood pressure, stomach problems, back pain, arthritis, asthma, and hearing loss.

The group's report entitled "A Cage within a Cage: A Report on Indeterminate Security Housing Unit (SHU) Confinement and Conditions" was issued in 2012.

"Under regular, normal circumstances in prison it's very, very difficult to get access," said Linda Evans, an organizer with LSPC. "When you're in solitary, healthcare delivery is terrible," Evans said.

Sundiata Acoli is a New Jersey state prisoner currently being held in the federal corrections system. His medical complaints, sent via e-mail, sound very similar to many of the survey respondents in California: "Here are my illnesses: heart arrhythmia, fat in the bloodstream, cataracts that need

removal, need proper eyeglasses, need dental work ... my hearing is rapidly declining so that I need regular ear washing but can't get it often enough."

Acoli also says that "... over half [his] teeth have decayed and fallen out so I have numerous gaps and missing teeth thru out my mouth."

Evans describes dental care in prison as "abominable." "I lost 5 teeth while I was in prison, and I'm not a drug addict. I had relatively good teeth when I went in."

A former member of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Weather Underground Organization (WUO), Evans spent 16 years behind bars. She was pardoned by Bill Clinton in 2001. Evans says she and several other women were housed in the Orleans Parish Prison (OPP) in New Orleans for a time as part of a federal interstate agreement. "When I was in Louisiana what they did routinely, routinely, was pull everybody's teeth. Just pull 'em. And then, not give them false teeth. So there were women that had no teeth. That was, like accepted."

Evans also stated that female prisoners with sight problems were denied glasses. The sheriff of the Orleans Parish Prison could not be reached for comment for this article; neither could the jail's Medical Inmate Advocate (MIA) who is reportedly available to answer medical questions about the inmates. According to the prison's website, the MIA "is an experienced Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office nurse who will investigate your concern and call you back."

"Its pretty abysmal. There's nothing good about [healthcare in U.S. Prisons]. It's terrible," said Paul Wright.

Wright is the founder and Executive Director of the Human Rights Defense Center, a Florida-based non-profit that advocates on behalf of the human rights of the incarcerated throughout the U.S. It began as a means to publish *Prison Legal News* (PLN), a newsletter out of the Washington State Penitentiary. PLN is currently a 72-page monthly magazine and is the longest-running independent prisoner rights publication in U.S. history. Wright initially became editor of PLN while imprisoned in Washington State for 17 years.

According to Wright, "four to five thousand prisoners a year" die in American prisons and jails for "medical reasons."

Medical, and economic reasons, would probably be a more accurate diagnosis.

"Florida alone privatized the Department of Corrections' medical care system a few years ago, and deaths went from 35 a year to 400 a year," said Wright.

Healthcare systems at most state prisons have been privatized. The corporations that run these systems are not only private but are also based on "for profit" business models. "This system of healthcare kills people," said Grote.

According to Grote some of the major features in this type of business model are: understaffing; lack of adequate medications; a reluctance to refer people to hospitals or specialists; lack of follow-up on specialist recommendations and, a "bot-

tom-line" approach to healthcare delivery that values saving money over saving lives.

In the words of Grote, "This business structure, combined with the culture of dehumanization that exists within the prison system, results in corpses and lawsuits by the score." He identifies Corizon (formerly Prison Health Services), Wexford Health Services and Correct Care Solutions are some of the biggest "offenders" in his region of the country.

Those just happen to be the same companies – along with a fourth one, MHM Correctional Services – that had a combined annual revenue of \$782 million as of March 2015, according to the website Open Minds.

A November 2014, report by the American Friends Service Committee claims that "subcontracted prisoner mental health and medical care ... is the largest and fastest-growing sector" in what the organization is calling the "Treatment Industrial Complex." The report also claims that state spending on healthcare for "rose from \$4.2 billion in 2001 to \$6.5 billion in 2008 (the last year available for comprehensive review)."

Women are not faring much better than men when it comes to medical care inside prisons and jails.

