

CounterPunch

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LEARNING FROM EDWARD SNOWDEN BY JENNIFER MATSUI

YEMEN: THE BOMBS GO ON BY CHARLES PIERSON

UPTON SINCLAIR, SOCIALIST BY JONAH RASKIN

GHOSTS OF AN AMERICAN DEATH CULT BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR



CounterPunch

www.counterpunch.org

CounterPunch Magazine, Volume 27, (ISSN 1086-2323) is a journal of progressive politics, investigative reporting, civil liberties, art, and culture published by The Institute for the Advancement of Journalistic Clarity, Petrolia, California, 95558. Visit counterpunch.org to read dozens of new articles daily, purchase subscriptions, order books and access our digital archives.

Periodicals postage pending at Eureka, California.

POSTMASTER send address changes to: CounterPunch
P.O. Box 228
Petrolia, CA 95558

ISSN 1086-2323 (print)
ISSN 2328-4331 (digital)
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A one year subscription consists of 6 bi-monthly issues.

1-year print/digital edition \$45

1-year digital edition (PDF) \$25

1-year institutions/supporters \$100

1-year print/digital for student/low income \$40

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Add \$25.00 per year for subscriptions mailed to Canada and \$45 per year for all other countries outside the US.

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Cover Image

"CoronaHeads of Wall Street"
by Oliver Grant.

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In Memory of
Alexander Cockburn
1941–2012



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Carry, Wash and Repeat

More than 40% of the Navajo nation is without running water. They reuse much of the water they haul to their homes. Try washing your hands every 20 minutes like that. They were also disproportionately hard hit with H1N1. It's bad.

Arwen Mer

Haiti in Crisis

A regional perspective. Haiti is already in ruin (for reasons of which you are all aware). The border between Haiti and The Dominican Republic is closed. During times of supposed budget crises here attention is thrown off on Haitians living in the D.R. (Haitians do the field work here). Dominican flags get posted with the slogan, "I'm not racist, just a patriot." Should the hurricane season build as expected Haiti will almost certainly take the worst of things. If the virus is still raging during that time it will be

catastrophic. There is no way to know how this would affect the already tense relationship between Dominicans and Haitians living in country.

Mark Ziolkowsky

The End, the Beginning

Regarding the end to the pandemic, I was thinking about this this morning, when a local theatre radio person referenced the fact that Shakespeare wrote through the course of two waves of Black Plague. I felt like I should have known that: "Plague epidemics ravaged London in 1563, 1593, 1603, 1625, 1636, and 1665, reducing its population by 10 to 30% during those years."

Given the incompetent ways this one has been—is being handled—willful or by default—It does not bode well for the direction of ending the plague soon. And another dynamic that few seem to be taking into account is the vola-

tile climate: wildfire & drought & flood & hurricane seasons, in the midst of a plague, with supply and production chain interruptions to our food supply, with maniacs at the helm. Hell. We might want hell to end soon, that's for fucking sure.

Roxanne Amico

TrumpCare Will Defeat Biden

Even a modest move in toward Medicare-for-All by Trump will end the Democrats in 2020. Biden has done less than nothing to propose a leftist alternative, and Bernie is unlikely to gain inroads with the corporate-minded Democrats and an America who thinks pussy-hats are praxis.

M.N. Hannah

Serious, Very Serious

I had Coronavirus for 24 days, my daughter for 21. I had to get up every 4 hours for 10 days to take Mucosolvan to

breathe at all. That started 6 days in, so it gets worse than at the beginning! It was easier for my daughter who is 16, but she had high fevers and burned her hand badly when making tea because she just collapsed and the water poured from the kettle. It is very, very serious, but obviously not for every case.

Sean Mark Miller

More People, Fewer Beds

If we had the 1975 US population-to-hospital-bed ratio today we'd have about 2.25 million hospital beds in the US, more than double the post-Reagan, post-Clinton, post-Obama number of just over 900,000.

Elliot Sperber

**Send Letters to the Editor
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Dear Readers,

As CounterPunch evolves, we are faced with decisions that can sometime be very difficult. We've recently come to the conclusion that we'll need to stop printing the magazine and go to a digital only format within the next year. Currently we're down to so few paper subscribers—a tiny fraction of our readers still request the print edition—that the cost per copy to produce the magazine has increased each issue for the past few years.

While we are sad to see the print magazine go, we're very excited about the features we'll be offering our subscribers. We will be rolling out these new and improved features during the year and they will include more up-to-the minute exclusive content for our subscribers in easily printable formats for those who still want to read paper. As has been offered to all subscribers in the past few years, you'll continue to have access to the entire archive of magazines and newsletters as well. The new area of the website will be user friendly and searchable,

so no more digging through magazines to find that long-lost article on Climate Change from 2005 or all the articles by your favorite writer. All of this, and more, will be at your fingertips.

We acknowledge that many of our print subscribers have been with us since the beginning, or for many years and as our Charter Subscribers, you've been long-time friends and supporters of CounterPunch. We don't want to disappoint you and hope that we can make this transition as smooth as possible. All current print subscriptions will be extended until the completion of the print magazine, which will happen sometime between late 2020 and early 2021. If your subscription is not yet due to expire at that point, we will automatically provide all digital subscribers' access unless otherwise requested. Instructions to access the new online version will be sent out well before that and hopefully there won't be too many hiccups.

Sincerely, Jeffrey, Joshua, Becky, Deva, Nat and Nichole



ROAMING CHARGES

Death Valley Daze

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

I didn't want to be here. Not really. I took a wrong turn at Panamint Springs and headed south. I gave in to a bad impulse, lured on, summoned almost, by the name of Golar Wash. It was 35 miles of hard road to the ghost town of Ballarat, where first they mined gold, then uranium, before moving on or dying, then up the twisty curves and narrow slots of Golar Canyon, until my car could go no further, and I was forced to walk the last mile until I encountered a faded sign, hand-painted on plywood, propped on a fence post: "You Have Entered Barker Ranch Please Pick Up Keep It Alive."

Keep it alive. Here, standing in the desert sun, on the shattered flanks of the Panamint Range, a deathly chill seemed to rise up from the ground. I wanted to be down below on the sunbaked valley floor, where Michel Foucault, tripping on acid for the first time, tried to punch a hole in the constraining rules of consciousness. Instead, for all I knew, I was standing on the grave of an unknown victim of the Manson cult, starring at the burnt ruins of the ranch house, where Charlie himself made his last stand, as the Rommel of the Mojave, his brood roaming the canyons and playas in their stolen Jeeps and dune buggies, firing automatic weapons from the back at anything that moved: jackrabbits, roadrunners, coyotes or hikers.

Keep it alive. Barker Ranch had become a shrine to America's most infamous cult of death. (Until the arrival of the current government.) It was here that Manson had plotted a new killing spree, human sacrifices who would, in his stark phrase, be de-meated so the cult could thrive, their clothes strung up on fencelines like scarecrows of the

departed. I'd forgotten, if I ever knew it, that Manson and his cult of killers had been finally taken down by Park Service rangers from Death Valley (or the Valley of Death, as Foucault insisted on calling it), just over Manly Pass, after Manson and his gang had burned some road-grading equipment inside the park's boundaries. The rangers had no idea that the Barker Ranch had become a commune of a death cult. They thought they were dealing with some ranchers or miners enraged by the very existence of the park itself. They found Manson, where you could imagine they'd find Trump in a similar raid: cowering in a cabinet under a sink. People have left tributes near the scorched foundation of the house and down by the little pool: rock cairns, flowers, coins, medallions, lipstick cases, knives, small Buddhas. Not for Sharon Tate or Jay Sebring, not for Elizabeth Folger, Wojtek Frykowski or the LaBiancas. But to Charlie and Tex, Susie, Patty and Linda. There's something about America that loves a killer.

I had merely wanted to get away from the frigid, arrogant sound of Trump's voice for a day, as Americans began to fall to the COVID-19 plague. I had been staying on the eastern Sierra front, in a motel in Lone Pine, between the concentration camp at Manzanar and the dead white bed of Owens Lake, where ghostly twisters of saline dust danced across the valley in the late afternoon winds. This was a landscape of crime scenes.

Trump, the man without empathy, kept talking about the sick and the dead as numbers, his numbers versus Xi's—2,500 dead later, he's not so proud of his body count. But the voice goes on.

I'd reached my limit. I felt overcome by an urge to rip the motel's TV from the

wall and throw it into the Los Angeles aqueduct. Instead, I hauled myself up at 4 am and, to the sound of coyotes gossiping in the Alabama Hills, finished loading the CounterPunch website, and then drove east into the sunrise, over the Inyo Range toward Death Valley Park with the intention of revisiting Zabriskie Point, where almost 20 years ago to the day, Alexander Cockburn and I had absconded to from LA in his mighty Imperial, trailing a blue plume of hydrocarbons all the way from Palmdale. Zabriskie Point was a cinematic backdrop for one of Alex's obsessions—the, as he put it, "divine Daria," Daria Halpring, who had cavorted memorably in this surreal golden landscape at the explosive denouement of Antonioni's film. The movie was based, very loosely, on a scenario written by two of Alex's friends: Clare Peploe and Fred Gardner. We sat on the retaining wall, eating sausages and drinking cold cans of Tecate, as the sun slipped down below the ragged bronze peaks of the Panamint Range, before driving back to the city in the dark with one headlamp and a lurching transmission.

Still, there was no hint of death in the air that April day. But here at the dead end of Golar Wash, just a few miles away as the vulture flies, I was overcome by the sensation that the American death cult had gone nationwide. Unnerved, I retreated to my Subaru and rattled my way back down the wash, up the Panamint Valley and into the park. I pulled over south of the white waves of the Mesquite Dunes and struck off on foot across the playa, letting the afternoon sunburn the ghosts from my mind, until I hit Cottonball Marsh, 200 feet below sea level. It's one of the harshest environments on Earth. The saline water of these shallow pools is 3.5 times as salty as the Pacific Ocean. In the summer, the water temperature tops 105 degrees. But there, right in front of me, where hundreds of endangered Death Valley Pupfish, little streams of life, flashing out of the deadlands. Keep it alive. **CP**



EMPIRE BURLESQUE

Springtime for Bojo

BY CHRIS FLOYD

The first week of lockdown in Britain has seen the most sustained period of fine weather I've ever experienced in my 22-year sojourn on this island of perpetual wind and rain. Never has it been so bright, calm, temperate and invigorating. On solitary walks down deserted streets and river paths, keeping a careful distance from other humans when they sporadically appear, you find the air has the light crispness of early fall, while the sun—unimpeded by any cloud—imbues the body with the warmth of spring. As a friend remarked, it's an inversion of the pathetic fallacy: while human affairs are falling apart, nature is at its most serene.

At the moment, Britain seems to have arrested its headlong slide into the "American Carnage"™ that Trump has loosed upon the unfortunate land in his charge. But it has been near thing. With the supreme arrogance that only comes from centuries of inbred elitist stupidity, the Johnson government of toffs and twits wasted weeks of precious time pursuing a course of "herd immunity": essentially letting COVID-19 sweep through the populace and cull the old and weak, while praying that the rest of the population would build up a natural resistance.

This, you might think, would be a risky proposition, especially given the fact that no one knew exactly how this novel coronavirus worked or how it might mutate as it worked its way around the world. There was also the fact that the British approach flew in the face of WHO recommendations, which were proving effective in containing the virus elsewhere. But Johnson, a well-known, lifelong goof-off, was being led in this, as in all things, by his "special advisor," Dominic Cummings. This creepy liber-

tarian replicant has long advocated Steve Bannon-like principles of tearing down the "administrative state"—especially commie claptrap like the NHS—while exalting executive rule unencumbered by the pesky machinery of representative democracy. Just before the COVID-19 crisis hit, Cummings had to fire one of his own special advisors: yet another cranky twerp who, it was found, had been a bit too open in his advocacy of good old-fashioned eugenics.

But with the arrival of the virus, Cummings himself could now eugenitize to his heart's content, on a grand scale. Relying on dubious modeling based on woefully incomplete data, Johnson's government adopted a strategy that, if carried through, could have killed up to 250,000 Britons, although they were hoping for a low-ball of "only" 20,000 or so. (One can see the bug-eyed, smooth-pated Cummings in the Cabinet Room, telling Johnson in true General Ripper style: "I'm not saying we wouldn't get our hair mussed!") Government officials talked of the "herd immunity" strategy. Johnson made a speech telling Brits that a bunch of their loved ones was about to die, which, strangely enough, didn't go down all that well. So the Tories began denying that they were doing what they had said they were doing and were obviously still doing.

This Trumpian circus went on until March 12, when a new study by Imperial College, based on the actual data of the pandemic so far, showed that Boris and Dom's dimbulb plan would kill close to half a million people, maybe more. Panicked by the facts—or, perhaps, by the exposure of the mass death they'd been willing to accept—here is where the Tory toffs and twits finally diverged

from the Trumpian approach. Instead of denouncing the Imperial study as "fake news" and continuing their resistance to containment, they turned on a dime, jettisoned the "herd culling" plan and began adopting the WHO measures.

Naturally, being the stupid, inbred elitists they are, they went about it in a half-assed fashion, wasting two weeks with vague, often contradictory "guidelines" and "suggestions" that left the nationwide open to the spread of the virus. And when they finally pulled the trigger on an enforced lockdown, they dithered for days—and are still dithering as I write—about providing sufficient support for people now without work and, for the most part, without pay. Nevertheless, spurred on by relentless pressure from Jeremy Corbyn and many others, the Tory government was forced to offer far more substantial assistance for ordinary people than our fightin' progressives in the Democratic leadership have even proposed back in the States.

To riot in understatement, it has been an unedifying spectacle all around. But also a clarifying one. The murderous contempt which our elites feel toward us has been confirmed beyond a shadow of a doubt. It's in the open now: their willingness, their eagerness, to sacrifice thousands, even millions of lives in order to preserve their reeking, bloodstained dominion. All the clown make up of the ludicrous front men they push to the fore—Trump, Johnson, Bolsonaro, even trembly, sputtering old Joe Biden—can't hide the death's head that is capitalism's true face. This crisis is the last stop on the road to destruction: theirs or ours. And you don't need a weatherman to know which way that wind should blow. **CP**



BOTTOMLINES

Privatization vs. People

BY PETE DOLACK

Privatization of railways in Britain has been a disaster. So disastrous that the Labour Party had promised to nationalize the rail industry in five years during the just concluded election.

That wouldn't have happened immediately because train operators work under contract with the government, which maintains control of tracks and stations. Once those contracts expired, those operations would have gone back into public hands. Labour's manifesto also called for nationalizing water, energy and the postal service. But re-nationalizing the railways would have had particularly symbolic meaning along with the concrete benefit of better service and lower fares.

Naturally, the Conservative Party would have none of this. But the COVID-19 virus has upended previous ideological certainty. Boris Johnson's Tory government has announced a back-door nationalization of the railways, albeit one seemingly intended to be temporary. The Department of Transport said on March 23 it would suspend existing franchise agreements and assume all revenue and risk for six months. The government said it is taking these measures to minimize disruption to the industry and safeguard jobs.

A steep decline in ridership resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and strict shelter-in-place orders prompted the action. So it is not saving the jobs of working-class Britons—a group the Tories hardly have a history of caring about—but rather saving the companies operating the privatized railways that is the motivation here. Nonetheless, it is an irony that brings a smile to our faces that the Tories have done an abrupt about-face when it comes to nationalization.

Of course, not all blame for privatization can be laid at the feet of the Tories. Tony Blair was an unyielding proponent of “public-private partnerships,” known as “private finance initiatives” in Britain. Under these, governments sell off a public asset and lease it back.

Public-private partnerships are nothing more than a variation on straightforward schemes to sell off public assets below cost, with working people having to pay more for reduced quality of service. A scheme concocted by the Conservative Party and enthusiastically adopted by the “New Labour” of Blair and Gordon Brown, the results are far from the double talk of neoliberal rhetoric. A 2015 report in *The Independent* revealed that the British government owed more than £222 billion to banks and businesses as a result of private finance initiatives. Britain will pay more than five times the value of the assets, which are valued at £56.5 billion, under the terms of the initiatives used to create them.

Research by the Labour Party conducted in 2017 found that privatized rail, telecommunications, energy and water companies in Britain had paid out £37 billion in dividends to shareholders—money that could have been used to invest in public services and/or to reduce consumer prices. Nor has better service been the outcome of privatization, as exemplified by the case of British Rail. Dozens were killed and hundreds injured in a series of accidents in the first four years of privatization.

A 2013 study reported that “British taxpayers spend far more on the privatized system than they did on the old nationalized model,” in part because government subsidies are funneled into shareholder dividends. Britain's com-

muters spend up to six times more on rail travel than do those in continental Europe systems, and rail fares have increased twice as fast as wages. By 2018, riders paid 70 percent of the cost of a ride, up from 30 percent a decade earlier.

And so the private sector once again proves to be worse for customers and taxpayers than the public sector. Such a lesson ought to be intuitive—the private sector expects to obtain a hefty profit, give bloated salaries to top executives and hand out bundles of cash to shareholders.

The private sector, and capitalism in general, simply is unable to cope with the serious crisis that has arisen from the COVID-19 pandemic. We can readily see this failure in the United States, not only due to the incompetence of the Trump administration but the inability of capitalist enterprises to plan for emergencies or even have the capacity (or desire) to quickly switch to necessary production. Massive shortages of medical supplies, even those as basic as face masks, demonstrate the priorities of the “market.”

The modern nature of “just in time” supply chains is another example of capitalist failure. Producing extra supplies for future emergencies—outbreaks of new diseases occur at frequent intervals and medical professionals have long warned that a pandemic would inevitably occur someday—could have at least made the current crisis less severe. But doing so would have cut into profits, and that's all that matters.

