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THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR

FALL 2019

Edited by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

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OUTSMARTING A.I.

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THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR

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Zorro in the White House

by Wlady Pleszczynski

Last year in this space I made the case that President Trump is great with children. I provided visual evidence. Thought it might soften some of the haters. There was nothing to lose by trying. Of course I know better — I always knew better — that with certain people trying does no good. Never has, never will.

Why do they hate him so? I don't even want to know. Lucky for them, someone invented patient confidentiality, freeing us from ever having to find out their dirty little secrets. But boy have they ruined things.

One thing about their impeachment fetish: it confirms what they've been all about from 2016, if not earlier. They've stopped playing by American rules. An election means nothing if you don't win it. Respect for voters means even less. Sabotage, mendacity, collusion, and insolence pretty much sum up their priorities. They should be ashamed of themselves, but they long ago forgot what shame is. So this is where we are.

In a very ugly mess. If only this were about politics.

But imagine, a jovial fellow running for president is undermined by the outgoing administration and its intelligence services, not to mention the campaign of its anointed successor and all the usual suspects in the press. After his surprise victory, those forces double up to make life hell for him even before he has spent a single night in the White House. A two-year investigation is launched that for all its police-state tendencies comes up dry. That is interpreted as reason enough to redouble and retriple the efforts to destroy him. And just so we're clear on this, any effort on his part or on the part of his foolhardy defenders to dodge the poison darts and arrows directed his way is invariably seen as new evidence of his impeachability. We've come to the point that any effort to point out corruption in the so-called intelligence community or on the part of, say, a recent vice president is seen as yet a further reason to impeach and impeach and impeach.

My mind goes back, as it tends to in such moments, to the Watergate-era ouster of Richard Nixon. I remember my grad school colleagues' drunken celebrations when he resigned, this in culmination of months and months of daily shocker headlines and ever newer charges and supposed revelations that whetted appetites beyond bloodthirstiness. In their fury, none of Nixon's mad haters could tell you what it is he had really done, or more importantly what the famous "smoking gun" actually entailed. (Readers of Geoff Shepard's meticulous report, pages 26-34, will likely conclude it was confected by Adam Schiff.) We are probably fortunate that Donald Trump has a different personality from Richard Nixon. The latter was ultimately a gentleman. The former isn't allowed to be, and so he has to play Zorro, forever single-handedly fending off the charges and attacks of the ruling-class hordes. And he does so fearlessly and with unique élan. His haters never learn, and he always has their number.

Wlady Pleszczynski is editorial director of The American Spectator.

The Pope's Bugaboos

Francis fails to understand America, and capitalism, and many more of God's good gifts to man.

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Is the pope more anti-American or more anti-capitalism? I frankly believe that he is more anti-American, though he, for a certitude, is anti-capitalism, too. Where would the world be without America? Has he forgotten about World War II? I suppose the pope attributes the Allies' victory in World War II to Stalin, or Uncle Joe, as he might call Stalin. But what of President Ronald Reagan's victory in the Cold War? As we at *The American Spectator* like to say, we won that worldwide confrontation with communism without firing a shot. While the Cold War was going on, Pope Francis was growing up in his native Argentina, one of the last refuges of Nazi war criminals. Did he pick up his anti-American bias from his Nazi neighbors? They certainly did not like us.

Frankly, I would not be so quick to join in the global propaganda against the United States as the pope regularly does. It has its historic roots in Nazi propaganda, KGB propaganda, and of course Third World propaganda. Without the United States to kick around, Pope Francis would quite possibly be relying on the sufferance of the Russians, and possibly on the sufferance of the Nazis, to survive. The pope might give some thought to how much he owes the United States rather than how much more he can gouge from us.

Not long ago, Pope Francis gave a press conference while returning to the Vatican from a trip to Mozambique, Madagascar, and Mauritius. During his press conference he, of course, lied. What else does one do at a press conference? The lies were understandable because he was making a political statement against capitalism and against America, his two favorite bugaboos. Yet is it ever all right for the pope to lie? I shall leave that matter for the theologians. I do wonder, though, who is hearing the pope's confession these days.

His most obvious lie came when he said that his conservative critics, mainly in the United States, have criticized him for saying what he claims were "the same things" as previous conservative popes have said about capitalism. He mentioned Pope John Paul II, who is dead and cannot rebut him. Pope Francis said, "They are the same things John Paul II said. The same! I copy him." Then he threw in something about his critics screaming, "The pope's too communist" — the pope, meaning him.

My vast research staff has combed John Paul II's statements on capitalism and come up with nothing like the infantile statements that Francis regularly trots out. Francis challenges the very premises of capitalism. When John Paul II challenged capitalism, it was the capitalism that took advantage of a lawless culture. He had no argument with capitalism when it is informed by a healthy culture. As the late theologian Michael Novak has written, capitalism and culture are two different things. Both capitalism and a law-abiding culture are necessary for prosperity.

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Novak, incidentally, is the theologian who worked with Pope John Paul II on his encyclical *Centesimus Annus*.

As for critics saying Pope Francis is "too communist," I shall leap to the pope's defense in this dispute. He is not "too communist." He is a standard-issue Peronist. He subscribes to the same garbage can of economic and class beliefs as Juan Perón did years ago when he bankrupted Argentina. Argentina was once a prosperous, productive country. Now it is a basket case producing greedy minds like Pope Francis, who apparently believes wealth is created by passing the collection plate or possibly by expropriating it. That is how Perón managed it. Any other way of creating wealth is utterly beyond the pope's understanding.

During his airborne press conference, the pope seemed to be mocking his critics in a most unpapal manner. "We have to be gentle, gentle with the people tempted by these attacks, by these things," he said. Going on, he joshed, "Because they are going through problems, and we should accompany them with gentleness."

Well, I too prescribe gentleness. Moreover, I shall be gentle with the pope. He is obviously an economic illiterate, but what is worse he has strayed far from his supposed area of expertise, namely, spirituality and morality. He is rapidly becoming a typical blowhard politician. Perhaps he is angling for a seat at the United Nations. The priorities of his papacy would put him in the running for secretary-general.

The pope is rapidly becoming a typical blowhard politician. Perhaps he is angling for a seat at the United Nations.

According to the *New York Times*, "the priorities of his papacy [are the following:] reaching out to the poor, advocating justice for migrants and other marginalized people, and protection of the environment from capitalism run amok."

Yes, run amok. Each of these priorities is, of course, best accomplished by capitalism. In the past 25 years, the number of people worldwide living in abject poverty, which is to say on a budget of $1.90 a day, has declined by two thirds. Global GDP thanks to capitalism more than doubled between 1992 and 2017. In other words, we already are "reaching out to the poor" and "advocating justice for migrants and other marginalized people." As for protecting the environment, America has a cleaner environment than Mozambique, Madagascar, Mauritius, or any other impoverished country to which the pope might travel in his fuel-guzzling airliner. The pope might visit the United States to see how a truly capitalist nation cleans up its environment.

In fact, one of the world's great achievements over the last 25 years has been the creation of wealth and the spread of it. Indeed, the world has never enjoyed such prosperity. It is about time that the pope greets the modern world. It has problems enough in the areas where the pope's legitimate authority reposes. That is to say, on issues of spirituality and morality.

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Fortune-Telling the Future of Tax Reform

Trump 2.0 would make more beneficial tax cuts. Warren would raise the roof on taxes.

by Grover G. Norquist

The Tax Cut and Jobs Act of 2017 is the Trump administration's greatest legislative triumph. It was the first major tax reform since Reagan's Tax Reform Act of 1986 brought what was then 14 personal income tax rates ranging from 11 percent to 50 percent down to two — 15 percent and 28 percent — and the corporate rate fell from 46 percent to 34 percent.

So what is the next step for tax reform? And must we wait another 31 years?

There are three potential paths forward: one if the Democrats gain control of the Senate and White House; a second if Republicans win back the House, restoring unified Republican government; and a third if the government continues to be divided, with Republicans or Democrats holding at least one legislative body — the present gridlock.

The future depends on who wins the November 2020 elections.

The Democrat plan is clear. First, repeal the Trump tax cuts. Raise the corporate rate from 21 percent back to 35 percent, once again the highest in the world. Increase the personal income tax rate for all taxpayers. End the 20-percent exclusion for small businesses and return to the double taxation on income earned overseas by American companies when those earnings are brought back to the United States.

Second, impose a tax on energy, a "carbon dioxide tax," often simply called a "carbon tax." This will be a European-style regressive tax so obviously hitting the middle class that it will have to be paired (like a fine wine) with a "wealth tax." This will allow the *Washington Post* to focus on the tax on the "other," "the rich," "the 1 percent," while the serious money is raised through taxing everything that uses energy — such as everything. And this wealth tax — tried and rejected by eight European nations — will require, as a bookend, an exit tax to keep the sheep from fleeing the butcher.

The carbon dioxide tax will morph within a decade to a standard European-style Value Added Tax (VAT). The VAT allows European nations to collect 10 to 20 percent more of their citizens' paychecks and savings than the American IRS does. Total U.S. government spending is 38 percent of GDP compared to Sweden's 50 percent and France's 56 percent.

If Elizabeth Warren becomes president, we become Europe, with European-style slow growth and rates of innovation right out of the Middle Ages.

But what if Republicans win a net

Grover G. Norquist is president of Americans for Tax Reform.

18 House seats and the speakership while reelecting Trump and the GOP Senate?

President Trump has promised a "middle class" tax bill in spring 2020. This would be a campaign promise written as legislation, but one notes that the tax bill that passed in December 2017 was very close to the tax bill on which Trump campaigned.

What would Trump tax cut 2.0 look like? First, the president is committed to bringing the corporate income tax rate down to 15 percent — his original goal — from 21 percent. The corporate rate cut is viewed as having driven economic growth and job creation and would certainly continue downward in all future Republican tax legislation. Reagan's observation that the proper tax rate for the corporate income tax was zero is no longer wishful thinking. It is a goal — though, alas, probably a distant goal.

Second, the 2017 tax cut introduced a new concept: smaller companies that pay taxes through the individual income tax system — such as sole proprietorships, partnerships, and pass-through or Subchapter S corporations — should not be taxed at a higher rate than major corporations. The top individual rate today is 37 percent. The top corporate rate is 21 percent. If you are one of the 28.3 million businesses paying your business taxes through the individual system top rate — 35 percent now, thanks to the Trump tax reform — you may deduct 20 percent of your business income and exempt it from taxation. This reduces your effective top tax rate to 29.6 percent. The next tax reform will almost certainly expand this exemption to 25 percent, which is what the National Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB) argues would achieve rough parity.

Republicans would also expand the types of businesses eligible for this exemption. (Participation has been restricted to avoid feared tax avoidance, but with the experience of the past few years could now safely be expanded.)

All future Republican tax cuts will target three areas: reducing personal income tax rates, reducing the corporate tax rate, and reducing the tax rates on "pass-through" small businesses.

Third, all the tax cuts of the 2017 bill that were phased out over 10 years (much like the Bush legislation in 2001) will be made permanent.

Fourth, the double taxation of Americans working and living abroad will be ended. Today, if you are an American citizen who lives and works in France, you first pay French taxes on your entire salary and then pay American taxes on top of that for any income above $109,000. We ended such a worldwide tax that double-taxes American companies but allowed this tax on individuals to remain.

If Elizabeth Warren becomes president, we become Europe, with European-style slow growth and rates of innovation right out of the Middle Ages.

Republicans in Congress understand the fundamental unfairness of double-taxing the wages of Americans living abroad. The reform of this double taxation failed to pass only because there was not enough "room" in the final bill to fit all the recommended reforms.

And fifth, the death tax will finally be eliminated. Totally. Not phased out. Not pared back. Dead.

And what if Congress in 2021 is divided — as it is now?

The president has repeatedly stated that he knows he has the authority to end the taxation of inflation on capital gains through executive action that does not require Nancy Pelosi's approbation. The 2002 *Verizon Communications Inc. v. FCC* Supreme Court decision said an agency could define cost as "cost plus inflation," and doing this would take the inflation gain out of what is taxed when you sell land, a home, a building, or stocks in your 401(k).

For instance, if you bought a share of IBM stock in 1970 for $14.81 and sold it today for $134.42, you would pay $28.46 in capital gains tax. Removing the inflation from that gain reduces your tax bill by 70 percent.

This is a big deal for millions of voters. Older Americans have a great deal of inflation in capital gains in their property, stocks, and 401(k) accounts. Rural Americans have land the value of which today is largely the result of inflation build up inside the nominal value.

Allowing older Americans to sell assets that make up their life savings and not pay the inflation penalty would benefit the 99.9 million Americans who own mutual funds, the 78 million Americans who own homes, the millions of farmers and ranchers, and more than 30 million small businesses. These are numbers that move votes. Many votes.

Should Trump triumph over the slow-walking bureaucrats at the Treasury Department before the 2020 election, this increase in the after-tax life savings of millions of voters just might ensure that Republicans win back the House, reelect Trump, and hold the Senate. This would avoid all threatened tax hikes flowing from a Democrat victory and make possible, indeed inevitable, another round of pro-growth, job-creating tax reduction. Trump 2.0.

FBI and DOJ Abuses in the Mueller Investigation

America's intelligence divisions made some not-so-smart mistakes.

by George Parry

George Parry is a former federal and state prosecutor. He is a regular contributor to the Philadelphia Inquirer *and blogs at knowledgeisgood.net. He may be reached by email at kignet1@gmail.com.*

"George Papadopoulos was the whole reason for the Trump–Russia investigation."

–Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.)

Dirty cops have been known to plant incriminating evidence on innocent people. While this technique has been used most often in small-time narcotics cases, it is now becoming abundantly clear that the highest levels of the Obama-era federal law enforcement establishment adapted it to frame Donald Trump.

How they went about planting the incriminating evidence is the subject of *Deep State Target: How I Got Caught in the Crosshairs of the Plot to Bring Down President Trump*, by George Papadopoulos, a junior foreign policy adviser to the Trump campaign. In his book, published last March, Papadopoulos relates how in March 2016, shortly after he joined the nascent campaign, he was introduced to Joseph Mifsud, a self-promoting Maltese academic who claimed to have vast international connections. Early in their relationship and in "a conspiratorial manner" during a London dinner, Mifsud volunteered to Papadopoulos that the Russians had "dirt" on Hillary Clinton and "thousands" of her emails.

With the sowing of that seed, many others began a coordinated effort to manipulate Papadopoulos into repeating and elaborating on Mifsud's information. In other words, repeated attempts were made to put words into Papadopoulos' mouth that could be used as "proof" of Russian collusion coming from inside the Trump campaign.

For example, in September 2016, Stefan Halper, a professor at Cambridge University with extensive U.S. intelligence ties, invited Papadopoulos "out of the blue" to travel from New York to London to discuss foreign energy issues. Halper paid his international travel and lodging costs as well as $3,000 to Papadopoulos for a 1,500-word policy paper.

Shortly after his arrival in London, Papadopoulos was contacted by Halper's "flirtatious" and "sexy" assistant, Azra Turk. At her invitation, they met for drinks, during which she came on to him and pressed for information about whether or not the Trump campaign was "working with the Russians."

Later, Papadopoulos met with Halper, who placed his cell phone on the table and asked a series of leading questions:

> It's great that Russia is helping you and the campaign, right, George? …
>
> George, you and your campaign are involved in hacking and working with Russia, right? …
>
> It seems like you are a middleman for Trump and Russia, right? …
>
> I know you know about the emails.

Papadopoulos denied any knowledge of Russian collusion or hacking. Still, he got the impression that Halper was recording the conversation.

There's much more to Papadopoulos' saga, but you get the idea.

All of this strongly suggests that Turk and Halper were trying to conjure up the illusion of Trump–Russia collusion by getting Papadopoulos to repeat what he had been told by Mifsud about the Russians having "dirt" on Clinton and "thousands" of her emails. Put another way, Mifsud, Halper, and Turk were, in effect, attempting to plant incriminating "proof" of Russian collusion on the Trump campaign.

If so, why? And for whom did they do it?

To answer these questions, their actions must be placed into context. Overlapping with the swarming of Papadopoulos, the leadership of James Comey's FBI was using the now-infamous Steele dossier to dupe the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC) into authorizing electronic surveillance of Trump campaign adviser Carter Page.

The Steele dossier was a compilation of political opposition research paid for by the Clinton campaign, the Democratic National Committee, and the FBI. It was compiled by former British spy and FBI informant Christopher Steele, working in conjunction with the research firm Fusion GPS. It contained unsubstantiated claims that Donald Trump had been compromised by the Russians such that, once in office, he would do their bidding. In short, it was another part of the collusion hoax.

In later testimony before Congress, Comey conceded that the dossier was "unverified and salacious." Nevertheless, Comey himself submitted a verified application to the FISC based on the Steele dossier. As a result, the FISC authorized the electronic surveillance of Carter Page and, by extension, the Trump campaign. Subsequently, the Page intercept order was renewed three times based on applications by, among others, Justice Department lawyers Sally Yates and Rod Rosenstein.

> This promises to be one of the major corruption scandals in American history.

Can it be that the FBI and Justice Department's use of the Russian collusion hoax as summarized in the Steele dossier just happened to occur coincidentally with the efforts of Mifsud, Halper, and Turk to put words in Papadopoulos' mouth that, if uttered, could have been used as "proof" of the campaign's collusion with the Russians?

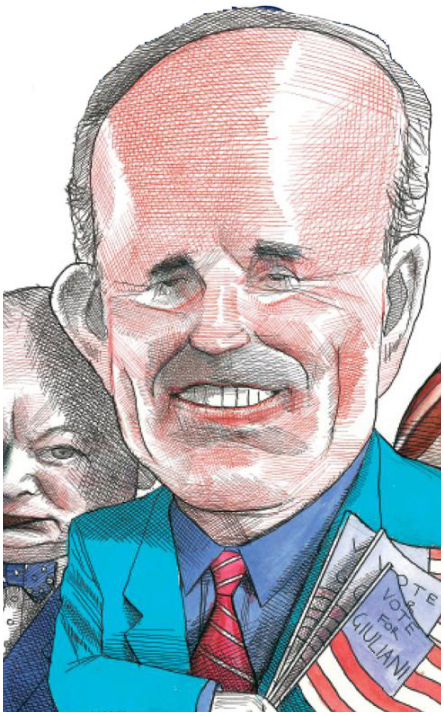
There is an old truism in law enforcement that says there is no such thing as a coincidence. On that basis, it is almost certain that those who tried to manipulate Papadopoulos were working in tandem with the people who duped the FISC. This would mean that Mifsud, Halper, and Turk were doing the bidding of the FBI and/or the Justice Department.

U.S. Attorney John Durham has been tasked with getting to the bottom of the FISC-authorized spying on the Trump campaign and the Russian collusion hoax. *The Hill*'s John Solomon reported in August that Durham's investigators have obtained an audiotaped deposition of Mifsud in which he discloses why he targeted Papadopoulos, who directed him to do it, and what he was told to do. Placing Mifsud's actions in the context of the parallel efforts to deceive the FISC will likely lay the blame on the leadership of the FBI and/or the Justice Department.

All this means that Obama-era federal law enforcement establishment leaders are on the verge of being criminally charged for engaging in corrupt partisan presidential politics by trying to frame Donald Trump and illegally spying on his campaign. As such, this promises to be one of the major corruption scandals in American history.

But as huge as such charges would be, they would also raise larger questions about the conspirators' motives. Why did they do it? Were they acting at the direction of the Obama White House? Were they working in conjunction with the Clinton campaign or the Democratic National Committee? Who stood to benefit if the conspirators had succeeded in framing Trump?

