

The Fortnightly Rant

Nothing to Worry About...

It's all a bit much, so let's break it down into smaller pieces. We'll begin with the most volatile issue. Then we'll assess the threats which, should they succeed, will take longer to annihilate us.

Russia invaded Ukraine on Thursday, February 24th—the day our paper went to press. That paper carried an article headlined “Physicians Warn Russian War On Ukraine Risks Global Nuclear Catastrophe.” In essence, it said that firing rockets and artillery in the immediate vicinity of facilities containing industrial quantities of highly radioactive material is inherently dangerous.

A week later, as Americans went to bed, news outlets reported that a battle between Russians and Ukrainians had set the largest nuclear power plant in Europe on fire. That emergency has apparently been resolved, and yet things may have gotten worse.

On Wednesday of this week, we learned that the decommissioned ruins of Chernobyl—captured by Russians on February 24th—had been disconnected from the high-voltage electrical grid, and the pumps cooling the reactor cores had only enough diesel fuel to last 48 hours. Ukraine is Eastern Orthodox territory, but clearly what is needed here is a Maccabean miracle.

Many people find it deeply uncomfortable to know they have no control over a threatening situation. Some people find that having information about that threat can ameliorate that discomfort.

Fortunately for them, some thoughtful online genius created @chernobylstatus. It's a bot that automatically tweets out the safety level at Chernobyl. Unfortunately, on February 24th, the safety level at Chernobyl went from 1.1944 percent safe down to 0.0000.

OK, that's enough of that for now. We're allegedly professionals, but everyone has limits—Joey “Jaws” Chestnut has never downed more than 76 hot dogs at one sitting. Let us turn to Mother Nature for solace in these trying times.

Uh-oh. Bad idea. Looks like prostituting the old gal has had some dire consequences.

Australia is essentially a desert surrounded by water. Lately it's been under water. Brisbane, in the middle of the east coast, was hit by a four-day “rain bomb” in late February. Then it was Sydney's turn. The east coast of Australia got a year's worth of rain in a week. Twenty people were killed and sixty thousand have been evacuated.

Scientists are loathe to attribute specific weather anomalies to global heating. [Warming is *passé* now.] There are two reasons for this. First, being scientists, they understand that correlation does not equal causation. They require hard evidence. That's harder to come by in climate science than on TV cop shows. Second, they're sentient human beings. They know that if they are not exceedingly careful, the fossil fuel industry's propagandists will put an early end to their careers.

Now that reticence seems to be dissipating. On February 28th, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued a report which began, “Human-induced climate change is causing dangerous and widespread disruption in nature and affecting the lives of billions of people around the world, despite efforts to reduce the risks. People and ecosystems least able to cope are being hardest hit....”

“The world faces unavoidable multiple climate hazards over the next two decades with global warming of 1.5°C (2.7°F). Even tem-



porarily exceeding this warming level will result in additional severe impacts, some of which will be irreversible. Risks for society will increase, including to infrastructure and low-lying coastal settlements....

“Increased heatwaves, droughts and floods are already exceeding plants' and animals' tolerance thresholds, driving mass mortalities in species such as trees and corals. These weather extremes are occurring simultaneously, causing cascading impacts that are increasingly difficult to manage. They have exposed millions of people to acute food and water insecurity, especially in Africa, Asia, Central and South America, on Small Islands and in the Arctic.

“To avoid mounting loss of life, biodiversity and infrastructure, ambitious, accelerated action is required to adapt to climate change, at the same time as making rapid, deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions. So far, progress on adaptation is uneven and there are increasing

gaps between action taken and what is needed to deal with the increasing risks....”

In other words, things are getting worse faster than we thought. We have some idea of what to do, but we're not doing it nearly well enough. And, as conditions get worse, so does our performance.

We can't claim to have read all 3,600 pages of this document. Fortunately that was not necessary. If, anywhere in those 3,600 pages, the IPCC had the following, we would have heard about it:

“There are two great obstacles preventing ‘ambitious, accelerated action required’ to save us: the fossil fuel industry that created the problem, and the political system that protects it.”

If that seems overstated, consider this: the same day the IPCC issued its dire warning, the U.S. Supreme Court hosted oral arguments on *West Virginia vs EPA*.

The Court could have told the

plaintiff to go pound sand. Instead it chose to give itself the option of preventing the EPA from regulating carbon dioxide emissions—that is, trying to save the planet. Three of these knuckleheads—please pardon the legalese—were appointed to the Court by The Former Guy.

The Former Guy was the preferred candidate of the criminal running and ruining Russia. There's a theory afoot which says Pooty-Poot Putin—pal of Bush #43, idol of Dolt #45, icon amongst the members of the NRA—wanted the Republican candidate to win in 2016 so that a \$500 billion deal between Exxon and Rosneft might succeed.

In the Oval Office on May 10, 2017, The Former Guy played host while Secretary of State and former former Exxon CEO Rex Tillerson yukked it up with Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Ambassador to the U.S. Sergey Kislyak.

Don't worry, though—it's just business as usual.

The Alleged News®

Now Let's Do the American Oligarchs

by Richard Eskow

From President Biden's State of the Union:

“Tonight I say to the Russian oligarchs and corrupt leaders who have bilked billions of dollars off this violent regime: no more.

“The U.S. Department of Justice is assembling a dedicated task force to go after the crimes of Russian oligarchs.

“We are joining with our European allies to find and seize your yachts, your luxury apartments, your private jets. We are coming for your ill-begotten gains.”

With these words, the president unintentionally laid out a blueprint for responding to the American oligarchs, superpredators who dwarf their Russian counterparts in wealth and political power.

Oligarchs in a Violent Regime

About that “violent regime” business: It's possible to condemn the violence perpetrated by Russia's government while at the same time recognizing and condemning our own. Our direct attacks on Iraq and Afghanistan, among other countries, have been matched by the proxy violence we have funded in nations like Palestine and Syria. Our sanctions have taken countless lives around the world, a form of bloodshed we pretend isn't warfare.

America's oligarchs, like their Russian counterparts, have bilked billions—no, make that trillions—from their own regime. Some of their bilking comes directly from its violence, in the form of “defense” contracts to entities like Halliburton, Lockheed Martin, and the Carlyle Group.

A 2014 Princeton political science study showed that government actions nearly always conform to the wishes of wealthy and powerful U.S. elites. “Our central finding was this: Economic elites and interest groups can shape U.S. government policy—but Americans who are less well off have essentially no influence over what their government does,” wrote co-authors Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page.

America's oligarchical influence extends from healthcare and fossil fuels to the industry of war itself. American companies account for more than half of all arms sales worldwide. The Center for Responsive Politics reports that “in the past two decades, [the arms industry's] extensive network of lobbyists and donors have directed \$285 million in campaign contributions and \$2.5

billion in lobbying spending to influence defense policy.”