Trump could have invoked the Defense Production Act early, but didn't. The reason is he and his gang desperately want to demonstrate that the market will solve all problems. It clearly can't, as the escalating toll the virus has taken in the United States makes plain to anyone who wishes to observe. Trump's consistent behavior in putting profits ahead of human life isn't simply incompetency, it is capitalism in action. **CP**



HOOK, LINE AND SINKER

The Rise of Deep Tech

BY JENNIFER MATSUI

Now might be the time to consider the role of ‘Deep Tech’ in the coming weeks and months ahead before it considers you in its efforts to monetize pandemic and make it a regular, if not, permanent feature of remaining life on this earth. You might even say this digitized ‘swamp’ supersedes the ‘Deep State’; an entity comprised predominantly of military bureaucrats preserving their influence and power at the highest levels of government. In contrast, these far more influential private sector operatives see government as an obstacle to overcome, or just another instrument to grant them unobstructed access into our devices, and complete control over our lives.

The explicitly right wing National Security State that emerged in the aftermath of 9/11 has morphed into a more centrist, ideologically-vague entity most often described as neoliberalism—a pandemic itself infecting every part of the world as evidenced by its spiking temperatures and its devastated, no longer functioning respiratory system. Having secured the world’s markets and installing its preferred leaders, it is left to battle itself, targeting surplus humans as vectors of contagion. And just as importantly, the constraints in place that put limits on their own ability to gather damning information against them as “public health risks”, sentenced to indefinite periods of solitary confinement

By now, many of us will have forgotten our previous roles as potential ‘terrorists’, bearing explosives and malicious intent towards airlines and office towers, having assumed our new identities as plague-carriers unwittingly atomizing disease. For a while there, we were “Russian assets”, deliberately spread-

ing fake news until our new Overlords downgraded our status to mere ‘vermin’.

Since Hiroshima and Nagasaki became Ground Zero for an American-led world order, crises, whether manufactured or the unintended consequences of this “exceptionalism”, have long been the impetus for “emergency” measures necessary to re-calibrate capitalism and allow it to extract value from untapped sources. Yesterday, it was mining our personal information to make predictive inferences about our behaviors and manipulating them to achieve certain consumer and political outcomes. Today, it is burrowing deeper into ourselves to harvest data resources from us at the very cellular level.

In some very foreseeable future, breakthrough technologies monitoring our health will be upheld as a medical necessity, recording our temperatures and electronically guiding us through digitally demarcated zones of ‘safe’ and ‘dangerous’, providing up to the minute updates on infection clusters, and tracing the routes and sources of contagion. With these invaluable tools at our disposal, we will overlook their more sinister social control aspects, and accept these limitations on our movements and associations with others as necessary to maintain health. A “clean bill” of it by now a prerequisite for daily commuting, air travel and a general admission fee for admission into society at large.

Notice how so many of these social-distancing measures in place have already yielded demand more tech-based solutions in the form of more advanced teleconferencing technology, and one can only suspect digital home-

schooling (programming) software, helpfully provided by Microsoft. Expect the shut down of public schools as a permanent feature in the “new pandemic normal” where seasonal outbreaks send us back indoors for weeks or months at a time. Here we will accelerate our data flows as we become wholly dependent on our devices for work, socialization and simply survival. Technology will provide the tools that will enable solitary interaction with ourselves as “entertainment”.

Expect unemployment rates to favorably reflect millions of parents (mostly mothers) forced to relinquish outside employment as unpaid homeschooling teachers. Their best hope is a sub-survival level universal basic income contingent on abject adherence to terms and conditions authored by private sector legal departments and rubber-stamped into Federal law. To be clear, these so far imaginary situations are not based on prediction, but rather outline the best-case scenarios as envisioned by the architects of an emerging, global society both united and divided by fear.

The UK, under the leadership of a quarantined baboon, where even its future crowned head of State is self-isolating, is predicting a nearly year long lockdown of its entire population. This could mean that existing facilities, venues, institutions and even laws will die of neglect, and unlikely to be revived in their present form in the post-pandemic world. Apps, software, and government-mandated regulations, written by its Deep Tech brain trust will become the underpinnings of all human activity as we pivot from enshrined rights to the universally applied terms and conditions one must “agree” to in order to remain online.

Already, we can see an erosion of the legal frameworks in place that inhibit some of the more egregious aspects of corporate overreach. When the EU unveiled its data privacy and protection guidelines, it was lauded by privacy advocates for its protections against data theft and unethical uses of AI. The

guidelines would have forced data controllers to design information systems with privacy in mind, and mandate how long data can be retained by third parties, among other protections put in place to safeguard content providers against unauthorized uses of their data.

This much needed regulation, which also addresses the transfer of data outside the protected zones of the EU has been put on hold as anti-regulatory bodies, citing “public health concerns” see the implementation of these recommenda-

between the sort of “idle” brain activity that scans a social media account during work hours and one that is fully engaged in problem-solving mode. Extended periods of the latter will produce a patented cryptocurrency mined from the literal sweat of workers, now battery hens laying a new source of wealth for the world’s wealthiest man, and creating alternate revenue streams from misapplied Blockchain technology. The ‘fever hunting’ capabilities of this soon-to-be patented technology could have real

of-its-depth . . . The list could go on to describe not just the cretin and his abominable administration’s policies, but the entire bipartisan establishment from which they emerged.

At this point you have to wonder if the Imbecile Child-in-Chief wasn’t (s) elected to hasten the obsolescence of the present, deliberately broken system. Still, we have to be careful that in our justifiable anxiousness to wipe out a pandemic and the President who is making it “Greater” by the minute, we



Inside Google’s data center. Photo: Google.

tions as slowing down the development of (in their words) “algorithms and vaccines” that require more enhanced measures of data collection, surveillance and monitoring. Not surprisingly, our data output is needed more than ever to combat both COVID-19, and more importantly, the regulations that would impede Big Tech and Pharma’s ability to profit from pandemic.

Here might be the right place to mention a recent patent filed by Microsoft to reward cryptocurrency ‘tokens’ to people working remotely based on involuntary physical activity such as brain waves or body heat. This technology can somehow differentiate

world ramifications for potential travelers overseas and to their local supermarkets. While we are barricaded behind closed doors, hunkered down behind shrinking stocks of toilet paper, Microsoft is already laying the groundwork for a society stratified by health, not just wealth.

This is just a more recent example of Deep Tech’s hibernating technologies now rising from their digitized swamps that will eventually overtake ‘analog’ government response to pandemic and government itself. Think of Trump as the ultimate symbol of an outdated political model: Incompetent, dangerous, corrupt, erratic, petty, ridiculous, out-

just might be “Making the World a Better Place” in every dystopian sense for the phrase. Is the alternative to a plutocracy on life support, a “healthy” and health-centered technocracy that grants privileges instead of rights, and keeps us in line with ‘soft’ (and software-based) measures of containment? Now, many would argue, might not be the time to ask those particular questions. Still, there’s no time like the present to consider the alternatives to answered prayers. **CP**

Special thanks to Dr Rick Kastelein, Publisher of *Blockchain News*.

BORDERZONE NOTES

COVID-19

Cuba Wages War for Which it is Well Prepared

BY CHARLES MCKELVEY

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel declared on Cuban television on Friday, March 20, that Cuba is prepared to wage a successful battle against the COVID-19 infirmity. “We have an educated, informed, responsible, compassionate, and disciplined people. We have in our favor a system of public health for all, an acclaimed scientific community, an effective system of Civil Defense, a Party and a government that place the Cuban people at the center of their attention; and we also have the army of the people. In addition to these strengths, we have the training of more than 60 years of a long journey of resistance in the tough wars of all kinds that they have imposed on us. . . . Be strong, Cuba, we will live and we will overcome!”

As of March 25, Cuba has fifty-seven confirmed cases of COVID-19. All are imported cases, that is, they were infected outside the country or through contact with a person who had contracted the infirmity outside the country. As of March 25, there has not been a case of autochthonous transmission among Cubans who have not had direct or indirect contact with a person who traveled recently in the exterior.

The March 21 issue of the Cuban daily newspaper Granma included a twelve-

page supplement that was devoted to the pandemic, six pages of which were dedicated to a thorough description of the government’s report on the adoption of new measures on Friday, March 20, in a special two-hour edition of the evening new program Mesa Redonda. During the program, a report was presented by a government team formed from the Council of Ministers, led by President Miguel Díaz-Canel, Prime Minister Manuel Marrero Cruz, Deputy Prime Minister Roberto Morales Ojeda, and Minister of Public Health José Angel Portal Miranda; and including the ministers of Internal Commerce, Finances and Prices, and Work and Social Security as well as the Vice-President of the Central Bank of Cuba.

Restrictions on permission to enter and to leave the national territory are the most important of the new measures announced on March 20. For a period of thirty days, Cuba will deny entrance into the country of persons who are not Cuban citizens or residents. Non-Cubans presently in the country are not required to immediately depart; they can leave the country during the thirty-day period, but many are leaving now. Cuban citizens will not be able to leave the country during the period; and Cuban citizens and residents currently

in the exterior can enter the country during the thirty-day period, but many are returning now. The Prime Minister noted that the measure should not be described as a closing of the border, because foreigners will be departing and Cuban citizens and residents will be entering during the thirty-day period. The restrictions may be renewed for a longer period, depending on the evolution of the situation.

The Cuban Plan of Prevention and Control of COVID-19 was approved on March 5, prior to any confirmed cases of COVID-19. It is a dynamic plan, based on a daily evaluation, with modifications and new measures as the international and national situation evolves, such as the new border restriction of March 20.

The Plan has been conceived as having three phases. The first or pre-epidemic phase is characterized by confirmed cases of travelers proceeding from affected countries or local cases produced by contact with these travelers. At the moment, Cuba is still in the first phase. The second phase is that of limited autochthonous transmission, where there are confirmed cases in which direct links with travelers proceeding from affected areas has not been established, but such cases are limited to a locality of the country or a particular center or institution. The third is the epidemic stage, where cases are confirmed without links to travelers, and there are an increasing number of cases in different localities of the national territory.

The Plan of Prevention and Control has various components. An important dimension is a program of vigilance or surveillance, seeking to identify persons with symptoms. The surveillance occurs at points of entry in the country, where cameras that read body temperatures of travelers have been in place for some time as part of Cuba’s regular epidemiological vigilance. In addition, vigilance is in place in all places of work or study, where people with respiratory symptoms are prohibited from entering and are sent to the family

doctor. Moreover, there is a program of active inquiry to identify persons with symptoms, incorporating more than 28,000 medical students, who go from door to door inquiring if a person in the house has respiratory symptoms. The students are under the supervision of a professor, who gives priority to ensuring the personal protection of the youth. The students wear masks, and they do not conduct physical exams or have personal contact, and they maintain social distance. Their task is to identify persons with symptoms.

When persons with respiratory symptoms are identified, they are sent to the family doctor's office in the area, who determines if the symptoms warrant clinical analysis. If so, they are taken to a local hospital for testing. Samples are taken at the local hospital and sent to one of three laboratories in the country, where the cases are confirmed as COVID-19 or not. Through a testing kit designed by Cuban researchers, these laboratories have the capacity to identify not only COVID-19, but also seventeen other types of viruses. So far, most of the patients have been determined to have a virus other than COVID-19.

All persons with respiratory symptoms combined with having traveled internationally or having had contact with an international traveler are hospitalized for up to fifteen days, where they are regularly tested. If confirmed for COVID-19, they remain hospitalized for treatment. Cuba has at its disposal the Cuban drug Interferon Alfa 2B, which has been developed by the Cuban Center of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, and which has been used to treat with success COVID-19 cases in China. Several countries have requested Cuba for the drug, requests that are under consideration. Cuba has supplies of the drug to respond to national need and international requests.

Two categories of persons are placed in obligatory fifteen-day home quarantine, namely, persons with respiratory symptoms but who have not had contact

with international travelers; and persons who have traveled internationally but who do not have symptoms. They are tested regularly during the quarantine and confirmed cases are hospitalized for treatment.

In addition to restrictions at the border, vigilance, testing, hospitalization, and quarantine of particular persons, the Cuban plan has other dimensions as well. The sale of a chlorine solution has been expanded, with the establishment of 444 points of distribution throughout the country, with plans to increase the number of distribution points, in order to avoid the concentration of persons. All places of work and study are mandated to provide solutions for hand-washing in multiple and convenient places.

Moreover, the plan calls upon weekend food markets to change their structure of distribution, reducing centralized distribution and using mobile street sellers with carts. And it calls for a decentralization of the locations of small-scale merchants authorized to sell goods and provide services, which tend to concentrate in particular areas.

Restaurants and cafeterias are obligated to reduce their services by 50% and arrange the tables with a distance of two meters among them.

There are 151 workshops that are dedicated to the fabrication of masks, which are being made for distribution to the population, above all people with respiratory symptoms and workers who have transactions with large numbers of people. People can bring their own cloth to a workshop for elaboration for their personal use.

Cuban citizens are being called upon to suspend tourist hotel lodging as well as any activity than involves concentration of persons, such as night centers, cinemas, theatres, et cetera. Social distancing in greeting and in personal transactions, as well as voluntary quarantine and isolation, are recommended. Working at home via the Internet is encouraged.

Further measures were announced

on March 23, including restriction on the movement of foreign tourists, of which 42,873 remain in the country. Those who are in private rental rooms will be relocated gradually to hotels, and tourists will not be permitted to leave the hotels or the private residences. All tourist excursions and tourist car rentals are suspended. Inside the hotels, all recreational activities, concentrations, and night centers are suspended; the gymnasiums and pools will be closed.

The Prime Minister indicated a level of surprise that more tourists did not leave the country during the 72-hour period following the announcement of restrictions for leaving and entering the country. The tourists are free to leave during the thirty-day period in which the restrictions are in place, but flights will be limited, and it is possible that the thirty-day period will be extended.

Some tourists may find that a hotel in Cuba, in spite of being confined to their hotel, is their best option, because of the unsafe and chaotic situation in their countries. In effect, Cuba is offering a safe haven to tourists who by chance were in Cuba at the time of the outbreak of the pandemic, but they must confine themselves to their hotel. At the hotel, they have meals, Internet, international and national television, medical services, and laundry services.

The Prime Minister made clear that the restrictive measures imposed on foreign tourists in the country do not apply to foreign residents, who are temporarily or permanently living in Cuba for motives of work or marriage.

School and university closing were not among the measures announced on March 20. The government believed that the closing of education centers not necessary, inasmuch as the nation had not entered the phase of autochthonous transmission; and the educational centers were rigorously practicing necessary hygiene measures. However, the people expressed concern, and in deference to the concerns of the people, closing of the schools and universities for three weeks was announced on

March 23. Activities will be presented on education television during the suspension of classes, and classes will resume on April 20, if conditions permit.

The plan is well-conceived. It is carefully formulated; it has not been formulated under pressure, nor is it improvised. It has been formulated by the government, and it is supported by the institutions of the nation: The Party, the medical profession and medical institutions, the media, and the mass organizations. All are calling the people to calm and to serenity, yet to appreciate the seriousness of the situation. The people are called to avoid panic and to comply with the Plan.

Cuba has all the necessary technical and human resources to respond to the threat, a situation that is rooted in sixty years of giving emphasis to the building of a society that responds to human needs; and that has established a government of, by, and for the people.

Cuba confronts the pandemic with unity, on the basis of a coherent plan that has the backing of the people. It is a nation in which the political leadership is capable of formulating a reasoned and coherent plan, and when it calls upon the people to comply with the plan, it speaks with moral authority and with credibility.

In its comportment in the context of the current global emergency, Cuba once again demonstrates that “power to the people,” which was the hope of our youthful days, is not an impossible dream. **CP**

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EUROZONE NOTES

Tax Commission Plunder

BY DANIEL RAVENTÓS AND JULIE WARK

There’s no such thing as capitalism singular. There are socially and historically indexed capitalisms. And there’s no such thing as the market singular. There are specific, politically regulated markets at different times and in different places. But all capitalisms, whatever the epoch, have elements in common. Private property of the means of production, a labor force market, the corporate mission of maximizing profits, capital accumulation, and market economies may not be unique to what’s understood as capitalism, but they are part of it, around the world and in different periods. Nevertheless, European capitalism prior to the Second World War has little in common with the postwar version; putting Reaganomics under the same heading as the New Deal doesn’t shed much light on anything; and neoliberalism (austerity policies, rampant inequality, the dominance of finance capital, and power in the markets concentrated in the hands of a few corporations) and capitalism of the “roaring thirties” are chalk and cheese.

Markets are just as varied, ranging from, for example, fish, porn, tractors, beauty, coffins, housing, and so on, all of them existing within state bounds or well-defined historical territories, each with its own strict or slack regulations. Markets are political creations of the state and, in capitalism, more than ever. If you want to enter a market, you must comply with laws and rules dictated by

the entity that has the power to enforce them, i.e. the state and the interests that run it. There’s no market that isn’t politically regulated.

The “free market” doesn’t exist outside textbooks of Economics students and the minds of many of their benighted professors. The various sorts of capitalism and markets clearly aren’t independent of each other. Depending on how the laws and regulations are designed in the most important markets, a specific kind of capitalism will be shaped by, say, aggressive policies against the non-rich population (for example, people paid \$7.65 per hour in KFC) and benefits for the richest group (CEOs of S&P 500 companies earning a yearly average of \$12 million) in markets governed by ironclad—though full of lovely loopholes for those in the know—regulations. Rarely has a capitalist system required the rich to contribute more in order to favor the wellbeing of the poorer members of society. Regulation is about who benefits. Whether the measures are tax, monetary, or labor policies, they’ll work to benefit some to the detriment of others.