Durham's investigation may expose just how close we came to the illegal subversion of a presidential election and the ruination of our republic.



Trump versus … Bernie?

The 2020 presidential election could come down to a referendum on reconstructed Soviet communism.

by Scott McKay

Consider what follows a thought experiment, or a hypothetical, if you will, as an August 28 *Economist*/YouGov poll of the Democratic primary race had Joe Biden holding a 24-to-20 advantage over Elizabeth Warren for the pole position, with just 14 percent going to Bernie Sanders. Based on that survey, it isn't quite factual to dub Sanders the front-runner for the nomination to oppose President Trump in next November's election — particularly given that Sanders' heart attack on October 1 has sent his campaign reeling.

As of now it looks as though Biden, Warren, and Sanders are the three main contenders for the nomination. With Biden the putative favorite plagued by a never-ending, incessant flow of devastating gaffes and a terrible disconnect with the woke, identity-politics-driven, and socialist Left of the party's base, it's likely that Warren or Sanders will ultimately get the nomination.

This assumes, of course, that none of the others in the Democratic field will join the top tier. The *Economist*/YouGov poll didn't offer much hope for that, as the next tier of candidates, Kamala Harris and Pete Buttigieg, checked in at 8 and 5 percent, respectively. Both have had their turns as the flavor of the month and failed to hold support, largely because their résumés are disqualifying — to put it charitably.

But that's true of virtually the entire field, and it's certainly true of Biden, who has been rejected by the American electorate over and over again — even before it became clear he is bought and paid for by the Chinese government. Warren, whose career is defined by a fraudulent representation as a Native American in pursuit of advancement through affirmative action in academia, necessarily has a ceiling that is likely to cost her staying power. Besides, there's that voice. Who can listen to that voice through an entire primary season?

But Sanders? Let's put aside all his obvious negatives — the fact he never could hold down a job until he was able to gull the voters of Burlington, Vermont, into making him mayor of that tiny backwater and launching him into a political career that has turned him from a virtual hobo into a multimillionaire with no less than three luxury homes being the most obvious one — and examine the fundamentals of his campaign. Assuming he recovers from that heart attack, that is.

Ideology and résumé aside, if Sanders were a Republican we would likely look at him as the favorite for the nomination. Sanders, after all, gave Hillary Clinton all she wanted in 2016 and can make a somewhat credible case that he was denied the nomination in that cycle through party-insider skullduggery. That Democrats tend not to operate on the basis of next-man-up like the GOP did in nominating Bob Dole in 1996, John McCain in 2008, and Mitt Romney in

Scott McKay is publisher of the Hayride*, which offers news and commentary on Louisiana and national politics. His first novel,* Animus: A Tale of Ardenia*, is available in Kindle and paperback.*

2016 doesn't necessarily disqualify Sanders. After all, what the Democrats like in their presidential candidates is something new and fresh; that's precisely what this Cecil B. DeMille Cast of Thousands field distinctly lacks, particularly in the top tier.

Sanders has something the others don't, moreover: an organization that largely remains intact from the 2016 cycle. With the Democratic field likely to contain more than a dozen candidates by the time the Iowa caucuses roll around, that ground game and the get-out-the-vote muscle it carries could very well be the difference in maximizing Sanders' ability to rack up delegates. What if Sanders were able to outduel Biden and a quickly fading Warren (thanks, if nothing else, to that awful voice) in the early primaries and emerge as the Democrats' nominee? What then?

As August came to a close, Sanders gave us a hint of the race to come, spewing forth a raft of news-making pronouncements showing off his true colors as an unrepentant Soviet communist sympathizer. Sanders didn't only suggest converting the American news media into an organ of the state à la *Pravda* and *Izvestia*; he also praised the Chinese communist regime for its having lifted its citizens out of poverty (the irony of the statement being clearly lost on Sanders, as when China was truly communist its best method for eliminating poverty was the mass killing of its poorer citizens, and it was only by bringing in a modicum of free-market economic liberalism that the progress he touts became possible). And to add a cherry on top, Sanders then pushed a plan to nationalize electric power production — the surest possible way to create brownouts and blackouts across the country and cripple the American economy.

> Ideology and résumé aside, if Sanders were a Republican we would likely look at him as the favorite for the nomination.

It goes without saying any country that would vote for such a preposterous agenda deserves everything it gets, and it's unlikely that would include the United States of America. There are polls, which shouldn't be believed, placing Sanders ahead of Trump. But any referendum pitting Trumpian capitalism against Sandersian socialism would doubtless favor the former. The bet here is the Democrats' machine bosses know this and will move any mountain to keep that matchup from happening.

The Dems' problem is that they lack alternatives. And that's a problem they will find insurmountable as 2020 nears.

Trump Should Play the 19th Amendment Card in 2020

The GOP fought hard for women's suffrage, and he should remind them of it.

by David Catron

President Trump's 2016 victory was driven in part by female voters, particularly in critical Rust Belt states. The Democrats and their media confederates, their agitprop about "uneducated white men" notwithstanding, are well aware of this reality. Consequently, they will attempt to use next year's centennial celebration of the 19th Amendment to concoct a fictitious narrative of the suffragist movement. They will place it in the anachronistic context of identity politics and cast the Democratic Party as the true champion of women's rights. In reality, the Democrats fought passage of the amendment from 1878, when it was first introduced in Congress by the Republicans, until the latter won majorities in both Houses in 1918.

Because our education system long ago abandoned teaching history, this may well be the first time some readers have learned about the longstanding Democratic opposition to women's suffrage. Those have been taught that the "Party of Jefferson and Jackson" is all about social justice may well ask, "Why would they have opposed such a basic right?" The short answer is that they believed women to be inferior to men. Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat who vehemently opposed the suffragists for decades, captured his party's view in a letter to a friend: "Barring the chilled, scandalized feeling that always overcomes me when I see and hear women speak in public, I derived a good deal of whimsical delight from the proceedings." He went on to describe a speaker at a Women's Congress meeting as a "severely dressed person from Boston, an old maid … a living example and lively commentary of what might be done by giving men's places and duties to women."

Wilson was no outlier. His attitude was all too typical of the Democrats who fought women's suffrage for so long. Wilson espoused this Neanderthal position for most of his political career, which earned him the dubious honor of being the first president to peer out the window of the Oval Office and discover hundreds of demonstrators picketing the White House. Many carried signs identifying him as "Kaiser Wilson." He nonetheless remained intransigent until the last year of his presidency.

Today's Democrats have revised their party's history, knowing that no one will learn the truth in school. Nor are they worried that the "news" media will call them out when they falsely cast the GOP as the villain of the piece. There can be little doubt that appropriation of the 19th Amendment will be a prominent feature of the 2020 Democratic presidential campaign, particularly if Sen. Elizabeth Warren is the nominee. Warren routinely includes the following remarks about it in her stock

David Catron is a recovering health-care consultant. In addition to his contributions to The American Spectator*, his writing has appeared in PJ Media, the* Providence Journal*,* Parnassus*,* Able Muse*, and a variety of snotty literary publications.*

stump speech: "The women who won our suffrage were told over and over again to give up the fight. We have the vote today because they didn't listen." Warren neglects to mention that those people who said it was "impossible" were Democrats.

This is what President Trump has to make clear in 2020 as he makes the case for his reelection. He has to point out that just as Barack Obama has attempted to take credit for the Trump economy, the Democrats are attempting to take credit for the Republican fight to enshrine a woman's right to vote in the Constitution. Trump will need to remind them that the Republican Party, in addition to opposing slavery, has advocated women's suffrage since its founding in 1854. This is why the author of the amendment, Susan B. Anthony, asked a Republican friend and political ally to put it before Congress. That friend was Sen. Aaron A. Sargent of California, who introduced the 19th Amendment in January 1878.

Trump has to point out that just as Barack Obama has attempted to take credit for the Trump economy, the Democrats are attempting to take credit for the Republican fight to enshrine a woman's right to vote in the Constitution.

The Democratic Party's opposition to the amendment was so entrenched that when the Wyoming Territory recognized women's right to vote in 1869, Democrats in Congress retaliated by slow-walking its application for statehood until 1890. When Utah passed a suffrage bill recognizing a woman's right to vote in 1870, they passed the Edmunds–Tucker Act, disfranchising Utah's women. Meanwhile, Republicans continued to introduce the 19th Amendment in Congress every session, but the Democrats were able to keep it bottled up in various committees for yet another decade before allowing either House of Congress to vote on it. In 1887, the amendment finally reached the floor of the Senate, where, once again, it was defeated by the Democratic majority.

After this setback, advocates of women's suffrage opted to put pressure on Congress by convincing various state legislatures to pass bills giving women the vote. This met with some success. By the turn of the century, a variety of Republican-controlled states, including Wyoming, Colorado, and Idaho, had granted women suffrage. During the first 10 years of the new century, several other states granted women the vote. In Congress, however, the Democrats successfully blocked any floor vote on the 19th Amendment. It finally reached the floor of the Senate in 1914, and the Democrats once again defeated it. When it was brought to the floor of the House for a vote the next year, they again made sure it was defeated.

The big break for the 19th Amendment came when President Wilson, being a typical Democrat, violated his most solemn campaign promise. Having fervently pledged to keep the United States out of the European conflict that had been raging since 1914, he nonetheless decided to enter the war. This set the stage for the 1918 midterm elections, in which voter outrage swept the Republicans into power. This finally provided the Republicans with majorities in both houses of Congress, which put them in a position to pass the amendment without the votes of the still intransigent Democratic opposition. In May 1919, Republican James R. Mann reintroduced the 19th Amendment in the House, and it finally passed by a vote of 200 to 14.

Facing the inevitable passage of the 19th Amendment, some Democrats reluctantly faced reality and did the right thing. Nonetheless, 40 percent of the much-diminished Democratic caucus still voted "Nay." Shortly thereafter, a then Republican-controlled Senate also passed the amendment, clearing the way for ratification by the states. But the Democratic resistance, like their irrational opposition to President Trump today, was not susceptible to reason. They did their level best to prevent the amendment from being ratified by the states, but they failed. When the amendment was submitted to the states, 26 of the 36 states that ratified it had GOP legislatures. Of the nine states that voted against ratification, all but one were Democrat-controlled.

By this point, even "Kaiser Wilson" had finally faced the facts and reversed his position. Indeed, in an act of breathtaking *chutzpah*, he staged a signing ceremony even though the amendment required no presidential signature. Likewise, today's Democrats will attempt to appropriate the 19th Amendment in hopes of winning back crucial female votes. The hundredth anniversary of the amendment's ratification by the states will be on August 18, 2020. The media will collude with the Democrats in their effort to claim this Republican achievement as their own. This means President Trump has to make clear, as does every Republican on every ballot, that the Democrats were on the wrong side of history on the right of every woman to vote.

Women in a New York City parade, ca. 1910–15 (Everett Historical)

What Would Reagan Think of Trump?

Divining the Great Communicator's thoughts on the Great Tweeter.

by Paul Kengor

Paul Kengor is professor of political science at Grove City College. His books include A Pope and a President: John Paul II, Ronald Reagan, and the Extraordinary Untold Story of the 20th Century *and* Dupes: How America's Adversaries Have Manipulated Progressives for a Century.

It's an intriguing question, one requiring a degree of nuance: What would President Ronald Reagan think of President Donald Trump? I'll begin with a quick statement on what Reagan would disapprove of and then focus mainly on what I believe would impress Reagan about the Trump presidency.

First, what may be for some the elephant in the living room: temperament, personality, character, behavior, style. In those respects, Ronald Reagan and Donald Trump are polar opposites. Trump, in that regard, stands as the anti-Reagan. Ronald Reagan rarely even swore. In his letters and diary, Reagan took care to abbreviate words like "damn" and "hell" as "d--n" and "h-ll." Such were the worst extremes of any foul language by Reagan. Reagan was also almost universally liked. He had few enemies at a personal level. It's no exaggeration to say that he was widely beloved — as attested by him winning 44 of 50 states against an incumbent in 1980 and being reelected by 49 of 50 states in 1984. Reagan had great success with an overwhelmingly Democratic Congress because of his charisma and popularity.

Ronald Reagan would not approve of Donald Trump's behavior. Trump enthusiasts will not want to hear that, and they may judge it a minor, wimpy, unmanly point unworthy of comparison. But that's a mistake, and it's unwise. In truth, if Donald Trump were better liked, and not loathed by much of the electorate, his policy successes would have him handily cruising to easy reelection. I've pleaded with Donald Trump's most diehard supporters from the beginning: you should want better behavior of the man if you want him to succeed. His job depends on votes. Policy cannot advance if the chief policymaker loses the office.

And that's what Ronald Reagan would approve of: Donald Trump's policy successes, particularly the economy, taxes, deregulation, judicial appointments, and even moral and social issues like abortion and religious liberty. As to the latter, Reagan would be stunned, as many of us are, to see Donald Trump, once a New York liberal, an unexpected champion of the unborn and of religious freedom. Reagan would not only applaud Trump's solid record in these areas but would even envy it.

These conservative policy accomplishments were true for Trump right out of the gate. No less than the Heritage Foundation, the preeminent conservative think tank that has long carried the flag of Reaganism, judged that President Donald Trump enacted more of Heritage's agenda in his first year than President Ronald Reagan did in his first year — a year that included Reagan's mighty August 1981 tax cut.

Running through the entirety of the Trump policy record here would require a much longer analysis (I'm focusing almost entirely on domestic policy), but, in short, the Trump economic record, especially job growth (including among African Americans and Latinos) and GDP growth, has been impressive. Trump's battles on trade and tariffs have been more worrisome, albeit part of a larger China strategy. His tough talk with China is a risk; it remains to be seen if it will pay off. It could pay off big.

Deregulation has been the great hidden success of the Trump presidency. This is measurable by the size of the Federal Register, the official journal of the U.S. government's existing rules and regulations and proposed changes to rules and regulations. It is a compilation, collected by the Office of the Federal Register, of all acts by the federal government, and it is the foremost record of federal regulations. The more rules and regulations, the larger and more intrusive the government. In 1980, the year before Reagan entered the presidency, there were 87,012 pages in the Federal Register; by 1986, the Reagan administration had reduced the number to 47,418.

The Obama administration exploded the Federal Register, ballooning it to 97,110 pages in 2016 (265 pages per day) and adding another 6,730 pages (337 per day) in the final 20 days of the Obama presidency. In merely his first year in office, President Trump reportedly cut this by half, down to 162 pages per day, the lowest since 1990. "During his first year, President Trump has made significant progress on limiting the administrative state," concluded Daniel Bonevac, a professor at the University of Texas in Austin. That progress has continued. It has been a terrific feat and a blessed blow to the regulatory state. Ronald Reagan would have loved it.

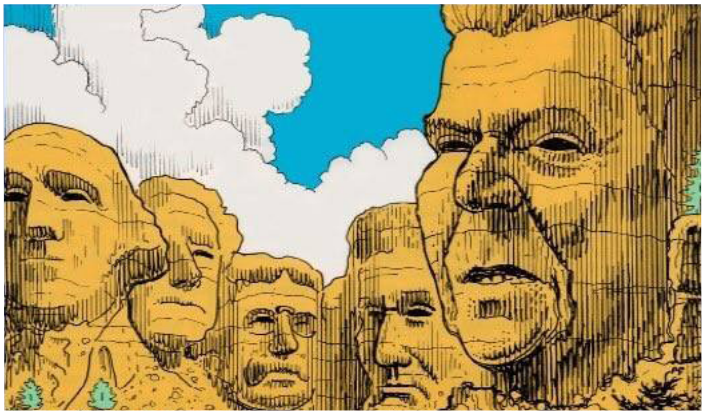
Taxes have also been cut under President Trump. Federal income taxes have not been lowered nearly as much as under Reagan, because Reagan had far more room to make changes. When Reagan entered the presidency, the top federal income tax rate was 70 percent. When he left, it was 28 percent, and he consolidated an obscene 16 separate tax brackets into merely two. Trump was able to lower rates a small amount, with the top rate reduced from 39.6 percent to 37 percent and the middle rate reduced from 25 percent to 22 percent. The bigger, more impressive achievement by Trump was cutting the corporate income tax from 35 percent to 21 percent.

Probably Trump's biggest domestic disappointment was one regrettably shared by Reagan. It is a failure both men would concede: Neither president, both hostage to a Congress that wouldn't cut spending, has decreased budget deficits because neither could rein in Uncle Sam's spending addiction.

What will perhaps be Trump's longest-lasting legacy is largely unseen: his saving of the judiciary through a sizable number of excellent judicial appointments throughout the federal system. He has accepted the guidance of Leonard Leo and the Federalist Society, making good on his 2016 promise to fill the bench with Constitutional judges who practice judicial restraint rather than judicial activism. When it comes to judges, most eyes are fixed upon the Supreme Court, but those appointments are precious few. Most changes happen at levels below the high court, and these are critical.

As for the high court, Trump's picks have been Neil Gorsuch, who appears to be exactly what conservatives hoped for, particularly in defending religious liberty, and Brett Kavanaugh, on whom, let it be said, the jury is still out. There are some disconcerting signs suggesting Kavanaugh could go the route of Ronald Reagan's worst Supreme Court pick, Anthony Kennedy — the man Kavanaugh replaced. In defense of Reagan, he initially wanted Robert Bork for that vacancy, but Bork was sabotaged by the moonbat Left. Liberals' coup of Bork turned out nicely for their cultural revolution, as they ended up with Kennedy giving them everything from the preservation of *Roe v. Wade* (the 1992 *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* decision) to the judicial invention of same-sex "marriage" (the 2015 *Obergefell* decision). In *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, Anthony Kennedy also wrote the most ridiculous statement in the history of the high court — his ludicrous, infamous "mystery clause."

Reagan's picks for the high court were Kennedy, Sandra Day O'Connor (another disappointment), and the wonderful Antonin Scalia. Reagan batted .333. Trump is batting at least .500.



Alas, the huge question in the Trump–Reagan comparison is the likelihood of a second term.

To that end, Trump lacks something particularly notable compared to Reagan. It's hard for him to identify a single defining accomplishment that resonates with a majority of Americans. To be fair, that's true for many presidents who have sought a second term. Barack Obama and Bill Clinton had virtually no accomplishments, but they squeaked by. Reagan was unique going into his second term. He was celebrated for the "Reagan reversal," for resurrecting "Morning in America," and for his complete turnaround of the malaise and misery index of the Carter–Ford years, the Watergate and Vietnam syndromes, and much more. He was so enormously popular in 1984 that he crushed the Electoral College 525 to 13. The Reagan tax cuts alone were so dramatic that he was identified with them.

Donald Trump's challenge is producing a similar signature accomplishment, something even his most loyal supporters struggle to find. They, for instance, expected him to build a massive border wall, which hasn't happened. The economy is good, and the amount of deregulation has been remarkable, but the regulatory state isn't exactly a sexy campaign issue. Trump needs something big that Americans across the spectrum can applaud as unique, bold, and memorable. (How about abolishing the IRS?)

What would Ronald Reagan think of Donald Trump? He would be impressed by many of the conservative policy accomplishments in Trump's first three years. He would be even more impressed if Trump, like him, manages to get reelected in a landslide.

Nationalism: Many Strands, Many Misunderstandings

The focus needs to be on its nobility.

by F. H. Buckley

F. H. Buckley teaches at Scalia Law School. His next book is American Secession: The Looming Threat of a National Breakup *(Encounter, January 2020).*

Joseph de Maistre said that he had never met a man. He knew Frenchmen, Italians, and so on, but as for "man," he'd never met one. Similarly, I have never met a "nationalist," so I can't say anything about nationalism in the abstract, whether it be good or bad. I can't say anything about Hungarian or Chinese nationalism.