Arms manufacturers (more commonly known by the Orwellian appellation, “defense industry”) shrewdly concentrate on hiring ex-government officials to advance their agenda and pump up their ill-gotten gains. This ensures that their interests are represented by people who know the officials they're lobbying. Even more importantly, it puts those officials on notice that there is a lucrative future in store for them if they play along. Arms oligarchs have hired more than 200 lobbyists who, in the report's words, “have worked in the same government that regulates and decides funding for the industry.”

Arms manufacturers played a dominant role under Trump, but are also well-represented in the Biden

Administration:

“While Biden has touted strict ethics rules that attempt to thwart the influence of lobbyists on the administration, several of his earliest appointees, including Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken consulted for a private equity firm that emphasized its “access, network and expertise” in the defense industry. Austin also had a seat on the United Technologies and Raytheon boards, earning more than \$250,000 from the now merged companies.”¹

Ill-Gotten Gains

It's not just the arms industry, of course. Other oligarchs have bilked the people of the United States in more creative ways. Jeff Bezos built

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his Amazon empire off his ability to sell products online without charging sales tax. This government-granted loophole made him an oligarch, a position he has used to further cement his power and influence. He has purchased the most influential paper in the nation's capital—an oligarch's move if there ever was one—while constantly extending his monopolistic power into new markets.

Despite the fact that he already possessed great wealth, Elon Musk has received billions in subsidies and contracts for his automobile and space ventures. Bill Gates parlayed a government contract and some aggressive patent strategies into his own oligarchical status. Insurance executives have bilked billions from the violence of our privatized healthcare system, which takes an estimated 45,000 lives per year.

Money, of course, is only part of an oligarch's wealth. President Biden also mentioned the property that belongs to Russian oligarchs: "your yachts, your luxury apartments, your private jets. We are coming for

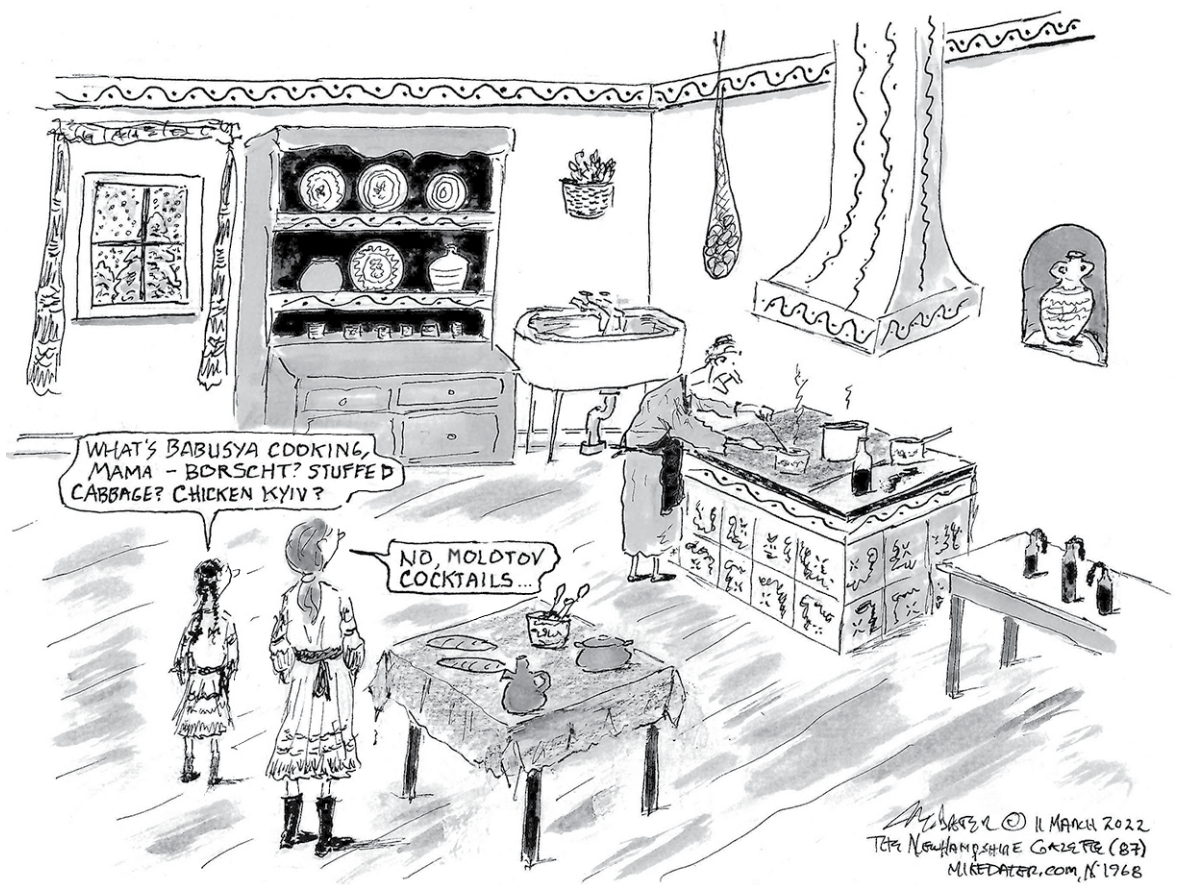
your ill-begotten gains." (He meant "ill-gotten," but I suppose you could call such malapropisms part of Biden's charm.)

Russians own an estimated 7-10 percent of the world's superyachts, leaving plenty for their American counterparts. Luxury apartments? Check out "New York Condo Sells for Close to \$190 Million; Hedge-Fund Billionaire Doubles His Money." Private jets? Jeffrey Immelt, job outsourcer and financial predator at GE, used to take two jets when he traveled so that he'd have a spare—and charged it back to GE's shareholders.

Little Oligarchs, Big Oligarchs

We're told that the Russians whose yachts have been seized include Alisher Usmanov, whose net worth is \$20 billion, and Alexei Mordashov, whose wealth is described as "nearly" \$30 billion. Compare that with Elon Musk, who's worth nearly \$300 billion, or Jeff Bezos at \$202 billion. These guys are pikers.

Globally, in the U.S.-led world financial order, billionaires have gained \$5 billion in wealth since the pandemic began. Think of our



The blue and yellow colors of the Ukrainian flag flew in Market Square for about five hours on Saturday. Cars beeped their horns in solidarity, drivers raised their fists in salute, and pedestrians engaged in—mostly—respectful conversation. John Jones did the honors. A North Sutton resident, and a subscriber to this newspaper for more than 30 years, Jones was a medic on a Special Forces A Team in the highlands of Vietnam.

economic leadership as a "global endowment for oligarchy." Oxfam reports that the ten richest men in the world (yes, they're all men) own more wealth than the bottom 3.1 billion people ("six times more, in fact"). Oxfam also notes that "if the 10 richest men"—nine of whom live in the U.S.—"lost 99.999% of their combined wealth, they would still be richer than 99% of the world."

Now that's oligarchy.

Making a Killing

No industry has taken more advantage of government-granted patent monopolies than Big Pharma. Even when its oligarchs misled the country into an opioid epidemic—one of the largest mass-casualty events in American history—they are able to escape criminal culpability for their actions.