Paul Wright says his organization does get a fair amount of correspondence from female prisoners but he has less data for long-term health care issues. "Most of them aren't doing that much time in prison," Wright says, therefore "you don't have a big body of women lifer prisoners like you do with male prisoners."

Of course, time is relative. Female prisoners may not be spending the same amount of time as male prisoners, but they are still subjected to horrible medical neglect.

Putting it mildly, "Women prisoners often get overlooked," says Amy Fettig, a senior counsel at the ACLU's National Prison Project. Fettig is quoted in the May 29, 2015 edition of *The Intercept* in a detailed piece written by Erika Eichelberger on death and neglect at New York's Rikers Island jail. Rikers, known for the brutal violence that engulfs its male population, has unleashed a "quiet" violence against its female population – currently around 600 women in the facility – in the form of medical neglect, a gross example of state violence.

Misdiagnoses, unfulfilled prescriptions and the ending of prescriptions are routine occurrences for the women of Rikers.

For many female inmates, lack of personal hygiene products is also a serious concern. While not necessarily considered an issue of medical neglect, the implications of something seemingly so trivial, to women who may not be incarcerated, is huge.

Writing in *The Guardian*, Chandra Bozelko says she has seen women bleed through through their clothing and soiled sanitary napkins fall out on occasion. Since prisons limit the number of pads the women receive, many are sometimes forced to wear soiled pads for several days at a time; as such,

the adhesive on the napkins no longer works.

Far from being merely a social *faux pas*, Bozelko states that the lack of an adequate supply of sanitary napkins actually serves a strategic purpose: “[menstrual] stains on clothes seep into self-esteem and serve as an indelible reminder of one’s powerlessness in prison,” says Bozelko. “Asking for something you need crystallizes the power differential between inmates and guards.”

A letter from a female prisoner echoes Bozelko’s comments on women’s self-esteem. The letter, entitled “Menstruation and Incarceration,” was published on the Committee against Political Repression’s website on Nov. 23, 2012. According to the author, identified as KteeO, calling menstruating in prison unpleasant is an understatement.

“It is an experience that either intentionally works to degrade inmates, or degrades us as a result of cost-saving measures; either way, the results are the same,” KteeO says. “Prison makes us hate a part of our selves; it turns us against our own bodies.”

The California Institute for Women (CIW) and the Central California Women’s Facility (CCWF) are the largest correctional institutions for women in the world. According to Linda Evans mental health care is the current and most pressing need for the women.

“The suicide rate for women is 8 times what it is nationally. The conditions in the prison are driving people to suicide ... and if there were obviously not people in prison, fewer people or better conditions or mental health counseling I think the suicide rate would be lowered, but a lot of these women probably shouldn’t be in there in the first place. It’s a mental health issue but its related to the physical conditions of the prison and the kinds of services and programs that they have,” said Evans.

The California Coalition for Women Prisoners, an organization that challenges the “institutional violence” that is inflicted on the population, began in 1995 after women initiated a lawsuit over the horrific medical care at CCWF (*Shumate v. Wilson*). In a memo to California state legislators in April 2015, members of the organization provided data on the number of attempted suicides at both prisons (23) and actual suicides (3) during the 13-month period of Feb. 2014 – Feb. 2015. The memo also noted that “CIW had more suicides reported by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation than any other CA prison in 2014.”

While suicide and mental health appear to be the most pressing immediate issues, Evans echoes Grote’s comments regarding a tremendous lack of specialists of any kind inside the prisons, as well as the cost-cutting reasons for that reality. “For a long time there wasn’t a gynecologist available,” said Evans. “Access to any kind of specialist is really, really hard because they don’t want to send you out to clinics or to regional hospitals... because it costs so much money for the security.

The federal correctional institution for women in Dublin, CA, practices the same philosophy according to Evans. “The specialist had to be contracted and come in, and they don’t like to do that because it costs too much money,” she said.