But I do know American nationalism, and nationalism in this country is a noble sentiment. American nationalism is benign because

- It is a liberal nationalism;
- It is a multicultural nationalism; and
- It is a fraternal nationalism.

That is the essence of American nationalism.

Liberal Nationalism

The core icons of American identity are the liberal ideas of our Founders. They are what make Americans out of Americans. That is why American nationalism is necessarily a *liberal nationalism.*

In other countries, nationalism is a matter of dynastic houses and cultural icons, but America does entirely without the former and increasingly without the latter. Instead, the focal point for our nationalist and patriotic sentiments is the sense that America has a special mission to promote liberty, as promised by the Declaration of Independence and guaranteed by the Bill of Rights.

For Americans, as Americans, illiberalism is self-defeating, and if some Americans in the past have been illiberal, in time they've been seen to be un-American and have been rejected as a body rejects a foreign object.

Some American conservatives pretend to be nationalists while rejecting the liberalism of our Founders. They tell us that the American idea is charged with secret Enlightenment codes that dissolve all they hold dear. If that's what they think, it would seem to follow that they regret the American Revolution.

Possibly they're covert Canadians. Not that there's anything wrong with that.

Yet some conservatives will tell me I've missed something: I've defined American nationalism solely in terms of the beliefs of the Founders. They'll tell me that's not what a nation is. Our nation is more than an idea, a creed, they'll say.

What then is a nation? That's a question Ernest Renan asked in the 19th century. He didn't think it was a creed either. Nor was it a race or religion. It wasn't even a common language. Rather, a nation required of its citizens a memory of the glorious moments in French history, along with an amnesia about the inglorious ones, as he says in the 1882 lecture "What Is A Nation?": "Forgetfulness, even historical errors, are essential in the creation of a nation. If the citizens of a nation have something in common, they have to have forgotten a good many things about their origins."

There is something to this. But if Renan was right, is America a nation? On the left there is a concerted effort to remember all that is shameful in American history and to suppress the great deeds done by Americans. Even Washington has been demoted. A school district in California will pay $600,000 to paint over a mural of Washington because it offends the sensibilities of a politically correct school board.

If Renan was right about what makes a nation, are we still a nation? When so many Americans on the left see us divided along lines of race, sex, gender, and heritage, when identity politics is the touchstone on which all political questions are judged, there is little left of a common identity. We have become what Lord Durham saw in his 1839 *Report on the Affairs of British North America:* two nations warring in the bosom of a single state. We are *deux nations,* without even the saving grace of reticence and politeness that permit different peoples to get along.

So if that's what makes for nationalism, the sincere American nationalist is or ought to be a secessionist.

Not that there's anything wrong with that.

Multicultural Nationalism

Second, American nationalism must necessarily be multicultural. In 2017, speaking to a Polish audience, Trump said, "We write symphonies." Actually, we don't. At least, Americans don't much. We write jazz and bluegrass, rock and Latin fusion. We write both kinds: We write country and we write western.

So that's our culture, and if you're a cultural nationalist that's what I'd expect you to like. Not that you're bound to do so. You can be an American if you don't like baseball and apple pie. You can be an American if you don't like Coolio and Johnny Cash, Thelonious Monk and Dave Brubeck, Carlos Santana and Doc Watson. It's just that you might be a bit more American if you did like them.

If you don't, and you tell me you're a nationalist, I get it. You love America. It's just Americans you dislike.

Fraternal Nationalism

Third, American nationalism is fraternal. Let me explain. Nationalism can take two very different forms. *Vertical* nationalism desires its country's glory, its preeminence over that of other countries. The vertical nationalist will want to make his country great, with the biggest military, with all the guns in the room.

But there's another kind of nationalism: *horizontal* nationalism. Entirely without the jingoism that can disfigure vertical nationalism, horizontal nationalism rests on a sense of kinship to and fraternity with fellow citizens. And that in turn implies free-market policies that create the economic conditions that provide jobs, along with a generous social safety net for those who can't work.

The *horizontal* nationalist distinguishes between citizens and non-citizens. The open-borders crowd, right and left, doesn't. The right-wing version would deny welfare benefits to both. The left-winger would extend the same benefits to both. But, like the Earl of Kent in *King Lear*, the horizontal nationalist says, "I'll teach you differences." He would deny benefits to non-citizens, but in doing so he'd extend greater benefits to citizens. Otherwise his pose of nationalism is a pious fraud. Nationalism has a gravitational force that pulls one leftward on social welfare policies.

Historically, Republicans have been the party of vertical nationalism and Democrats the party of horizontal nationalism. Republicans wanted the biggest military in the world — and got it. But Republicans found horizontal nationalism in conflict with their right-wing principles. That kind of nationalism they left to the Democrats, to people like FDR, who communicated a sense of caring about all Americans, a feeling one didn't quite get from Mitt Romney.

What was remarkable about the 2016 Republican victory was that, almost for the first time, a presidential candidate ran on a platform that united the two strands of nationalism. We weren't going to gut entitlements, much as the Republican right-wingers might have wished. We'd not just repeal Obamacare — we'd repeal it and replace it with something beautiful.

Trump found the sweet spot in American presidential politics, the famous upper-left quadrant of social conservatives and economic liberals I wrote about two years ago in the *Wall Street Journal*. It's the place where presidential elections are won and where the MAGA slogan implied both vertical and horizontal nationalism.

Let me say something to Americans who might disagree:

- The anti-liberal who rejects the American creed;
- The conservative who dislikes our minority cultures; and
- The right-winger who hates welfare benefits for the disabled.

Wonderful stuff, but when you call yourselves nationalists … I do not think that word means what you think it means.

Amash's Tea Party Comes to an End

Unlike members of the Squad, he's gone back to where he came from.

by Nic Rowan

Nic Rowan writes from Washington, D.C.

A week after Michigan Rep. Justin Amash declared independence from the Republican Party in a July 4 *Washington Post* op-ed, the GOP of his native Kent County officially condemned his exit.

"For some, this is a stunning revelation," the Grand Rapids-based committee responded. "But for many of us, this announcement confirms what we've known for years: Congressman Amash does not share our Republican values."

Amash says he left the party because he cannot abide a system dominated by President Donald Trump and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.). Even without Trump and McConnell, the Michigan congressman likely would have bowed out eventually. His alliance with the GOP was one of necessity, and — like so many other right-wing alliances forged in the Obama years — it was never destined to survive a Republican return to the presidency.

Up until his departure, Amash's relationship with Republicans resembled the shaky alliance between the so-called "Squad" of freshman Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.), Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.), Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.), and Ayanna Pressley (D-Mass.) and House Democratic leadership — necessary to resist the power of the president. Once Democrats regain control of the White House, the similarities will likely persist. Democratic leaders, already so annoyed by the Squad's calls for socialism, could push them in the same direction Trump nudged Amash: out.

In fact, understanding the rise and fall of Amash may be a helpful way of predicting the future of the Squad. After all, both ran during wave years for their parties — and with minimal aid from their national wings. In the case of Ocasio-Cortez and Pressley, it was outright opposition: they won their seats in 2018 by ousting long-serving establishment incumbents in the primaries. And they continue to capture national attention because they embody the spirit of resistance to President Donald Trump that has

been moving within the party since its dramatic loss in the 2016 presidential election.

Amash and his ilk captured the attention of the Republican Party much the same way in 2010. A crew of libertarians who had gorged their minds on the free-market, deficit-slashing writings of Friedrich Hayek and Frédéric Bastiat attacked the party from within, blaming the Great Recession on decades of runaway government spending, and flipped House control from Democrats to Republicans in the process. And though the deficit hawks behind this so-called Tea Party never took control of the House or the Senate, their voices were loud — and they harangued President Barack Obama so effectively — that GOP party leaders were forced to take their demands seriously.

Understanding the rise and fall of Amash may be a helpful way of predicting the future of the Squad.

Like the Squad in 2018, these congressmen did not rise through the normal party channels. Amash is a prime example. In his first run for political office in 2008, he took a seat in the Michigan State House, vowing to be a fiscally responsible congressman. This was before the Tea Party even existed: Rick Santelli had not yet delivered his famous 2009 rant on CNBC, and Glenn Beck was still bouncing around on CNN. But the seeds were there in people like Amash. Unlike many of his colleagues, he publicly vowed not to vote on a bill unless he had read it and became known statewide mostly for never missing a vote in his first term.

Amash also understood that his Facebook account could be a powerful tool for interacting with his constituents. Starting in 2008, Amash posted all of his notes from meetings, along with every vote, online. Amash stood for transparency and fiscal responsibility in a decade when his party nationally was fixated on a seemingly endless war.

By 2010, the country was ripe for the Tea Party. The economy was down the tubes, and the new Obama administration's solution was to continue the Bush-era bailouts and pass the Affordable Care Act. Amash's belief in less government interference in the economy — largely drawn from Hayek, whose portrait he hung in his office — became popular with the still-nascent movement.

Tea Party activists were organizing protests against government spending in every major city. Michigan was no exception. About 600 protesters rallied outside the state capitol in Lansing in February. Their demands were simple: no new taxes, no more corporate bailouts. Inside the building, Amash reiterated their demands before the state Legislature.

Only a few days later, Amash announced that he would primary Vern Ehlers, the sitting Republican congressman for Michigan's 3rd District. Ehlers had held his seat since a special election in 1993 and was essentially a moderate Republican. He opposed abortion and same-sex marriage and wanted to lower taxes, in general. At the same time, he supported research on climate change and was one of the eight Republicans who voted in favor of the DREAM Act, which would have granted residency to people who enter the United States illegally as minors. Amash said Ehlers had lost touch with Grand Rapids.

"It's important to have a person in Congress in touch with the community on a regular basis," Amash told *Politico* in 2010. He offered himself as that person.

Rather than face a primary challenge, Ehlers chose to retire at the end of his term. The move opened a power vacuum in western Michigan, and Amash and four other Republicans moved on the seat. The same thing happened in other districts around the country: moderate Republicans retired rather than face primaries from younger (and often feisty) fiscal conservatives. Trey Gowdy replaced Bob Inglis in South Carolina. Joe Walsh cleared out a field of Republicans in Illinois with no help from the party. And Amash set himself up for Michigan. The Republican wave began as an internal affair.

Even with the national groundswell of fiscal conservatives, Amash faced a tough primary because of the local Republican machine. Nevertheless, the deep-pocketed Dick and Betsy DeVos (formerly the GOP state party chairwoman) threw support behind him days after Ehlers announced his retirement. And while fighting for acceptance from the local party, Amash scored an endorsement from the erstwhile presidential candidate Ron Paul in June. Glenn Beck praised Amash on his Fox News show, to much fanfare. The political action committees FreedomWorks and Growth PAC got behind him.

Back home in the 3rd District, resistance was high. The same day Paul endorsed Amash, Ehlers got behind former Kent County Commissioner Steve Heacock, a moderate whom Ehlers had personally asked to run and touted as the "better choice" for local Republicans. →

Amash immediately launched his attack. The messaging on Heacock's campaign website was markedly similar to that of Reps. Dave Camp (R-Mich.), Paul Ryan (R-Wis.), and McConnell. Amash called foul. "Anyone who lifts and takes credit for the words and proposals of others lacks credibility," he said in a statement. Heacock apologized — but the incident stuck.

Once Amash won the primary, Ehlers' two daughters opened their own offensive against the upstart politician and endorsed his Democratic opponent, Patrick Miles. The move forced Ehlers to criticize his daughters in the press. "I think it's foolish not to support a Republican if this is the year they take over," he said.

And it was. Amash defeated Miles despite the Democrat's aid from dozens of prominent district Republicans. Once in office, Amash stuck to his promise: he opposed federal spending increases in all cases.

At the same time, Amash veered his leadership of the district away from its historically socially conservative bent. He voted against defunding Planned Parenthood in 2011 and supported same-sex marriage on the ground that the government, not gay people, poses the greatest threat to society. These issues, he argued, had little to do with debt or runaway spending, the primary concerns of a principled representative.

Those views don't play well anymore, and the Republican Party has little use for people like Amash. Fiscal responsibility has been out of fashion since at least 2016, best evidenced by the fact that Trump was able to campaign successfully on the promise that he would not seek to curtail Medicare benefits. And the death knell for the Tea Party came in late July, when Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) declared its passing on the Senate floor with the monstrously huge, Republican-approved budget.

True believers in the Tea Party should have seen this coming. After all, calls for responsibility and accountability are often just the scoldings of a party in opposition. No Republican-led U.S. government since at least since World War II has ever seriously bothered with cutting the budget or paying off the country's massive debts. Not the party of Reagan, not the party of Bush, and certainly not the party of Trump. To think otherwise is to be an ideologue, like Amash — or Walsh, who in August announced a primary challenge to Trump. The principles the Tea Party espoused were an attractive pose for the party, for a time.

Likewise, Ocasio-Cortez and her ilk are making a lot of noise right now, but it's unlikely their Green New Deal and vocal support for universal health care will play well in a Democratic White House. Proposals like these are made to keep the party's political base energized — rather like fiscal responsibility and abortion for Republicans — but to actually deliver on them would be disastrous. For a party in power, staying in power is the main objective — and neither Democratic nor Republican leadership will ever gamble on a few principled loudmouths.

If the Squad doesn't like that, expect another July 4 declaration. But unlike Amash, it won't be such a stunning revelation.

Britain in the Fall (of Brexit?)

Help! I'm being held in the EU against my will.

by Robert Taylor

It's official: We Brits are fighting nothing less than a civil war, with the elites on one side and the people on the other. And this war isn't over something that's merely crucial, like the economy, crime, or health services. No, it's much more important than that. It's about democracy itself.

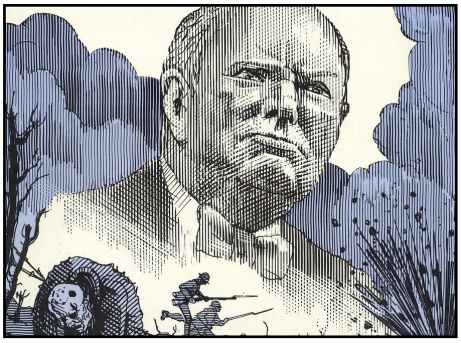
Look at the facts. In 2016, the government gave voters a referendum on whether or not to leave the European Union. In the biggest vote in British history, and by a clear majority, we chose to do so. I, along with 17.4 million others, voted to leave because the EU's arrogant vision of "ever-closer union" goes against the grain of human nature and people's desire for the primacy of the nation state and because the EU is hell-bent on putting economic and political theory before common sense until we have nothing less than a United States of Europe. God help us.

Yet here we are, more than three years later. Not only has Britain failed to leave the EU, but our elected politicians, and indeed the entirety of the British establishment, are also putting every conceivable obstacle in our way, quite deliberately making it all too likely that we might never get ourselves out.

Hillary Clinton described Trump's supporters as "a basket of deplorables ... racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic." That's also how most of Britain's Remain elite, overwhelmingly hostile to Brexit, regard Leave voters. At best they say Leavers like me were duped by unscrupulous leaders (including Boris Johnson), and at worst that we are ignorant bigots. Our vote to leave the European Union can therefore be overturned, by fair means or foul.

These otherwise sensible, rational people, who have risen to the very top of British government, society, and business, appear to have been overcome by a zombielike obedience to Brussels. Take Boris Johnson's own brother, Jo Johnson. Until very recently, he was a minister in Boris' government. But he's also an ardent Remainer and has therefore resigned at a time calculated to cause his brother maximum political difficulty and embarrassment.

If the prime minister's own brother puts the EU before family loyalty, you can only imagine what the rest of the Remain elite is prepared to do. They'd drown puppies in a pond if Brussels told them to. One Remain-supporting member of Parliament even said that Britain should be "brought to heel" by the EU. Oh, thanks.



Until very recently, I still (foolishly, it turns out) had faith in British democracy and believed it must triumph. I still (naively, I now realize) trusted our elected politicians to fulfill their promise to implement the result of the 2016 referendum, even if it meant leaving the EU without a deal. I assumed (prematurely, it transpires) that Boris and his fearless, if outnumbered, band of Leave-supporting parliamentarians would find a way to achieve Brexit despite the barefaced, disgraceful, anti-democratic maneuverings of the Remain elite.

But now, after the most dispiriting few weeks of politics in living memory this September, I am genuinely afraid that the elite — smug, liberal, and metropolitan, and including, of course, most members of Parliament — will succeed in either keeping Britain inside the EU against the explicit instruction of the voters or that any Brexit that they agree to will mean Britain being half in and half out.

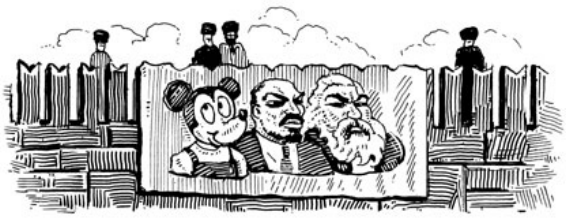
The elites' strategy has been as ruthless and duplicitous as it has been effective. First, the overwhelming majority of the politicians standing in the general election of 2017 wooed the voters by solemnly promising to implement the result of the referendum. Second, they refused to back the deal (the "withdrawal agreement") that Theresa May, Johnson's colorless predecessor, negotiated with the EU. Third, they passed a law declaring that Britain cannot under any circumstances leave the EU without such a deal. And finally, they formulated a new law that commands Johnson to request yet another extension to our membership of the EU.

They've stitched us up like a kipper. And it could go on forever — a kind of purgatory in which our politicians assure us that we will leave the EU but never actually agree a mechanism for doing so. We'll Remain, in one form or another, in perpetuity.

The last time I visited the U.S., the cab driver who picked me up at Dulles Airport near Washington, D.C., cut straight to the chase in a fashion that we British find startling but refreshing. "Are you Brits crazy?," he enquired, referring to our decision to leave the EU only to get bogged down in years of wrangling and indecision. "No," I scoffed. "Don't you worry. We'll be just fine."

I was wrong. Only the elites are fine. We, the ordinary Leave voters, are anything but. We've been taken for a ride by the perfidious, unscrupulous bunch who run our country.

Robert Taylor is a London-based writer, journalist, and communications consultant.



Red John Brennan

The failed coupster got burned by the Mueller investigation.

by George Neumayr

George Neumayr, a contributing editor at The American Spectator*, is author of* The Political Pope.

After Robert Mueller laid his egg in March, filing a much-anticipated report that contained no evidence of Trump–Russia collusion, John Brennan, Barack Obama's CIA director, admitted, if only for a nanosecond, that he had blown it. "I don't know if I received bad information, but I think I suspected there was more there than there actually was," he said on MSNBC's "Morning Joe." Having outrageously and repeatedly floated the possibility of Trump as a Russian agent during the course of the Mueller investigation, Brennan suddenly changed his tune: "I am relieved that it's been determined there was not a criminal conspiracy with the Russia government over our election. I think that is good news for the country." Usually a cocky loudmouth on Twitter, he meekly counseled his followers to "accept" Mueller's finding.

That was late March. By early April, his hysterical, anti-Trump jackassery had resumed. He broke a couple of weeks of Twitter silence to pronounce Trump subhuman and politically finished: "Your unfitness for office has never been more stark, your lack of humanity never more apparent, your politics never more craven, & your ultimate political ignominy never more certain."