Then came Covid-19. As *Forbes* reported in January, U.S. billionaires held an estimated \$3.5 trillion before the pandemic struck, a figure that reached nearly \$5.3 trillion two years

later. That's \$1.8 trillion in gains, divided among only twenty oligarchs. Musk led the pack, with Bezos in second place. The billionaires' list is a cavalcade of monopolists and speculators whose wealth has been fueled by their government's benign view of their predatory business practices.

Once the pandemic hit, Big Pharma's oligarchs were able to parlay their political power into exclusive patent rights for Covid-19 vaccines. Moderna made \$17.7 billion from its vaccine in 2021 and anticipates making \$22 billion this year, from a formula developed with \$2.5 billion in funding commitments from the U.S. government. The money from these government-granted profits could vaccinate the entire world, but they've been used to enrich shareholders instead. That's oligarchy.

Restoring the Balance

What can Americans do about their oligarchy? President Biden's blueprint is a good place to start. A "dedicated task force to go after the

crimes of American oligarchs" is an excellent place to start. It could address questions such as:

1. Why have nine American billionaires acquired more than \$755 billion during the Covid pandemic, while so many other people struggled?
 2. What role did government and central bank policy play in this enrichment?
 3. What unethical or illegal actions, if any, were undertaken in amassing this wealth?
 4. What effect will these levels of economic inequality have on social justice, political power, social mobility, and the rights of consumers and workers?
 5. Is there any reason why this money should not be taxed at 99 or 100 percent?
- Item #5 would not be unprecedented. It would revive a proposal from President Franklin D. Roosevelt for a "100 percent war super-tax" on extremely high incomes and

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would echo the 94 percent top tax rate passed during World War II. (The top marginal tax rate stayed above 90 percent for the next two decades.)

We certainly face a World War-level emergency. Oxfam observes that “a 99% windfall tax on the Covid-19 wealth gains of the 10 richest men could pay for enough vaccines to vaccinate the entire world and fill financing gaps in climate measures, universal health and social protection, and efforts to address gender-based violence in over 80 countries, while still leaving these men \$8bn better off than they were before the pandemic.”

If a “supertax” were levied against America’s oligarchs by the federal government, it would produce as much as \$755 billion in revenue. That’s enough to pay for the original, ten-year “Build Back Better” proposal—twice.

To See, and to Act

It’s striking that the current debate about American democracy ignores its biggest antagonist: the oligarchs who have undermined the political process and drained the nation of its wealth. Restraining the oligarchs would help build true de-

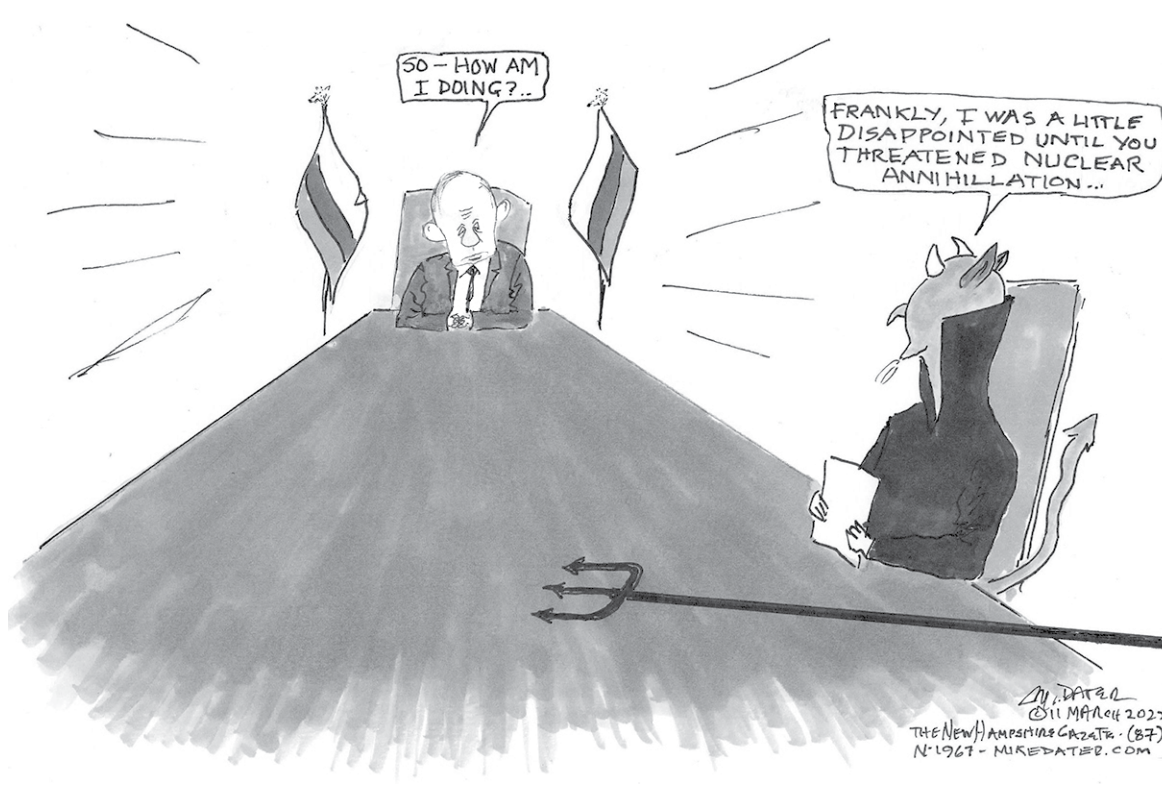
mocracy. It would be good politics, too.

“We know from polling that (anti-oligarchical) policies and rhetoric like these are wildly popular,” writes Eleanor Eagan of the Revolving Door Project. “In our deeply divided country, anger at elite impunity and a desire to see it end are among the rare uniting forces that we have left.”

Not that we can expect an anti-oligarchical agenda from this government any time soon. Politicians know that America’s oligarchs, unlike Russia’s, have the ability to crush their careers at any time. But the rest of us are free to speak out and demand an end to oligarchical rule anywhere in the world. Our condemnation of other country’s oligarchs will ring hollow until we do.

1. “Biden ethics rules aim to curtail revolving door,” Karl Evers-Hillstrom, *OpenSecrets.org*, January 21, 2021.

This work is licensed under Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0). Feel free to republish and share widely. Richard (RJ) Eskow is a freelance writer. Much of his work can be found on eskow.substack.com. He is a senior advisor with Social Security Works.



Is It Time for a New New Hampshire Historical Highway Marker?

The New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources:

“New Hampshire’s historical highway markers illustrate the depth and complexity of the state’s history and the people who made it, from Abenaki Native Americans to poets, painters and contemporary sports figures; from meeting houses to stone arch bridges and long-lost villages; and from factories and cemeteries to places where international history was made.