A promising development for the health and well-being of women in prison regards the use of “shackling.” In 2012 LSCP was successful in getting legislation prohibiting this practice of restraining pregnant inmates in California prisons and jails. The ACLU described shackling – the use of leg irons, waist chains, and handcuffs behind the body – as a common but “degrading, unnecessary” practice of restraint that can “interfere with appropriate medical care and be detrimental to the health of the mother and her newborn child” during labor, delivery and postpartum recovery.

“When I was in prison,” said Paul Wright, “one of the things they said was ‘prison will make a young man old and an old man dead.’ And I think that’s pretty accurate.”

Bret Grote concurred. “Folks can look forward to an increased mortality rate,” said Grote. “The general population in society that’s 60 and older is considered aging or elderly and the incarcerated population, they cut 10 years off of that.”

Paul Wright notes that even the physical make-up of the prison itself as well as its practices are geared for younger, able-bodied prisoners. “For older prisoners, basically, its death by incarceration.”

Russell Shoatz is 71 years old and Robert Hayes is 66. Sundiata Acoli is 78. Mumia Abu Jamal, who turned 61 in April, spent 30 years on death row and never had so much as a common cold, according to his son Jamal. “He left death row and went to general population and came down with at least three very serious ailments. My son [Mumia’s grandson] asked how’d that happen?,” said Jamal.

Bret Grote believes that, while gains have been made in past decades due to litigation, the current context for medical neglect is also due to legal collusion. He says the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Estelle v Gamble* in 1976 gave constitutional sanction to the crises we are now witnessing throughout the U.S. prison system.

“In order to prove a cruel and unusual punishment claim you have to meet a higher subjective standard than a negligence standard, you have to show something called ‘deliberate indifference’ and this leaves most people who are incarcerated without a remedy whenever they are subjected to horrible medical mistreatment,” said Grote. “The U.S. Supreme Court has a lot of blood on its hands.” **CP**

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CULTURE & REVIEWS

If You Love Me, Why Am I Dying

BY LEE BALLINGER

“The most insidious effect of this shift is that after a few years of Molson concerts, Pepsi-sponsored Papal visits, Izod zoos and Nike after-school basketball programs, everything from small community events to large religious gatherings are believed to ‘need a sponsor’ to get off the ground...we become collectively convinced not that corporations are hitching a ride on our cultural and communal activities, but that creativity and congregation would be impossible without their generosity.”

—Naomi Klein

Almost unnoticed, oil companies have taken over a big chunk of the world’s culture. Shell sponsors the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, ExxonMobil supports dance and the symphony there. In Washington DC, ExxonMobil sponsors the Smithsonian, the Shakespeare Theater, and the Washington National Opera, and also works with Russia’s largest oil company Rosneft to sponsor the National Gallery of Art. BP (British Petroleum) helps to fund the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

In the middle of the Canadian tar sands, the China National Overseas Oil Company sponsors several cultural institutions while Norway’s Statoil backs the Calgary Stampede. Italian oil company Eni has sponsored exhibitions in the Louvre and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. In Brazil and Australia, oil companies sponsor theater, dance, and the symphony.

The French company Total Oil funds a program called “Sharing the World’s Cultures” through which Total puts its stamp on exhibitions from the various regions of the world where it owns oil fields.

Coincidentally enough, the sponsorship of cultural events often comes in the wake of community opposition or an ecologically damaging accident. Shell sponsors folk festivals in rural Ireland where there has been a campaign against Shell’s Corrib gas pipeline in County Mayo for over a decade. Canadian oil companies began sponsoring museums across the country only after First Nations and enviro groups built very public campaigns against tar sands.

“Oil companies claim affection for the arts because doing so establishes their position as heroes rather than parasites,” writes Mel Evans in *Artwash: Big Oil and the Arts* (\$22, Pluto Press). “In the theater of the global public relations industry,” Evans adds, “arts sponsorship becomes a way for the global corporation to offer a pretense of corporate responsibility for the corporate profiteer; and becomes an illusionary act of cultural relevance for outmoded industries.”