Brennan's hilarious self-description on Twitter is "Nonpartisan American who is very concerned about our collective future" — this from the most partisan CIA director in history, whose idea of a "collective future" is Soviet-style collectivism. One of the richest ironies here is that no one loves Russia more than John Brennan — that is, the Russia of Soviet communism. It wasn't Donald Trump who voted for Gus Hall, the Soviet Union's plant in American politics, but John Brennan, who once admitted in an indiscreet moment that he feared his vote for the communist might jeopardize his CIA career. Would that it had. Alas, the CIA, even under William Casey, lacked the vigilance to keep Brennan out.

That a Gus Hall voter would rise to the top of the CIA and make anti-Russian obsessiveness his signature issue sounds like a comic novel come to life. Trump once said that Putin is "laughing his ass off" at American democracy's crippling self-inflicted blows. No doubt one of the most enjoyable for Putin is that a useful idiot like Brennan, claiming Trump–Russian collusion based on nothing more than fragments of what was in all likelihood Putin-planted disinformation, would inflict some of the worst blows. What could be more funny to Putin than seeing a shaggy radical like Brennan become CIA director and then use that prestigious position to call for what would be in effect a coup against an innocent president?

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Russians had to pay Gus Hall to try and screw up American politics. But they got Brennan's services for free. If anybody has been a stooge for Putin's manipulations, it is old Red John Brennan. Who needs Gus Hall when John Brennan is around?

It wasn't enough for Brennan to team up with the Trump-hating Peter Strzok (the FBI's liaison to Brennan, a key fact in this farce) to try and sabotage the 2016 election. Brennan has also called for what amounts to an overthrow of Trump's presidency. Within weeks of Trump's inauguration, Brennan was urging members of the executive branch to defy the chief executive. Don't "carry out" his directives, he exhorted them.

Brennan's commentaries have been staggering in their recklessness — scarcely believable for any former cabinet official, much less a supposedly sober CIA director. My previous reporting about Brennan bears repeating at length here: Brennan's favorite and most telling fulmination is that the American people will bury Trump in the "dustbin of history." After all, it was the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky who coined that phrase. To his political opponents, Trotsky sputtered, "You are pitiful, isolated individuals! You are bankrupts. Your role is played out. Go where you belong from now on — into the dustbin of history!"

Is it really just a coincidence that John Brennan, who supported the Soviet-controlled American Communist Party in the 1970s, would borrow from Trotsky's rhetoric in his invective against Donald Trump?

Is it really just a coincidence that John Brennan, who supported the Soviet-controlled American Communist Party in the 1970s, would borrow from Trotsky's rhetoric in his invective against Donald Trump? That revealing anti-Trump tweet, sent off shortly after the firing of FBI senior official Andrew McCabe, reeked of socialist revolutionary schlock. "When the full extent of your venality, moral turpitude, and political corruption becomes known, you will take your rightful place as a disgraced demagogue in the dustbin of history. You may scapegoat Andy McCabe, but you will not destroy America," he tweeted. "America will triumph over you."

Americans will triumph over a president they elected? That's the raw language of coup. Another hardcore leftist, Samantha Power, who spent the weeks after Trump's victory rifling through intelligence picked up on his staff, found Brennan's revolutionary tweet very inspiring. "Not a good idea to piss off John Brennan," she wrote. That sounded pretty dark and grave. But not to worry, she tweeted later. She just meant that the former CIA director was going to smite Trump with the power of his "eloquent voice." Americans who have to endure Brennan's incoherent babblings on MSNBC as its ludicrously appointed "security correspondent" might disagree with that description.

Out of office, aging radicals like Brennan can't seem to help themselves. They had their shot to stop Trump, and they failed. Yet they remain aggrieved. The adolescent coup-talk of the Brennans, the Comeys, and the Holders grows more feverish with each passing day. We have a former CIA director calling for the overthrow of a duly elected president, a former attorney general (Eric Holder) calling for a "knife fight," a Senate minority leader speaking ominously about what the intelligence community might do to Trump ("they have six ways from Sunday at getting back at you," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer has said), and assorted former FBI and CIA officials cheering for a coup, such as CNN's Phil Mudd, who said, "You've been around for 13 months. We've been around since 1908. I know how this game is going to be played. We're going to win."

In all this unhinged chatter, the partisan origins of Obamagate have become clearer. The same anti-Trump hatred on display in Brennan's tweets and punditry drove the Obama administration to commit the greatest act of political espionage since Watergate. In an interview with *The American Spectator*, James Kallstrom, the former FBI assistant director, notes that the "animus and malice" contained in Brennan's tweet is "*prima facie* exposure of how he felt about Trump before the election."

Brennan's CIA, I have been told, looked like a branch office of Hillary Clinton's campaign in 2016, with his staffers gibbering about Trump while sipping from Hillary for President coffee cups. Brennan was famous for wearing an LGBT lanyard while striding the halls of the CIA. His support for Hillary was so loud he didn't even need to wear one of her campaign pins.

It bears repeating that all the key figures in the decision to open up a probe on Trump wanted him to lose — from Brennan to James Comey to Peter Strzok, whose anti-Trump machinations included, according to a batch of texts with his mistress, plotting to manipulate a buddy on the FISA court. In one text, Strzok wonders if he can finagle a meeting with his friend by inviting him to a "cocktail party." The impropriety aforethought on display in that tweet is astonishing, but of course the media has paid no attention to it, preoccupied as it is with such grave concerns as Andrew McCabe's retirement income and the fragility of James Comey's ego.

What an amazing collection of entitled creeps and frauds. The Brennans long ago convinced themselves that the "rule of law" is identical to what they see as their sacred right to exercise power in any way they see fit. All the blather about Trump's violation of the law is simply a projection of their own lawlessness. So far Brennan's coup has been thwarted. He had hoped to stop him in the campaign through political espionage and wanton leaking (even former Senate leader Harry Reid, to whom Brennan leaked before Election Day the existence of the probe into Trump, has acknowledged the improper intensity of Brennan's pre-election activities).

But that didn't work. Then Brennan, Power, Susan Rice, and company tried to upend him through spying during the transition, holding out hope until the very last moment, as evidenced by Rice penning her sham exculpatory note only after Trump's swearing-in. Now Brennan apparently is pinning his hopes on a dustbin in Jerry Nadler's office.

Trotsky would have understood the shorthand of all Brennan's tweets, polemics, and posturing perfectly. They bear no relationship to reality or justice. They are simply an expression of power politics, which doesn't always end well for its exponents. As even an old Gus Hall supporter like John Brennan must know, those who talk the loudest about their enemies heading for the dustbin of history often end up in it.

Nixon's Resignation Reconsidered

New Watergate evidence suggests that presidential resignation is a mistake — then and now.

by Geoff Shepard

Geoff Shepard came to Washington, D.C., as a White House Fellow right after graduating from Harvard Law School and spent five years on President Nixon's White House staff, including serving as deputy counsel on Nixon's Watergate defense team.

Richard Nixon resigned 45 years ago, on August 9, 1974, in the face of certain impeachment by the House of Representatives and probable conviction following a Senate trial. It also seems that he did so to spare the nation further agony from the Watergate scandal. While two other presidents have been impeached and stood trial in the Senate, neither Andrew Johnson in 1868 nor Bill Clinton in 1998 was convicted. Nixon remains the only living president to have left office before completing his term.

There is no question that Nixon was on the ropes and that his voluntary departure helped heal a badly wounded nation, but so much new information has surfaced in the past four decades that we should ask ourselves whether his resignation was actually a mistake — and whether it would have been better for the nation, if not for him, to have had a Senate trial.

The question is particularly relevant today, with constant calls to impeach President Trump in the midst of an equally divisive era.

While I don't normally write articles in the first person, this analysis will be highly personal. You see, I was there throughout the Watergate scandal. I worked on Nixon's White House staff for five years, knew and had worked with all of Watergate's major players, and served as principal deputy on his Watergate defense team. In the latter regard, I transcribed the infamous White House tapes, supervised the document rooms holding the seized files of principal defendants, and staffed presidential counselors on Watergate issues and developments. As you might already know, it ended rather badly, with Nixon resigning in disgrace and two dozen members of his administration convicted and imprisoned.

I have fretted about this almost every day since. My wife of 45 years calls it my "Nixon obsession": How could a staff that did so much good in Nixon's first term have gotten it so wrong in his reelection campaign? How could rumors and accusations that I knew to be baseless at the time still persist as accepted fact in the years that followed? Why hadn't others who knew far more than I come forward to present Nixon's side of the story?

In 2002, as the last man standing, I set out to tell the Watergate story from an inside-the-White-House point of view — and made a startling discovery. All of the surviving records from the Watergate Special Prosecution Force (WSPF) are kept at our National Archives and most can be accessed through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. I got busy and, because of my insider knowledge, had a little better idea of just where to look — and I've uncovered some surprising documents.

My analysis is divided into three sections: What we knew then — and why Nixon's resignation was the best choice for the nation, what we know now — and why his resignation may have been a huge mistake, and the lessons we should take from this discovery. You can already tell where I come out: It was right for Nixon to resign at the time because had totally lost the moral authority to govern. But, in retrospect, his resignation seems completely unjustified because what we now know might have come out in a Senate trial. Nixon was essentially railroaded out of office by specially recruited, highly partisan prosecutors. Knowing that today, we'd better be very cautious about how we treat President Trump.

What We Knew Then

President Nixon had an extraordinarily successful first term, best known for his foreign affairs triumphs: opening trade with China, leading Soviet *détente* and the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, ending the Vietnam War with the Paris Peace Accords, and reestablishing American influence in the Middle East, including saving Israel in the Yom Kippur War.

His domestic successes, though less well known, are equally impressive: restoring law and order; appointing four new Supreme Court justices to stop the leftward lurch of Earl Warren's court; cleaning up the environment through the creation of the EPA and passage of the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Ocean Dumping Act, and the Marine Mammal Protection Act; peacefully desegregating southern schools and continuing integration of northern trade unions through the Philadelphia Plan; restoring the rights of Native Americans by ending the policy of assimilation; and quadrupling the number of women appointed to senior government positions. Nixon also restructured the Executive Office of the President through the revitalization of the National Security Council, transformation of the Office of Management and Budget, and creation of the Domestic Policy Council — laying a foundation for the modern presidency that stands to this day.

If not for Watergate, Nixon's presidency may have been among the most successful in history. But all of that was washed away in the torrential downpour of the first national scandal since Teapot Dome: a perfect political storm that engulfed Nixon and his senior aides.

For those readers who did not live through those halcyon days of yore, here is a partial list of what went wrong.

Break-In and Cover-Up

Five men were caught red-handed on June 17, 1972, in the offices of the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate Office Building. One of them had been a CIA wireman and was head of security for Nixon's reelection campaign, the Committee for the Reelection of the President (CRP). It soon came out that two others, also connected with CRP, had directed the break-in: G. Gordon Liddy, a former FBI agent, and E. Howard Hunt, a career CIA agent. All were indicted on September 15, 1972, and convicted on January 30, 1973. There was speculation from the outset that knowledge and approval of the break-in went far higher within the Nixon administration. It was soon revealed that there had indeed been an extensive cover-up — which collapsed gloriously shortly after the break-in defendants' sentencing on March 21, 1973.

For those tracing parallels to today, this is where the two situations part ways. In Watergate, there was no doubt that real crimes were committed: there really was an actual break-in and an

actual cover-up. The only issues were who and how many were involved. From a legal perspective, a cover-up is a conspiracy to obstruct justice — and one of the more interesting things about the law of conspiracy is that, once a conspiracy plot is shown to exist, it takes almost no proof to add additional defendants. Thus, in a highly politicized prosecution, simply having been nearby could (and did) have catastrophic consequences. With Trump, there is no proof that a conspiracy existed at all. So naturally, the likelihood of prosecution from association with Trump is much lower.

Ervin Committee Hearings

For the vast majority of Americans, Watergate awareness came from the nationally televised hearings of the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities (or the Ervin Committee, chaired by Sen. Sam Ervin), which burst onto the public stage with the dramatic testimony of Nixon's own lawyer, John Dean, who had obtained immunity in exchange for testifying against his former colleagues. His testimony regarding the cover-up's existence was quite persuasive. After all, he was the one who had been running it.

But the hearings stood out for another reason. Unlike a criminal prosecution, in which the government has to prove its allegations through evidence introduced under strict procedures and with its witnesses testifying under oath and subject to cross-examination, the Ervin Committee hearings were conducted as a legislative trial, in which only the accused were under oath and the government was not required — or even expected — to prove its own case. →

This was an unusual situation because potential defendants typically either refuse to appear or take the Fifth Amendment and refuse to testify. But that's not what happened in Watergate, in which newly named WSPF prosecutors postponed any cover-up indictments for 10 months while the nation gorged itself on the Ervin Committee hearings.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler is trying to create a duplication of the Ervin Committee with today's committee, but his efforts lack the drama, the politically appealing witnesses, and the TV audience that fueled the Ervin Committee's popularity.

Creation of the Watergate Special Prosecution Force

Edward Kennedy and his colleagues on the Senate Judiciary Committee demanded the appointment of a special prosecutor as a condition of confirming Elliot Richardson as Nixon's new Attorney General in 1973. They also demanded that the special prosecutor operate with complete independence from the Department of Justice. Richardson saw little reason to object: he hoped someday to run for president himself, so he really didn't want to be attorney general at that particular time anyway, and he certainly didn't want to have anything to do with Watergate investigations or prosecutions destined to devastate the Republican Party. He consented to the appointment of his former Harvard law professor Archibald Cox as special prosecutor and happily agreed to full and unreviewed delegation of his authority as attorney general.

Cox, much like Robert Mueller, was largely a figurehead. He was already showing his age and had recently gone deaf in one ear. Besides, he had no prosecutorial experience; he'd taught labor law at Harvard. Even still, he was Sen. Kennedy's first choice. He'd been the lead speechwriter for Jack Kennedy's 1960 presidential campaign, had traveled on the candidate's plane, and had assembled Kennedy's much-vaunted Harvard brain trust. Following JFK's election, Cox had become solicitor general under his brother, Robert Kennedy. He was seen as the adult in the room at the Department of Justice. It was Cox who had been principal adviser to Sen. Kennedy, leading the opposition to Nixon's Supreme Court nominees.

Specially Recruited, Highly Partisan Prosecutors

It should have come as no surprise that Cox delegated WSPF recruiting to James Vorenberg, a fellow law professor who had taught criminal law. Vorenberg hired only people whom he knew or who were recommended by people he knew, and he assembled a specially selected team of some 70 lawyers, virtually all Ivy League graduates, the top 17 of whom had worked together in the Kennedy/Johnson Department of Justice. Readers should note the constitutional inversion here: these were the very people voted out of office with Nixon's 1968 election, now in control of the government's investigative and prosecutorial powers. Vorenberg announced at their first press conference in June 1973 their intent to investigate each and every allegation of wrongdoing by the Nixon administration since it had assumed office some five years prior.

Compared to WSPF prosecutors, Mueller's team was much smaller, its investigations less broad, and its successes dramatically fewer. Threatening as it was, you could even call it the "junior varsity" of special prosecutors.

Comprehensive Cover-Up Indictments

The steady drip, drip, drip of rumors, accusations, and "What if?" media speculation in Watergate continued unabated month after month until comprehensive cover-up indictments were announced on March 1, 1974, accompanied by a sealed report that the grand jury asked be forwarded to the House of Representatives. This was quickly nicknamed the "Road Map" because it was said to contain evidence that would lead to Nixon's impeachment.

The transmittal of secret grand jury information was highly improper, but it was condoned by District Judge John Sirica and the D.C. Circuit Court. No doubt this is what the Mueller team hoped to do with Trump grand jury material, but they rightfully feared that today's judges would be far less accommodating.

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It soon developed that Nixon himself had been named by the grand jury, along with some 18 others, as an unindicted co-conspirator. This action was something Leon Jaworski had said (in his January 8, 1974, memo to his deputy) that Cox had opposed, because "it was just a back-handed way of sticking the knife in" the president. But, once Cox had been fired in the Saturday Night Massacre (so named because Attorney General Richardson and his deputy had quit rather than carry out Nixon's instructions), his staff swore vengeance and left no stone unturned — as Jaworski put it (in a second memo to his deputy dated January 21, 1974) — in the effort to get Nixon "at all cost."

Release of White House Tape Transcripts

Presidential assistant Alexander Butterfield had testified on July 16, 1973, to the existence of a White House taping system. His testimony quickly led both to the belief that the tapes would provide definitive evidence of Nixon's own involvement and to litigation over their confidentiality. As Nixon's situation continued to deteriorate — gleefully helped along by the liberal establishment media, who had dogged Nixon since he had exposed their hero Alger Hiss in 1948 as a former Communist spy — White House defenders began to suspect that the tapes themselves were not nearly as bad as the public had been led to believe. Besides, their release would undercut the testimony of John Dean, who had now become Nixon's principal accuser. Transcripts of some 50 presidential conversations were released on April 30, 1974, along with a 50-page legal analysis outlining the president's case.

The reaction was unexpected: Nixon's opponents and their advocates in the media pivoted as one — much like what followed the release of the Mueller report, which found no collusion

involving President Trump. No longer would Dean's now-undermined allegations be the focus of press coverage. No, now the expressed concern was that the tapes showed Nixon was all too human. In the privacy of his own office, he was bitter, petty, and small-minded. This was not the soaring rhetoric of a Roosevelt or a Kennedy: Nixon was "unpresidential" — similar to the way the two-year claim of Russian collusion has been abandoned in favor of new "racist" claims about President Trump.

Revelation of the "White House Horrors"

Materials were improperly taken from Dean's counsel's files in his effort to obtain personal immunity. Among these were documents given by Dean to prosecutors that showed abuse of powers. These became known as the "White House Horrors": (i) Seventeen wiretaps had been placed on NSC staff members without court blessing, (ii) Liddy and Hunt had conducted a prior break-in in the name of national security (the Fielding break-in), and (iii) the White House had adopted a secret plan for gathering intelligence on left-wing radicals (the Huston Plan). Needless to say, these revelations seriously undermined public confidence in the Nixon administration.

Nixon's Dramatic Demise

The outlook for the administration's survival had already been bleak, but calls for Nixon's resignation reached their crescendo in the three-week period beginning July 24 with the Supreme Court's 8-0 decision to uphold the special prosecutor's subpoena for 64 additional tapes.

Just three days later, beginning July 27, HJC adopted three articles of impeachment: obstruction of justice, abuse of power, and refusal to comply with House subpoenas.

The denouement came August 5, when the White House released the transcript of one of the special prosecutor's subpoenaed tapes: that of June 23, 1972 — from six days after the Watergate burglar arrests — which showed President Nixon concurring with his staff's recommendation that they get the CIA to tell the FBI not to interview two Watergate witnesses. It was quickly — and accurately — labeled the "Smoking Gun."

Any remaining Nixon support collapsed completely. There was a *pro forma* meeting on August 7, when Sens. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), Hugh Scott (R-Pa.), and House Minority Leader John Rhodes (R-Ariz.) came to the White House to tell the president that not only was his situation hopeless but that prolonging the nation's agony by demanding a Senate trial would also devastate the Republican Party in the fall elections.

And so, for the second time in his political career (the first being when he declined to challenge voter fraud in Illinois and Texas in his 1960 loss to Jack Kennedy), Nixon chose his country over his personal ambition and declined to fight for his claim to the presidency.

In a nationally televised speech on the evening of August 8, Nixon announced he would resign at noon the following day. The next morning, he bid adieu to his staff in an East Room ceremony, walked to the helicopter on the South Lawn that would take him to Andrews Air Force Base, and boarded Air Force One for the flight to California. His resignation took effect somewhere over Kansas, and he landed at El Toro Marine Base a private citizen.

Should He Have Resigned?