“Any municipality, agency, organization or individual wishing to propose a historical highway marker to commemorate significant New Hampshire places, persons or events must submit a petition of support signed by at least 20 New Hampshire citizens. They must also draft the text of the marker and provide footnotes and copies of supporting documentation, as well as a suggested location for marker placement. NHDHR staff will review the marker application and draft text and shall make revisions. Finalized

text will be shared with the applicant for approval before the marker is manufactured.”

Proposed text for an Historical Highway Marker to be placed next to the Yoken’s sign:

“At this site, on October 22, 1987, Donald J. Trump addressed the Portsmouth Rotary Club at the invitation of a local Republican activist representing the ‘Draft Trump Committee.’ As he spoke, college students rallied outside, carrying ‘Trump for President’ placards.

“Trump ‘delivered what sounded like an impassioned campaign speech to an enthusiastic audience,’ according to news reports, yet denied he was running for President. He also called for an attack on Iran and the seizure of its oilfields.

“The State of New Hampshire apologizes to the nation and the world for having thus given encouragement to the first—and let us hope only—President to have encouraged a mob to subvert an election through mob violence.”

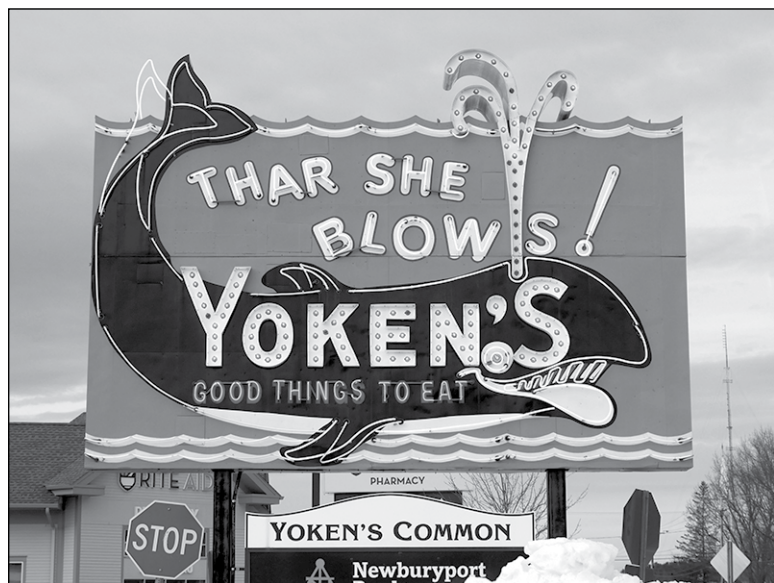
R.I.P., Jim Philips

Jim Philips, the contractor who has faithfully distributed our paper in the outlying towns of Exeter, Newmarket, Durham, Dover, Rochester and points in between for the better part of 20 years, died Sunday, February 27th. He was 77.

Allan James “Jim” Philips was born in Pennsylvania and served in the U.S. Air Force. Though he was not a native of the Granite State he fit right in, being frugal, often taciturn, and occasionally contrary.

In addition to the *Gazette*, Jim distributed other publications. These included the *Weirs Times*, which we reviewed in our issue of December 3rd. Switching rapidly from one paper to the other would put a reader at risk of ideological whiplash. Every fortnight, Jim would leave us a copy of the latest *Times*. Sometimes he would add, “Here, you might learn something.” An insult, perhaps, from someone else, from Jim it was just a friendly invitation to a lively conversation.

We will miss Jim, and not just because he so faithfully provided us with an essential service.



New Hampshire’s highways are adorned with 272 Historical Markers. We propose adding one more, next to the Yoken’s sign on Lafayette Road. This marker would not commemorate the lovingly-restored sign—why gild the lily?—but to mark an infamous incident that took place on October 22, 1987 at the eponymous restaurant which it once advertised.

Murph’s Fortnightly Quote
 “When you fight a war against a tyrant, who do you kill? You kill the victims of the tyrant.”
 —Howard Zinn (1922-2010)

“War is the unfolding of miscalculations.”
 — Barbara Tuchman
 john@wordpraxis.com

“War is God’s way of teaching Americans geography.”
 — Attributed to Ambrose Bierce
 — Not-So-Random Thoughts from an Oregon Subscriber

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N.H. GOP Entrenching a Purple State?

To the Editor:

For the past six weeks New Hampshire GOP Chair Steve Stepanek has actively encouraged Elliot Gault to remain both the Executive Director and Assistant Secretary of the N.H. GOP. The Executive Director is a salaried, hired, non-voting position. The Assistant Secretary is a non-compensated voting officer elected to the N.H. GOP Executive Committee. N.H. GOP State Bylaws Article IV Section 3 (Compensation) and 5 (Conflict of Interest) are clear as the sky is blue: whoever is paid cannot vote, and vice versa.

During February's N.H. GOP Executive Committee meeting, instead of leading with integrity by immediately asking Elliot to resign as Assistant Secretary, Mr. Stepanek recited his interpretation of the Bylaws' intent, rather than what is clearly written. When the group majority challenged this interpretation, Mr. Stepanek proposed selecting individuals himself for a "special counsel." No personally selected special counsel is necessary. Especially when it is Mr. Stepanek's judgment itself that is in question.

If there is any doubt why New Hampshire is becoming entrenched as a purple state, Mr. Stepanek's behavior demonstrates how easily unethical party leadership rears its head and speaks against the Republican Party's interests.

Does Mr. Stepanek understand his actions are making our state deep purple? Why did he lobby to decide his own salary? Why does he refuse to retain official legal counsel? Any reasonable, rational and Bylaw-abiding Republican should be concerned by the fundamental disrespect exhibited by Mr. Stepanek. Moral courage matters.

Gary Whitehill
Colebrook, N.H.

Gary:

We are shocked—shocked!—by these allegations.

Everyone is familiar with Republicans' general contempt for the rule of law out there in the Marketplace of Ideas™—i.e., the phone-jamming scandal of 2002,

for which Allen Raymond served three months in the Crowbar Hilton.

But a state chair of the Republican Party playing fast and loose with the Party's own bylaws? If true, that would be unconscionable.

The Editor

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Ukrainians vs Palestinians

To the Editor:

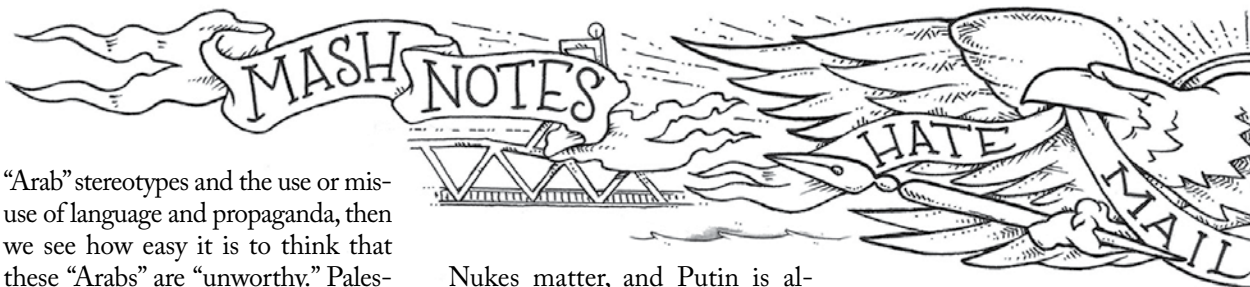
Let me be clear that I believe Putin and his generals, by attacking and occupying Ukraine, have committed a war crime. And, as we have seen, most of the world has reacted swiftly to offer military equipment, humanitarian aid and moral support to the people of Ukraine, and that is just. The separation of families, the dire humanitarian situation impacting especially the children, even babies, informs us of the brutality and sorrow of war.