One of the areas where capitalist market regulation has a truly alarming influence is corporate tax whereby legal entities—mainly corporations—are theoretically obliged to pay an involuntary levy to the state in keeping with their profits over a certain period. This should be the main source of public revenue.

In the 1980s, corporate tax was about 50% in most European states, but now the average is down to 22%. In Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, and Lithuania the tax rate is between 10% and 15%, while in France, Malta, Belgium, Portugal, Italy, and Germany it oscillates between 30% and 38%. But these are nominal rates and once deductions and tax breaks are applied, the real rate is much less. Thanks to these concessions for the rich, tax revenue has fallen by more than 50% over the last four decades. Besides greatly exacerbating inequality this has caused notable deterioration in the public sector, especially health-care, as COVID-19 has made more than manifest.

Tax competition strives for lower and even zero taxes for big corporations. The technically shaky argument claims that something (like public infrastructure and services) has got to give if the state is to attract “investment”. Investment in what doesn’t matter because, however damaging to the general good it may be, if the right people are making the profit, the market will be regulated to make that legal. Outdoing each other, tax competitors have invented a raft of measures, including tax holidays (fifteen years in St. Kitts and Nevis), incentives and grants, exemption of withholding tax, lowering or cancellation of tax rates on profits, and so on, all supposedly to attract more business. Other states follow suit and even when the tax rate hits zero the competition isn’t over because tax subsidies can be offered. One state can offer 5%, its neighbor 10%, and another 15%, etcetera.

This competitive logic has repercussions on the other side of the coin. If a state introduced measures aiming to improve the situation of the non-rich population, abolishing poverty with a universal basic income for example, it would cause capital flight. It’s taken for granted that, if workers’ conditions are better in any country, businesses will move on to “more competitive” places where workers rights aren’t so “detrimental to company interests”. It doesn’t

take great flights of imagination to see where this ends: let’s get as close as we can to slavery in economic and social life so we can attract more capital. And? According to the ILO, 40 million people (71% women and girls), were victims of slavery in 2016.

The tax competition champs are tax havens, these territories, enclaves, or whole states whose legislation is designed for tax fraud in other countries where paying taxes is obligatory. There are plenty of these chummy offshore heisters (“haven” is too nice a word), and they’re not all small islands. Among the most aggressive depredators are the United States, Taiwan, the Netherlands, Singapore, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. These “international financial centers”, generally prized for their political stability, have several specialties: zero or only nominal tax; lack of exchange controls; zealous protection of financial information; opaque legislative and administrative machinery; and non-requirement of local presence (hence, a single building in the Cayman Islands, accommodates 12,000 US corporations). There are some 70,000 companies domiciled on the volcanic rock of Nevis (population 11,000, former center for British slavers), but not much more is known because the Nevis corporate registry has “no idea” of who owns what. Nevis is paid to protect secrets. In the tax competition game, secrecy is good business.

Nevis, neither an independent country nor controllable by any other, and with a peculiar constitutional situation, shows how tax havens take ideas from each other, honing their legal systems for more secrecy, fewer and lighter taxes, and less regulation. Nevis drew on limited liability company legislation from Wyoming to ensure that no one can challenge the legality of a property or even learn whether it exists. “Nevis ownership can transform a supposedly transparent British company into a secrecy vehicle as iniquitous as anything on earth.” (Oliver Bullough, *The Guardian*, July 12, 2018). Since this

is a competition, other countries aren’t keen on transparency either.

The Tax Justice Network estimates that about a third of the world’s GDP (about \$87,000 billion in 2019) is deposited in tax havens. Fortune 500 corporations are calculated to be stashing more than \$2,600 billion offshore in the form of “permanently reinvested profits”, thus avoiding some \$767 billion in US federal taxes. Among them, 29—the only ones that make such disclosure (non-disclosing companies collectively held some \$1.88 trillion in unrepatriated offshore profits at the end of 2016)—reveal in their recent annual reports that they paid an income tax rate of 10% or less in places where their profits are officially held. Tax Watch UK observes that Apple, Google, Facebook, Cisco, and Microsoft had profits of £30,000 million in the UK from 2012 to 2017 but most of this was transferred to other countries. They paid only £933 million in UK taxes, in some cases with a tax rate of 3%.

Tax haven countries that have no or very low corporate income tax—like Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, and the Bahamas—aren’t going to offer real “business opportunities” for American corporations like Qualcomm, Citigroup, and Microsoft. But they can “legally” tweak the accounting to make profits look as if they’re earned. A 2016 Citizens for Tax Justice (CTJ) study of IRS data found that U.S. corporations reported earning profits in Bermuda and the Cayman Islands amounting to more than fifteen times their GDPs!

Until Donald Trump was elected, US corporate tax was one of the highest in the world, at 35%, but once deductions and tax advantages were applied, it fell substantially to an average of around 22%. Since January 2018, the nominal tax rate has dropped to 21% and then there are the deductions which have meant, as is notorious, that companies like Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), Duke Energy, and Boeing, paid nothing at all some years, and even received refunds. Indeed, the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy has

found that 60% of the biggest companies paid no income tax in 2018 and received a total of \$4,300 million in refunds, even though their net profits were \$79,000 million. If they paid even at the paltry rate of 21%, state coffers would have received \$16,400 million in taxes, more than \$27,000 million less than at the previous rate or, in other words, a nice reward for all their lobbying and donations to Trump's campaign.

Tax competition between EU member states is largely unregulated. Oddly enough, in the "construction of a common Europe" there is no "common" tax policy but only a Code of Conduct for Business Taxation, and a political commitment of member states to refrain from harmful tax practices and unfair competition by selectively giving favorable tax treatment to certain businesses. Since the Treaty of Rome (1958), decisions on taxation have been taken by "unanimity", so national sovereignty in the EU over tax matters is guaranteed because EU-wide rules (for example specific rates, the tax base, the tax structure, etc.) can't be applied without all countries agreeing. This "unanimity" requirement is what allows tax competition to exist because countries can use their own tax systems to compete internationally. The EU Commissioner for Tax Planning, Pierre Moscovici has pointed the finger at Belgium, Cyprus, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, and the Netherlands for their "aggressive tax planning", but everyone's at it. Apart from overseas dealings, between €50,000 million and €70,000 million are lost each year because of profit-shifting within the EU. There are some calls for reining in tax abuse by strengthening national tax legislation, increasing transparency, and cooperation among governments. Fat chance. Trump and Brexit (after which the UK is no longer bound by minimum standards against tax evasion) have shown the way for tax competition among states, and between them and the United States. As long as tax competition and places like Nevis exist, the future's rosy for criminals profiting from this financial finagling (and with that kind of money at stake, their crimes don't stop at that) and, since their corporations are pitted against humans and nature, it's bleak for human and environmental rights, and especially now when the economic mayhem caused by COVID-19 is aggravating that already caused by the recent economic crisis. **CP**

Patriotic Rescue

Historians' Beef with the New York Times 1619 Project's View of the American Revolution

BY TIMOTHY MESSER-KRUSE

In the summer of 2019, the *New York Times Magazine* published a series of essays on the role of slavery and racism in American history it called the "1619 Project". Named for the

year in which the first Africans were sold in Virginia, the 1619 Project became a target for a group of renowned historians who took particular aim at its characterization of the American Revolution.

Lead essayist Nikole Hannah-Jones re-centered the history of America through slavery. Among all of Hannah-Jones' claims, perhaps none riled up this group of historians more than her contention that "Conveniently left out of our founding mythology is the fact that one of the primary reasons the colonists decided to declare their independence from Britain was because they wanted to protect the institution of slavery." Apparently, this breach in the founding mythology was worth defending and they rushed to repel the assault.

A number of distinguished historians of early America, Sean Wilentz and James McPherson of Princeton, Gordon Wood of Brown, Victoria Bynum of Texas State, and James Oakes of CUNY, wrote a protest to the *New York Times Magazine's* editor, Jake Silverstein, in which they wrote: "On the American Revolution, pivotal to any account of our history, the project asserts that the founders declared the colonies' independence of Britain 'in order to ensure slavery would continue.' This is not true..."

Defending his authors, Silverstein noted that a number of noted scholars had documented a series of events that supported the contention that slavery was a factor in the American Revolution, including the ruling of the British High Court in the 1772 case of *Somerset v. Stewart* that slavery could not be enforced on the English mainland.

Princeton's Sean Wilentz, eager to have the last word, fired off a more detailed critique to the Atlantic magazine, misleadingly entitled "A Matter of Facts", that he largely devoted to downplaying the *Somerset* episode and arguing that English policies never actually posed a threat to American slavery. To do this, Wilentz employs a tactic of specificity: making it appear that he is merely correcting the newspaper of record when he is actually challenging the framing of facts, not their existence.

Wilentz attempts to paint a picture of patriot disinterest in the whole *Somerset* business: "In the entire slaveholding South, a total of six newspapers—one in Maryland, two in Virginia, and three in South Carolina—published only 15 reports about *Somerset*, virtually all of them very brief. Coverage was spotty: The two South Carolina newspapers that devoted the most space to the case didn't even report its outcome."

Wilentz's statement is both designed to obscure the reality of an intense journalistic reaction to the *Somerset* decision and is categorically untrue. *The South Carolina Gazette*, which is one of the two newspapers that devoted the most space to the case (notably Wilentz doesn't note that one of the *Gazette's* articles ran to some 1400 words), in fact did report the outcome of the trial on Sept. 10, 1772: "Yesterday morning came on at ten o'clock, in the Court of King's-Bench, the judgment of the Negro cause, when Lord Mansfield spoke for the rest of

the Judges; he said, that every slave brought into this country ought to be free...”

Note how Wilentz only mentions southern newspapers, as if the American revolution didn't exist north of the Chesapeake. Had he included the northern press, he would have been forced to acknowledge that a number of papers carried extensive and lengthy reports on the case that included much commentary. The scholar who has produced the most comprehensive study of the colonial American press during the Revolution, Patricia Bradley, found that 22 of 24 of the papers she surveyed carried news of the Somerset case (out of a total of 32 news outlets in America—the others not surveyed because a full year's run of their publications do not exist). Bradley concluded, “... the patriot press manipulated the issue of slavery in the American colonies to advance the separation of the colonies from Great Britain.”

Sean Wilentz, in his most recent book on slavery in the Constitution, briefly mentions Somerset and in his footnotes writes “On American slaveholders’ reactions to the Somerset principle, see Van Cleve, *Slaveholders’ Union*, 31-40. More broadly on Somerset’s impact, see William M. Wiecek, *The Sources of Antislavery Constitutionalism...* 40-61.” These sources don’t actually dismiss Somerset as Wilentz now does. Van Cleve writes the following on p. 33: “The political impact of Somerset was not limited to England...

The decision ignited a substantial controversy in the American colonies. The wider political implications of Somerset were even broader and more important than its direct legal effects.” Wiecek observes, “The Somerset decision and the arguments it spawned were promptly disseminated in the colonies.... Somerset’s ideas flowed into the mainstream of policy debate during the Revolution...”

Among the other “false assertions” Wilentz claims Nicole-Harris makes is that “By 1776, Britain had grown deeply conflicted over its role in the barbaric institution that had reshaped the Western Hemisphere”. Wilentz refutes the idea that there was a significant antislavery movement in England and writes, “apart from the activity of the pioneering abolitionist Granville Sharp, Britain was hardly conflicted at all in

1776 over its involvement in the slave system.” In making such a claim, Wilentz is both splitting hairs and contradicting the statements made by the scholar who just gave the prestigious Philip Roth lecture. That scholar said, “By the mid-1770s, in the American colonies as well as in Britain and France, a significant number of reformers and intellectuals had come to regard American slavery as pure evil.” Sean Wilentz doesn’t have to travel far to engage in debate with that scholar, he has only to look in the mirror as those remarks are his.

Unsatisfied with the protests he had already lodged, Brown University’s Gordon Wood also penned a rejoinder to New York Times Magazine editor Jake Silverstein’s defense of the 1619 Project. This time, rather than cite historical facts

that would support his argument, Wood trots out his credentials: “I have spent my career studying the American Revolution and cannot accept the view that “one of the primary reasons the colonists decided to declare their independence from Britain was because they wanted to protect the institution of slavery.” I don’t know of any colonist who said that they wanted independence in order to preserve their slaves. No colonist expressed alarm that the mother country was out to abolish slavery in 1776.”

Wood is correct that there is no known Patrick Henry style speech of a colonist at the time proclaiming, ‘Give me slavery or give me death!’ but there is a tall pile

of letters, speeches and resolutions that reveal the panic the prospect that England might free American slaves caused. Soon after the Somerset ruling effectively ended slavery in England, a New York correspondent wrote that Lord Mansfield’s ruling “will occasion a greater ferment in America (particularly in the islands) than the Stamp Act itself.” What Somerset clearly did was predispose, rightly or wrongly, many Americans into believing that England was a threat to the slave system that was at the core of their economy and society.

In 1770, Sir William Draper toured the troubled American colonies and upon his return to London published his insightful observations of the American rebellion in 1774 in a pamphlet entitled *Thoughts of a Traveller upon Our American Disputes*. Though Draper urged a policy of conciliation he

On October 15, 1775, the former governor of South Carolina who was now a member of the House of Lords, Lord Lyttelton, rose in debate and advocated encouraging a slave rebellion in the American South: “He intimated, if a few regiments were sent there, the negroes would rise, and embrue their hands in the blood of their masters.”

also warned that if the Americans should try and turn Crown soldiers against the throne, England should do likewise. "... if they rob us of those...Proclaim Freedom to their Negroes; then how long would they be a people? They would soon cry out for pardon, and render unto Caesar the Things which are Caesar's."

Draper's proposal ignited chatter among the political class in England and news of its popularity traveled quickly to America. In November of 1774, James Madison wrote to his Pennsylvania friend William Bradford and told him of a curious plot among some Virginia slaves that was just uncovered: "If America & Britain should come to an hostile rupture I am afraid an Insurrection among the slaves may & will be promoted." Bradford then agreed with confirmed Madison's fear and replied that he had heard of similar plots while in a Philadelphia coffee-house where a letter was read aloud that "mentioned the design of administration to pass an act (in case of a rupture) declaring ["]all Slaves & Servants free that would take arms against the Americans."

That same year, Samuel Johnson in his widely discussed pamphlet *Taxation No Tyranny* proposed freeing Americans' slaves if they didn't knuckle under to Parliamentary authority. "If their obstinacy continues without actual hostilities...It has been proposed, that the slaves should be set free, an act which surely the lovers of liberty cannot but commend."

Speaking on the floor of Parliament, Edmund Burke discussed a proposal to free American slaves as a means of securing the rebels surrender in March of 1775. At this point, Burke, who would later be a critic of such a policy of "a general enfranchisement of their slaves" admitted he saw both pros and cons in it.

Well before the first open clash between southerners and their governors occurred in April of 1775, talk of English rulers aiming to foment a slave rebellion was widespread. When Virginia's governor, Lord Dunmore, ordered his troops to secretly remove the stores of gunpowder from the Williamsburg armory to his anchored fleet, colonists presumed this was a means of disarming them so that they could not put down a slave uprising. As early as the summer of 1775, American newspapers were circulating rumors that British policymakers were plotting to foment a slave uprising to drown the colonials in blood. *The Virginia Gazette* published a letter from London (Aug. 11, 1775) that reported that "ministerial tools" were plotting to use "the negroes, who were to be emancipated to slaughter their masters." At the same time Benjamin Franklin wrote to his friend Jonathon Shipley: "The humane Sir W: Draper, who had been hospitably entertained in every one of our Colonies, proposes, in his Papers called the Traveller to excite the Domestic Slaves, you have sold us, to cut their Master's Throats."

On October 15, 1775, the former governor of South Carolina who was now a member of the House of Lords, Lord Lyttelton, rose in debate and advocated encouraging a slave rebellion in

the American South: "He intimated, if a few regiments were sent there, the negroes would rise, and embrue their hands in the blood of their masters."

Some of Lyttelton's fellow lords huffed and condemned such reckless talk, one saying the "scheme he alludes to, of calling for the slaves, is too black and horrid to be adopted..." But a month later Lord North himself rose and justified the actions of General Carleton in doing just that. "As to the means of conducting the war, he declared there never was any idea of employing the negroes or the Indians, until the Americans themselves had first applied to them: that general Carleton did then apply to them; and even then, it was only for the defense of his own province."

About the same time a North Carolina planter received a letter from a business associate in London warning him to sell out and leave because he had overheard a well-connected minister, "that all slaves on the Continent would be seized as forfeited by the Provinces, and sold in the French and Spanish Islands, the profits arising to reimburse the great expense of Ships, Troops, &c., sent to America." This is just the tip of the iceberg.

Independence took a year of legislative struggle to win and was achieved in a series of incremental steps. In July of 1775, almost a year to the day prior to declaring independence, the Continental Congress sent a lengthy declaration to the Crown explaining why it was finally and officially taking up arms in resistance. Naturally, this declaration recounted the closing of Boston harbor, General Gage's firing on the Lexington and Concord militias, and ended with the muted, even euphemistic description of the plot to turn their slaves against them. "we have but too much reason to apprehend, that Schemes have been formed to excite domestic Enemies against us."