Evans’ story in *Artwash* focuses on the huge Tate Museum in England and on the role of BP. In April 2010, eleven people died on the BP Macondo rig in the Gulf of Mexico. The fireball of the rig’s explosion was visible 35 miles away. After being charged with manslaughter and other serious crimes, BP was forced to pay the US Dept. of Justice \$4 billion as a settlement in 2012. At the very moment that Macondo blew up, the Tate Museum was in the midst of celebrating twenty years of BP sponsorship.

Tate Director Nicholas Serota dutifully stepped forward to protect the

museum’s meal ticket, saying that “We all recognize they have a difficulty at the moment but you don’t abandon your friends because they have what we consider to be a temporary difficulty.”

Who are these friends that the Tate Museum stands by so proudly?

Five years before Macondo, an explosion at a BP oil refinery in Texas killed fifteen workers. Following the incident, BP CEO John Browne was personally censured by US safety authorities. Now retired and knighted, Sir John Browne chairs the Tate Museum Board of Trustees, sealing the cozy relationship between oil and art.

BP and death have many links. The company was a close ally of the Egyptian military dictatorship run by Hosni Mubarak. In 2003 the company egged on the US/UK invasion of Iraq, as can be seen in the minutes from a meeting between British Petroleum and the British Foreign Office: “BP is desperate to get in there and anxious that political deals should not deny them the opportunity.”

BP employs thousands of scientists yet would have been on the wrong side at the Scopes monkey trial. In 2010 BP announced that it provided funds to the Institute for Economic Affairs and admitted that it was aware of that organization’s key role in promoting the idea that climate change is a hoax.

So much for “temporary difficulty.” The crimes, indictable and otherwise, of BP are only one part of the oil industry’s fossil fuel onslaught. There have been nearly *ten thousand* oil tanker spills so far and oil train catastrophes are now a regular occurrence. Fracking continues to cause earthquakes and health problems wherever it goes. In 2012, 154 people died on the Chevron KS Endeavor exploration rig in Nigeria while over 2500 people in the country have been killed in pipeline explosions.

Toxic chemicals released during gas flaring done in conjunction with oil extraction cause chronic health problems. Even though Shell pledged to phase out flaring by 2008, the company refuses

to actually do it. In 2010 Shell burnt off 22 billion cubic meters of gas during flaring. In Canada, where the Alberta tar sands are bigger than England, extraction methods have been linked to increased cancer rates.

It isn't just oil-driven military invasions which highlight the international violence of the oil industry. There are also the bullet-backed security apparatuses in the poor countries whose oil makes foreign bankers rich. Their level of violence rivals that of a drug cartel. In fact, as pushers of a substance more dangerous than heroin, the oil companies are a drug cartel themselves. As Mel Evans writes, "With each drop of oil unearthed and burned, the cloud of carbon dioxide wrapping itself around the planet thickens."

Despite Big Oil's artwashing efforts, resistance to oil industry destructiveness continues to grow, as opposition has been mounted to nearly half of all global extraction projects. This combative relationship with civil society shows the contempt in which democracy is held by "corporate citizens" such as BP and Shell.

Mel Evans was part of a protest at the Tate Museum: "Invisible to the casual passer-by, we were carrying ten liters of oil-like molasses into the gallery under our skirts...When we reached the champagne reception, we spilled our precious cargo across the polished stone floor of the gallery. Across the Atlantic, BP was attempting to plug the dire spill, and here at Tate we replicated their messy clean-up mission."

Activists in New York were arrested for protesting the Metropolitan Museum of Art's opening of the David H. Koch Plaza, named in honor of the Koch Brothers, the founders of climate science denial.

When the band Godspeed You! Black Emperor won Canada's prestigious Polaris Prize, they released a statement: "Asking the Toyota Motor Company to help cover the tab for this gala, during a summer when the melting northern ice caps are live-streaming on the Internet,

IS FUCKING INSANE."

The Reclaim Shakespeare Company formed in 2012 in response to BP sponsorship of the Shakespeare Festival. Before the beginning of a Royal Shakespeare Company production of *Much Ado About Nothing* in London, two actors took the roles of BP and the Royal Shakespeare Company and addressed the audience.