On the other hand, there have been another people who have been attacked and occupied for some 55 years. I speak of the Palestinians who have suffered much during those years of an ugly and brutal occupation, and with nearly 700,000 illegal Israeli settlers colonizing stolen Palestinian land. This has resulted in the loss of much of their land, including their olive groves, the theft of their water resources, the on-going house demolitions and forced evictions, and even the jailing and maiming and killing of children. This, too, is unjust.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has quickly initiated an investigation of potential war crimes that Russia may have committed, and is still likely carrying out, against the citizens of Ukraine. This has been the start of a valid criminal investigation.

On the other hand, Palestinians have been waiting for almost six years for the ICC to expedite its investigation of Israel for possible crimes against humanity involving Palestinian citizens. Why has the ICC acted so quickly to investigate Russia, but much more slowly to examine Israel's potential crimes?

Might it be that Ukrainians are considered "European" and more worthy than Palestinians who are referred to by many as "Arabs"? If one examines



"Arab" stereotypes and the use or misuse of language and propaganda, then we see how easy it is to think that these "Arabs" are "unworthy." Palestinians have been demonized as terrorists, dehumanized as a people who use their children as "human shields," and essentially regarded as the "other." No, they are not the "stranger to be welcomed," neither by most Israelis or even by North Americans.

Israeli journalist Jack Khoury of the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* wrote this in a recent column: "Joe Biden's speech last week against the occupation of another people and against Russian aggression can be easily embraced by Palestinians, but everybody knows that nothing will happen here. The world, touched by pictures of light-skinned, blue-eyed refugees trudging toward the border of a neighboring country, remain indifferent to the sight of a darker woman in a hijab walking through ruins in Gaza City." In May of 2021, the fourth horrific military assault on the human beings in Gaza occurred. The previous 2014 invasion and attack on Gaza resulted in the deaths of over 2,000 Palestinians, including 520 children. One Israeli child was killed. Every death is a tragedy.

How will history remember this moment in time? This is the question we face in 2022—what is the answer?

Will Thomas
Auburn, N.H.

Will:

This seems irrefutable to us. Nevertheless, we expect a few attempts towards that end.

The Editor

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Dime-Store Patriots

To the Editor:

It's not difficult to understand why the U.S. is acting cautiously when dealing with Vladimir Putin. He is, after all, an unpredictable autocrat in possession of devastating nuclear-strike capability, much of it pointed directly at us.

Nukes matter, and Putin is already playing nuclear brinkmanship by placing his arsenal on high alert. Duck-and-cover kids from the '50s understand what this means. Get ready because, after a 60-year hiatus, concepts like first-strike capability and mutually assured destruction are about to re-enter the American lexicon.

The real danger is that events in Ukraine are unfolding too quickly, making the potential for a misstep exponentially greater. To survive the revival of nuclear confrontation as a negotiation tactic, America needs to put its best face forward, show national unity, and project resolve.

Sadly, that objective is being hampered by attention-seeking faux patriots who are busily praising Russia, extolling Putin's genius, and tearing down America's leadership on the world stage.

Back in the '50s, our government hunted down subversives who sabotaged U.S. policy and praised our adversaries in the face of a bitter cold war. We called them disloyal communist sympathizers.

Today we call them Republicans.

Rick Littlefield
Barrington, N.H.

Rick:

If Eisenhower were alive today, he'd wish he were dead.

The Editor

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The Republicans' Conundrum

To the Editor,

The Republicans have a conundrum. The MAGA wing, giving aid and comfort to the enemy with their effusive praise for Putin, is attacking our commander in chief for doing too much for Ukraine. The non-MAGA faction is criticizing him for not doing enough. At any rate, they share an agenda of undermining President Biden, unconcerned if their actions

weaken America's position. We should be grateful for Biden's steady leadership in this crisis. Imagine the danger if the self-absorbed Trump ("Vladimir likes me. He really likes me!") were still in charge.

Michael Behrendt
Durham, N.H.

Michael:

We cherish the hope of someday knowing—if we're not baked to death by our oil habit first, or ionized by a rodent-like ex-KGB agent—how the GOP eventually resolves this conundrum.

The Editor

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New Hampshire Town Meeting, 2022

To the Editor:

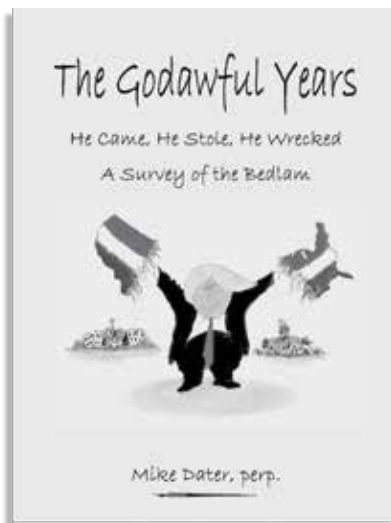
Town Meeting is coming. Some towns have elected the SB2 alternative to traditional town meeting because of the growth of their municipalities. The SB2 form of local government requires two meetings. The first is the deliberative session: discussion of warrant articles, when amendments are considered. The second day is voting day, when the votes on the warrant articles are taken. Traditional town meeting is a one-day session for the deliberation of the articles where amendments can be made to the warrant articles, followed by a call to vote by the moderator for each article on the warrant.

When a resident participates in this honorable right, they are expressing their civic duty as well as recognizing their elected town officers who pledge to uphold the New Hampshire State Constitution and the laws of the State. Ideally, we expect our municipal elections to protect the health, safety and welfare of the communities they serve.

Town Meeting votes express the importance of direct democratic decision making, to pass warrant articles that govern our municipalities. It must be recognized that all warrant articles

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Another War

Last night it rained, and then turned cold. Today the trees are coated in ice, every bare branch, every tiny needle on the evergreens. Now the sun's come out, the sparkle on the trees is dazzling, enough to lift the heaviest heart, enough to make you think this world's not so hopeless as it seemed last night.

Last night, Russian missiles hit Ukraine, and Russian tanks crossed the border headed for Kyiv. Who's at fault? Who did what to whom? No doubt the fingers will be pointing sixteen different ways to Sunday. Anymore, it's hard to care whose fault it is. It just keeps happening.