In March of 1776, Congress declared their right to emit letters of marque to pirates, granting them a license to prey on British shipping. To justify this drastic move, this document cited a number of oppressive actions of the Crown, including "instigating Negroes to murder their Masters..." Then in May a convention of leading Virginians instructed its delegates in Congress to call for independence, and listed quite centrally as one of the reasons that the King "is carrying on a piratical and savage war against us tempting our slaves by every artifice to resort to him, and training and employing them against their masters. In this state of extreme danger, we have no alternative left but an abject submission to the will of those over-bearing tyrants, or total separation from the crown and government of Great Britain..."

Tom Paine's *Common Sense*, the pamphlet credited with tipping wavering American opinion toward independence, urged Americans to quit Britain saying, "There are thousands and tens of thousands who would think it glorious to expel from the continent that barbarous and hellish power which hath stirred up the Indians and negroes to destroy us."

Jefferson's original draft of the Declaration of Independence

included the following article: “by prompting our negroes to rise in arms among us; those very negroes whom by an inhuman use of his negative he hath <from time to time> refused us permission to exclude by law”.

Jefferson’s fellow Congressmen were uncomfortable with this construction on many levels, they did not wish to implicitly condemn either slavery or the slave trade and they did not wish to highlight their fears of slave insurrection. After they were finished striking out and editing Jefferson’s draft, all that was left was the phrase, “He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us...” that did not mention slavery or negroes at all.

Gordon Wood also complains that efforts to remap America’s origins, like the 1619 Project, erases the noble labors of white liberals. “How could slavery be worth preserving for someone like John Adams, who hated slavery and owned no slaves?... Ignoring his and other northerners’ roles in the decision for independence can only undermine the credibility of your project with the general public.”

In fact, revolutionary leaders like Adams did not see the war as an opportunity to end slavery, but quite the other way around. Any steps taken to weaken slavery during that time of crisis was a threat to winning the war and erecting a new nation. In 1777, the Massachusetts House considered a bill to end slavery in the state. James Warren, who was one of three members of a committee that considered the proposal, mentioned in a letter to John Adams that he and the other committee members killed the bill out of concern for the unity of the nation.

We have had a Bill before us for freeing the Negroes, which is ordered to lie least if passed into An Act it should have A Bad Effect on the Union of the Colonies. A Letter to Congress on that subject was proposed and reported, but I Endeavoured to divert that, supposing it would Embarrass, and perhaps be Attended with worse Consequences than passing the Act.

Adams then wrote back praising Warren’s move, “The Bill for freeing the Negroes, I hope will sleep for a Time. We have Causes enough of Jealousy Discord and Division, and this Bill will certainly add to the Number.”

Here was the paradox of the antislavery feelings of Founding Fathers like Adams and Jefferson and the rest. While hating slavery, their priorities never wavered from what was best for and in the interests of white people. Ending slavery could wait until the revolution was won, then ending the slave trade could wait for twenty years, then northern emancipation could be phased in over decades, and through it all the hope was that any people of color freed from their chains would be exiled to another continent or at least moved to the outer fringes of the frontier. Certainly, they were never considered fully members of whatever racist republic was being constructed. Edmund Jennings, one of John Adams longest and most prolific correspondents over his lifetime, offered his definition republicanism to Adams soon after Yorktown: “all Citizens in Republics are Equal, altho one may have more Negroes than Another...”

Jenings never knew how apt his description of the foundation of American democracy was. **CP**

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EUROPE: German-Russian Relations

BY GAITHER STEWART

NATO encirclement of Russia does not further world peace but endangers it. A unified European foreign policy including Russia for a collective security system aimed at easing tensions should replace U.S.-dominated NATO policies. Who does not favor the collapse of the European Union should support a new social and democratic system.

— Sahra Wagenknecht, Die Linke Party of Germany

The US has tactical weapons in Europe, let us not forget this. Does it mean that the US has occupied Germany or that the US never stopped its occupation after World War II and only transformed the occupation forces into the NATO forces?

— V. Putin

It’s no easy task to get a handle on just what is happening in Europe. Is it really united? And if so, who is in command? And above all, does what used to be called the continent of Europe (it’s not a continent at all) even count in world affairs? There is little doubt about who commands within the European Union. Germany commands. Though the “special Paris-Berlin relationship” makes the headlines, for Germany that relationship is nothing special. Not so for traditional France always in search of old glories, while pragmatic Berlin chooses Germany’s partners and defines the nature of the relationship.

Germany has long been dominant in Europe. Brexit or not, Southern European unity or not, Germany dominates in most any Europe. Any Europe, that is, that does not include Russia and the heavy hand of the USA whose armies still occupy Germany and Italy today seventy-five years since World War II. Decisions made in Berlin might cause griping and bitter criticisms by other European nations and generate remembrances of the “good old times” of strict borders and interlocking pacts and treaties. And also since the UK departure, you read of weak threats from other member nations to abandon the ranks of the European Union. But be that as it may, matters that count within the EU are decided in Berlin. For EU policies and actions serve above all German interests, to such an extent that many Germans and Germany itself might envy the British exit from a heavy, bureaucratic, costly, decadent EU. If Germany dominates Europe anyway, Germans can think, why then the

cumbersome EU?

A Europe that includes Russia, however, is another matter. Another world. Therefore the German-Russian relationship IS special, the key to the Europe conundrum. Then the related question arises: Is U.S./NATO domination of this weak-voiced, insignificant peninsula attached to the western tip of the great Eurasian continent destined to continue forever? Is American domination of this nonetheless great, densely populated area reduced to an American military base and colony to be eternal? The answer lies both in Germany's relationship with the USA/NATO of today and with Russia in the near future.

According to historian John Wheeler-Bennett—like most Western historians a victim of US anti-Russian propaganda—relations between Russia and Germany since the 1740s have been a series of alienations distinguished for their bitterness and of rapprochements remarkable for their warmth. Despite Nazi Germany's war on Russia in WW II, Russians and Germans have traditionally admired each other: Russians love German music and culture; Germans love Russian dance and graphic arts.

On the Future of Russia and Germany, Professor of Slavic Studies Vladimir Golstein at Brown University writes: The Russian-German relationship is as complex as it is fascinating. Both countries share proud histories, unique cultures, and the uncanny combination of rivalry and interdependence, a combination that has resulted in two brutal wars. I see Germany as the China of Europe. Hard-working, highly organized, much less driven by the debilitating individualism that has crippled both France and Great Britain, leaving Germany as the most powerful player on the European scene... besides Russia. The paradox is that neither Russia nor Germany is going anywhere alone.

Professor Golstein recalls that the United States introduced itself into the European scene ... and through the combination of economic pressures and NATO expansion has managed to turn itself into a major European player even though without much history, expertise, patience and, most importantly, geography to back it up. Consequently, as the only relatively independent European power, Russia never knows with whom exactly it is dealing: Germany or the US, England or the US, Italy or the US. That creates problems for Russia, as it does for its German economic partners.

Russia, the possessor of great natural resources, highly talented people, and potentially the biggest market in Europe,

is a natural partner of Germany in the process and can transform the two countries into one major power player of both the European and the international scene. Neither the United States, nor its staunch allies, such as Great Britain and France like this scenario. They are doing their best to prevent it, consequently pushing Russia away from the China of the West—Germany—into cooperation with the China of the East. I still see Russia as benefitting from any of the scenarios, be it becoming the major player of either Europe or of Asia. Germany, however, stands to lose a lot if it continues to allow the United States to prevent it from its natural and mutually beneficial cooperation with Russia.

An understanding of the true nature of German-Russian relations is elusive because of US/NATO anti-Russian propagan-

da on the one hand, and on the other because of Russia's stubborn insistence on considering Germany and the EU and the USA as friends and partners. In reality, Germany's interests differ radically from US/NATO interests. Germany likewise is suffused by so much anti-Russian propaganda originating from the USA that Germans go against themselves. According to a 2014 BBC World Service poll, only 21% of Germans view Russia's influence positively,

with 67% expressing a negative view. Russians, however, have a much more positive view of Germany than Germans do of Russia, with 57% viewing Germany's influence positively and 12% negatively. The result shows also where propaganda is stronger!

By the end of 2020, Russia's Gazprom is scheduled to begin pumping Russian gas to Europe through the new Nord Stream 2 pipeline, 1200 kilometers from Ust-Luga in the St. Petersburg province to Greifswald in Germany passing under the Baltic Sea. The USA has obstructed the project from the start ten years ago imposing sanctions on participatory countries since which time Russia has proceeded alone. Such major German-Russian agreements-partnerships affecting the rest of Europe perforce change the entire web of international relations.

Moreover, in recent years Berlin stationed German troops in Lithuania and points eastwards while NATO military forces moved into Poland, Romania and Bulgaria and elsewhere along Russia's borders. It is a brutal irony of history that German troops (under a US/NATO umbrella) are now 'permanently' in Lithuania, a former republic of the USSR, the winner of WWII. Lithuania is now 'occupied' by the loser of the war at the end of which defeated Germany was demolished.

**Russia sold \$13.2 billion
worth of weapons in 2014,
about \$22 million more than
the year before, despite
Western sanctions against
Moscow for its “meddling
in eastern Ukraine”.**

At the start of the war in 1939 Germany's population had reached 80 million. At war's end, over five million Germans lay dead, many of whom soldiers in Russia, while many civilians were buried under the ruins of Germany's great cities like Dresden or Cologne. At the same time, just as American and Nazi German WW II leaders had desired, the West turned against its former Russian ally, charging Russia with aggression in Ukraine, Crimea and other ethnic Russian regions like Moldova, while in violation of post-WWII accords and promises NATO has continuously extended its borders eastwards.

In today's world the moral issue of right or wrong shifts slowly, from one generation to another, while in a fast-moving and ever-smaller globe, every consideration raises a fundamental question like: Who is the good guy, who the bad? Who holds the true truth? Once you could accuse and hate a Hitler or a Stalin. Today we seem stumped at the quandary: Who is responsible for the mess? Many Europeans believe the USA responsible. Yet they cannot break the American yoke. Naive Europeans once felt safe in the arms of America's NATO. That situation has changed. The US yoke weighs heavy today: US economic demands, sanctions against America's enemies who are Europe's natural friends, and American military occupation not only of Germany and Italy but of most East European countries—Bulgaria, Romania, Czech Republic, Poland—which today are again Europe's friends, but they are America's subjects. The difference is great.

Quietly, without fanfare, in 2017 the foreign ministers of 25 EU countries announced the birth of the PESCO (Permanent Structural Cooperation) agreement. PESCO is the cornerstone of a future EU army in which the German voice would be the strongest. Yet, paradoxically, it would also be a parallel army to NATO forces with overlapping capabilities of the U.S.-run NATO army. Who would pay? Europeans would pay, of course. An EU army is good news for the exploding German arms industries, which has made of that country—though hundreds of light-years of dollars behind the U.S. arms producer giant—the world's third military weapon exporter after the USA and Russia. Meanwhile, the U.S. continues to push for an obligatory annual contribution to NATO of 2% of the GDP of member countries. If the U.S. budgets \$700 billion for "Defense", it expects (but will never get) immensely increased military contributions from European taxpayers bled dry by taxes to support the non-elected EU bureaucrats.

Meanwhile, more secret and more important than Paris-Berlin pompous exchange visits, press rumor has it that German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Vladimir Putin speak almost daily. Certainly they speak of plans for a peaceful solution to end EU/NATO-Russian tensions over Ukraine. NATO calls for Russia's withdrawal of support for ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine and for economic assistance to disintegrating Ukraine. In exchange, Germany/EU/NATO/U.S./ UN would recognize Crimea's independence and

what the West still calls its annexation by Russia. Clearly, only Germany could hammer home such an agreement.

The Merkel-Putin relation is complex. Merkel, who grew up in East Germany, shares common geography with Putin, who as a KGB major was stationed in Dresden in former East Germany. It is said that they switch between German and Russian languages during those phone talks and meetings. A former scientist, Merkel prides herself on her ability to methodically analyze situations. Considering her background and political expertise, it is hard to imagine her believing her own propaganda of what is termed in the West "Russian aggression". She must be aware of the internal pressures on Putin to absorb Russian ethnic territories such as East Ukraine, Odessa, and Moldova-Transdnistria. A natural desire which is not Russian "aggression". At the same time, Merkel does not put a high priority on salvation of the fictitious country called Ukraine. When Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, transferred Crimea to the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, it was an internal administrative matter, now the object of international crisis. And Crimea has long been part of Russia. To speak of "annexation" regarding its reintegration into Russia is a political absurdity that cannot be compared to Hitler's annexation of Austria and Sudetenland. Moreover, though not a country for Russia either, Ukraine is most certainly a major issue for Moscow.

Berlin-Moscow; Moscow-Berlin

Nikolai Pavlov, Professor of History and Politics at Moscow MGIMO University and the author of 'German-Russian Relations: A Failed Alliance', wrote that the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop military pact between Russia and Germany destroyed the traditional relationship between the two countries. What remained after that fake event was a shattered love-hate affair that continues until today. In an interview with Russian Sputnik, the professor said the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact "was not even a true alliance. It was merely a neutrality agreement between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union." Besides, between 1934 and 1939, Nazi Germany made non-aggression and friendship pacts with: Poland, the United Kingdom, Japan, France, Romania, Lithuania, Italy, Denmark, Estonia and Latvia, in that sequence. (Western historians-propagandists today claim that Stalin made an alliance with Hitler—as if that were an alliance, and the only pact—and thus Nazism and Communism are the same thing.) Professor Pavlov is doubtful of the realization of a strategic partnership between the two countries today because of the "big differences in the economy, structure of the state, and domestic politics". Recalling the alliance between the German Democratic Republic and the USSR after the Second World War when both countries belonged to the Warsaw Treaty organization, Pavlov said that nothing of that sort is now possible. Germany is part of NATO and Russia has trouble dealing with that alliance at the present moment. "While Germany tries to speak with Russia as a representative member of NATO and

the EU, Russia prefers to maintain bilateral relations with Germany.”

In 2017, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier visited Moscow—the first German President to visit Russia since 2010—allegedly on a mission to restore bilateral relations ... precisely as Moscow prefers. Since then and despite NATO and the EU, German political parties have claimed they are committed to having good relations with Russia. In his somewhat ambivalent analysis of Angela Merkel, Professor Pavlov compared Germany’s Chancellor to the first Chancellor of the country from 1860, Otto von Bismarck. “She is a sober and cool politician in Bismarck’s sense,” Pavlov said, again reflecting President Putin’s views, “though she does not build alliances like him. She instead incorporates all the little things into big real-policies of the international arena.”

So if Merkel does not intend some sort of alliance with Russia, the question remains open as to what “little things” she has in mind. If for the USA also Ukraine has become a little thing, not so for Russia, and therefore not for Germany either. Crimea’s return to Mother Russia is a very ‘big thing’ for Moscow’s Black Sea strategy, while apparently less and less a big thing for the U.S. geopolitical plans for that great sea, and perhaps just a little less big for Germany in comparison to the entire Berlin-Moscow question which would be the point of Russian-German bilateral relations.

German and Russian Arms Industry

Though we read frequent reports about the sophistication of Russian arms, its newest missiles and aircraft or its arms sales to Turkey or Saudi Arabia, little is written about the German arms industry. Certainly, her arms are not quiet and rusting away. The contrary is true: the German arms industry is booming, according to Fortune, citing an unnamed German newspaper as the source. Although the USA dwarfs other arms producer-exporters of the world, without which the U.S. would have no industry to speak of, Germany is the world’s third arms producer. German aerospace and munitions industries account for over 50 percent of that country’s worldwide arms sales. After the U.S. companies that dominate the first ten of the world’s top 100 arms sellers in 2010, appears Germany’s Rheinmetall—\$2.6 billion of sales—followed by Krauss-Maffei Wegmann—1.5 billion, ThyssenKrupp—1.3, Diehl—1.2, MTU Aero Engines—640 million. Other firms are Deutsche Aerospace (DASA), founded in 1989 to incorporate the aerospace and other defense activities of the Daimler-Benz group. It also controls Dornier, (WWII, Dornier bombers) which produces aircraft and equipment. The Motoren und Turbinen Union (MTU), another unit of DASA, is a large producer of parts for aircraft, ships, and tanks. Already in 1990, there were seven German firms among the world’s top 100 arms-producing firms. Not included in the top 100 list in 1990 was Krupp MaK Maschinenbau GmbH, a firm engaged heavily in tank production. All in all, of the top 100 arms-producing companies in 1990, 47 were U.S. companies

and 7 were German companies.

Russia’s military production floundered during the 1990s on the heels of the dissolution of the USSR. And Russia all but stopped producing arms for its own military. Most of its arms production was earmarked for foreign buyers. Sukhoi and MIG fighters were about a fourth of the price of comparable American-made planes. Today Russia aggressively promotes its combat aircraft on the East Asian arms market. Other top sellers include missiles, tanks and hand arms, Russia has returned to become the world’s second-largest producer and exporter of arms; it exports about half of US arms exports. According to Moscow Times: Russia sold \$13.2 billion worth of weapons in 2014, about \$22 million more than the year before, despite Western sanctions against Moscow for its “meddling in eastern Ukraine”. Major deals included the sale of S-400 surface-to-air missiles to China. Other important customers for Russian weapons include India, Iran, Iraq, UAE, Algeria, Syria and Vietnam. (Moscow Times, April 13, 2105)

U.S. Encirclement of Russia

Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov believes that NATO/USA is using every opportunity available to deploy as many of its soldiers along the Russian border as possible. In fact, just today US/ NATO military maneuvers have tens of thousands of soldiers practicing war along Russia’s eastern borders. British politician Martin Koller said that “Lavrov is right because NATO is 70 percent doing America’s bidding and has long ceased to fulfill its duty to defend Europe. Its main objective was defending Europe against the Warsaw Pact, which is no longer in existence. Secondly, in its standoff with Russia, the US will naturally opt for solutions of which Europe will suffer the most and America will emerge in a stronger position vis-à-vis European countries.”