Heck, yes; he had no real choice! I had been one of his strongest supporters, working countless hours on his public policy initiatives and then on his Watergate defense team — up until I listened to the "Smoking Gun" tape of June 23, 1972.

You see, on the very afternoon of the Supreme Court's decision, I had been privy to conversations with my boss and Nixon's lead defense lawyer Fred Buzhardt, Nixon, and his chief of staff Alexander Haig, at the Western White House in San Clemente. Buzhardt had listened to the June 23 tape for the first time and concluded that it contained unambiguous proof that Nixon had been part of a cover-up conspiracy from the very outset. He wanted Nixon to destroy the tapes and resign rather than give his enemies undeniable proof of such criminal action. His advice was not accepted. The decision was made to release the transcript and see what followed.

I was the one who transcribed that tape later that morning — and the one who first characterized it as the "Smoking Gun." The nation didn't learn until August 5, when my transcript was released, but I knew from that day forward — two full weeks before the public — that Nixon's presidency was doomed. I was certain that he needed to — and would — resign. And good riddance: he'd lied to the American people and, worse, he'd lied to his lawyers! I was in the East Room on August 9 for his staff goodbye and on the South Lawn for the helicopter's liftoff. I was sorry to see him go — all that we'd worked on lost in total collapse — but I was certain that's what he needed to do.

I didn't have to leave my position as associate director of the Domestic Council, but I felt personally responsible: my friends and colleagues had brought this about. I was a "Nixon holdover," and I needed to make room for new people in the Ford administration. I joined a law firm (fortunately with the foresight to obtain a "clearance" letter from the special prosecutor) and even suffered the indignity of having to testify on the government's behalf as a chain-of-custody witness to facilitate introduction into evidence of some White House documents.

Shortly after Ford lost the 1976 election to Jimmy Carter, we moved to Philadelphia, where I embarked on a 35-year career as a corporate lawyer for a series of national insurance companies. I thought that I'd left Washington and Watergate well behind me.

What We Know Now

That's where things stood for almost 30 years. Sure, I missed my former colleagues, and so I began arranging and hosting annual reunions of what we call the White House Policy Planning Staffs (*circa* 1970s) — which is mainly staff members of the Domestic Council, the National Security Council, and the Office of Management and Budget. These were the folks who worked on many of Nixon's successful initiatives in his first term. They were the ones who helped the president to govern, not necessarily the ones who were in the election campaigns of 1968 or 1972.

It dawned on me sometime in 2002 that no one remained alive with any real understanding of what had happened within Nixon's own defense team: what we had tried to do, what we expected to fight over, how we intended to proceed — up until the "Smoking Gun" tape came out of nowhere and undercut all our strategies.

I resolved to preserve the record of those efforts and set out to write my story — but on my own terms. I didn't have to interview anyone else. I had been there — a youngster perhaps, but I was in the room when the critical defense decisions were made.

I finished my initial manuscript, but a few factual questions remained. Nixon's papers, including the tapes, had been seized by the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act of 1974 and stored at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland (Archives II).

When meeting with Nixon Project archivists, I discovered that the special prosecutors' records — all the WSPF files that had survived — also were kept at Archives II. This was like coming across, some 30 years later, the coach's playbook from the team that had beaten you in the state championships. You knew your team and your own game plan, but now you could see theirs. All you had to do was submit FOIA requests. There was a whole lot of material I was eager to review.

I've now been at this for 15 years, and what I've discovered changes everything I thought I knew about Watergate. Here are some of the revelations.

Among my more startling discoveries is that we lawyers were completely wrong on our interpretation of the "Smoking Gun" tape.

Misunderstanding the "Smoking Gun" Tape

Among my more startling discoveries is that we lawyers were completely wrong on our interpretation of the "Smoking Gun" tape. Far from being an attempt to thwart the FBI's Watergate investigation, it turns out to have been an effort to avoid disclosure of substantial campaign donations to Nixon's reelection committee by two very prominent Democrats. While every person involved in that original effort is now in agreement as to its real meaning, the best summary comes from John Dean himself, in *The Nixon Defense*, a book written in 2014:

> When revealed by order of the U.S. Supreme Court in late July 1974, this became known as the "smoking gun" conversation, because it was viewed as hard evidence, demonstrating beyond question, that Nixon's final defense about the Watergate break-in … was bogus, which doomed the Nixon presidency. Ironically, this conversation has been mistakenly understood as an effort by Nixon and Haldeman to shut down the FBI's entire Watergate investigation. This appears to be the case only when viewed out of context. In August 1974, when the conversation was revealed, and Nixon and his lawyers had to focus on this conversation, he had long forgotten what was actually involved; they assumed it had the same meaning as everyone else. In reality, it was only an effort by Haldeman to stop the FBI from investigating an anonymous campaign contribution from Mexico that Justice Department prosecutors had already agreed was outside the scoop of the Watergate investigation…. In fact, this conversation did not put the lie to Nixon's ... statements, and had Nixon known that he might have survived its disclosure to fight another day…. In short, the smoking gun was only firing blanks.

Dean had been aware of this misinterpretation all along but did not think it worthwhile to say so earlier. Regardless of whether you find his 2014 admission persuasive or not, it is uncontroverted that no one even knew about this tape until its August 5 release. What, then, did WSPF prosecutors claim in bringing Nixon to his knees well before that tape's release?

Secret — and Fraudulent — Allegations of Nixon's Personal Wrongdoing

What the special prosecutors actually did to Richard Nixon is quite astonishing: they wrongfully assured both grand jurors and HJC staff that Nixon had personally approved the payment of "hush money" to Howard Hunt. Admittedly, there was circumstantial evidence to this effect. Nixon had first learned of Hunt's blackmail demands from Dean on the morning of March 21, 1973, and a payment to Hunt's lawyer had been made that very evening. Yet prosecutors were never able to prove the necessary chain of events to make the case that this was done at Nixon's personal behest.

That didn't stop them, however. They simply misrepresented the facts to cover their lack of direct evidence. This was fully and finally proven just last year. In response to my petition, Chief District Court Judge Beryl Howell unsealed the "Road Map," which shows conclusively that WSPF prosecutors had no factual basis for their claim of Nixon's personal approval for the "hush money" payment to Hunt.

WSPF prosecutors' secret misrepresentations in the "Road Map" have striking parallels to equally critical misrepresentations made to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance (FISA) Court by the Obama Department of Justice, enabling them to institute surveillance of the Trump campaign. In both cases, prosecutors gave incomplete and misleading information, in secret, suggesting criminal acts by the president.

Wrongfully assured of Nixon's personal involvement, the grand jurors named him an unindicted co-conspirator in the Watergate cover-up. They also adopted the prosecutors' Road Map as their own and transmitted these same material misrepresentations of fact to the HJC. Four months later, in June 1974, prosecutors began a series of secret meetings, improperly sharing grand jury information and convincing HJC staff of this same fraudulent hypothesis of Nixon having personally approved the hush money payment. As with the grand jurors, it's little wonder the HJC approved the first article of impeachment, accusing Nixon of obstruction of justice.

Among the more interesting aspects of this situation is that neither Nixon nor any of us on his defense team had any inkling of WSPF's allegation — either to the grand jury or to HJC staff. There were no witnesses to testify to such an accusation: neither H. R. Haldeman, nor John Mitchell, nor Fred LaRue, nor even Dean ever once — then or since — has offered direct testimony as to Nixon's personal involvement. WSPF prosecutors' hypothesis has remained entirely circumstantial. As such, there was no direct accusation made in the HJC hearings and no reason for Nixon or his defense team even to be aware of the accusation. If we had known, we could have refuted it. If Nixon had known that this was the basis for advocating his indictment or impeachment, he would never have resigned — since he would have known that he hadn't committed the alleged act.

So much for destroying Nixon himself. How did WSPF prosecutors go about securing convictions of his top aides?

Secret Meetings Between Trial Judges and Watergate Prosecutors

There is documented proof of a series of secret meetings between Chief Judge John Sirica and Watergate prosecutors. I don't know which is the bigger surprise: that they were secretly meeting to resolve issues in advance of trial or that they were documenting their agreements in memos to their files. The mother lode of these documents, improperly removed in 1974 when Jaworski left office, first came to light in 2013 in response to my FOIA requests.

Cox's Secret Meeting With Chief Appellate Judge David Bazelon

At one point, Cox became so worried about the sustainability of Judge Sirica's one-sided rulings in favor of the prosecutors that he feared their conviction verdicts would be overturned on appeal. He secretly approached Chief Appellate Judge David Bazelon to explain how the judicial panels could be stacked to maintain Bazelon's slim one-vote liberal majority. Sure enough, each of the 12 appeals from Sirica's criminal trials was heard by the full nine-judge appellate court, sitting *en banc* — a circumstance unprecedented in any federal appellate court anywhere in the country, before or since.

John Dean's Changing Story

John Dean became WSPF's principal witness, and they cut him a special deal. Before that, when Dean first approached career prosecutors as his cover-up collapsed, their internal documents show that he never mentioned a conspiracy involving Nixon or his top aides. That only came about after Dean was fired as Nixon's counsel and career prosecutors declined to grant immunity. Even then, Dean's immunity came from the Ervin Committee and not from federal prosecutors. Regardless, once WSPF prosecutors had replaced the career prosecutors who had broken the cover-up, they chose to treat their only star witness with kid gloves. He was allowed to plead to a single felony.

This was a huge concession. By his own admission, Dean had been the cover-up's "chief desk officer"; he had encouraged others to lie to the grand jury (subornation of perjury), held back and then shredded materials from Hunt's safe (destruction of evidence), shared prosecution information with defendants (improper disclosure of government information), and taken campaign funds to pay for his honeymoon (embezzlement).

Surprised to learn this? Here's the *New York Times* report from Dean's Virginia disbarment:

> The disbarment action was brought by the Virginia State Bar, which charged that Mr. Dean had been guilty of unprofessional conduct by withholding evidence, inducing a witness to commit perjury, authorizing payment of hush money to the Watergate burglars and diverting money to his own use. The three Circuit Court judges found Mr. Dean guilty of "unethical, unprofessional and unwarranted conduct as an attorney-at-law violating the code of professional ethics." They ordered that Mr. Dean's license to practice law in Virginia be revoked.

WSPF prosecutors' special treatment of their star witness (while deliberately hiding documents showing changes in his testimony that, by law, should have been shared with defense counsel) stands in startling contrast to Mueller's vicious treatment of witnesses in their Trump investigation — witnesses like Paul Manafort, George Papadopoulos, and Roger Stone who resisted seeing things the way prosecutors wanted.

The WSPF's special treatment of witnesses was actually much worse. Although Dean was sentenced to a prison term of one to four years for his role in running the cover-up, this was just for show, to increase his witness credibility before the trial jurors. Instead of prison, Dean was put into a witness protection program, where he spent his nights at Fort Holabird, Maryland (replete with conjugal visits), and his days in a dedicated WSPF office, where he worked on writing his book. He was released immediately following the cover-up trial, without probation or parole, having spent only four months in technical confinement. Dean never spent a single night in jail — something he proudly proclaimed during his recent appearance before Nadler's House Judiciary Committee.

The temporary prison ruse, however, worked quite well. Dean's testimony was believed by the cover-up jurors, who convicted Nixon's top aides on all counts — conspiracy, obstruction, and perjury — on January 1, 1975.

Revelations From Yale's Abuse of Power Study and the Church Committee's Report

Two developments following Nixon's resignation have cast new light on the significance of alleged abuses of power. The facts underlying each of these revelations were well known to Nixon's opponents but deliberately kept secret from his supporters and the American public.

First, a comprehensive study of abuse of power allegations made against prior presidents had been authorized by the HJC and led by Yale history professor C. Vann Woodward. It was supervised by Hillary Rodham but suppressed when it showed that abuse of power accusations against Nixon differed little from those made against virtually every president, beginning with George Washington. To everyone's great surprise, the Yale study was published in book form three months following Nixon's resignation. It showed that such tug-of-wars between the legislative and executive branches had occurred with every president since our nation's founding.

Second, the Church Committee's 1976 report of its investigations into domestic-intelligence-gathering operations showed the "White House Horrors" to be little different from the massive and long-standing Fourth-Amendment violations (such as warrantless searches and seizures, supposedly justified by national security concerns) of American citizens' privacy rights that the FBI, CIA, and Military Intelligence Corps had conducted under each president at least as far back as 1936. You may or may not agree with their national security rationale, but the report did show that the actions of the Nixon administration were hardly extraordinary.

The Church Committee revelations also led to the 1978 creation of the FISA courts, to which the government now goes before undertaking such national security searches and seizures. But the secret operation of both institutions — grand juries and FISA courts — depend upon prosecutors' full and fair disclosure of the factual information underlying their requests.

> Nixon and his senior aides went to their graves never knowing of prosecutors' secret allegations about the president or about the clear due process violations that accompanied their cover-up convictions.

Lessons for Today

Nixon chose to resign rather than put the nation through further agony. One result of his choice is that he and his senior aides went to their graves never knowing of prosecutors' secret allegations about the president or about the clear due-process violations that accompanied their cover-up convictions.

Perhaps the most candid retrospective appraisal was made by Ben Bradlee, the *Washington Post*'s executive editor during Watergate, in an unpublished interview with Barbara Feinman conducted on May 16, 1990 (the interview only came to light in 2013):

> Well, you know, Watergate in retrospect, it's hard to believe that people were that dumb, were that insane to do that. And it's achieved a prominence in history and in my life that it doesn't really deserve....
>
> I mean the crime itself was really not a great deal. Had it not been for the Nixon resignation it would be really a blip in history. The Iran–Contra hearing was a much more significant violation of the democratic ethic than anything in Watergate. Watergate really was dirty tricks and arrogance and people thinking that they were all-powerful and could ride roughshod over civil liberties, but it wasn't dealing in smuggled arms and buying foreign nations and shit like that.

And Bradlee's characterization was made before any of the many instances of judicial and prosecutorial wrongdoing had been uncovered.

Perhaps, but only perhaps, if Nixon had chosen to stand trial before the Senate, more of the backstory of this wrongdoing might have come out. We will simply never know for sure, but Leon Jaworski's first interview after he resigned as special prosecutor — conducted by none other than Bob Woodward — does give us a clue. These quotes are taken from the opening two paragraphs of Woodward's typed notes from his December 5, 1974, interview:

Sez there were a lot of one-on-one conversations that nobody knows about but him and the other party.

Most important "focus" in his view was working out arrangement to get the material to House Judiciary; this especially critical because of decision not to indict RMN. HJC was "very slow" getting started, he sez, and would never have gotten off the ground without the info provided by SPO. It was a "roadmap."

Jaworski appears to have been most eager to disclose his secret meetings with Judge Sirica, as well as all of the grand jury information that WSPF prosecutors had improperly shared with HJC staff. But Woodward, intrepid investigative reporter that he was, never bothered to follow through on Jaworski's comments. One result (along with the fact that Jaworski improperly took his confidential Watergate files with him when leaving office) is that it has taken over four decades for much of this information to surface.

In a Senate trial, had one occurred, the "Road Map" itself would certainly have appeared, perhaps along with prosecutors' baseless assertion that Fred LaRue had obtained Mitchell's permission to make the "hush money" payment in the early afternoon of March 21. This missing fact was critical for their concocted scenario of Nixon's personal involvement to be credible at all. The kid-glove treatment of John Dean, as well as WSPF documentation of the dramatic changes in his testimony, might also have come out under cross-examination. In addition, it would have been difficult to suppress the Yale study or the Church Committee information about equally questionable acts of prior administrations.

I will leave it at this: If the public had known of the totally erroneous accusations made in secret against President Nixon and the judicial and prosecutorial wrongdoing that characterized the Watergate investigations, it is doubtful the Democrats could have mustered the necessary two-thirds vote to convict and remove Nixon from office. And, if he had survived, then the due-process travesty of the cover-up trial might not have unfolded as it did.

Stage Play on Nixon Impeachment

We will never know for sure what might have happened had Nixon chosen to stand trial. But it's fascinating to think about, and I am currently consulting on the plot of a stage play that speculates about this very subject. *Trial on the Potomac: The Impeachment of Richard Nixon* is scheduled to have the New York debut of its first reading in late November. No historical information is changed from what we knew then, except that all of the information that I've uncovered over the past 40 years is portrayed as coming out during the Senate trial.

The play opens with Nixon announcing on August 8, 1974, that he will not resign, but has chosen instead to stand trial in the Senate. Edward Kennedy's staff complains of Nixon's selfishness in demanding that his accusers produce their evidence, but Kennedy sees Nixon's decision as helping his own expected 1976 bid for the presidency. The House adopts two articles of impeachment, but drops the abuse of power article when it learns of the Yale study of similar allegations against prior presidents — suppressed by HJC staffer Hillary Rodham — and the revelations of Fourth-Amendment violations committed in the name of national security stretching back to 1936, as later revealed in the Church Committee.

John Doar, HJC's majority counsel, acts as lead prosecutor, with Chief Justice Warren Burger presiding — thus adhering to the same format as in the Clinton impeachment trial. It is during the cross-examination of the House's three principal witnesses that Watergate truths begin to emerge: John Dean admits to his own criminal wrongdoing, to changing his story to allege a conspiracy, and to his fake imprisonment. Henry Ruth, the longtime deputy special prosecutor, admits to the secret, but fraudulent, accusations about Richard Nixon that had been made to Watergate grand jurors and to HJC staff. James Neal, the cover-up trial's lead prosecutor, admits to the series of secret meetings with Judge Sirica, to the politicized nature of their indictment decisions, and to their participation in Dean's false sentencing.

The play's most dramatic scene occurs with the testimony of Richard Nixon, who now realizes the lies that prosecutors have told behind his back. He is defiant. He was gracious when his election was stolen in 1960, but he won't play the fool a second time. The play ends as Chief Justice Burger calls for the Senate vote — leaving the audience to ponder whether or not, in light of all that has come out, the Democrats could have mustered the necessary two-thirds vote for conviction.

Of course, the play is speculative. We don't know what might have happened if Nixon had chosen to stand trial. There is no guarantee that the information we know today would have come out during the trial itself, but trials have remained throughout Judeo-Christian history the best method for ascertaining the truth about prior events.

The Role of Divided Government

An interesting pattern began with Richard Nixon: Each and every time in modern history that a lame-duck president has been faced by a totally hostile Congress (that is, both houses in opposition to the party controlling the White House), a seemingly mundane problem morphs into a national scandal. →

Think about it. There is Nixon and Watergate, Reagan and Iran–Contra, Clinton and Whitewater/Lewinsky, Bush II and the outing of Valerie Plame. These examples always involve appointment of a special prosecutor, but it is not clear whether that appointment is a cause or an effect of this pattern. What does seem clear is that the party controlling Congress is acting on the belief that the incumbent president has lost his authority to govern and that the opposing party should be running the country instead. It's nothing personal, you see: They are simply using the scandal to improve their chances to retake the White House in the next election.

Perhaps this reflects a flaw in our constitutional system, exacerbated by the 1947 adoption of the 22nd Amendment, which limits the president to two terms in office. The lame-duck president has been reelected to serve a four-year term — and will continue to do so, regardless of the loss of his party's popularity in Congress.

It is instructive to point out that this situation could not arise in a parliamentary system. If the prime minister's party lost control of Parliament or failed in a party-line vote, it would be seen as no longer representing the nation. The government would fall, and there would have to be a new election.

Necessity of a Strong Executive

In the last analysis, our Constitution was grounded on the concept of a strong and unitary executive. One of the most persistent fears of our Founding Fathers was that it might become too easy to depose a president. This is why they granted the power to impeach but set a high bar for its accomplishment.