And after seven decades plus, I finally can't avoid accepting that there's nothing I can do about it, this is simply what and who we are, this is how we'll finally nail shut our own coffins. Grant me the serenity. Listen: you can hear the little chunks of ice tinkle softly as they hit the ground.

—W.D. Ehrhart

member of every member of congress signs up to fight Russia, then we can send troops to defend Ukraine.

Until then, please, let's not Play it again Uncle Sam.

Michael Petruzzello
Major, USMC (Ret.)
Wolfeboro, N.H.

Major Mike:

We just don't know what to make of you. On the one hand you express disgust with our pointless wars. Coming from a former Marine officer, we have to respect that. But then you complain of "feckless leadership and impotent foreign policy." Can't you see that's just code for "let's fight more pointless wars"?

You go on to hallucinate about "millions of unvetted foreigners [who] have invaded our country this past year." Come on,

man—you're a former Marine. Don't show cowardice in the face of a bunch of women and children fleeing criminals in Central America.

You then pivot to hysteria about the national debt. Listen to Robert Reich explaining why that's all a load of BS: https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=1009412163222994&_rdr.

As for Hunter Biden...get a grip. That's a red herring ginned up to distract you from the real, systemic corruption that funds the propoganda mills. Don't let chickenhawks like Sean Hannity and Tucker Carlson spook you. Smedley Butler would be ashamed.

The Editor

Mash Notes, Hate Mail, &c.

to page six

Black Rock gobble up real-estate in mammoth blocks and then overprice it, shoving millions of potential buyers back into the renter column.

Nice when, in 2021, big oil managed to gouge consumers with faux overcharges totaling \$174 billion.

Nice when we see our duly elected public servants defecting in droves to the tyranny of dark money and private-sector campaign financing.

Nice as we watch the growing partnership between Oligarchy and Authoritarianism spread, revealing in detail how the system is rigged to put the kibosh on a fair distribution of wealth.

Just like in Russia.

Only here in America—where it all began.

Rick Littlefield
Barrington, N.H.

Rick:

Such audacity—pointing out the parallels between corrupt systems.

The Editor

====

Please, Let's Not Play It Again, Uncle Sam
To the Editor:

Russia invades Ukraine and every politician and talking head are now shouting "Democracy is at stake."

Let's look at our track record for going to war to "Save Democracy."

Vietnam: Thousands killed, countless wounded.

Result: Death and Destruction - No democracy.

Iraq: Thousands killed, countless wounded.

Result: Death and Destruction - No democracy.

Afghanistan: Thousands killed, countless wounded.

Result: Death and Destruction - No democracy.

This faux outrage from our political leaders is meant to redirect our intention away from their failures.

The truth is that their feckless leadership and impotent foreign policy are the reasons this invasion is taking place.

Weakness invites war, and this administration is pathetically weak.

This president and congress have turned a blind eye as millions of unvetted foreigners have invaded our country this past year.

Not a single politician or media minion ever uttered "Democracy is at stake" during this ongoing invasion.

They've also given us a skyrocketing national debt, out of control inflation and record breaking food and gas prices, all in a year.

Don't forget the historically high crime and murder rates throughout the country, while they protect criminals and ignore victims.

Our department of injustice is not blind, they prosecute based on politics, meting out punishment, instead of equal justice.

The people don't want any of the things you've given them.

That is the unvarnished state of our union.

Americans don't want to get involved in a war between Russia and Ukraine.

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines democracy as "government by the people."

Over the last year, our elected leaders have acted more like autocrats in a totalitarian government, instead of representatives serving the people.

Yes, the politicians and the media who are shouting "Democracy is at stake" are correct.

Unfortunately they got the country wrong.

Democracy certainly is at stake, right here in America.

Every American should be outraged that our leadership wants to get us involved in another foreign war for "Democracy."

When Hunter Biden, Paul Pelosi and at least one immediate family

The Roots of a Rigged System

To the Editor:

Will NATO's economic war on Russia's Oligarchs provide a roadmap for breaking up the American Oligarchy's chokehold on Main Street?

Probably not. But wouldn't it be nice? Nice as we watch hedge funds like

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What do we choose to remember with memorial markers, buildings and community projects?



To learn more about memorials and what else we choose to remember go to PortsmouthGenome.org Join the conversation. A Portsmouth Peace Treaty Forum project.

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(603) 624-4366 X6883

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from page five

Good Covid News, But...

Dear Sir:
The good news is that Covid cases, positivity rates, and hospitalizations are falling. Although this is very good news, we are still not out of the woods. Our vaccination rates have not increased very much, and less than 60 percent of New Hampshire residents are fully vaccinated. We are still at a high risk level of community transmission. In response to this good news, what do our leaders propose? You guessed it, stop doing the things that have caused the number of cases, the positivity rate and the hospitalizations to fall! Just brilliant!

If you were being treated for a disease and the medication is working and you have no serious side effects, would your health care provider decide to stop the treatment before you are cured? Of course not!

If you have a strategy that is working in any endeavor, why would you ever decide to end or change that strategy until you have achieved your final objective? It makes no sense in business, politics, health care or in public health. The only explanation for such a response is politics, not public health or science.

While I understand the urgency we all feel about getting back to normalcy, we need to make sure we do not act too hastily and end up going backwards by taking counterproductive actions. We are at a point where the pandemic is almost under control, but as we should have learned from what happened last fall, things can take a bad turn quickly. We are close to getting to where we want to be, but we just need to hold on and continue doing what we have been doing for a few more weeks.

Why risk the possibility of another Covid surge or dangerous variant emerging just as we are about to return to normal? We need to continue with mask policies in schools and in indoor public settings like grocery stores and entertainment venues. We need to continue to emphasize and encourage more people to get



vaccinated and to get their booster shots. If we do these things, there is an excellent chance that by spring or summer we can return to as close to normalcy as possible, considering Covid-19 will be with us at some level for the long-term.

I encourage everyone to just take a deep breath and consider staying the course for a little bit longer. We have all gone through a very difficult two years, we are strong and tough enough to go another few weeks with a little inconvenience considering the possible reward for doing so.

Rich DiPentima, RN, MPH
Portsmouth, N.H.

Rich:
Keep these letters coming. The voice of informed sanity—just what the doctor ordered.

The Editor

Two Parties, No Representation

To the Editor:
The purpose of a democratic-representative form of government is for We the People to have control over our elected officials and our communities, but at this time we have neither!

The two-Party system has been controlled by rich special interests for decades, who profit from wars, fossil fuel destruction, economic manipulations, health care lies and fears, big banksters, and food chain contamination. Political prostitutes rewarded by PACs and super PACs dominate Congress and the White House.

Elections are the way to replace corrupt politicians but most folks just vote the same every two years and then they expect different results (a sign of mass insanity?). We need to vote for new independent thinking people who will refuse PAC bribes and promote community rights!

The New Hampshire Community Rights Network has assisted a dozen towns with passing ordinances that protect their water resources

and ecosystem, and we need many more people taking charge in their communities. We really need more legislators working for grassroots democracy!