In an article of a few years ago about Ukraine, I included the words below of the right-wing, radical, nationalist writer in Russia, Egor Prosvirnin, who is a leader of the large and controversial, Sputnik and Pogrom movement, whose slogan is Russia For Russians and is antagonistic to Putin, Communists and Liberals. The movement’s name is significant: the Russian Sputnik was Earth’s first satellite, the word meaning fellow-traveler; the Russian word pogrom means devastation. I have purposely left the article almost intact so as to reflect the frustration of many Russians vis-à-vis the West in general and also to show clearly this very Russian way of thinking.

My name is Egor Prosvirnin, I am the chief editor of the Russian site www.sputnikpogrom.com which advocates European values.

... one of the aspects of life that Europeans and Germans especially cherish is history. If we were to recall recent history, we would remember that a vast army of 300,000 Soviet troops along with 5,000 tanks, 1,500 aircraft and 10,000 artillery pieces (including tactical nuclear weapons) simply left the then just-united Germany without firing

a shot. It was an operation unprecedented in scope and brevity, when the entire Soviet army withdrew literally to open fields. Tens of thousands of Soviet officers, obeying the orders of the supreme command, went from their warm barracks to live in moldy tents set up in the middle of sodden snow-covered fields.

For what?

For hope. Hope that the dark pages of history between our two countries were finally and forever past. Hope that we no longer have to keep armies of tanks in the center of Europe, and that Europe would respect and consider our interests. Hope that in a united Germany we would have a good friend and ally, with whom Russia would fulfill the dream of Charles de Gaulle of a united Europe stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok. When our armies were leaving Germany, our soldiers were told that Germany had recognized and redeemed its mistakes of the past, there were no undecided issues with Germany, and that we would no longer hear German voices calling for retribution against Russia, therefore we did not need our army of tanks positioned in the middle of Europe. From that moment, Russians and Germans were friends, and friends have no need for vast armadas of armor and tanks. Russians should cease being afraid of a united Germany and disarm.

And we disarmed. And for 20 years we felt that we did the right thing, that the past was forgotten forever, and that the Germans appreciated how readily we closed all the bases and brought all the troops home (although there are huge American bases in Germany to date).

In good times our friends know us; in troubled times we come to know our friends; and troubled times did come via the Ukrainian crisis. It became clear that the Germans do not remember the good. It turned out that the Germans did not learn the lessons of history; it seems that the Germans viewed the voluntary dismantling and withdrawal of our war machine not as humanism and goodwill, but weakness.

It turns out that when the Americans spoke loudly and sharply with the German chancellor, whom they for all these years have kept under surveillance like some sticky-fingered housemaid, the entire German society leaped up like a submissive dog running obediently to its American master.... even when the conflict with Russia goes against German economic and political interests. It seems therefore that if one blunts their sword, removes their armor, stops Soviet-era preparations for World War III, and reaches out to the Germans, the Germans will spit in your extended hand at the first opportunity.

It turns out that Russians are yet again “Untermensch”, who can be savaged with impunity on the pages of the German press and punitive sanctions demanded from the rostrum of the Bundestag... It turns out, however, that the Ukrainian government can without any liability prohibit the Russian language, jail Russian activists, target residential neighborhoods with volleys of artillery, kill thousands of civilians who happen to be mostly Russian—and that’s OK. It is OK because

it’s a “democracy”, and it suits Germany because Russians are “Untermensch”, because Russians are Jews whose blood for Germans is worth nothing. And what’s more, for trying to defend themselves, for attempting to return fire against the Ukrainian armed forces, Russians should be punished, publicly harassed, their will to resist broken, and then forced into an international Russian ghetto.

We are again the subhumans, we are again nothing but animals that Ukrainian Nazis may kill with impunity, creating a “Russian-frei Ukraina”....Where are your protests, Germany? Where are your sanctions against Ukraine? Where is your vaunted humanism that you profess to have learned since 1945 by recognizing the errors from your past?

You have not learned humanism, you Germans. You have not learned responsibility. You have not learned to resist Evil and tell that Evil clearly to its face, “No, you are the killer, I will not help you, you must stop the killing immediately.” You have not learned to be a responsible, independent, free people, who are capable of giving good in return for good.

You are slaves who think good is a weakness.

In 1934, Hitler drove you like sheep, and in 2014 Obama was your shepherd. If tomorrow in Germany, the Americans were to open a concentration camp for Russians, half of you would immediately submit their curriculum vitae for jobs as operators of the gas chambers, and your press would start to explain how this camp is patriotic and good for the German economy. It would then follow that killing these Russian “Untermensch”, crafting lampshades out of their skin for daring to resist, and sending this nicely packaged to Washington to please your American ally is right.

Germans have failed the test. Evil has returned again to Europe, but you do not even attempt to resist it, and immediately fall prostrate at its feet like a slave after the eagerly-awaited, long-delayed return of your master. Serve Evil, impose sanctions, support the murder of Russians, supply weapons to the killers of Russians, justify this genocide—the end of your story will be familiar because Evil cannot win.

I will conclude this text with a popular quote from the famous American stateswoman Ms. Victoria Nuland, who obviously makes the decisions in Ukraine instead of your Chancellor:

“Fuck the EU”

Although Prosvirnin’s words do ring harshly, he also voices patent political-historical truths and an unconcealed warning to Europe to stop blaming Russia for its own deficiencies and crises. In other words, he says: “Germany, Europe, get your act together! Or accept your fate.” That is, I would add, your fate still locked in the arms of your delusional American overseer riding on the falling star of a conceptual economic boom. **CP**

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US Arms Sales Fuel Yemen's Unending War

By CHARLES PIERSON

What keeps the war in Yemen going? Borzou Daragahi of the UK Independent observes:

The greatest tragedy of the five-year war in Yemen may be that of the numerous conflicts in the region it is the most easily resolved, if the international community had the will to rein it in rather than to largely ignore it, or serve as its enabler.

Iran enables Yemen's Houthi rebels by providing them with weapons. Iran's provision of arms to the Houthis is mirrored by arms sales the US, UK, and France make to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Saudis, who inhabit one of the world's richest countries, have been conducting a genocidal war on Yemen, the world's fifth-poorest country, since 2015.

Saudi Arabia kills civilians in Yemen thanks to US weapons. The Saudis used a smart bomb manufactured by Lockheed Martin to kill 40 Yemeni children on a school bus. Two Saudi airstrikes on the Yemeni village of Mastaba in March 2016 left 97 civilians dead, 25 of them children. The bombs used were 2,000-pound MK-84s from General Dynamics with components manufactured by Boeing and Raytheon.

The Saudis deliberately target civilians, and attack hospitals, schools, weddings, and funerals. Kemal Jendoubi, one of the authors of a report on Yemen to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said in August, 2018 that "There is little evidence of any attempt by parties to the conflict to minimize civilian casualties."

President Donald Trump betrays no sign that he is troubled by the thousands of civilians he is helping kill in Yemen. Trump is positively boastful about US arms sales to the Saudis. During a meeting at the White House with Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, on March 20, 2018, Trump crowed about a \$110 billion US arms sale to the Saudis (the bulk of which was negotiated under President Barack Obama). Trump told reporters: "Saudi Arabia is a very wealthy nation and they're going to give the United States some of that wealth, hopefully, in the form of jobs, in the form of the purchase of the finest military equipment anywhere in the world."

Trump wildly exaggerates the number of American jobs that rely on arms sales, and the numbers Trump spews only keep going up. The last time I checked, Trump was claiming that one million American jobs relied on US arms sales. (Glenn Kessler, "Trump's Claim of Jobs from Saudi Deals Grows by Leaps and Bounds," *Washington Post*, Oct. 22, 2018.) Even a million jobs can't justify the hell the US is creating in Yemen, but Trump's claims aren't even true. Vox's Alexis Fernández Campbell concludes that few of the jobs in the US defense sector "depend directly on weapons sales to Saudi Arabia, and it's also unlikely that those jobs would vanish if Saudi money disappeared." The jobs created are a fantasy. What's not a fantasy is the vast profits US defense contractors rake in.

Outsourcing Murder

If Trump is so concerned about Americans in the defense sector losing their jobs, then why is he outsourcing those jobs? The New York Times reported last June that the Trump Administration had granted an emergency authorization to "Raytheon Company, a top American defense firm, to team

with the Saudis to build high-tech bomb parts in Saudi Arabia." (Trump's latest Secretary of Defense, Mark Esper, is a former Raytheon executive.) Recall that Trump ran for the presidency on his opposition to outsourcing American manufacturing. I guess Trump makes an exception for outsourcing murder.

The move has raised concerns about the transfer of sensitive American technology overseas. Trump, however, is remarkably blasé about transferring sensitive



US Air Force has expanded operations from Saudi air bases. Photo: USAF.

US technology to the Saudis—including nuclear technology. Since its earliest days, the Trump Administration has been negotiating the sale of two nuclear reactors to Riyadh. That's alarming. Henry Sokolski, Executive Director of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, an NGO in Washington DC, calls nuclear reactors "nuclear bomb starter kits."

The Saudis maintain that the reactors will be used solely to meet the energy needs of the kingdom's rapidly growing population, thus freeing up more Saudi oil for export. However, fears of a Saudi bomb were stoked when Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, the kingdom's de facto ruler, said during an interview which aired on 60 Minutes on March 18, 2018 that "Saudi Arabia does not want to acquire any nuclear bomb, but without a doubt if Iran developed a nuclear bomb, we will follow suit as soon as possible."

Iran is the obvious target for a Saudi nuclear bomb. But the Saudis could choose another target: Yemen. Is that unthinkable? Who would stop them? The international community has done nothing to prevent the deaths of the one hundred thousand people killed during the war. The international community's response to Yemen's immolation has been—if not a shrug—nothing more than futile recriminations. Why should we expect a different response if a mushroom cloud blooms over Yemen? **CP**

CHARLES PIERSON is a lawyer and a member of the Pittsburgh Anti-Drone Warfare Coalition.

Why Leftism

All the Way to Anarchism—is the Last Colonial Project

BY PETER HARRISON

External obstacles are now only technological, and only internal rivalries remain. A world market extends to the ends of the earth before passing into the galaxy: even the skies become horizontal. This is not a result of the [Ancient] Greek endeavor but a resumption, in another form and with other means, on a scale hitherto unknown, which nonetheless relaunches the combination for which the Greeks took the initiative—democratic imperialism, colonizing democracy.

The European can, therefore, regard himself [sic], as the Greek did, as not one psychosocial type among others but Man par excellence, and with much more expansive force and missionary zeal than the Greek.

— Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, 1991

Western culture—which is effectively global—is a culture of materialism and scientific rationality—grounded, of course, in the capitalism that guides and shapes our daily lives. To be more specific, Western culture is *Spinozian*—for Spinoza successfully concluded that the mind and matter were the same substance, thereby presciently defeating (think neurons and neurotransmitters) the mind/body dualism of Descartes which was the last defense of the 'immortal soul' of organized religion—and *Marxian*—for Marx transformed the philosophic dialectics of Hegel into an empirical sociological system that reflected what was happening in the sciences around him.

Both Spinoza and Marx were expressing the logical, radical endpoints of the Western Enlightenment that was generated by the arrival of capitalism—Spinoza, described by Jonathan Israel as "the first major figure of the Radical Enlightenment," and Marx as its last.

In 1674 Baruch Spinoza wrote:

"Men [sic] are deceived in thinking themselves free, a belief that consists only in this: that they are conscious of

their actions and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined. Therefore, the idea of their freedom is simply the ignorance of the cause of their actions. As to their saying that human actions depend on the will, these are mere words without any corresponding idea. For none of them knows what the will is and how it moves the body, and those who do boast otherwise and make up stories of dwelling places and habitations of the soul provoke either ridicule or disgust." (Take that, Descartes!)

Spinoza believed that true wisdom lay in the aligning of one's intelligence with the immutable truth of the material universe by understanding mathematical proofs. As Israel writes:

"He gives the example of the earth's rotundity. Only science can prove the earth is round. One may well not believe it is round until shown the proofs. But it is impossible for someone who grasps the proofs to doubt or oppose them sincerely... Hence Spinoza's conception of truth, and the criterion for judging what is true, is 'mathematical logic,' and mathematical rationality universally applied provides, from Spinoza to Marx, the essential link between the Scientific Revolution and the tradition of radical thought."

In his notes for a critique of the philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach Marx famously wrote: "Philosophers have hitherto only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it." This line was never a simple urging of philosophers to 'get active' for the good of things, it meant that philosophers had to abandon the world of 'universal absolutes' (think Plato's theory of Forms, or *Ideas*) and work within the social and environmental processes that were actually in existence. If they did this, Marx believed, they would no longer be 'idle philosophers,' they would be *scientists*.

Echoing Spinoza, Marx writes:

"In direct contrast to German philosophy [or 'Idealism,' better written as 'Idea-ism,' a development within Plato's theory of Ideas] which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process, we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises."

Engels further explains how, as Marx put it, 'philosophy as an independent branch of knowledge loses [has, in fact, lost] its medium of existence':

"While natural science up to the end of the last century [1799] was predominantly a *collecting* science, a science of finished things, in our century it is essentially a systematizing science, a science of the processes, of the origin and development of these things and of the interconnection which

binds all these natural processes into one great [Spinozian/monist] whole... [so it is with] the Marxist conception of history [which derives its proof] from history itself. This conception, however, puts an end to philosophy in the realm of history, just as the dialectical conception of nature [‘a science of *processes*’] makes all-natural [traditional] philosophy both unnecessary and impossible. It is no longer a question anywhere of inventing interconnections from out of our brains, but of discovering them in the facts.”

Marx’s greatest achievement was not to ‘predict’ or describe communism: it was his thorough and convincing analysis of modern life. The legacy of his insights into how the economy works and how people are apparently constructed in *any* society is now hardwired into all our institutions and social policy. The mirror he held up to his own time, which is still relevant for ours, was powerful because what it revealed was what everyone already knew but hadn’t yet expressed. His dialectics only followed what physical and social science was already doing. Westerners had become materialists before he told them that that was what they were—they only realized it when he observed it. The rationalism in society that he wished to build on had been generated by the new economic circumstances, it just took his writings to give it a more solid theoretical grounding. But he didn’t quite realize the monster he was making even bigger. It could only now be obvious to any enlightened European that—apart from whether private ownership of industry and land is a good or bad thing—they were held back by the persistent irrationality and ignorance of ‘the masses’... not only ‘at home’ but globally.

We can see that Spinoza and Marx thought they were witnessing the advancement—through science—of a rational society, and they wanted to see this promise come into full existence. But there is another important aspect. Both Spinoza and Marx, following science again, were ‘monist’—they believed in the ‘oneness’ of the world and all its workings. So, at the heart of radical thought—as worked out through the Western Enlightenment—is the idea that there is no mind/body dualism, there are no supernatural beings, there are no miracles: everything can be explained by science and rational thinking... that is, *Enlightenment* science, and *Enlightenment* rationality.

There were, as Jonathan Israel documents, two sides to the Enlightenment—a moderate one (eg, Voltaire, Adam Ferguson) and a radical one (eg, Diderot, Paine). The moderate side was conservative and not so adamant that all falsehoods entertained the world over—by the poor and the foreign—should be actively quashed. Interestingly (you’ve gotta laugh...), it was the radical side that sought to spread full Enlightenment to all the peoples of the globe.

As Israel notes, the radical *philosophe* Nicolas-Antoine Boulanger argued that, “reason, and law founded on reason, should be the only sovereign over mortals.” I think that this declaration—on the level of ideas—is the precursor to Marx’s ‘materialist’ declaration that “the veil” of mystification “is not removed” until the reproduction of existence “stands under

[the] conscious and planned control” of all. Both are global projects, but Marx’s appears to have a more virtuous and more practical strategy attached to it. His plan goes beyond simply stomping around the world saving the poor and ‘the savages’ from the own ignorance. He thinks they should be an empowered part of the process. (On how ‘empowerment’ is a double-edged sword now routinely utilized by social agencies the world over, see below.)

Marx’s strategy is more radical than Boulanger’s because it is based on the ideal of the attainment of egalitarian democracy, that is, communism (Frédéric Lordon: “another name for the communist life could be radical democracy”). In this context, Boulanger’s formula looks like it could simply be an *evangelism* of Western Radical Enlightenment values, whereas Marx’s formula appears more ‘scientific’. But as it turned out, both systems of enlightenment were *imperialist*. Boulanger and Marx were, of course, conscious of the fact that the rationality they were exporting to the poor and ‘the savage’ originated in Europe, but they weren’t aware that their visions amounted—for the rest of the world—as simply an altering of the European colonial project. Both strategies seek the establishment of *one* rational and harmonious world.

(By-the-way, this interpretation of Spinoza’s ideas does not take into account the investigations of Deleuze and Guattari into the notion of ‘the One’ or ‘the plane of immanence,’ or the question of whether Marx turned Spinoza’s ‘immanence’ into another ‘transcendentalism.’ For now, it is enough to touch on how Spinoza’s philosophy has come down to us, rather than the possibility of its misinterpretation.)

The notion of the world being one interconnected thing—which is what ‘science’ tells us it is—and that people are a part of this interconnection rather than a species that somehow exists above the world—connected more to ‘God’ than to the earth—is indeed a sound one, and one shared by Indigenous peoples. But this message consistently becomes a death knell for Indigenous cultures that resist the ‘modern’ world—because when two *properly distinct* cultures come to live side by side in one community then one of those cultures always dies.