Initial accusations, screaming headlines, and daily doses of scandal and outrage are not necessarily based on facts — and it frequently takes considerable time for complete stories to develop. One is reminded of the saying, "Act in haste, repent at leisure." It is certainly true of the constitutional power to impeach — but an actual Senate trial, with the House having to present its case through witnesses, under oath and subject to cross-examination, offers the most promising chance for a true picture to emerge.

Where does all this leave us? We now have good reason to believe that, 45 years ago, Richard Nixon was driven from office and two dozen members of his administration convicted and imprisoned by hugely improper actions of a specially recruited, highly political team of prosecutors who were exempt from DOJ oversight by demand of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Nixon chose to resign rather than put the nation through further agony. But he might well have made the wrong decision.

It is well worth taking a very cautious approach today with President Trump to be sure we don't make that mistake again.

THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR

THE TROUBLE WITH TECH

Modern Maoist, *2019 (Bill Wilson Studio)*

The Dystopian Reality of Utopian Dreams

by Melissa Mackenzie

A few times over the years, I've taught seminars about social media. Facebook, I'd explain, is like a planned community. People view it as a safe neighborhood. Your page is your house, and your friend's page is his house. There are other neighborhoods, such as Twitter and YouTube. Then there's the information superhighway, Google. It's important to know that it's all connected. There may be dark alleys that are difficult to find, but they can be found. The internet is forever.

Imagine that the online neighborhood is a real neighborhood. Imagine living in a planned community with a corporate owner who built the infrastructure and then sold out parts of the property for individual homes and for businesses. The corporation would make money from fees and taxes on things bought and sold in the district. The corporation would be very rich. It would receive, after all, a piece of every pie in the community.

Now imagine the corporation making decrees about who could and could not live in the homes. Perhaps they didn't like a person's color, religion, or politics. Imagine the corporation deciding that a business in a strip mall sells a product it does not want the company to sell after it has made thousands of dollars in taxation and fees on that business.

Further, imagine being kicked out of one's home or business overnight and losing everything in a blink. There's no Homeowners Association. There's no government police force. Friends of the corporate owners live and work as free as they like. Those who disagree with the corporation's policies are banned from the community. They lose their business. The value of everything they own is gone overnight.

As it stands now, there are laws against discrimination for mortgage lenders, renters, building owners, and corporations. People can't be booted from their homes or have their businesses destroyed simply because a functionary within the corporation decides that he or she hates those kind.

Not so online. A person can build a social media home and persona, he can build his business, and with a keystroke, the corporation can destroy him. Overnight, the value he built in his business on Facebook or YouTube, for example, evaporates. The tech companies can do so for no reason other than that they feel like it. Community rules written by the corporation and enforced by new college graduates fueled by commie idealism and social-justice vengeance are capricious and inconsistently applied.

The home or business owner has no recourse. He might sue said company, but in the 20 years it might take to win the case, his livelihood is lost. He is canceled.

Melissa Mackenzie is publisher of The American Spectator.

Now imagine trying to move to another neighborhood and finding that one is not welcome there either. In fact, in flailing to rebuild somewhere, the individual might find that he cannot live or do business anywhere meaningful. He is consigned to exile.

The mobs in the neighborhoods cheer. Others who share the beliefs of the shunned person see and are afraid. They censor themselves. Sound familiar? Sound civil rights-y at all?

Tech companies have the power to destroy lives and livelihoods while the victims are treated with contempt or ignored. These tech companies will broadcast murders but will kick users out of the neighborhood for disorderly conduct. Tech companies house terrorists and allow them to live and work unmolested while uprooting people whose crimes are saying mean words and being annoying.

Critics of those complaining about the tech companies' power make helpful recommendations: Just move to a different house and different neighborhood. Keep your head down. Don't make waves. If you were a better person, you wouldn't have to worry about losing your online life or livelihood.

The internet and the companies built on the government superhighways are at a crossroads. They seem incapable of policing themselves. They shun any balanced community involvement. They give power and prestige (blue check marks) to friends and people who share their political aims. They blacklist people they dislike but who are good neighbors.

Enemies of the powers that be find themselves unable to advertise and engage in commerce. Often, they don't even know that they're being discriminated against. This was the case of *The American Spectator*, for example, when we found out that we were on a Google News blacklist and were dropped from Apple News for no known reason.

When we contacted both organizations, there was no explanation and no recourse. *The American Spectator* is far from a radical media organization. Our writers range from TV personalities to respected economists to former state and federal prosecutors to rabbis and college professors. Media reporting and commentary is safely within the mainstream of conservative and libertarian thought.

> A person can build a social media home and persona, he can build his business, and with a keystroke, the corporation can destroy him.

It is time to consider the power of "Big Tech." Should the government respond to the big tech companies' anti-conservative bias with regulations? Should conservatives be content to be forced out of their online neighborhoods? Should they turn the other cheek when their privacy and careers are destroyed?

In this section of the magazine, our writers discuss these and other concerns. Technology is outpacing ethics. The ability to defend oneself personally, professionally, and even militarily is questionable. America's national security is at risk because these corporations consider themselves to be global rather than American and side with tyrannical regimes against citizens in oppressed countries. For all their talk of freedom, they willingly sell their technology for evil ends.

We endeavor to educate our readers and help them form their own conclusions. New companies arise daily promising information security and a free voice, but they are small players and they are later to the market. Behemoths like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube own the neighborhoods. Google owns the information road access. They can stealthily deplatform. They can unperson. While an individual may find it impossible, of his own will, to erase his online persona, the companies can do it with ease when they've decided a business or individual shouldn't exist. It's an enormous amount of biased, unchecked power.

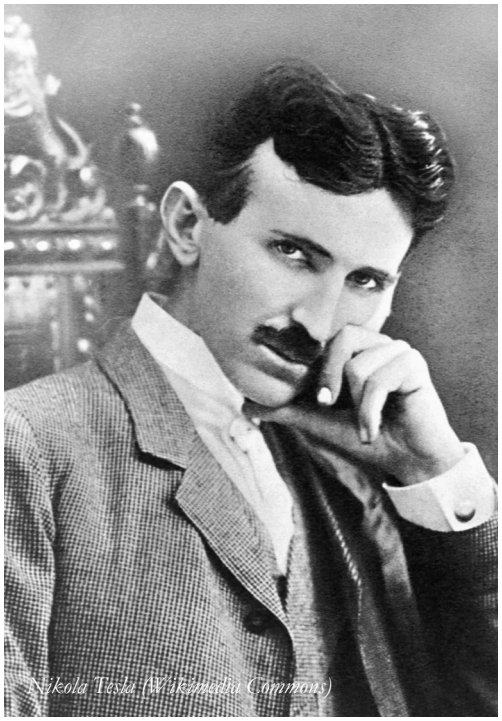
Broadcast yourself, they said. Don't be evil, they said. Move fast and break things, they said. Conservatives can broadcast themselves up to and until the evil businesses refuse to let them. The companies move fast and break things, all right, and that's the problem.

Iakov Filimonov (Shutterstock)

Forty Years of the Computer Revolution

Warping our children's brains.

by Joseph Bottum



Nikola Tesla (Wikimedia Commons)

Let's start with a story. Just a few years ago, when I first turned to think seriously about the changes wrought by 40 years of the computer revolution, I found myself in a meeting with some senior figures in cybertechnology: directors of computer labs, explorers of artificial intelligence, people with their fingers on the pulse, or maybe the throat, of the future.

In the chit-chat before the meeting began, I mentioned a British study claiming that "many young adults spend a third of their waking lives" on electronic devices. These young people, ages 16 to 22, check their phones an average of 85 times a day — even while they already have their devices set to beep or vibrate to notify them when they have a new message.

In response, one of those senior technology sophisticates I was sitting beside, a director of a computer lab, said this study might as well have been done with his own children. His kids constantly consult their phones and tablets, he said. Like smokers who have to sneak out for a cigarette in the middle of a meal, they can't even make it through a restaurant dinner without withdrawing from conversation to look for messages. They even get grumpy, he said, if someone tries to stop them.

You know just what he meant. Other recent studies have pointed out that people in constant electronic communication become disturbed, set off-kilter, when cut off from their computerized contact. They display small signs of irritability, anxiety, confusion, and even existential dread: a general feeling of unfocused threat and displacement. These are, I pointed out, the classic symptoms of the psychological category of disease known as addiction. Those kids are addicted to their electronic devices.

Then, the computer-lab director, one of the masters of our future, said something that struck me as both profound and telling about where we are culturally at this moment. Here he was: a significant figure with weight behind his opinions, a man presumably trained by graduate school to thoughtful articulation. When I suggested that his children were displaying the classic symptoms of addiction, he answered, "So what?" In other words, *so what* if kids are addicted to this useful technology? What difference does it make? Why should anyone spend the least division of an hour worrying about such stuff?

There are, of course, several ways we could take this. Perhaps he was just being morally obtuse and didn't particularly care about his children — although

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that seems unlikely. Or perhaps he was just looking for a way to close down the conversation, though it did, in fact, go on for a while, until the actual meeting finally started and the person running it glared us all into silence.

But let's suppose for a moment that this senior figure in the computer world genuinely meant what he said: The sheer fact of computer addiction is not, and ought not to be, worrying or bothersome. That is an amazing thought — a proposition that reaches back toward a fascinating set of necessary prior assumptions and reaches out toward an equally fascinating set of consequences and implications.

As it happens, our computer expert is wrong, just on the facts. New studies of psychological damage from relentless connectivity are started to line up with the anecdotal evidence we've all seen. The cross-generational data are not yet complete and won't be complete until the damage has been suffered for years. But we've got enough to suggest that — in the aggregate — clear psychological deficits are resulting from our machine-enabled interconnectedness.

We have an infantilizing of affect, for example, as you might guess if you have seen young people forced to be around adults. And that regression in affect is matched, as it must be, by a reduction of social skills as verbal proficiency atrophies when personal conversation is truncated in online interactions. For that matter, we have dangerously indulged fantasies in pornography, online posing, and role-playing.

Meanwhile, we have a fetishizing of commercial commodities beyond even what television did to prior generations. We have a devaluation of actual life as social media consumers imagine the constantly Instagrammed lives of others to be better than their own lives. Worse psychologically is the parallel (and well-documented) increase in body hatred and dysmorphia since the World Wide Web began on August 6, 1991. And through it all, we see an overvaluation of the esteem of others as expressed through social media.

The neural mechanisms of attention, the pathways by which the brain forms habits of focus, are not well understood. The problem is that the growth of the tech giants has made that lack of understanding entirely beside the point. Economic competition remains the greatest motor, the most dynamic device, for solving a puzzle the world has never known before. In its essence, the web is an economic competition for attracting attention.

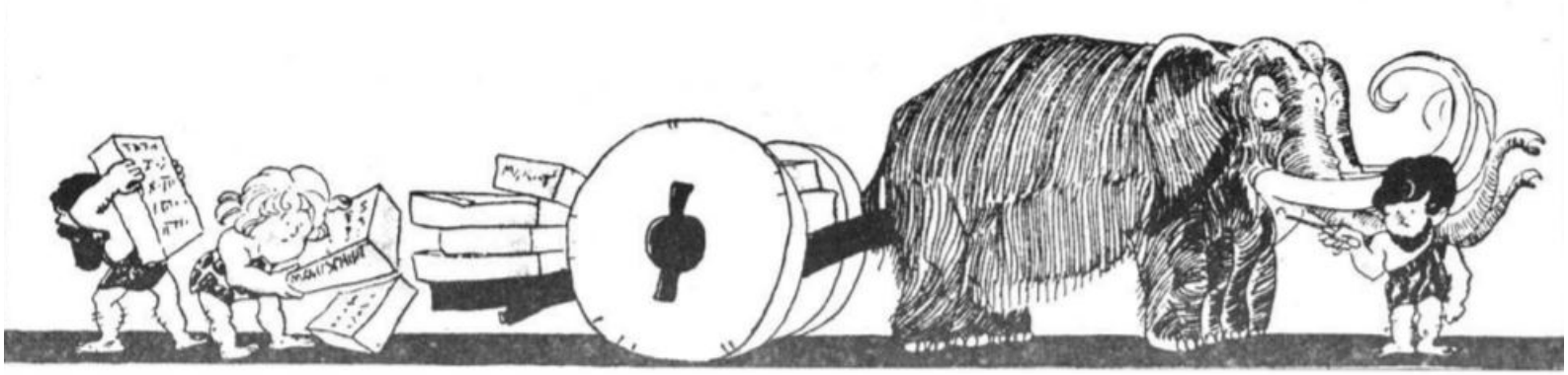
Black-box neural networks, the most sophisticated forms of AI, solve problems more or less by not solving them. They use a kind of brute-force correction of pattern recognition, growing ever more precise, that bypasses understanding and forges toward the most exact practical answer. In exactly the same way, the web acts as a brute-force, self-correcting network for arriving at the most efficient and successful ways to forge the neural pathways of attraction. We don't know how it works. We just know that it works.

And it's the young who are the easiest audience, since one of the things we do understand is that the neural pathways in the brain are not well formed until late adolescence. No wonder Steve Jobs and a surprising number of other seminal figures in the computer revolution limited screen time for their children. They wanted to protect their own families from the devices they were becoming wealthy by producing.

> Recent studies have pointed out that people in constant electronic communication become disturbed, set off-kilter, when cut off from their computerized contact.

The dangers of online life typically fall on the poor. Children of impoverished families end up using technology more than children from wealthier families in America. White children average less than nine hours a day staring at a television, computer, or cellphone screen. That's terrifying, but black and Hispanic children average 13 hours a day. We have a digital divide between rich and poor — but the divide turns out to be caused by the fact that the rich can afford activities that take their children away from digital screens. The poor, far more than the rich, are living in a technological cage.

Even more than money, family matters — a point made strongly in Naomi Schaefer Riley's recent book, *Be the Parent, Please* (2018). Digital addiction puts at greatest risk those who have weak parental oversight, especially from absent fathers and unmonitored web access. In *The Cyber Effect* (2017) — as dismal an examination of the American condition as a reader is likely to find — Mary Aiken observes that "if you spend time online, you are likely to encounter a far greater variety of human behavior than you have before — from the vulnerable to the criminal, from the gleeful and altruistic to the dark and murderous." Even a few decades ago, to find sadomasochism required that one "dig around in the public library for a copy of the Marquis de Sade's writings or go to an art-house cinema." →



At its most basic, the internet has made public access to the violent recesses of the human mind so easy that we have ended up normalizing what St. John Henry Newman once described as the stained imagination. And every teenage boy can spend hours watching it. Is it really much surprise, then, when the psychologically weakest and most confused are drawn into evil?

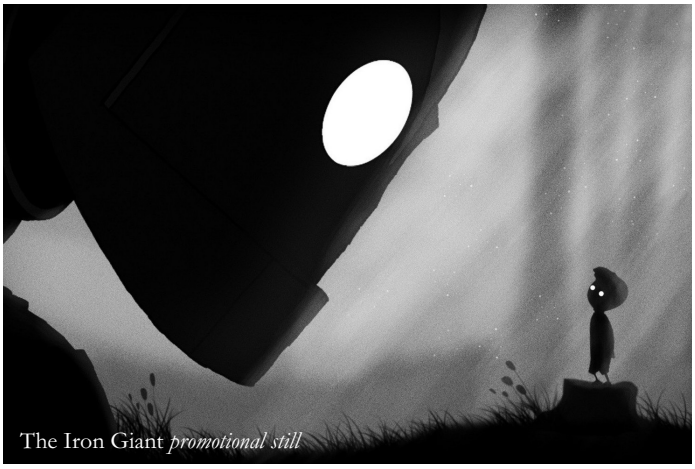
Let's leave aside the fact that our senior computer sophisticate, our important director of a computer lab, was simply wrong on the facts: Interconnectivity does matter psychologically and socially, and the effects are not neutral. Let's concentrate instead on what it means to say *So what?* — as though addiction doesn't matter.

We used to think that addiction was bad in itself because it was a derogation of the human. Human being, our existence as embodied beings, has at its best a shape that is not reached by the alcoholic, the heroin addict, the chronic onanist, the psychotically obsessed. Addiction was considered a flaw in what ought to be a fully realized adult — a grown-up: *noble in reason, infinite in faculty ... the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals.* The mainstreaming of addiction through technology is a small portion, a telling example, of the general diminishment of the human. For the sake of their souls, get your children offline.

For that matter, get yourself offline. The joy of the internet is that it allows like-minded people to find one another. And the horror of the internet comes from exactly the same source: It allows like-minded people to find one another.

When the web first emerged, baseball-card collectors, used-book buyers, and knitting enthusiasts could suddenly share news. One fascinating effect of this was financial transparency. Everyone who finds an old coin can now find out its worth. No one stumbles on an impossibly great buy in a record store because the seller now knows the average price across the nation. A national transparency of markets resulted from the ability of like-minded people to find one another.

Of course, the same process made it possible for neo-Nazis and child molesters to find one another. Perhaps even worse for society, the internet allowed things like 4chan — a racist and sexist chat group. Interestingly, as Dale Beran notes in his recent book, *It Came From Something Awful* (2019), the people involved were young men who, in the early 2000s, found themselves underemployed. Clever in a jokey way, with hours a day to spend online, they began creating for one another comic memes that twitted the culture. And since the only culture they had ever been taught was liberal, they made fun of liberalism's sanctimonious platitudes by playing at being sexists and racists.



The Iron Giant *promotional still*

Not that they actually believed in sexism and racism. They were too nihilistic to believe in anything, really. They played with those evils simply because they could get a rise out of people that way. Decades earlier, they wouldn't have mattered. In the internet age, they discovered they weren't alone. And together they managed to push out into the world something vile.

> The poor, far more than the rich, are living in a technological cage.

But even the mainstream social media sites, from Facebook to Instagram, have something vile about them. Reddit, Snapchat, Twitter: The form hardly matters. All of them encourage something strange in human interaction. It's a kind of personal impersonality, in which we find ourselves willing to say astonishingly unkind things to one another. And Facebook — to take only the most obvious of the near-monopolistic online companies — managed to commercialize the result. Think about that for a moment. Facebook provides nothing but a forum. It publishes nothing (which makes it safe from lawsuits under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act). It manufactures nothing. It builds nothing. Facebook grew enormously powerful just ... by existing.

Like many of the technological gatekeepers of our national conversation, it has also increasingly been willing to use that power to tilt in favor of preferred positions in sociopolitics. We've had near-monopolies before — all those trusts that Teddy Roosevelt thought needed breaking. But we've never had a trust like Facebook, exerting wide control on free speech itself.

And yet, what if the social media sites were neutral, as they ought to be? What if we broke up the technological giants, as we probably should? And somehow reinstated a national politeness that could keep online commentators from spewing bile at one another? And eliminated the techniques discovered for profiting from the private information we seem determined to give away?

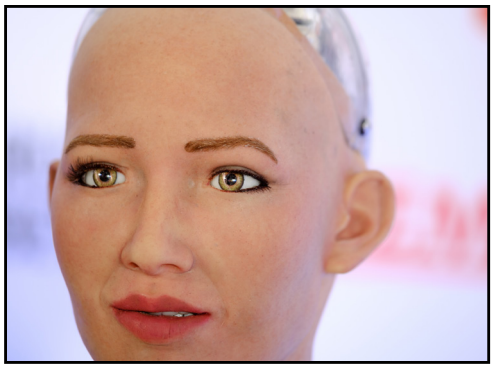
Still, the neural effects of the computer age are not what we thought they would be as we rushed into what is now 40 years of the Computer Age. Remember the old computer program Tetris — a game of falling blocks that you had to turn to make them fall into place? Remember how even after you stopped playing at night and settled down to sleep, you could see the blocks still falling in your mind's eye?