RSC: You seek my help in being virtuous?

BP: Nay, I seek your help in seeming virtuous.

For a thousand ducats, thou shall proclaim

*My innocence to these simple people
To wash away the memories of my misdeeds*

Distract them from the destruction of the earth.

RSC: A thousand ducats: Tis a fine price

BP: By your reputation, I will mine own mend

It's no coincidence that current oil trading routes follow the same paths across the Atlantic that the slave ships did. The slave trade began in London, the home of BP and the Tate Museum. Davis writes: "London established itself as a global financial center in the founding of insurance companies, such as Lloyd's of London, that insured the ships on which people were abducted—the Middle Passage on which an estimated nine million people died. The arts and culture have a history intertwined with politics and economics. The buildings, collections, content and discourses of art galleries and museums all relate to the colonial empire, whether by theft or by theme."

If the oil and gas companies were properly taxed, the resources would be available to fund all aspects of the arts, not just the gallery world, and we could entirely avoid the deal with the devil known as corporate sponsorship.

More fundamentally, since we have eliminated one Atlantic triangle—the slave trade—why not make it two? As long as the fossil fuel industries con-

tinue to exist, neither humans or their culture will be safe.

What if the sun don't rise when it's supposed to?

What if the birds stop flying?

When will the air turn thicker than water?

If you love me, why am I dying?

Boxing Gandhis. **CP**

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Life Over Death

The Lessons of Targets

BY ED LEER

With the recent shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church and the closing arguments in the case of Aurora Theater shooter, James Holmes, an onslaught of media coverage ranging everything from gun control to flag control have flooded the news outlets, all in an attempt to grapple with the deep sense of senselessness and despair, but more importantly, to figure out why someone would unleash such a random explosion of violence onto their fellow man. In 1968, when mass shootings were still in their relative infancy, a young film critic named Peter Bogdanovich wrote and directed *Targets*, a low budget exploitation piece that remains one of the most potent and personal statements on this strange breed of American killer.

The film follows two competing narratives. The first concerns aging horror movie actor Byron Orlok (Boris Karloff in his swan song performance), having just completed yet another trashy Victorian fright flick for a Roger Corman-esque executive. The director, Sammy Michaels (Bogdanovich) wants Orlok to star in his next non-horror film. The state of that film, which depended on his star power, is thrown

into jeopardy when the veteran actor announces his retirement from acting.

In a nifty narrative baton pass, as Orlok talks to Sammy outside the studio the film cuts to a shot from the POV of a sniper scope with Orlok in the crosshairs. This is our introduction to Bobby Thompson (Tim O'Kelly), purchasing a brand new rifle in gun shop across the street from Orlok, before adding it to an alarming cache of other guns in the trunk of his car. Thompson is modeled after Charles Whitman, the man who murdered his wife and mother before firing randomly down on pedestrians from the University of Texas clock tower. The film follows Bobby in his daily routine and peculiar movements leading up to the killings, relocating the action to the Los Angeles suburbs.

In terms of tone and style, the two storylines are drastically different. Bobby's world is cold, ominous, and at times surreal. We follow him as he drives down the highway, taking note both a large, white oil refinery and a colorful drive-in movie theatre marquee. The camera lingers on both just long enough to imply something ominous. Once home, Bobby wanders around like a stranger, gazing at pictures of himself (both in military uniform and on his honeymoon) without a hint of recognition. It is a quietly disturbing moment, made all the more so by Bobby assuming such a chipper façade when he's called to dinner, answering questions with such force and speed, as if terrified of what might crawl out of a gap in the conversation.

Orlok's story, on the other hand, has the laid back playfulness of a hangout movie. He and Sammy get drunk, watch Howard Hawkes's *The Criminal Code* (an early role for Karloff), and prepare for Orlok's final public appearance at the drive-in. Karloff and Bogdanovich make a humorous duo and it's clear the affection and respect felt between the actor and director. Lines like, "I couldn't eat on an empty stomach" call back more to

one-liners from screwball comedies of the 1930s rather than the horror films of which Karloff is synonymous.