In countries where there is an ongoing government-funded and Indigenous-supported process of ‘reconciliation’ between the colonizer culture and the colonized culture there appears not to be some kind of meeting in the middle but smoothing out of difference in the favour of the colonizing culture. As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang write: “Reconciliation is about rescuing settler normalcy, about rescuing a settler future.”

And as Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash write in their critique of ‘Development,’ ‘Human Rights,’ and ‘The Global Project’: “Cultures are incommensurable—a condition which seems clearly uncomfortable for those accustomed to extrapolating their own perception of reality on others.”

Another work that challenges the ‘development’ industry is *Participation: The New Tyranny?* (2001) in which Heiko Henkel and Roderick Stirrat question the ‘participatory’ nature of rural

development projects around the world—particularly those that go under the aegis of ‘Participatory Rural Appraisal’ or its offshoots. They write: “the attempt to empower people through the projects envisaged and implemented by the practitioners of the new orthodoxy [reflexive and empowering research methodologies] is always an attempt, however, benevolent, to reshape the personhood of the participants. It is in this sense that we argue that ‘empowerment’ is tantamount to what Foucault calls subjection.”

This is the reality of the situation for Indigenous peoples. The only way out of the (often dishonestly presumed) poverty and helplessness created by the global economic system—according to every entrepreneur, educationalist, or far-left political activist—is to change who they are.

The most perfect expression of the ideals of the Radical Enlightenment is the idea of genuine communism, or anarchism—a world ‘government’ run by the people (all enlightened) that would be a radical, or direct, as opposed to *representational* democracy. Such an expression is the endpoint of the colonial project of the Western Enlightenment: it is scientific and mathematical rationality for a *global* population that has abandoned ‘irrationality’ and all ‘false consciousness.’

There is more, of course. The Left—all the way to the anarchists—pushes multiculturalism (cultural relativism) and the notion of ‘universal human rights.’ But these are just two more suffocating and dishonest facets of European colonization. As Esteva and Prakash write: “So it comes to pass, more and more, that under the benign banner of human rights, indigenous and other non-modern communities suffer unprecedented forms of oppression, of suffering and power abuses.” See, for example, John Pilger’s film, *Utopia*.

Way back in 1998 Esteva and Prakash were exposing the truth behind the slogan, “Think globally, act locally”: “The *universality of human rights*...constitutes the moral justification behind “think global.” [...] Modernizers and post-modernizers alike assert that global thinking is superior to local thinking. Equally clear, for them, local thinking is limited, parochial and backward.”

And we should think about what ‘multiculturalism’ really is without falling into right-wing populist nonsense or the strange and vehemently pro-civilization rantings of Leftist contrarians (see Trevor Phillips et al in Spiked-Online). Esteva and Prakash write: “Western monoculturalism [is] now cosmetized and disguised as ‘multiculturalism.’”

Everyone on the planet has the right to the hollowed-out existence of a Westernized wage-slave... whether they like it or not.

Communism is the logical endpoint of the Radical Enlightenment—the logical arc from Spinoza to Marx—and it relies on all peoples passing through the fire (see Georg Lukacs) of wage slavery. But communism has never actually been actually realized, and maybe it can’t be in a mass society... maybe the best we can do, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau advised, is to continue to make the best of a bad job. He was

not a millenarian who thought that the ‘Garden of Eden’—or communism—could be returned to or created on earth. He knew he was a slave of society who was unable to break his chains, but he also suggested that we could all persist—as Greta Thunberg, for example, appears to be doing—in trying to keep the bastards honest:

“As for men like me, whose passions have forever destroyed their original simplicity, who can no longer feed on grass and acorns, nor get by without laws and chiefs [...], they will scrupulously obey the laws and the men who are their authors and ministers; [though they will also] animate the zeal of these worthy chiefs by showing them without fear or flattery the greatness of their task and the rigor of their duty.” (One must understand the irony in this passage: Rousseau was trying to get his work published in an environment where it was a hanging offense to argue his radical ideas, hence: ‘scrupulously obey,’ and ‘worthy chiefs.’)

The striving for the goals of Radical Enlightenment—the *project of the entire Left*—is essentially and effectively, for the rest of the world, a continuation of European colonization.

Western Civilisation—and the Left (even unto the anarchists) is a staunch promoter of its fruits—is driven by a unifying and expansionist imperative that is *ethnocidal*. Only ethnocide—the systematic diminishment and eradication of the genuine differences in the cultures of other groups (even under the banner of ‘multiculturalism’)—can bring global homogeneity. As Tuck and Yang observe above: “Reconciliation is about rescuing settler normalcy, about rescuing a settler future.”

Pierre Clastres is an anthropologist who died young in 1977. He had figured out the fearful symmetry of the universalization of European values and he recognized the greater humanity of ‘the savages’ that he encountered, compared to the hollowed-out, educated Westerners of whom he was one. He pointed out that ‘primitive’ societies were organized ‘centrifugally’ in order to maintain their autonomy, as opposed to modern civilization, which is organized ‘centripetally’: to create a universal homogeneity in service of the Economy and the European values that support it. These values are daily delivered militarily and, as Esteva and Prakash observe above, through the agendas of human rights and multiculturalism. Anyway, to bring this short foray into the nature of modern leftism/colonialism back to its start point—his writings were in dialogue with Deleuze and Guattari. Clastres wrote: “Savages want the multiplication of the multiple.” They want difference, they want ‘the Other’—they do not want ‘the One,’ they do not want the same.

In 1971 Clastres wrote of the Yanomami, and remember that they are still here, still struggling against the ethnocide being brought in on successive waves from Europe:

“A thousand years of wars, a thousand years of celebrations! That is my wish for the Yanomami. They are the last of the besieged. A mortal shadow is being cast on all sides... And afterward? Perhaps we will feel better once the final frontier of

this ultimate freedom has been broken. Perhaps we will sleep without waking a single time... Some day, then, oil derricks around the *chabunos*, diamond mines in the hillsides, police on the paths, boutiques on the riverbanks... Harmony everywhere.” CP

PETER HARRISON is co-author of *Nihilist Communism: A Critique of Optimism in the Far Left*.

Snowden’s Mission

BY JENNIFER MATSUI

Before you go out and purchase Edward Snowden’s ‘Permanent Record’, consider the fact that by doing so, you are attracting even more unwanted attention to yourself. The powerful forces that Snowden once worked for as a CIA employee and NSA subcontractor can (and will) draw conclusions from your queries, downloads and purchases, analyzing them, or more accurately, “manipulating” them (in Snowden’s words) so that they can predict behaviors to come. If that sounds as farfetched as any scenario in some distant, fictional future where law enforcement preemptively strikes criminals before they even commit crimes, Snowden can confirm the future is here. While millions of rapt viewers are Keeping Up with the Kardashians, thousands of equally voyeuristic private contractors are Keeping up with You.

The rewards that come with reading Snowden’s long-awaited and revelatory memoir come at a cost: Your right to access it without triggering law enforcement agencies, while granting them the power to seize your communications without a warrant no longer exists. Perhaps by googling the author, you have involuntarily given them the green light to access your text messages, check your medical records, store all your photos and emails, and keep every file you ever deleted in a database with the aim of exerting complete control over your life.

The above is just a partial list of their abilities, and a small sampling of the “spreadsheet of doom” compiled with your name on it, to be used against anyone who resists the National Security State. Don’t think for a moment that this nexus of corporate, state and military interference into every aspect of your life is designed to keep you safe. On the contrary, it was created to make you helpless against a system that could take you down at the stroke of a keypad for any perceived infraction against this regulatory, invisible force field known by a number of confusing acronyms. These secretive institutions at the heart of the National Security State are in fact, transnational entities that serve a bipartisan political establishment with a stake in permanent war, and exist to uphold the status quo and defend it from the rabble-led movements threatening its hegemony.

Adding insult to these unnecessary violations of your privacy—or what Snowden prefers to call your “selfhood”—this doomsday dragnet was implemented and still adminis-

tered by mostly private contractors with unfettered access to it all. More access, in fact, than the individuals and entities meant to oversee and regulate it. The technocratic, committee-serving wonks who unleashed this monster are incapable of containing it, and rely on the skill sets of lower-tier, poorly trained employees who can exploit it for personal gain. This particular fact should give pause to anyone who still believes that spy agencies are served by principled and scrupulous players, professionally unconcerned by your habit of viewing, say, online tentacle porn in pursuit of someone who wants to do worse damage than spooge on a keyboard.

Think of their interference into your online activities as being strip-searched at every stoplight along the information highway, while SWAT teams raid your house and tear up everything in it. Snowden compares this process to “standing naked before power”. Eventually, you will alter your non-criminal lifestyle to minimize these intrusions into your life, becoming as boring as anyone with opinions about craft beer. More ominously, you are being primed to exchange concealment of certain aspects of your private life for information implicating others.

In Israel, advanced surveillance technology monitors and records every movement made by its imprisoned Palestinian population, whether they have access to a computer or not. CCTV cameras equipped with facial recognition software and hidden microphones, not to mention drones, give the occupying powers unprecedented access into the lives of these human guinea pigs, involuntarily paving the way for this intrusive military technology to be implemented worldwide. For now, it allows the “Jewish State” increased leverage in all their attempts to recruit informants, forcing a gay person or an adulterer, for example, to rat out an acquaintance, neighbor, coworker, or even a family member in exchange for not exposing compromising personal information.

While Permanent Record doesn’t mention much about Israel, Snowden has elsewhere disclosed its often testy relationship with the NSA, particularly the agency’s legal prohibitions against using its technology and resources for targeted killings. Israel’s applied pressure on its American counterparts to circumvent the law in order to carry out assassinations of Hezbollah members has resulted in a “compromise”. So far it remains unknown how much of the law has been rewritten to satisfy a foreign power’s murderous imperatives.

Permanent Record’s strength as a taut, flawlessly argued jeremiad against state intrusion into the lives of its citizens leaves little room for rumination on peripheral facts in the service of an unswerving, clear-eyed narrative. The book can only be faulted on its absolute fealty to its perfectly executed mission. Snowden cuts through the notion of privacy in all its competing and vaguely worded elements to define it as a sphere that should remain off-limits by either corporate or state interest in it for their data harvesting mechanisms. As it stands now, our privacy is as illusory as one’s belief that data

can actually be disappeared. For the (permanent) record, data is never deleted, it's merely written over, and can be retrieved by anyone who knows where to look. For those who respond with "I have nothing to hide" to justify their willingness to cede their selfhood to the Corporate State, while sacrificing innocents who do have something to hide, (undocumented workers, political dissidents, whistleblowers, journalists, even battered wives) Snowden has some choice words: "Arguing that you don't care about the right to privacy because you have nothing to hide is no different than saying that you don't care about free speech because you have nothing to say". Boom!

Snowden's memoir is notable for not just its revelations, but its omissions, understandable in light of his ongoing persecution and the threats he faces daily as an "enemy of the state". His abiding adherence to the sort of secrecy that is justified for certain aspects of law enforcement should refute any argument that whistleblowers put lives at risk. So far no prosecutor has ever been able to determine actual deaths as a result of exposing a war crime, arguing instead about potential risks that only exist in a policy wonk paper intended to justify an agency's budget. Still, he confirms that the Stuxnet virus, used to sabotage Iranian computer systems connected to its nuclear program, was jointly developed by American and Israeli spy agencies. On a lighter note, he dispels any notion of extraterrestrials holding down top government posts.

Snowden, by his own reckoning, was never out to destroy the NSA, but merely intent on "reforming it". This particular admission is meant to dispel any lingering doubts that he is just another "disgruntled", a low-rung employee with an axe to grind as he has often been described in the establishment media; itself the stenography pool of the state, unthinking and reflexive in its condemnations of whistleblowers like Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning and now Glenn Greenwald. Like his now-imprisoned counterparts, Snowden is principled to a fault truth-teller brought down by his own intellect, and the unwavering moral compass underlying and guiding it.

Snowden's book outlines an airtight case against his own government and its "bulk collection" of our communications for reasons having nothing to do with external threats to ci-

vilians or infrastructure but internal resistance to the politics underlying such programs. The US's now digitized hegemony across the globe—thanks in large part to President Obama's authorization of warrantless wiretapping of everyone in the world—now overtakes its physical capacities as a superpower. As the dollar declines as the world's reserve currency, mass surveillance, with its blackmail capabilities can keep nations (and the marginalized populations within them) in line without the use of physical force, negotiations, or even diplomacy.

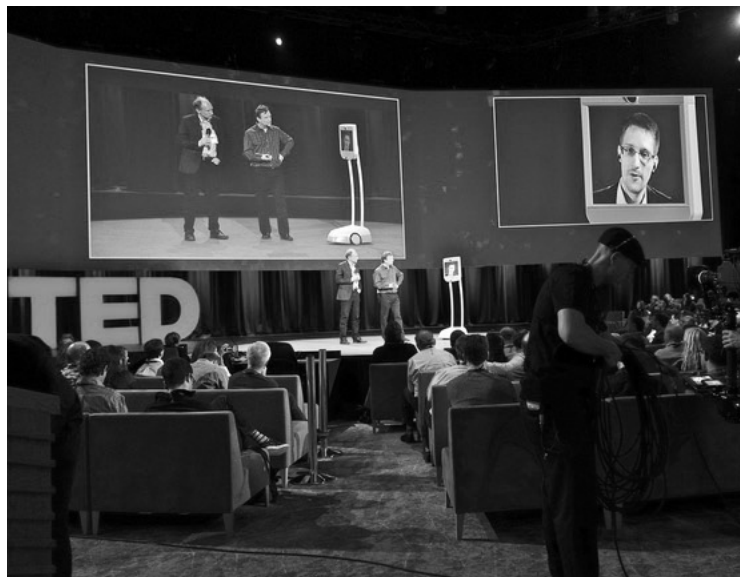
Snowden argues with the sleek and forceful logic of a computer, unencumbered by any doubt that the wrongs committed by his own government don't only violate the letter of the law, but the spirit contained within its now altered and highly redacted parchments. His almost algorithm likeabil-

ity to extract a heart-stopping narrative from the mumbo-jumbo of tech jargon is his greatest strength as a writer. This particular talent continues to weaken the government's case against him. So far their only line of defense against their illegal "bulk collection" of our benign-sounding data (for reasons that should give you nightmares in your every waking moment) is "Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire" and "his girlfriend is a stripper".

For those who insist

that the whistleblower should defend himself in a court of law or "face the music" as any innocent person should do, Snowden with characteristic alacrity, says he would gladly "if the music was a fair and open trial". What most people don't realize is the intent of government whistleblowers cannot be introduced at trial, disallowing their only line of defense. Who among us would exchange freedom, however, curtailed by exile, and exchange it for a foregone guilty verdict in a secret tribunal?

Snowden dispels these falsehoods and all the straw man arguments for his conviction with the calm, rapid-fire discharge of his rhetorical weaponry. This tendency towards machine-like precision and clarity of purpose should come as no surprise considering his early penchant for technology-based problem solving—first as an enthusiastic gamer, and while still in his teens, a hacker who was able to gain access to the Los Alamos National Laboratory (where nuclear weapons are developed and tested). In a turn of events that would prove prophetic in reverse, the secretive facility's remote interloper



Edward Snowden speaking to TED conference from Russia. (Flickr/Wikimedia).

was personally thanked by one of its own in a phone call to his astonished mother. Turns out, they were grateful to her son for pointing out the vulnerability of their security.

The tech prodigy, whom one might suspect is somewhere on that sliding scale indicator of autism, or at least on its highly functioning “spectrum”, is hardwired, it seems, to uphold the oaths he took when he assumed his position as a government security contractor. Having solemnly sworn to uphold the constitution with almost dogmatic fealty to a document he kept on his desk in hard copy form, and the government he believed he was serving, the incrementally gained knowledge of its violations of these very principles compelled the young tech worker to reveal the truth of its mass surveillance program. Once he had determined its illegality he was left, in his own words, “with no choice” but to inform the public of the violations committed against them by a rogue bureaucracy that concealed its worst excesses from even the elected officials who were briefed on its activities with false documentation and briefings.

Today, Snowden remains on a mission to defend his fellow citizens from the despotic technocracy he is replacing their enshrined rights with a terms of service agreement from Big Brother (and the private tech companies that commodify our innermost thoughts and use them to manipulate behaviors, commercially and politically).

Permanent Record is part autobiography, but more significantly, a manifesto of the post 9/11 digital age. Snowden defines the internet 2.0 less for the technological advances of its infrastructure, noting instead the ideological frameworks constructed within it. Failure to monetize our communications as fodder for targeted ads has transformed us all into ‘product’, not just for the social media platforms that own our data, and by extension us, but the government agencies that collateralize its predictive qualities, crunching even unknowingly surrendered data to anticipate your next move.

In the absence of the political will that will shut down illegal government surveillance, data encryption is our only defense against the prying eyes of a host of agencies all devoted to collating your data into a “spreadsheet of doom” to be activated in some unforeseen future, and ultimately weaponized. Even knowledge of it presents its own bulwark against this ongoing assault on our most basic liberties as outlined in the Constitution. Snowden argues that this document remains not only relevant in this digitized age, but strong enough to repel all official attempts to supersede it on the basis that it could never have anticipated the ever-growing demands of the National Security State—itsself a more powerful entity than the nation-state that spawned its own Dr Frankenstein’s creature in the form of technology whose applications cannot be overstated as a threat to every democratic institution still remaining. **CP**

JENNIFER MATSUI is a writer living in Japan.