Well, that's what everything about computerization has done to us. We cannot escape it. The beneficial effects are too great to lose, the technological advancement too rapid to legislate against, and the sociological changes too complete even to imagine going back. But let's not pretend they came at no cost, as though computers were some unalloyed good. They changed us. And as artificial intelligence grows, as we gain the implanting of chips beneath the skin and digital manipulation of the brain, they will change us more.

Beware the Feedback Loop

Machines may be more efficient than humans, but they lack wisdom and understanding, not to mention the most rudimentary common sense.

by Matt Shapiro



Sophia humanoid robot speaking Russian at Open Innovations Conference, Skolkovo Technopark, 2017 (Anton Grozdikov)

When he wrote *The Making of a Fly*, biologist Peter Lawrence probably did not expect his investigation into developmental genetics to rival the Magna Carta. But in 2011, copies of this book were listed for sale at Amazon for $23.6 million, a price that exceeded a recent sale price of the Great Charter of Liberties.

The reason is that prices for *The Making of a Fly* were being set by two competing algorithms, creating a feedback loop of escalating prices. The first seller's bot would look at the lowest available price and set his at 27 percent above that. Then the second seller's bot would look at the highest price and strategically undercut by selling his copy at 0.2 percent less. In most cases, this strategy would work for both sellers. But neither seller anticipated this possibility, and pricing bots don't have the common sense to recognize when the feedback loop has gone off the rails.

This episode, while hilarious, is a cautionary tale. We are daily edging toward a world in which vital decisions are made through algorithmic processes. Sometimes these algorithms are simple, as in the case above. But the exponential acceleration of the use of machine learning in decision-making means we need to start asking very important ethical questions surrounding algorithmic decision-making.

Machine learning is a tough topic because the details of how machines learn can seem incredibly obscure. Simply put, machine learning is about taking as much data as possible and telling a computer to find patterns within that data. Once a pattern is found, the computer develops an equation wherein we can give it a new point of input and the computer will predict a result.

Let's make that a little more concrete. A classic machine-learning problem involves breast cancer data. We feed in the imaging data on breast cancer scans. From a biopsy, we look at cell texture, area, symmetry, smoothness, radius, and so on. We "train" our program by giving it 70 percent of that data. It makes a guess about what combination of metrics will accurately predict breast cancer. Then we give it the last 30 percent of that data, and it checks itself to see how accurate it was. Let's say it's 90-percent accurate. Now it's ready for us to feed it new data from the patient who came in yesterday, and it can guess, with 90-percent accuracy, if that patient has breast cancer.

This is a generous example of the utility of machine learning. Machines are excellent at teasing out examples from known data on topics that provide easily

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measured information. But things get murkier when we branch out into topics that don't provide convenient, clean data.

In 2016, *ProPublica* published a devastating critique of a program called COMPAS that claimed to output the risk of a convict committing future crimes. They found that the algorithm used to predict re-offense rates skewed to predict higher risk scores for black individuals and lower risk scores for white individuals.

There were some claims of racism within the company or among the developers of this program, but the most likely scenario is that it was impossible to know exactly how this algorithm came to its risk score. It could very well be that the machine-learning process determined that people of color are arrested at higher rates and used that to predict that people of color are more likely to have higher rates of arrest in the future. The algorithm takes a shameful existing reality and makes no moral judgments on it, but simply extrapolates it in the form of a prediction.

Machine learning used this way has no guiding principle. We can shovel terabytes of data into a system, and there's still a chance it can go off the rails if there isn't a person with an ounce of common sense constantly supervising, reviewing, and critiquing the results of the decision-making. And we're not always able to anticipate how an algorithm will achieve unexpected results. Machine-learning methods tend to create a "black box" result: we can push data in and see the results, but we don't know how we got from point A to point B.

Algorithms don't have common sense. They can't look at the data and furrow their brow, say "That's awfully weird," and ask why. They have their parameters, and if a parameter isn't included in the program, the machine will barrel ahead without restraint or caution. Given the speed at which these programs make their decisions, this process can spiral in unpredictable and dangerous ways.

There is something miraculous in humans that machines will always lack. We don't just see the world as it is; we see it as it ought to be. This is the core message of C. S. Lewis' classic book *Mere Christianity*. Lewis says that an innate part of all of us rebels against the injustices and wrongs of this world because we have within ourselves a spark of the divine that nudges us toward the world as it should be.

Artificial intelligence can't see the world as it should be; it excels at recognizing the world as it exists. And certain applications of machine learning and artificial intelligence have proven incredibly controversial.

When Amazon built a machine-learning system to help in identifying and hiring the most productive candidates, the system ended up simply filtering women out of the candidate pool. Charges of bias were lodged against the system developers, who ended up scrapping the program. In all of this, no one publicly posed the question, "What if the system preferred men because men are more productive than women?"

I'm making some cynical assumptions about the inputs of the system, but let's say the system is looking for candidates who might excel in Amazon's famously aggressive work environment. It might prioritize candidates who work longer hours, forego paid time off, prefer an all-work lifestyle over a work-life balance, relentlessly seek promotion and advancement, or are unlikely to leave the job for family reasons.

In all these metrics, men as a group surpass women. If these are the metrics you're feeding into your algorithm, it might very well say, "You know what? Let's immediately narrow the hiring pool by 50 percent and then optimize within that group." We immediately recognize this as bias, but the algorithm does not. It's just trying to optimize the metrics we've handed to it. We asked an algorithm for productivity, and it gave that to us good and hard. We need to be sure we're prepared to confront reality as it is, or we're going to discover that a machine does not much care for our vision of how things should be. It can only see what we show to it, and it will strive endlessly to achieve incrementally whatever goal has been set in the metrics.

Algorithms don't have common sense. They can't look at the data and furrow their brow, say "That's awfully weird," and ask why.

There's a delightful academic paper on "algorithmic creativity" from the 2018 Artificial Life Conference that should be our defining reference point when we contemplate machine learning. The paper catalogues the absurd ways an algorithm tries to optimize to achieve its given task.

Directed to travel quickly, a simulation evolved to turn itself into a tower and fall over, moving incredibly fast before it slammed itself into the ground. Directed to jump as high as possible (height being the highest point of their structure), simulated robots built themselves to be very tall. When the researcher redefined the definition of "jump" to be "the height of your lowest point," the bots evolved to have a very long, thin leg, which they then kicked out from under themselves. Directed to sort a list of numbers, an algorithm learned that if it deleted the list, everything was perfectly sorted.

These are silly examples, but the reality of the matter is that, when directed to optimize a specific metric and given unimpeded authority to change the structure of a given system, machine-learning algorithms can hack any system we give them. We may decide to use AI to determine the best policies for a hospital, but we should carefully investigate its recommendations. If the algorithm is optimized for efficiency, it may discover that the best way to pool money for newborn care is to deny care to the elderly with high-risk cancer. A newborn has high utility, the elderly have low utility, and cancer care is expensive.

Handing vital decision-making to an algorithm could result in a system in which the elderly are not simply denied care but also denied the truth of their condition. The cheapest, most "effective" path would be to simply lie to them, tell them they don't have cancer, and let them die. Dead people are incredibly cheap.

Artificial intelligence and machine learning have enormous potential to tease our existing models of reality. But we cannot abdicate our decision-making to these algorithms. We can't use them to inform our decisions and then fall back on the excuse that the responsibility ultimately rests with the algorithm or the programmer who developed it. Converting this messy world and all its inconsistencies into clean data does not make the world clean. It threatens to blind us to the value of the immeasurable.

Up From CNN

by Jeffrey Lord

CNN loves Media Matters for America. Who knew?

Who knew that a supposedly "mainstream" cable news network would obediently do the bidding of a far-left special interest group — particularly a group that has been repeatedly flagged for anti-Semitism? Not me — and I should have known.

Brought on to CNN in 2015 at the suggestion of none other than candidate Donald Trump, I became a CNN regular over time. I enjoyed and respected my colleagues and the seemingly endless debates that went on — and on and on! — through the famously turbulent 2016 election cycle.

As the story was relayed to me by a CNN-er, Trump had complained to CNN that "Every time I'm on, you follow me up with Bush guys who hate me. Why don't you put somebody on who likes me?" They asked for a name, and, unbeknownst to me, the candidate gave them mine. And my CNN adventure was off and running.

CNN President Jeff Zucker was nothing if not encouraging to me, although I was puzzled when he said that he was "protecting" me. Why in the world, I quietly wondered, would a mainstream Reagan conservative-turned-columnist and contributing editor for *The American Spectator* — someone published in all manner of respectable publications, from the *Wall Street Journal* to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and much more — need "protecting"? And from whom?

The answer finally came out. Because I supported candidate and then President Trump, I was a target for all manner of angry lefties, notably at Media Matters, along with anonymous CNN types who couldn't abide Trump. So on that fateful day of my firing, I had a two-day-old column in print right here at *The American Spectator* titled "Fascist Media Matters Moves to Silence Hannity."

In the course of the column, I sarcastically took note of MMFA's seriously bad reputation for anti-Semitism. In my column I imagined how MMFA would draft a rewrite of the First Amendment to ensure left-wing state control of the media. Then I added of the imaginary "draft": "*The American Spectator* has been unable to confirm reports that the original draft of this Media Matters revision ended with the words '*Seig Heil!*' "

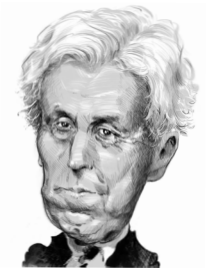
When I received an angry tweet from the head of Media Matters, I tweeted those infamous last two words to him.

CNN was furious. Rule No. 1: Never nail a left-wing group for its blatant anti-Semitism and racism. It's always OK to say this of some conservative or President Trump — but not the far-left, anti-free-press Media Matters, despite the pile of evidence.

With that, with Media Matters and Twitter lefties aflame over the tweet and my column, my CNN career ended abruptly, literally in mid-CNN car ride from my Pennsylvania home to New York City for an evening appearance with Anderson Cooper.

The bottom line? Left-wing media protects its left-wing allies in or out of the media, no matter how bigoted they may be. And it listens to them. This, dear reader, is exactly why conservative media — particularly *The American Spectator* — is so important.

This is a pivotal moment in American history. And *The American Spectator* is, with your help, right here to report the facts and uphold the oldest of cherished American values: freedom and liberty. No matter what left-wing censors in the Leftist State Media may say.



Jeffrey Lord is a contributing editor to The American Spectator.

Security and Statesmanship

You can't have one without the other.

by Jed Babbin

History reveals the constant competition among nations. That competition is comprised of the creation and destruction of alliances, enmities, and marriages of convenience, in all of which frequent betrayals and double-crosses are an essential part.

George MacDonald Fraser had perhaps the most realistic view of international relations. In one of his novels, he wrote, "There's a point, you know, where treachery is so complete and unashamed that it becomes statesmanship." Underlying Fraser's statement is the dependence of diplomacy on secrecy, deception, and espionage.

Since the era of rolled-up parchments sealed with wax, the greatest necessity in communications among diplomats and the nations they serve has been secrecy. In 1929, Henry Stimson — then the new secretary of state — closed the State Department's cipher bureau because he believed it was unethical. Stimson said, "Gentlemen don't read each other's mail." It is metaphysically impossible to be more wrong.

Today's technology makes secrecy extraordinarily difficult and has significantly increased the number of possible kinds of espionage and interference in every nation's domestic and international affairs. Russia tried and failed to affect the results of our 2016 presidential election, and they, China, Iran, and North Korea are all working assiduously to interfere with the 2020 results.

Our governmental and industrial secrets are being produced at historic rates by the intelligence, defense, diplomatic, and industrial communities. These secrets are trafficked among thousands of people every day. The computers on which those facts and ideas are transmitted are subjected to tens of thousands of cyberattacks each day. According to some estimates, China alone steals $600 billion in American intellectual property — military and other government and commercial secrets — every year.

The Geneva Conventions set what were, for decades, the laws of war. Cyberwar is not only ungoverned by international law but is also probably uncontrollable. Nations and non-state actors such as terrorist networks — irrational actors within both categories — have made the internet wilder than the Wild West ever was.

In that environment, we spend tens of billions of dollars every year to protect assets such as Defense Department and CIA satellites, aircraft, and others that are vulnerable to cyberattacks aimed to damage or spy on them. Every computer-controlled asset — even those, such as satellites, that are not connected to the internet — is vulnerable because the coded electronic signals that control them are susceptible to such attacks.

Malware, that is, software that enables interception of communications from within, can be embedded in any computer. After China bought the ThinkPad laptop line from IBM, the State Department took an unconscionably long time to realize that fact and stop buying those computers for diplomats and staff. When President Trump banned the Chinese telecommunications

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giant Huawei from building 5G cellphone networks in the United States, he prevented a Huawei network here from enabling Chinese intelligence agencies to routinely listen to every cellphone conversation on that network.

Machine learning is comprised of sophisticated algorithms, which, along with access to mountains of data, enable the computer to "learn." Its "learning" automates its building of computer models to solve problems and its choosing among sets of data. Automation of those functions results in solving problems at far higher speeds.

No one has, so far, achieved real artificial intelligence, by which computers will "think" on the basis of whatever data they can obtain — overtly or covertly — anywhere. AI computers literally will have the usual human senses of sight, smell, and touch. Best — or worst — of all, they will be able to reprogram themselves to decide which problems to solve.

AI will be able to deal with masses of information faster and probably better than humans can. For example, our intelligence satellites record images of most of the Earth several times a day and gather billions of electronic communications daily. AI will be far more adept than current computers at sifting through and selecting those that contain important information.

Real AI may be developed at any time by us and/or one of the many other nations working to achieve it. In February, President Trump issued an executive order for a "surge" in research to develop America's AI capability. It's anybody's guess whether we will succeed before our competition or not.

There are no international laws to govern AI. Those that are "irrational actors" by our standards — nations such as North Korea, Iran, and terrorist networks — will have AI sooner or later, and probably sooner.

For the foreseeable future, then, the ability to keep secrets and unveil those of our adversaries will be more a competition among computer scientists than among ordinary spies.

Nothing is kept secret forever. What one man can encode another man — or a computer — can decode. Developments in computer science mean that the lengths of time secrets can be kept will shrink.

For decades there have been "closed-loop" communications systems that are not only unconnected to the internet but are also hardened against internal and external attempts to connect with them. These systems, the use of which is widespread in some of the communities that traffic in top-secret information, will have to become the norm in much of government and industry. All those government employees who spend part of their workday viewing cute cat videos will have to find some other way to waste time.

We can pity the "Gen X-ers" and their "Gen Y" counterparts who have grown up connected to their smartphones. When these people achieve positions of power, their business and government worlds will have been transformed. They won't be required to go all the way back to letters sealed with wax, but to means of communication that aren't, by their electronic foundations, highly vulnerable to electronic eavesdropping.

Secrets will always have to be created and kept. The longer a nation can keep its secrets safe, the safer that nation will be.

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If you're a daily reader of *The American Spectator*, you've seen many new contributors to our site over the past few years. Lawyer and rabbi Dov Fischer has brought humor and insight to the topic of D.C. corruption. Geoff Shepard is a former Nixon staffer and deputy counsel on the Watergate defense team focused on the impeachment attempts past and present. And we have many other regulars: David Catron, George Parry, Roger Kaplan, Brandon J. Weichert, Doug Bandow, Paul Kengor, and of course Ben Stein, our legendary editorial director Wlady Pleszczynski, and our founder, R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

You won't find political correctness and humorless drivel in the *The American Spectator*. You will find yourself laughing and learning. Thank you for your support. It's making a difference.

Josh Hawley Is Dead Serious About Social Media Addiction

A challenge to Big Tech that is repositioning conservatism.

by John Jiang

What do the apps on your phone have to do with the fate of American society and culture? Quite a lot, if Josh Hawley has anything to say about it. The 39-year-old freshman Republican senator from Missouri has quickly built a reputation for himself as David to Big Tech's Goliath. Like an increasing number of conservative lawmakers, he sees Silicon Valley's liberal tilt and proclivity to censorship as unacceptable threats to conservatism. Perhaps uniquely among his colleagues in the Senate, he has begun to weave a narrative through both legislation and rhetoric that seeks to cast social media as one of several atomizing forces threatening to tear American society apart at the seams.

Hawley's philosophy seems, at first, like lukewarm social conservatism. His recent internet addiction bill would compel social media companies to set soft time limits on usage, a possibility that, if passed, will surely be panned as a tweet-addicted Washington telling everyone else they've had enough screen time. Yet it would be a mistake to conflate him with the for-your-own-good nanny-staters running Europe or the televangelizing capitalists who galvanized the Moral Majority of the 1980s in America. The worldview that Hawley brings to Congress is new, and it offers a glimpse into the future of conservatism.

In a May column for the *Washington Free Beacon*, Matthew Continetti described Hawley as the standard-bearer of a young and rising faction of the Republican Party: "post-liberals." In place of Reaganesque appeals to common values or purposes, post-liberals substitute the steadfast pillars of "familial, national, and religious authority." Unlike the proponents of "liberal modernity" on both the mainstream left and right, post-liberals see the value in hierarchies and social arrangements built as much on tradition as on ambition and merit.

Hawley, Continetti points out, offers an apocalyptic view of the trajectory of American society and a corresponding set of solutions that would offend any traditional establishment conservative. Giving a commencement address at King's College, Hawley railed against a culturally dominant "philosophy of liberation from family and tradition; of escape from God and community … of self-creation and unrestricted, unfettered free choice." Attempts by social conservatives to reframe the concept of liberty and appropriate it from the domain of social liberals are not new. To grant social liberals their desired association with liberty and to denounce them over that fact, as Hawley is doing, is unusual. Combine this distinct line of attack with Hawley's unabashed invocations of state regulatory power and an overarching philosophy begins to emerge in which freedom and conservatism are seen as antagonistic rather than complementary.

It is not difficult to understand where social media fits into this worldview. A spiritually exhausted and alienated population, "liberated" from tradition and God and community, turns to technology to grasp for fulfillment and meaning. Silicon Valley has become a dispenser of false idols in this struggle for America's soul, helping to perpetuate the same ills it claims to remedy. It promises its users genuine bonding and a sense of community in a time of lengthening work days, disintegrating families, and disappearing parishes. It delivers only narcissism and commodified, ersatz socialization.

American society is now beginning to feel the impact of this treatment. Some of the products of social media are benign, even pleasing, on their face, yet seem indicative of some deeper rot. Take, for instance, the rise of "sharenting." This trend sees parents turning their young children into unwitting Pinterest and Instagram stars, documenting their every move and acting as unofficial and unrequested brand managers. The privacy and consent of the children are effectively disregarded and given secondary consideration to the parents' own vicarious pursuit of social media recognition. In an era in which the nuclear family is

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Josh Hawley (Aviva Okeson-Haberman/KCUR 89.3)

being ravaged by both cultural and market forces, the increasing commercialization of even the act of parenting may be something of a death knell.

Other products of social media usage point toward its ability to drive generational shifts in attitudes, often for the worse. In a January 2018 article titled "Teenagers are better behaved and less hedonistic nowadays," the *Economist* notes that young people are doing drugs and engaging in sexual activity less often, largely owing to communications technology: "Teenagers who communicate largely online can exchange gossip, insults and nude pictures, but not bodily fluids, blows, or bottles of vodka." Yet the apparently more prudent lifestyle of Gen Z comes with a disastrous flipside, in which cyberspace socialization causes users to "pass up some opportunities to develop deep emotional connections with their friends, which are built on non-verbal cues as well as verbal ones."