We can and must re-organize our democracy from the local towns up, and the 2022 elections provide the way if We the People develop the will! Vote for change instead of the corrupt status quo!

Peter A. White, Treasurer, N.H. Community Rights Network
Nottingham, N.H.

If It Ain't Broke...

To the Editor:
We're all proud of our "First in the Nation" primary election. But the outcome of our celebrated primary may be put in doubt, if SB418 is made law. When asked if the results of our "FITN" primary might only be provisional, bill author Senator Bob Giuda answered "that's a possibility." Remember the mess when results of the Iowa caucus were in doubt? We don't want to jeopardize our First in the Nation status.

How could this happen? About 20 percent of the people casting their vote in New Hampshire elections are "same day" registrants. According to SB418 all same day registrants would be given a provisional ballot, an affidavit verification page, and "a prepaid Federal Express envelope addressed to the Secretary of the State for the affidavit voter to return the affidavit verification page...and missing documentation to the Secretary of State."

All this back-and-forth of affidavits to Concord could delay election results by two weeks. Maintaining First in the Nation status entails clearly naming a winner within 10 days of an election.

Most same day registrants have all their documentation. What would they need to furnish and mail to Concord? Since these provisional ballots have tracking numbers, election privacy is uncertain—especially in small towns where one or two votes make the difference. Please let the Governor, your Senator and Representatives know that SB418

will lengthen the lines at the polls, insult the integrity of 20 percent of our voters, and threaten First in the Nation status.

Susan Richman
Durham, N.H.

Susan:
Thanks for this illuminating letter. Disoriented by the current blizzard of looney legislation, this angle had not occurred to us.

SB418 is a bad idea for a whole raft of reasons, but this one alone should be enough to sink it. Too bad reason and legislation rarely coincide these days.

The Editor

"Independence Without Enmity"

To the Editor:
1) The Russian government's act of all-out conventional war is wildly excessive. Any individual or voluntarily funded institution wishing to help defend Ukraine against this overstep is far within their rights, recent Kremlin threats against this non-withstanding.

2) The initial success of the attack on this Western-leaning nation... is a reminder that Washington cannot be relied on to defend New Hampshire. Counterintuitive as it sounds, New Hampshire would be better off—and the Western world should benefit—if we handled our own defense and diplomacy. [Deleted for lack of space: A 72-word explication of this wildly implausible "idea." More, we presume, at this link provided by the writer: <https://free-keene.com/2022/01/14/the-porcupine-peace-plan-how-nh-independence-could-boost-american-security-and-stop-armageddon/>].

3) Ukraine's government has made this invasion practical by doing something most European governments and even American governments are still doing... [Another 55 non-essential words yanked.] GunPolicy.org lists Ukraine as having only seven civilian firearms per 100 persons... a foreign invader's dream. Civilians in the average U.S. state, including New Hampshire, reportedly possess over 115 per 100.

4) Washington has unnecessarily provoked Moscow over the last 30 years. By moving NATO so close to

Russian borders and arguably sponsoring a Ukrainian coup in 2014, it ignored the Rodina's security concerns. Since 2001 especially, it has bombed, blockaded, and invaded many nations with little good reason but much abuse of local civilians. It has cast away the relative ethical high ground, against the wishes of most New Hampshirites. It has also become a direct physical threat to all of us with its unconstitutional rules and raids inside our libertarian-leaning state.

5) U.S. ruler Joe Biden's statement of February 24, 2022 is partially worthy of condemnation: "Putin chose this war, and now he and his country will bear the consequences." By speaking in this manner, he equated the Russian people with their quasi-dictator... that would be like equating General Franco with the Catalan anarchists he so victimized in the Spanish Civil War. Individual Russians and the Russian nation should be treated as potential allies against Putin; many have already risked their lives this week to protest against him.

6) New Hampshire, unlike Switzerland and Costa Rica, is currently on the nuclear target list as a result of its membership in the United States system. This would be one thing if the U.S. were generally in the right and generally humane. It is not and thus is not worthy of our lives. Both D.C. and Moscow deserve opposition; neither deserve support.

7) Moscow's move may be designed to divert attention from a planned attack on Taiwan, where invasion-friendly gun laws are even more severe than Ukraine's.

8) The appropriate New Hampshire move is to peaceably declare independence from the U.S. Then it should set a clean foreign policy of its own crafting... one that does not overextend and does not aggress but does keep faith with foreign allies by insisting... that their governments end all the gun controls they are imposing on their people.

Dave Ridley
NHexit.com

Dave:
"U.S. ruler Joe Biden"? C'mon, man.... get real. We'll say this for you Free Staters, though—your horticulturalists are achieving wonders.

The Editor

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Enslaved Pressman: Primus X (ca. 1700 – 1793)

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The Western Left doesn't understand Putin – or the world outside the U.S.

After Russia's shelling of Kharkiv, the post-Soviet Left sees all too clearly what has been lacking from the West's analysis

by Volodymyr Artiukh, writing from the left end of Ground Zero

Here in the post-Soviet world, we have learned a lot from the Western Left.

By "we," I mean communist, democratic socialist Left anarchist and feminist scholars and activists from Kyiv, Lviv, Minsk, Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, and other places that are plunging into the horrors of war and police violence.

After our own Marxist tradition was degraded and marginalised, we read commentaries on *Das Kapital* in English. After the Soviet Union collapsed, we relied on your analysis of American hegemony, neoliberal forms of capital accumulation, and Western neo-imperialism. We have also been encouraged by Western social movements such as anti-war protests, Occupy and Black Lives Matter.

We appreciate the way you have tried to theorise our corner of the world. You have correctly pointed out that the U.S. has helped to undermine the democratic and economically progressive options of post-Soviet transformation in Russia and elsewhere. And you are right that the U.S. and Europe have failed to create a security environment that includes Russia and other post-Soviet countries.

Amid Russia's shelling of Kharkiv,

however, the limits to what we can learn from you are clear.

Your knowledge was produced under the conditions of American hegemony, which has reached its limits at Russia's blood-red lines. The U.S. has lost its ability to represent its interests as common interests for Russia and China. It cannot enforce compliance using military power, and its economic leverage is shrinking. In spite of what many of you claim, Russia is not reacting, adapting or making concessions anymore. It has regained agency and is able to shape the world around it. Russia's toolkit is different from that of the U.S. It relies on brute force rather than on soft power and economy. But brute force is a powerful tool, as you know from the U.S.'s own behaviour in Latin America, Iraq, Afghanistan and all over the globe. Russia has mimicked the coercive infrastructure of America's imperialism, if not its liberal democracy and free market.

But Russia's mimicry of U.S. imperialism does not mean dependence. Russia has become an autonomous agent. Its actions are determined by its own internal political dynamics, and the consequences of its actions are now contrary to Western interests. Russia shapes the world around it and imposes its own rules in the same way the U.S. has been doing, albeit through other means. The Russian warring elites are able to turn their delusions into the facts on the ground, to make others accept them despite their

will. Russia's delusions are no longer determined by the U.S. or Europe. They are not a reaction—they are a creation.