Moral Crusader & Muckraking Novelist Upton Sinclair Revisited

By JONAH RASKIN

Who reads Upton Sinclair’s books? Who recognizes his name? Not many, especially those under the age of say, 40, though “U.S.” to borrow his iconic initials, created a commotion with his muckraking novels and enjoyed a long-running career as one of the most popular American writers in the United States and around the world. Born in 1878 in Baltimore, and a descendant of southern aristocrats and military men, he died in 1968 in New Jersey, where, decades earlier, he created Helicon Hall, a cooperative community for white Christian folk only. No Jews or African-Americans allowed. That might be enough for some ‘68ers to dismiss him, but remember, too, that he denounced D. W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation* as “class lying” and “an incitement to race hatred.”

A quirky moral crusader, Upton Sinclair thought of books as weapons in the class struggle, though he never wanted to cause deliberate injury to anyone, rich or poor. Biographers and cultural historians have not been kind to him. V.L. Parrington noted ages ago that he “started as a novelist, but his art was submerged by propaganda.” Still, some lefties today, including Norman Solomon, speak well of him and his dissection of “the media jungle.”

Nearly 150 years after Sinclair’s birth—with most of his works only available as eBooks—the question might be, not who reads him, but rather why read him? Sinclair endured wars, revolutions and depressions, but climate change, Donald Trump, drones, and state terrorism could be a bit too for his own blood that was stepped in the nineteenth-century and that found the first 60 or so years of the twentieth-century rough going.

Competing with Harry Potter won’t be easy. Still, Sinclair’s books might appeal to curious boys: preteens, teens and twenty some-things. After all, his novels are adventure stories with happy endings. Boy usually meets girl and sometimes boy becomes a socialist. Those who knew Sinclair often said he was “boyish.” Indeed, he seemed part Peter Pan and part Pied Piper, though unlike the character in Robert Browning’s narrative poem he wasn’t motivated by revenge.

Lanny Budd serves as the protagonist in eleven novels published between 1940 and 1953. They make up the “Lanny Budd Series.” Budd does what the older Sinclair would have liked to do and never did: works for President F. D. Roosevelt. Theodore Dreiser, the author of *An American Tragedy* and a committed socialist, aptly described the first book in the Budd series, *World’s End*, as “novelized history.” World War II signaled to Sinclair the end of everything he knew and loved. But he braced himself and went on writing through the 1950s.

"I always think of stories," he said. Playwright and Fabian Socialist, George Bernard Shaw, explained that, when asked to describe what happened in his own lifetime, he recommended the Lanny Budd books.

Sinclair won the Pulitzer Prize in 1943 for *Dragon's Teeth*, the third novel in the series, which describes the Nazi takeover in Germany. *Dragon's Teeth* arrived in bookstores just as the U.S. entered World War II. Sinclair's timing couldn't have been better. The Pulitzer was the only major literary prize he ever won. The Nobel Prize selection committee thought he was too hot-headed to qualify for its prestigious award.

My father, who was a lawyer and a member of the Communist Party, U.S.A. from 1938 to 1948, introduced me to Sinclair's novels when I was a boy. His favorite Sinclair book was *Boston* (1928), which is based on the real story of the two Italian immigrants and anarchists, Sacco and Vanzetti, who were in all likely framed as armed robbers and killers. Sinclair called their execution in the electric chair in 1927 "the most shocking crime that has been committed in American history since the assassination of Abraham Lincoln."

Effective at absorbing and compressing vast amounts of information, quickly, and transforming facts into fictions about class and class differences, Sinclair was a master at publicity and nifty when it came to quotations suitable for the mass media. Decade after decade, he read the zeitgeist, and learned how to blow-up a story so it grabbed headlines and kept him in the public eye.

The trial of Sacco Vanzetti awakened my father from his Jazz Age reverie as a bootlegger, pushed him to the Left and persuaded him that art should be propaganda. He loved *Boston* because it turned the two persecuted Italian immigrants into martyrs, and alerted readers to the cause of justice, which Sinclair embraced wholeheartedly. In 1915, he edited and published *The Cry for Justice: An Anthology of Social Protest* with an introduction by his comrade, Jack London. Like my father, I revered Sacco and Vanzetti, but *Boston* intimidated me. At 755-pages, it looked insurmountable. When it was first published, critics savaged it and Sinclair, too. He defended the book and himself. "Having portrayed the aristocrats as they were, I had to do the same thing for the anarchists," he wrote.

He tended to admire aristocrats and millionaires more than anarchists and workers. His protagonist, Lanny Budd, the son of an American arms manufacturer and his gorgeous mistress, grows up in affluent pre-World War I Europe and becomes a sophisticated socialite. Bunny—the protagonist in another Sinclair novel, *Oil* (1926), which is set in Southern California—is cut from the same cloth as Lanny. In *Oil*, American presidents, Wilson, Harding and Coolidge, come and go. Bunny dates a movie star named Miss Viola Tracy, falls in love, marries a "little socialist," and defends the Soviet Union as a "new civilization" and "a model for the future." The author was as rosy about communism again.

The Jungle (1906), which was published two decades

before *Boston*, and which is dedicated "to the Working men of America," has simple declarative sentences, a vocabulary suitable for teens, plus characters and scenes that translate into a kind of comic book that plays up the grotesque. It has often been called the best American proletarian novel ever written, but in a country like ours that has produced relatively little proletarian literature, that's not saying a great deal. I've had two friends who crafted fiction about the working class: Tillie Olsen, the author of *Yonnonddio: From the Thirties* (1974), who wrote poetically, but produced very little work; and Alexander Saxon the author of *Grand Crossing* (1943), who was better at history than the novel. A proletarian novel isn't as easy to write as one might think.

Sinclair wanted *The Jungle* to awaken citizens to the harsh realities of industrial civilization. Instead, the novel roused consumers to the horrors of industrially produced food and led to the passage of the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act. "I aimed at the public's heart, and by accident I hit it in the stomach," Sinclair explained. Even before *The Jungle* was published serially in *Appeal to Reason*, the author was hailed as "a genius."

Yes, his books could be prescient and timely, but they also ran away from him and sent messages to readers he had not intended. As the Marxist literary critic, Michael Folsom, noted in an essay titled "Upton Sinclair's Escape from *The Jungle*": "The Anglo Saxon Protestant petit bourgeois intellectual triumphed over realism, Socialism, the alien working class, and serious literature." *The Jungle* literally turned my stomach. After I read it, I couldn't look at a frankfurter without seeing rats and rat shit. I avoided Nathan's Hot Dogs like the plague. *The Jungle* also turned me off to Sinclair's work because he piles tragedy on the tragedy from exploitation and prostitution to food poisoning, death in childbirth and more. At the novel's conclusion, which feels tacked on, the hero, Juris Rudkus, a Lithuanian immigrant in Chicago, experiences a near-religious conversion to socialism.

For years, I forget about Sinclair. Briefly, I even confused him with Sinclair Lewis. Others must have done the same. At the top of Upton Sinclair's Wikipedia page, readers are advised, "Not to be confused with his contemporary, Sinclair Lewis, another American novelist." For much of the twentieth-century it would have been nearly impossible for a reader to confuse the author of muckraking works of fiction like *The Jungle*, and *King Coal* (1917)—a love story set against the backdrop of the Colorado mining industry—with the novels by the Minnesota-born author of *Main Street*, *Babbitt* and *Arrowsmith* who was the first American to win the Nobel Prize for literature.

I didn't think about Upton Sinclair again until 2000 when I turned my attention to Jack London. While I didn't ignore London's jingoism, racism and anti-Semitism, I found him much more fascinating than Sinclair. He was a mess, but he was a loveable mess. Indeed, he tasted real poverty and knew

existential loneliness, too, and, unlike Sinclair, he grew up on the edge of what felt like “the abyss.” London could also be in deep denial about his birth out of wedlock and his early years in the Oakland African-American community. “I’m afraid I always was an extremist,” he wrote in John Barleycorn, a memoir about his bouts with alcohol.

New York Times columnist Paul Krugman recently described Bernie Sanders as a European-style social democrat and not a real socialist. He’d probably say much the same about Upton Sinclair. After all, Sinclair was closer to Christ than to Marx and more akin to the English romantic poets than to the Bolsheviks. Jack London studied *Das Kapital*, along with the history of the socialist movement in Europe in the nineteenth-century. He supported the Russian Revolution of 1905 and called upon his fellow Americans to employ revolutionary violence to overthrow capitalism. In *The Iron Heel*, his 1907 dystopian novel, he predicted the coming of fascism, and in *The Scarlet Plague* he chronicled the arrival of a pandemic that kills millions of people. At Beauty Ranch in rural Sonoma County, he raised pigs and horses, smoked hashish and got stoned, guzzled cocktails and entertained lavishly. Long before Kerouac went on the road, London went on the road. He died at the age of 40 in 1916, burned up and burned out. Sinclair assumed that London committed suicide and said so publicly which didn’t endear him to his widow and her circle.

In 1905, the two men met at Peck’s Restaurant on Fulton Street in New York, and founded The Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS), a forerunner of SDS, with London as president and Sinclair as vice president. What they had in common was socialism, whiteness, antipathy to Jews and African-Americans, and an inability to create complex women characters. When they were together, London smoked cigarettes, consumed alcohol and regaled Sinclair with tales of “incredible debauches.” Sinclair disapproved, though he liked Jack well enough to dedicate his 1908 novel, *The Moneychangers*, to him. Not surprisingly, Sinclair called himself a “mollycoddle” and London a “red-blood.”

Before they met face-to-face, Sinclair wrote *The Author* when asked to autograph copies of his books. London explained that he was supposed to write, with a flourish, “Upton Sinclair.” London looked the proverbial picture of health. Sinclair seemed sickly. But beneath his he-man physique, London was a sick man. Sinclair moved to California and willed himself to live an active life, playing tennis year for decades and adhering to a strict diet that often included only vegetables. He plugged his notions about eating and not eating in *The Fasting Cure* (1911).

When London died in 1916, *The New York Times* reported that his death was sudden and unexpected. The paper emphasized his creativity as a writer and listed twenty-nine of his 50 or so books. When Sinclair died in 1968 at the age of 90, *The New York Times* played up President Teddy Roosevelt’s role regulating the foods and drugs, though the obit also credited

Sinclair and *The Jungle* for alerting the public to the horrors of the meat packing industry.

Read Upton Sinclair now? I often prefer to read about him than sit down and tackle his novels, though the novels are the most valuable source of information available about “U.S.” as a thinker, political animal and social reformer. With 100 books to his name, on a wide variety of subjects, Sinclair couldn’t help but rely on formats, formulas, cliché and stereotypes. The point wasn’t to create great works of art, but to engage with readers, and inspire them to send telegrams to the White House, picket in front of the offices of Standard Oil, vote Socialist and buy his books. During his lifetime, right-wingers accused him of exploiting his political activities to make money.

Sinclair was too influential a writer and too much of a no holds barred, rabble-rouser, to ignore today. Too big to forget, he was also too quirky an historical figure to omit from an overview of American public life in the twentieth century. For decades, he served as everyone’s favorite punching bag. Mocking him was easy. Sinclair Lewis refers to him in his novel, *It Can’t Happen Here* (1935). Upton also appears in T. C. Boyle’s novel *The Road to Wellness* (1993) and in Joyce Carol Oates’s *The Accursed* (2013). Chris Bachelder features him in *U.S.!*, a satirical novel in which Sinclair’s career is emblematic of the failures of the American left.

During his heyday, it was impossible not to comment on his dramatic comings and goings, from New York skyscrapers to Colorado mines and to sunny southern California. His friend, H. L. Mencken, the intrepid journalist, caustic cultural critic, opponent of organized religion, populism and representative democracy noted sarcastically that U.S. delighted him “constantly.” Mencken read Sinclair’s major works, which were translated from English into dozens of languages and sold in bookstores in Chicago, New York, Paris, Moscow and Los Angeles, where he lived for half-a-century. After V. I. Lenin’s widow, Krupskaya, read Sinclair’s novel, *Jimmie Higgins* (1919), she wrote to Louise Bryant—John Reed’s lover and comrade—and asked, “Is he a Communist?,” and “Has he written other books?” It’s not difficult to understand why Sinclair’s novel piqued Krupskaya’s interest. Jimmie Higgins traces the life of an American Everyman who, like his creator, considers himself a pacifist. Against his will, he joins the U.S. army and goes to Europe, where he bravely battles German soldiers, and then refuses to fight the Reds. Sinclair himself supported U.S. entry into World War I on the side of the British and the French and insisted that it was essential to destroy German militarism, which he saw as the major threat to the cause of world peace. He felt the same way about German fascism.

Unlike the muckraking reporter, Lincoln Steffens, Sinclair never visited the Soviet Union, and, unlike Steffens, he never said anything as truly glowing as Steffens did about the fledgling experiment in communism. Steffens noted famously, “I have seen the future and it works.” Still, in the aftermath of the Bolshevik coup and Lenin’s rise to power, Sinclair gave

his support to the Russian Revolution. Even after he learned about and was shocked by the conditions that Russian political prisoners faced, he insisted that the “most important task in the world is the preservation of Soviet Russia.” Before long he changed his tune, not surprisingly, since he wasn’t in the same league as Steffens or John Reed, the bohemian turned Red—the author of *Insurgent Mexico* and *Ten Days that Shook the World*—who died in the Soviet Union in 1920 at the age of 32 and was buried in the Kremlin. “To you, Upton, there is only one tiger in the forest,” Reed wrote. “To me there is a whole flock of tigers. These tigers are fighting and whichever side wins, I get eaten just the same.”

In her letter to Louise Bryant, Krupskaya wrote, “I would like to know about Sinclair.” American readers felt the same way. There was a lot to know, though Sinclair often guarded his privacy and didn’t like it when the mass media pounced on him. Thin-skinned and unsuitable, temperamentally, for the vicissitudes of public life, he found himself repeatedly in the public eye.

If Americans knew anything about U.S., they knew that he rubbed shoulders with Charlie Chaplin, that his books were turned into movies, that he ran for Congress as a Socialist in 1920 and again in 1922, and for Governor of California in 1934 as a Democrat. That year, the Socialist Party expelled him and his supporters as defectors and soon afterward it lost much of its influence in California. Sinclair called his 1934 campaign for governor, “End Poverty in California,” or EPIC. He received nearly 900,000 votes, but incurred the wrath of Hollywood studios, the ire of agribusiness, the scorn of the pulpit and the hatred of newspaper editors. The popular Pentecostal evangelist, Aimee Semple McPherson, aka “Sister Aimee” denounced him.

Sinclair lost by more than 200,000 votes to his bland Republican rival Frank Merriam. That he won the support of hundreds of thousands of California was due to his fame, as well as to the strength of the EPIC and the dedication of its individual members. His strength at the polls also reflected the fact that, as never before, Californians were unemployed, hungry, homeless and sometimes hopeless. EPIC gave them a cause and a future in which they could believe. Sinclair wanted to cut retail taxes and distribute land to hungry people so they

could grow their own food and sustain themselves. He aimed to finance his ambitious program by selling bonds and taxing the wealthy. He also suggested that the state of California own and operate factories, though he didn’t spell out exactly how that would work. Sinclair appealed mostly to the poor and the unemployed, though he also insisted that “the owning classes will benefit under EPIC, not merely spiritually, but materially.” Class warfare wasn’t on his agenda and he didn’t urge California proletarians to arm themselves and head for the barricades, but he encouraged the formation of the “End Poverty League,” which boasted 100,000 members who sold on street corners copies of the paper EPIC News.

Centered in and around Los Angeles, EPIC gave birth to 800 individual clubs. It took the bee as its symbol, issued “Sinclair Dollars,” staged a play written by the candidate himself titled “Depression Island” and adopted an official campaign song, “End Poverty in All America” with the subtitle, “And Upton Sinclair will Show the Way.” Sinclair’s running mate, Sheridan Downey, a lawyer, a member of the Democratic Party and a loyal supporter of FDR. Together

Sinclair and Downey were known as “Uppie and Downie.” EPIC could be too cute for its own good, but it attracted loyal supporters and famous people. Sinclair sought and failed to get FDR’s endorsement.

In *Esquire* magazine novelist, Theodore Dreiser, called EPIC, “the most impressive political movement that America has yet produced.” Historian Greg Mitchell describes Sinclair’s 1934 run for governor as “The Campaign of the Century” in his 1992, 665-page tome. Sinclair put himself at the heart of the campaign, which worked both for him and against. He certainly had name recognition as a novelist and a crusader for social justice. But he made the mistake of turning the election into a kind of referendum about himself as much as the cause to end poverty. In many ways, he was afflicted by a sense of grandiosity as well as naivete. Calling the campaign “EPIC” didn’t make it so. “The only real problem,” Sinclair noted in 1934, was “getting power.” John Reed could have told him that in 1917.

During the campaign, a cult of personality developed around Sinclair—he had an ego and encouraged a kind of hero-worship—and he was all too easily demonized, as



Upton Sinclair speaking in Los Angeles during his run as a socialist for governor of California. (Bettman/Corbis.)

was EPIC itself. Earl Warren, who became Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court known for his liberal stance, called Sinclair's 1934 campaign "a crusade of Americans and Californians against Radicalism and Socialism." In Warren's eyes, Sinclair was the quintessential radical socialist and a menace. Newspaper editors portrayed Sinclair as a Bolshevik, who, if elected would turn California into an outpost of the Soviet Union, with private property abolished and individual freedoms curtailed.