These scenes also have a pervading sense of sadness and loss. At one point Orlok wonders aloud, "What's it all about? Everybody's dead. I feel like a dinosaur." His rationale for retiring is his form of horror is no longer relevant compared to the real world horrors going on all around him. Showing Sammy a newspaper reporting a recent mass shooting in a supermarket, he declares, "no one's afraid of a painted monster." The central idea of the film being, this new form of random, amoral killers is so disturbing, even the classic monsters of Universal Horror days are scared beyond comprehension.

By juxtaposing these two diametrically opposed monsters, Bogdanovich actually points out certain parallels between the men. Orlok is running away from what he sees as a strange, chaotic madness, unique to the contemporary world. He doesn't understand it and his solution is to run and hide in retirement and, eventually, death. Bobby has the same fear of this chaos. Unfortunately for him, it is inside his head, an entity possessing him. Bogdanovich sets up the character, and O'Kelly plays it magnificently, as so All-American, clean-cut, and child-like that it's clear he can't even fathom these strange impulses, let alone overcome them. One of the most heart-wrenching scenes occurs when Bobby tries to talk to his wife about the "funny" ideas he gets. Unfortunately, she is so busy getting ready for work; she doesn't notice the pure desperation in his voice.

This is not to say that Bobby is without menace. As he sits in his car at the drive-in, waiting for it to get dark, he watches a child on the playground in front of the screen. A look of rage and contempt flashes across his face, as if he resents the child for being so happy and content. It is immediately after this that Bobby sneaks behind the screen to begin his assault on the moviegoers.

It is a bit strange to watch the drive-in sequence in light of the Aurora shooting, seeing how prophetic Bogdanovich was over forty years before the notorious incident in 2012. What gives the film such integrity is Bogdanovich's refusal to look away, despite how obviously painful it is for him. He presents the rituals of the drive-in like a religious experience, from the concessions lines to the cleaning of the projector mirror. It's clear that this is Bogdanovich's church. A shrine to his love of all things cinema. When Bobby starts shooting the audience, his crime feels all the more blasphemous.

But it's also Bogdanovich's revelry for filmmaking that keeps *Targets* from sinking into absolute nihilism. The film came together on account of Boris Karloff owing Roger Corman two days of filming. Ever the businessman, Corman gave Bogdanovich Carte blanche to make whatever he wanted, as long as he used Karloff and clips from the previous Corman/Karloff film *The Terror*. With these guidelines of commerce in place, Bogdanovich creates a fascinating hybrid of true-crime docudrama and his own love-letter to cinema.

To watch *Targets* is to watch the unbridled joy of the creative process. Every aspect of the filmmaking pops with energy, from the bizarre symmetrical cinematography to the fragmented montage editing when Bobby murders his wife and mother. Bogdanovich and Whitman were only two years apart in age, something obviously not lost on Bogdanovich. While he presents Bobby as a tragic, misunderstood figure, the film is ultimately a testament to what's possible when one avoids falling into despair and despondency. Even inside the ruthless bottom-line capitalism of low-budget filmmaking, one can create something of resonance and meaning. **CP**

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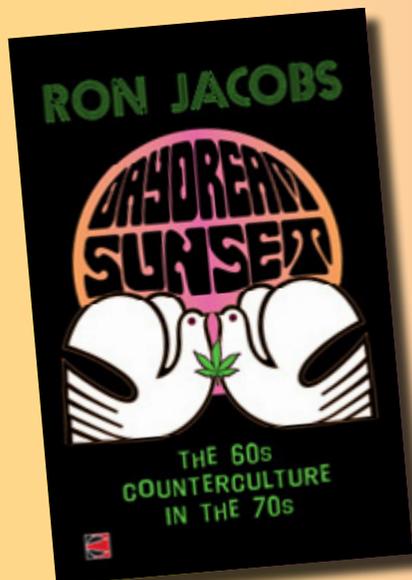
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