Having faced the unimaginable, I see how the Western Left has been doing what it does best: analysing American neo-imperialism and the expansion of NATO. But this is not enough: it does not explain the world that is emerging from the ruins of Donbas and Kharkiv's main

"Russia shapes the world around it and imposes its own rules in the same way the U.S. has been doing, albeit through other means."

square. The world is not exhaustively described as shaped by or reacting to the actions of the U.S. It has gained dynamics of its own, and the U.S. and Europe are in reactive mode in many areas. You explain the distant causes instead of noticing the emergent trends.

Thus, it strikes me how, when talking about the dramatic processes in our corner of the world, you reduce them to a reaction to the activity of your own governments and business elites. We have learnt all about the U.S. and NATO from you, but this knowledge is not so helpful anymore. Maybe the U.S. has drawn the outline of this board game, but now other players move the chips and add their own contours with a red marker. U.S.-centric explanations are outdated. I have been reading everything written and said on the Left about last year's escalating

conflict between the U.S., Russia and Ukraine. Most of the analysis was terribly off, much worse than many mainstream explanations. Its predictive power was nil.

This is not to accuse the Western Left of ethnocentrism, but to point to its limited perspective. Overwhelmed with the fog of war and psychological stress, I cannot offer a better perspective. I would only call for help in grasping the situation in theoretical terms while incorporating insights from our corner of the world. "U.S.-plaining" is not helpful to us to the extent that you think it is.

We need to move beyond both the ruins of Eastern Marxism and our colonisation by Western Marxism. We will make mistakes on the way, and you may accuse us of nationalism, idealism and provincialism. But you should learn from these mistakes: now you, too, are also much more provincial.

You face the challenge of reacting to a war that is not waged by your countries. Given all the theoretical impasses I alluded to above, there is no simple way to frame an anti-war message. One thing remains painfully clear: you can help deal with the consequences of the war by providing assistance to refugees from Ukraine no matter what skin colour or passport they have. You can also pressure your government to cancel Ukraine's foreign debt and provide humanitarian help.

Do not let half-baked political positions substitute for an analysis

of the situation. The warning that the "main enemy is in your own country" should not translate into a flawed analysis of the inter-imperialist struggle. At this stage, appeals to dismantle NATO—or, conversely, accept anyone into it—will not help those who suffer under the bombs in Ukraine or in jails in Russia or Belarus. Sloganeering is harmful, as ever. Branding Ukrainians or Russian fascists only makes you part of the problem, not part of the solution.

A new autonomous reality is emerging around Russia, a reality of destruction and harsh repressions, a reality where a nuclear conflict is not unthinkable anymore. Many of us have missed the tendencies leading to this reality. In the fog of war, we do not see clearly the contours of this new reality. Neither do, it seems, the American or European governments. But this new reality will leave the post-Soviet Left with even fewer organisational and theoretical resources. Without you, we will struggle to survive. Without us, you will be closer to the precipice.

Volodymyr Artiukh [https://twitter.com/R2khV] has a PhD in Sociology and Social Anthropology from Central European University, and is an editor at Commons: Journal of Social Criticism [https://commons.com.ua/en/]. Academic interests: anthropology of labour movements and the political economy of the post-Soviet area. This article is published under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International licence.

A Rube Goldberg Inflationary Spiral

by Jim Hightower

Last July, several GOP senators combined their 5-watt intellects to charge that inflation was rising because of the "insane tax and spending spree of President Biden and the Democrats."

Never mind that the "insane" spending is for such sensible, productive, and enormously popular national needs as childcare and jobless benefits, Mitch McConnell's rabidly partisan flock saw the chance

to politicize the public's legitimate worries about rising prices. You poor consumers are made to pay more for basics, they squawked, because of "Socialist Joe's" investments in grassroots people!

Follow the ricocheting pinball of the GOP's logic:

ONE, they say that helping hard-hit families induces them to refuse to go to work; TWO, this creates blockages in the global supply chain; THREE this causes shortages of everything; FOUR, this "forces"

corporate bosses to raise all prices; which, FIVE, slams the middle class and poor; so SIX, lazy workers cause inflation.

Whew! Rube Goldberg couldn't have dreamed up a more fantastical diagram to deflect attention from what's really happening, namely that instead of an inflation problem, we have a corporate greed problem.

Of course, the greedmeisters insist that their pursuit of excess corporate profit has not driven any price surges. In our economy of free market

competition, they snap, prices are established by the Law of Supply and Demand. It's the magic of the marketplace, they explain.

But magicians don't do magic, they perform illusions. And the illusion of free market competition implodes when it hits the reality that our economy doesn't remotely resemble a competitive marketplace. For some 40 years, corporate-directed government policies have intentionally promoted mega-mergers and green-lighted anticompetitive

business tactics.

Thus, in short order and with practically no public awareness, much less discussion, America has been transformed into Monopoly Nation—letting the few gouge the many. That's where inflation comes from.

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Portsmouth, arguably the first town in this country not founded by religious extremists, is bounded on the north and east by the Piscataqua River, the second, third, or fourth fastest-flowing navigable river in the country, depending on

whom you choose to believe. The Piscataqua's ferocious current is caused by the tide, which, in turn, is caused by the moon. The other player is a vast sunken valley — Great Bay — about ten miles upriver. Twice a day, the moon

drags about seventeen billion gallons of seawater — enough to fill 2,125,000 tanker trucks — up the river and into Great Bay. This creates a roving hydraulic conflict, as incoming sea and the outgoing river collide. The skirmish line

moves from the mouth of the river, up past New Castle, around the bend by the old Naval Prison, under Memorial Bridge, past the tugboats, and on into Great Bay. This can best be seen when the tide is rising.

Twice a day, too, the moon lets all that water go. All the seawater that just fought its way upstream goes back home to the ocean. This is when the Piscataqua earns its title for xth fastest current. Look for the red buoy, at the upstream end of

Badger's Island, bobbing around in the current. It weighs several tons, and it bobs and bounces in the current like a cork. The river also has its placid moments, around high and low tides. When the river rests, its tugboats

and bridges work their hardest. Ships coming in laden with coal, oil, and salt do so at high tide, for more clearance under their keels. They leave empty, riding high in the water, at low tide, to squeeze under Memorial Bridge.

Table with 7 columns (SUNDAY, MARCH 13 to SATURDAY, MARCH 19) and 2 rows. Each cell contains a list of historical events from 1812 to 2021 and a tide chart with numerical markers.

Table with 7 columns (SUNDAY, MARCH 20 to SATURDAY, MARCH 26) and 2 rows. Each cell contains a list of historical events from 1812 to 2021 and a tide chart with numerical markers.

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Advertisement for SALT CELLAR featuring a logo and text: 'SALT IS BORN OF THE PUREST OF PARENTS: THE SUN AND THE SEA.' — PYTHAGORAS (580-500 BC)