Still, Sinclair thought he would win. In 1934 he published a work of fiction titled *I, Governor of California*, and *How I Ended Poverty*. After his defeat, he followed up that book with *I, Candidate for Governor* and *How I Got Licked* in which he noted, "I am pretty good at fighting with my pen, but I dislike personal controversies." Sinclair blamed his defeat on the "All the little incipient Hitlers—the Californianazis." He never realized that, behind the scenes, two dyed-in-the-wool Republicans, Clem Whitaker and his wife, Leone Baxter—the founders of Campaigns, Inc.—pulled strings, doctored photos and told lies both big and small. Harvard Professor, Jill Lapore calls Campaigns Inc. "the first political-consulting firm in the history of the world." She gives it all the attention it deserves in *These Truths: A History of the United States*. Apropos Upton Sinclair, Clem Whitaker said, "we had one objective: to keep him from becoming Governor."

For some 1930s Progressives, EPIC was a sign of successful popular movements yet to come. They insisted that under Sinclair's leadership, the power of the Republican Party was broken, that the Democrats established a beachhead in the state, and that right-wing California was gone forever. EPIC members were elected to the legislature, but not long afterward came the Hollywood 10, and then the rise of Nixon, Reagan and later, Schwarzenegger.

Sinclair noted astutely in a 1951 letter to Norman Thomas, who ran for president six times as a socialist, that "The American people will take Socialism, but they won't take the label." Sinclair added, "We simply have to recognize the fact that our enemies have succeeded in spreading the Big Lie." He urged his liberal friends, allies and supporters not to launch a "frontal attack" on conservatives and their ilk, but rather to "out-flank them." Years earlier, when he took on the meatpacking industry, the coal industry and John D. Rockefeller, confrontation was the name of his game. As he aged, and became increasingly conservative he evolved into an anti-communist who didn't want to alienate the American middle class.

In 1982, Theodore White, who followed elections religiously from 1960 to 1980, noted that Whitaker and Baxter at Campaigns Inc. were dead, "but that their kind of politics—professional image-making—has not only persisted but thrived." Professor Lauren Coodley ignores Campaigns, Inc. entirely in her 2004 anthology *The Land of Orange Groves and Jails: Upton Sinclair's California*, and insists that Sinclair "has perhaps never been as relevant as he is right now." Professor Chris Bachelder,

the author of a stunning novel about Sinclair, titled *U.S.!*, is far less sanguine than Coodley about Sinclair's relevance.

In an email to me, from the University of Cincinnati where he teaches, Bachelder suggested that if "American fiction and poetry are becoming more engaged, more directly political and something of a movement, Sinclair might once again be regarded as an important figure." When he wrote *U.S.!*, Bachelder explained, he "was interested in Sinclair's "desperate zeal, crusading spirit, American pluck, notion of the artist's responsibility and in a very broad sense his ardent anti-capitalism." He added, "I guess I still find him admirable and absurd." As we approach the 2020 elections, I'd like to think of Sinclair as a socialist who warned Americans about the "Big Lie."

I'd also like to recommend the new edition of *The Cry for Justice*, which Sinclair edited and published in 1915, and that has just been reissued by Seven Stories with a new fiery introduction by Chris Hedges who points to a Golden Age of American radicalism before 1914, and who calls for a revival of "revolutionary religious fever." Not surprisingly, Hedges does not praise Sinclair. Indeed, he points out that the author of *The Jungle* "was tone deaf to white supremacy and institutional racism," and that he ignored the writings of Frederick Douglass, John Brown and Harriet Tubman. But he does like the work of many of the contributors, including Peter Kropotkin and Alexander Berkman who tried and failed to assassinate millionaire Henry Frick, went to prison and wrote his memoirs.

"The ideas celebrated in this book were driven from the mainstream," Hedges says of *The Cry for Justice*. He adds, "We never recovered."

The Cry for Justice is an odd anthology. It includes Rudyard Kipling and John D. Rockefeller as well as Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Abigail Adams, who told her husband in 1774 that she and her sisters "are determined to foment a rebellion." *The Cry for Justice* has more selections from Sinclair's work than from another other writer, such as Karl Marx and William Blake. It has a substantial section on Jesus and another on Children but no section titled sex, race or ethnicity. Despite its flaws, Hedges would like us to read the anthology and recover the lost heritage of real radicalism. To him, I would say that over the last one hundred years, we have lost ground and gained ground and that men and women and children here and all around the world still cry out for justice loudly and clearly. Perhaps Upton Sinclair hears their voices. **CP**

JONAH RASKIN is the author of *For The Hell of It: The Life and Times of Abbie Hoffman*.

CULTURE & REVIEWS

Past Reality

BY LUCY SCHILLER

It's an obvious statement, but time moves differently these days, particularly if you are in self-isolation, like, hopefully, so many others. I don't mean just hour-to-hour, day-to-day, though this is true, too—the days in my particular isolation feel defined by a kind of punctuated equilibrium, lots of short little bursts of activity and then, after around 3 pm, nothing at all but a molasses feeling in which I forget how to spell words like “molasses.” The recent past, too, feels like eons ago: for example, it was only on March 1 that Pete Buttigieg dropped out of the presidential race. A friend cited this date to me with shock. I recalled, in turn, that it was only seven years ago in which I was doing the very same thing I'm doing now, basically: living with my parents again, unemployed, in an ongoing larger calamity. Seven years ago, it was in the long shadow of the Great Recession that I returned home for the first time as a self-ashamed adult, unable to make a living for myself. Everyone I knew was doing it, if they could. Today's circumstances, of course, are even more dire, a spectacular turducken of a massive economic depression wrapped in a failure of a healthcare system wrapped in an already economically stratified society wrapped in a pandemic, basted in incompetence and misinformation. The metaphor is as ungainly, incomprehensible, and unapertizing as a turducken itself.

I've noticed, in this particular isolation, that I'm borne back ceaselessly into different versions of the past, via an unsettling gamut of television shows from the early 2000s, when, mostly unnoticed by the rest of us, PBS and BBC televised

numerous experiments in historical reenactment reality television. Uniformly, these shows involved preparing for long, hard lengths of time under a punishing set of constraints. *Colonial House*, *Frontier House*, *Pioneer Quest*, *Manor House*, *1940s House*, and *Victorian Slum House* brought volunteers, usually added enough already to want to do this in the first place, to reenact to the best of their ability the conditions and experiences of an early European colony on the coast of Maine, a rural Montana homesteading venture, a year breaking sod on the Manitoban prairie, a horrifically hierarchical Edwardian mansion, the London Blitz, and London's Late Victorian East End. The constant revelation, though it's unsurprising, is that across time and place, within the history of capitalism, the same types of people take happily to power, and the same groups of people suffer. In *Colonial House*, for instance, the governor of the Maine colony is simply the oldest man among the volunteers. A Baptist preacher from Waco, he gleefully institutes mandatory prayer among the colonists and modesty laws for all the women. In *Manor House*, the normally middle-class family who become the masters of the manor quickly learn to relish the fact that their servants spend eighteen-hour days burnishing the banisters and folding the ladies' hair into elaborate puffs. This is the work the masters see, of course; most servant activities take place in the bowels of the mansion, far out of sight.

It's going to be a long, hard winter. This phrase is repeatedly uttered in most of these shows, particularly the ones involving more manual labor and less insulation in the walls. It's obvious to me why I stay sleepless watching these people work to be physically and psy-

chologically resilient in the face of real danger, bad weather, immense challenges—we're at the beginning of our own long, hard winter, one far worse and uncontrolled than any dreamed up by reality television. In my late-night masochism, I have done what to me was previously unthinkable, and started to appreciate most the shows' blatant artificiality. In *Frontier House*, a few of the teenage participants, who've had enough with their parents' adulation of a repressive and unbathed time period, sneak out to a nearby suburban street and splash on makeup as if it's water. On *Manor House*, two successive scullery maids, occupying the lowest of the positions in the house, can't take the flatulent, controlling chef de cuisine any longer, and leave without warning. Good for them, and good for her, when Antonia, a servant, dares to argue with the softly sneering master of the house. This would be inconceivable, we are told, at the time.

In the long, glassy stretches of days spent inside, talking with friends, catching up with people from the slightly younger past, I am trying to start the rusty engine of my brain again, which has seemingly stalled in the face of what we seem to be calling “this moment,” as if it's short and finite, like a reality television show. “This moment” feels as illogical as reality television, in a sense, and, to a certain extent, artificially constructed—we know that it could have been far better handled, that we are helplessly piloted by an administration with real blood on its hands. I keep hearing people talk about staying “grounded in the moment,” “grounded in my body.” There is a sense of having lost time. Having lost our understanding of time, while it stretches and speeds behind and ahead of us, like an ice

skater gliding leisurely and then twisting suddenly into a blur of a triple axel.

Upon release, the participants are wild-eyed and somewhat sad to have left their era, which they tried on like an ill-fitting pair of long johns, but you can tell already that it's slipping away in their mind, and that the "real world," which is presented as a constant and a totally different entity than the past, has already slid in to take over. This is its own kind of turducken, of course: inside "this moment," I watch these people live inside the "real world" of the early 2000s, itself now a relic, inside which they inhabit a fabricated version of another time. If this is escapism, then it's an awfully complicated kind. I hesitate to draw any kind of comparison between this kind of reality television and our current "situation." We have no escape but to move forward, and to look, as ever, to the past to aid us. **CP**

LUCY SCHILLER is an essayist based in Iowa City. She's at work on a book about the musician Arthur Russell and on a collection of essays.

Latasha Harlins Redux

BY LEE BALLINGER

Shawn couldn't move. He was on the floor by his sister—how had he gotten there?—the knees of his pajama bottoms wet with blood and milk. There was a hole in her forehead, raw and shining. That's what this was—the woman had shot his sister.

As I was starting to write this novel, I kept thinking: This is not about the past at all—this is about right now.

—Steph Cha, in an interview with NPR

Your House Will Pay by Steph Cha (Ecco) is a fictionalized account of the murder of Latasha Harlins in a Los Angeles liquor store in 1991, an event which was one cause of the

1992 LA Rebellion. Cha is a young Korean-American writer whose book takes the reader all across the city, diving deep into the twists and turns of race and class, love and marriage, work and play, prison and freedom. Cha doesn't soothe us with easy answers. Instead, she leaves us with lots of questions.

On the morning of March 16, 1991, two weeks before Rodney King was beaten by police, sixteen-year-old Latasha Harlins entered the Empire Liquor Market in South Central Los Angeles. Standing behind the counter was the owner's wife, Soon Ja Du. Du worked up to fourteen hours a day and she suffered from migraines. The store had been robbed more than thirty times, including the previous Saturday.

Harlins and Du argued over whether or not the girl was attempting to steal a bottle of orange juice. Harlins pivoted away from the counter and Soon Ja Du shot her in the back of the head, killing her.

In due course a jury convicted Soon Ja Du of manslaughter in Judge Joyce Karlin's courtroom. A probation officer's report found Du to be defiantly unrepentant ("I would do the same thing again!") and recommended that Du serve sixteen years in prison. Yet Judge Karlin, a wealthy woman who would later serve two terms as mayor of upscale Manhattan Beach, ignored the report and, incredibly, gave Soon Ja Du no jail time at all.

How could this happen? How could someone murder a teenager and get off scot-free? Steph Cha provides one answer in describing the judicial journey of Jung-Ja Han [the fictional version of Soon Ja Du]:

"She'd started with a public defender, but by the time the case went to trial, she'd hired a silver-tongued black lawyer, who painted her as party to the tragedy. He was a smart man and a fervent speaker, but Grace [Jung-Ja Han's daughter] knew that wasn't why her mother hired him. She paid him to stand in court, his black body forgiving her on behalf of his community."

In real life, that attorney was Charles Lloyd, who drove to court each day in a Rolls Royce. Lloyd was a law partner of LA's first black mayor, Tom Bradley, who had appointed Lloyd to a powerful post as a harbor commissioner. The only thing Lloyd or Bradley had in common with Latasha Harlins was the color of their skin.

It's upon this historical base that Steph Cha builds her story, adding characters, building fictional families, all revolving around the aftermath of the day a bullet ended the life of Latasha Harlins. Cha brings the factual story alive by enriching it with the conflicting realities and perspectives of her invented characters.

"I think crime fiction is better positioned to deal with the human cost of political problems than any other genre," Cha said in a recent interview.

When asked to explain, she replied that "Crime fiction explains what causes the tensions, the fault lines. Who harms who?" That certainly is an accurate description of *Your House Will Pay*. The book is filled with fascinating characters—primarily the extended families of the murderer and the victim. But of almost equal interest is everyone from a journalist who may or may not be just an opportunist to a guy who runs a moving van company. This cast of characters collides and comes together in everything from street violence to their turbulent interior lives.

Cha uses dazzling wordplay not to show off but to pull the reader deeper into the story as she repeatedly makes the specifics of her story universal—family, social, and political scenarios that are highly recognizable. Her character development isn't just a bucket of quirks, but in every case has an arc such that the reader is swept along even when plot developments may be a bit hard to believe.

Inevitably, with a story that grows out of the LA rebellion, *Your House Will Pay* is about the relationship between blacks and Koreans in Los Angeles. Cha flavors her narrative with elements of black and Korean culture and sometimes, no

surprise in a city that is both segregated and fundamentally multi-racial, those elements mix. One of Jung-Ja Han's daughters has a black boyfriend while the other plays classical piano, fitting a Korean stereotype. But Ava Matthews (Latasha Harlins) also plays classical piano, which definitely does not fit a South Central stereotype.

Meanwhile, blacks in the real Los Angeles to this day continue to stage protests of the presence of Korean store owners in LA. Why does this continue? "No whites run 7-11s," Steph Cha told me, "so people take it out on who's there."

Yet there is also conflict within the same race. For example, Jung-Ja Han's daughters argue over their mother's action. This reflects the current situation in LA's Koreatown, where KTown4All works to embrace the homeless while Korean NIMBYs try to keep a homeless shelter from being built in their neighborhood.

Then there is Ava Matthews' brother and restaurant worker Shawn: "There were some parts of the job that never got easier. The suspicious looks, the bad tips. Most people assumed he was stupid, that his life was little and wasted, plainly inferior to theirs. There was one customer early on—a black doctor with a thin white wife, moving into a mansion with marble columns in Studio City—who clapped him on the back and asked if he didn't wish he'd gone to college."

And there is also a generation gap.

"The kids knew the family history, but they hadn't been there when Ava died, when Aunt Sheila learned that she could trade their pain for attention, which at times felt almost like justice while being nothing like it at all."

Throughout *Your House Will Pay*, Steph Cha treats most of her characters sympathetically while never letting us forget that the primary victims of an unjust society have been black. Yet when she explains why "Grace couldn't have imagined a better mother [Jung-Ja Han]," that description resonates as well.

The most obvious conflict, the one

with the police, is presented somewhat indirectly. This is something of a surprise, considering that Southern California cops have shot two thousand people over the past fifteen years, not to mention killing dozens of people during the rebellion that, ultimately, defines this book.

"She'd grown up watching men like him on TV, and even when she was wary of him, she'd assumed he was truth seeking and competent. Every day, there were rotten cops in the news, and still she had been bamboozled. 'I mean they're supposed to protect people, right? How can they be so bad at their jobs?'"

Or:

"Sometimes it felt like they were out fishing, putting out lines in active waters, just to see who they could reel in."

When detectives go on just such a fishing expedition, visiting Shawn and his wife Jazz:

"Jazz set coffee down in front of him. Shawn almost smiled. She was playing the polite hostess, but she'd chosen the ugly mug she'd gotten in a white elephant exchange, the one shaped like a shaggy cat's paw. They never used that mug; Jazz would die before pulling it out in front of good company."

And from a different angle, Jung-Ja Han's husband says about the police: "They're not on our side. They won't protect us."

Despite the subtleties, the police in *Your House Will Pay* come across as what they are—an alien force at odds with the public which pays their salaries.

The book's ultimate conflict is the 1992 Los Angeles rebellion. Cha describes it as "Six days of fire, a judgment poured over the earth" and then presents it from two points of view.

"When they started getting crews together to ride up into Koreatown, Shawn went with them, riding in the back of Sparky's grandma's Ford Escort, not even bothering to lie to Aunt Sheila. Koreatown—it was where the Koreans were. Jung-Ja Ha people. The people

who believed and supported her, who thought Ava was Han's bad fortune, a thing that had happened to her, like a car crash or a storm. It made sense to him, to take this outcry to Koreatown. They would bring this judgment to them."

"So many Koreans lost everything," Paul Han, Jung-Ja Han's husband, says. "Some of them I know they blame us. But it was the police who made us the villains, and then they abandoned us."

The last word goes to Ava Matthews' brother Shawn, at the book's conclusion: "He watched his city go up in flames, and under the sadness and rage, the exhilaration of rampage, he recognized the sparkle of hope. Rebirth—that was the promise of destruction. The olive branch, the rainbow, the good men spared to rebuild the earth."

I asked Steph Cha if she shared Shawn's hope. "A measured hope," she answered. "Rebirth is too much to ask and it's not going to happen in a dramatic, cleansing way. It won't fix itself."

Indeed it won't. But books like *Your House Will Pay* are part of the solution. They help us to ignore the noise and get us to think, to feel, to remember, to dream. We see that right now, in the middle of a worldwide pandemic that not only shines a light on the inequalities that define much of our world, but also forces us to see how much we have in common. Blacks. Koreans. Everyone.

My final question for Cha was if her next book would be a sequel to the Juniper Song detective trilogy which began her career. She said "It will be something different." I'm all eyes. I inhaled *Your House Will Pay* in two days. There was no hangover from that binge. I felt exhilarated, not like a lottery winner but like a battlefield survivor, yet with a sense of uplift. **CP**

LEE BALLINGER edits *Rock and Roll Confidential*.

CounterPunch

ISSN 1086-2323 (print)

ISSN 2328-4331 (digital)

www.counterpunch.org

1 (707) 629-3683

\$7.50 per issue

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