The result is a generation of kids addicted to their phones, socializing constantly but never being truly socially fulfilled or instructed in real-world interactions. This can have consequences years down the line, when so-called good behavior in teenagers turns into social stuntedness in adults. Take, for example, data from the General Social Survey in March that shows the percentage of Americans aged 18 to 29 reporting having no sex in the past year has jumped from 14 percent in 1989 to 23 percent in 2018. Another poll, from YouGov, indicates that 30 percent of millennials always or often feel lonely, compared to 20 percent of people in Gen X and 15 percent of Baby Boomers.

What will ultimately come of all of this low-quality socialization? Such a question is too great to study comprehensively, and the gradual nature of a generational shift makes it difficult to test hypotheses. But any small changes to the bulk of a set of normally distributed data must produce significant movement in the tail ends. In other words, while the majority of young people may simply live with fewer meaningful relationships and less sex, one can expect a small but growing minority to lose out dramatically and perhaps develop extremist views.

Enter the involuntary celibates, or "incels," men who identify primarily with their inability to obtain relationships or sex with women. Ever since the 2014 attacks in Isla Vista, California, by self-identified incel Elliot Rodger, the size and visibility of this very online community has grown exponentially. Its largest community, on the social media and aggregation site Reddit, has close to 80,000 subscribers. Of course, most incels are not violent. At their most lucid, incels complain about an exclusionary social landscape that prioritizes superficiality, narcissism, and relationships founded upon the soulless extraction of value from one's partner — complaints that may not seem entirely out of place in a social conservative's views about the woes of the present era. Even a harmless incel, however, represents a man singularly obsessed with his lack of sexual success, often to the detriment of employment and his life in general, making him a burden to society and his family.

Though their rise is alarming, incels represent only a glimpse into what may be yet to come. This is because of the parallels between the incel phenomenon and the related (but much more severe) phenomenon of *hikikomori*, which is most severe in Japan but increasingly prevalent in other developed countries, particularly in East Asia. *Hikikomoro*, usually young people, are loners who turn their backs on society and its obligations, spending months or even years in their rooms on their parents' money, leaving only for necessary tasks like buying groceries. The American emphasis on financial independence has helped to hold this social illness at bay, but it is not difficult to imagine something similar evolving out of the present incel community. The result of such a thing would be an economic disaster rather than a mere online curiosity: Japan has approximately 500,000 *hikikomori* aged 15 to 39, with another million at risk out of only around 17 million Japanese in that age bracket in total. In a country that already has a shortage of young people, such figures suggest a problem with existential implications.

What about those young men who act out, rather than internalize, their profound frustrations? Whenever a mass shooting happens, carried out by some disaffected extremist or mentally ill young man, politicians are quick to blame "mental health" but rarely social media. While 8chan and other such anonymous imageboards may not be comparable in their design and culture to Facebook or Instagram, they often play a similar role for their users: the sharing of conversation, self-expression, and humor, though exclusively by edgy young men and for edgy young men. What may be called "social media" in this case encourages egotism and degrades empathy, just as it does on more mainstream sites. More important, however, is what this social media offers as a substitute. In place of a healthy relationship with one's community or a partner, these imageboards drive their users into the arms of extremism, where any individual — no matter how unsuccessful or reclusive in real life — can feel uniquely knowledgeable or powerful.

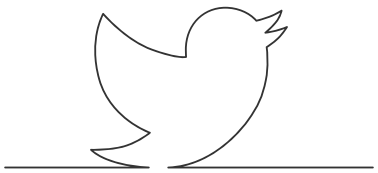
When Josh Hawley attacks social media for perpetuating these social ills and threatens to bring the wrath of the government to bear against Silicon Valley, he strikes a perfectly post-liberal tone. Battle lines are now being drawn among the conservative intelligentsia. As with peculiarly many conflicts on the right today, the two sides are embodied by David French and Sohrab Ahmari. French attacked Hawley's social media addiction bill almost as soon as it was announced in early August, declaring in *National Review* in a piece titled "Against the Republican Daddy State" that "Josh Hawley's efforts to micromanage social media are an affront to limited government and personal responsibility." In his essay "Against David French-ism" from *First Things* two months prior, Ahmari attacked French for failing to recognize that "autonomy unbound hasn't yielded freedom but new and insidious forms of digital tyranny."

The traditional conservative idea of individuals as rational and self-disciplining is, to Hawley and his intellectual allies, a fantasy.

For post-liberals like Hawley and Ahmari, the right-wing crusade against government oversight is a red herring — something for conservatives to cling to while the Left commandeers every other institution in America from Big Tech to higher education. Instead, they argue, government power ought to be generously applied to either subdue the malignant influence of these institutions or wrest them away from leftist hands. As if to preempt French's accusation that he is denying people their personal responsibility, Hawley uses the introductory paragraph in the text of his bill to accuse tech giants of "[exploiting] human psychology ... to substantially impede freedom of choice." The traditional conservative idea of individuals as rational and self-disciplining is, to Hawley and his intellectual allies, a fantasy.

Speaking to *Wired* in August, Hawley argued that social media encourages "some of the worst of America. We're dealing with pathologies that they have at the least contributed to." That is a brief way of referring to the chronic diseases that social media sites have inflicted upon American society and culture.

It may be too brief. Though Hawley's attempt to ban addictive social media practices is a notable first step, it is much like bringing a knife to a gunfight: it attempts to solve an enormous societal problem by targeting too few micro-features on too few sites. As David French put it in a critical response to the bill in *National Review*, Hawley would be left playing "whack-a-mole" with a thousand different Big Tech innovations, equipped with only the slow-grinding apparatus of government. Rather than relying on the bill itself as a solution, Hawley ought to take the publicity it has provided as an opportunity to articulate a comprehensive, intellectual case against the excesses of social media and all of its social and spiritual consequences. Viral figures ranging from Jordan Peterson to Jonathan Haidt and Ben Shapiro prove that there is an appetite for such public philosophy. If society itself is at stake — and Hawley seems to think so — then there is little time to lose.



Twittered Away

by Robert Stacy McCain

More than three years ago, my @rsmccain account was permanently suspended by Twitter. I had been using Twitter since 2009 and had more than 50,000 followers. The most interesting thing about my banishment was this: No one could explain why I had been banned. To this day there has been no explanation.

As I wrote in *The American Spectator* at the time:

> When I attempted to get my Twitter account reinstated, I received a cryptic message that I had been "participating in targeted abuse," although no evidence was offered to support this accusation. Who was targeted? What was the abuse? How did I participate? No one will say. In a statement to Debra Saunders of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Twitter officials cited "privacy" to justify this silence as to the nature of my alleged offense.

To be erased from a popular social media platform is to become, in some sense, an "un-person" in an age when the size of one's online following is a measure of one's influence.

My banishment from Twitter in February 2016 proved to be an omen of things to come: five months later, Milo Yiannopoulos was banned, and in the years since, the suppression of free speech online has advanced so rapidly that Congress and the White House are paying attention.

Robert Stacy McCain is the author of Sex Trouble: Essays on Radical Feminism and the War Against Human Nature. *He blogs at TheOtherMcCain.com.*

What Should Conservatives Do About Google?

The reason for cracking down.

by J. Arthur Bloom

Google office, London, 2018 (freemind-production/ Shutterstock)

With news of an antitrust probe, congressional hearings on bias, accusations from Peter Thiel of "seemingly treasonous" cooperation with the Chinese government, and ongoing revelations about leftist employees running amok on the company's voluminous Listservs, Google has had a bad couple of months.

For consumers of conservative and alternative media, however, one story should provoke particular concern. Reporting in the *Daily Caller* this May revealed manual blacklists that apply to "special search results," or all of the other results that aren't the famous blue links. On that list are a number of conservative and alternative media sites, including *Consortium News*, which is run by the Iran–Contra investigator Robert Parry, and the website of *The American Spectator*.

Though this reporter has exposed several of these blacklists — the term is used by Google internally; there is no dispute on this point — it is important to be clear that to some extent these lists are inevitable. It is not desirable, either for Google as a company or to news consumers, for conspiracy websites to show up in Google News. Until their machine-learning algorithms are sufficiently advanced to weed out that material automatically — and it's by no means clear that would be a better solution — manual blacklists will remain necessary.

But Google has not been forthright about its blacklists. The company's executives, when testifying before Congress as recently as this July, continue to insist that there is no blacklisting going on. In reality, though, the company has internal guidance about the reasons something may be blacklisted: if content is sponsored or deceptive. The problem is that, as far as I know, *The American Spectator* is neither.

With manual blacklists, choices are made that in any other context would be called editorial decisions. Adding and removing domains from Google News is not fundamentally different from the work of the homepage editor of a news website. In other words, they are acting like a publisher, not a platform. This has implications for the debate over Section 230, which says platforms are not liable for what gets published on them, and is probably the reason Google is reluctant to be straightforward about its blacklists.

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When the website in question is not a news publication but instead the homepage of the internet, it matters a great deal who is making these editorial decisions, especially when Google appears to be applying its own stated policies inconsistently.

A more successful congressional hearing would have forced the company to explain its practices publicly and in detail. Unfortunately, during the June 16 hearing, none of the senators pressed Google's witness Karan Bhatia, its vice president of policy, on these points. They should do so in the future.

Between the blacklisting of some conservative sites and the internal freakout over the conservative views of Heritage Foundation President Kay Coles James, it appears that Google's leadership is unwilling to stand up to its overwhelmingly left-wing employees. It is becoming increasingly clear that the company is unresponsive, if not outright hostile, to the point of view of the 35 to 40 percent of Americans who call themselves conservatives.

Conservatives should ask themselves why this is and what they can do about it. Media platforms have the ability to shape American democracy in profound ways, and if they wield this power against their own consumers — and there is some evidence they already have — it will not be good for conservatives. These platforms have not had to respond to conservative concerns for the same reason that Budweiser spends advertising dollars on a cornucopia of gay heraldry flags: The only credible consumer pressure against companies comes from the Left, so that's who they listen to.

Conservatives must get much smarter about their consumer decisions and their relationship to capitalism. The days when the free market and traditional values went together are over. The Right must be willing to bring both consumer and regulatory pressure to bear against companies that are subversive of God, country, and the well-being of the people. At the very least, they must stop handing them their money and their data. They must seek out alternatives, and, if necessary, build them.

The galaxy of nonprofits and policy shops that claim to represent the interests of conservatives in Washington should make a pact not to take any money from Google and perhaps other platforms, as well.

But the most effective way to force Google to change its behavior is the threat of antitrust action. For this to work, the threat must be credible. Present them with a choice: end the sort of anticompetitive practices for which they were fined $5 billion in Europe last year, remove interoperability barriers, and make all blacklisting procedures transparent, or be broken up.

It is hard to see how anything less is sufficient to deal with a company that has the potential to influence elections. This is not a notional concern: The Stratfor leaks show that Jared Cohen, the former State Department aide who runs Jigsaw, previously known as the Google Ideas think tank, was deeply involved in stoking the Arab Spring. It would not be difficult to apply these same techniques to foment a color revolution here at home. Perhaps Jigsaw already is; the company applies SPLC data in their projects, as my reporting in the *Daily Caller* revealed. Conservatives need to be realistic about the kind of threat that poses to their future political success — and act on it. In the meantime, readers can defy Google and similar platforms by supporting blacklisted publications like this one.

Government Should Leave Google and Facebook Alone

Tucker Carlson isn't going to like this.

by Steven Greenhut

It's increasingly difficult to distinguish the views of the new "national conservatives" from those held by "democratic socialists" when it comes to government regulation of the economy and social media platforms. Both groups are upset at the outcomes that a free-ish society provides, so they run to big government to protect their sensibilities.

Fox News commentator Tucker Carlson — when he's not praising Elizabeth Warren or questioning free markets — has been calling for the federal government to rein in tech companies. "They are a threat to this country," he tweeted recently, because of their supposed monopolistic power. He wants Congress to do something.

Other conservatives have jumped aboard the "regulate them as utilities" bandwagon. They say that these firms discriminate against conservative views. The companies have "power and control of the national conversation," wrote John Hawkins in *National Review*. They also have market "dominance and almost infinite levels of cash to buy out any rising competitor."

I certainly believe these firms discriminate against right-leaning viewpoints. But every media platform discriminates any time it makes any publishing-related decision. There's a difference between publications and social media platforms, of course, but the concept is similar. You don't have to go to the site — and the feds should have no right to control it.

"Fox News Channel finished July as the most-watched basic cable network for the 37th straight month and topped cable news for the 211th consecutive month," reported none other than Fox News, on its web-based news site. That network also has power over the national conversation, especially given President Donald Trump's love of its anchors. It has "infinite" cash, with infinite defined as a lot more than any of us have.

How about letting the Federal Communications Commission have a hand in how Fox is run, given that these are public airwaves, after all? Fox airs few liberal viewpoints and steers the national conversation to the right. Maybe Congress should bring back the Fairness Doctrine, the former federal policy forcing broadcast outlets to provide different views on key topics, so bureaucrats can assure Carlson's tirades really are fair and balanced.

I'm obviously being facetious. These Silicon Valley firms are private companies that have become spectacularly successful. Since when do conservatives call for government to break up companies for being too good at what they do? They shouldn't get billions

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of dollars in government subsidies or share their data with spy agencies, but beyond that the government should, you know, leave them alone. No company's decisions will ever make everyone happy. Some of them will make us angry.

Yes, we've all become dependent on Google searches, Facebook homepages, and our Gmail accounts. But that doesn't make these companies monopolies. They all have competitors, even if other search engines, discussion boards, and email providers have a less successful product.

The tech world is highly competitive and evolves quickly. A 2007 article in the *Guardian* focused on Rupert Murdoch's MySpace "monopoly" and noted that it might never "stop its continuing expansion which … could eventually extend Murdoch's influence in ways that would make his grip on satellite television seem parochial." As many others have noted, MySpace isn't even a thing anymore. Who knows where Google or Facebook will be in a decade?

Public utilities are industries such as electricity, water, and waste disposal that require enormous capital investment and are fundamental for life itself. You can actually go a few days without arguing with strangers on Twitter or posting cat videos on Facebook. Email is crucial for everyday communication, but many companies offer that service. Despite what Steve Bannon has said, Facebook and Google are not essential to our 21st-century lives. Not that government should control essential things — or we'd all be dead from hunger.

Since when do conservatives call for government to break up companies for being too good at what they do?

Utilities operate expensively and poorly mainly because of their government-granted monopoly status and subsidies. If you want a model of efficiency, openness, and competitiveness, then utilities should be near the bottom of the list — right above any state-level bureaucracy. They certainly shouldn't be the model for these media platforms.

Conservatives used to have a watchful eye toward government. But Carlson, in a recent talk, declared that private companies, which we patronize at our choice, are a bigger problem than the real monopolies in America today: government agencies that can regulate, fine, and imprison you.

Even these big-government conservatives ought to wonder about letting legislators and bureaucrats craft a corporate break-up plan. *Reason*'s Robby Soave wrote a hilarious article about a Senate hearing: "A Bunch of Senators Just Showed They Have No Idea How Facebook Works. They Want to Regulate It Anyway." What can possibly go wrong?

If tech firms violate privacy statutes or other specific laws, go after them for that. But if conservatives simply don't like the way they run their sites, their hiring practices, or the political beliefs of the companies' executives, they can start their own social media platform. Or they can skip it altogether and watch Tucker Carlson reruns — at least until the feds decide to regulate the "public airwaves," too.

A Conservative College!

Yes, you read that correctly! As we all know, there sadly aren't many conservative colleges. Grove City College, however, is one. In fact, *The Princeton Review* ranks us the #1 Most Conservative College in America. We have been consistently ranked #1 for Students Most Nostalgic for Reagan, and we've been ranked the #1 Best Buy in America by *Money* magazine. And it was our historic U.S. Supreme Court case in 1984 that led us to be the first college to break free entirely from all government aid. We are also home to one of the great intellectual institutes in America: the Institute for Faith & Freedom. We boast renowned scholars like Paul Kengor and Carl Trueman, and we're led by our president, the Hon. Paul J. McNulty, former Bush deputy attorney general and prosecutor of the 9/11 hijackers. We have experts on Ronald Reagan, C. S. Lewis, the Austrian School of Economics—Mises and Hayek, and more.

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Something Wicked This Way Comes

A de-Christianized America is a country without culture as we know it.

by Larry Alex Taunton

It's official: America is losing its religion. According to the Pew Forum, Gallup, the General Social Survey, and several other studies in recent years, this downward trajectory in American religious belief has been the trend for decades. But since 2001, the de-Christianization of America has progressed with startling speed.

What happened?

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon marked a watershed moment in the way Americans understood religion. Prior to 9/11, Americans were largely oblivious to the dangers of radical Islam. It was always something over there, far from our borders. What collapsed with the Twin Towers was the illusion that the United States was insulated from the violence of that religion as Americans came to grips with a fundamental biblical truth: evil exists.

But 9/11 brought another seismic shift in the American soul. After an initial wave of patriotic fervor that even the most ardent leftist dared not mock publicly, this unity of the American people and awakening to the true nature of Islam — both conservative impulses and thus intolerable to the liberal establishment — dissolved under the acid of cynicism as the Left devoted itself to redirecting the focus of America's ire from outward at the terrorists and terrorist states that support them, inward to America itself. Its line of reasoning was that the United States deserved it.

What followed was much introspection and handwringing over our past sins against the Third World. Our attackers were victims of American imperialism, and, it was alleged, we had provoked these attacks. Full of loathing for what America traditionally has represented, liberal elites used this rationale to launch their own attacks against America's fundamentally conservative institutions and ideals: sovereignty, self-reliance (that is, independence from government), marriage, suspicion of the environmental scare, and, above all, Christianity, the bedrock of American conservatism.

These were all proof of America's arrogance and deep-seated bigotry. America, we were told, was out of step with the rest of the world and needed to be burned down Ferguson-style and rebuilt in the image of a Western European democracy: weak, her wealth pillaged and redistributed to the nations she supposedly had exploited in the first place, subject to the dictates of international bodies, and thoroughly secular. This sentiment reached its zenith with the election of Barack Obama. Obama was not, as some would have it, a socialist or a Muslim, but an anti-imperialist who believed, like his father, that America's emergence as a great power was an accident of history and that it was his mission to weaken the aforementioned institutions and level the global playing field.

Attacking religion in all of its manifestations, and none more than Christianity, became fashionable. It is no coincidence that the years immediately following 9/11 saw the publication of a spate of anti-religious bestsellers:

- Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* (2003)
- Sam Harris' *Letter to a Christian Nation* (2006)
- Daniel Dennett's *Breaking the Spell* (2006)
- Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* (2006)
- Christopher Hitchens' *God Is Not Great* (2007)

Apart from Brown the novelist, the others were a new breed of aggressive, evangelical atheist — collectively known as the "New Atheists" — hell-bent on driving religion from public life. Of course, there is nothing new about atheism. This was old atheism, and these were old, outdated arguments with slick new packaging.

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Governor's Mansion Nativity, *University Press of Mississippi, 2019 (Bill Wilson Studio)*

Each New Atheist reserved his most savage rhetoric not for Islam, as one might have reasonably thought, but for Christianity. Take for example the opening lines of Dawkins' *The God Delusion*:

> The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving, control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.

Soon, Christianity became the cause of all the world's evils, and criticism of any other religion was taboo. No, it wasn't the Amish or Methodists who flew those planes into the sides of the Twin Towers, but Christianity nevertheless was interpreted as part of the West's colonial past and therefore a great evil. Jesus' words, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), politically incorrect and demanding of exclusivity, did not fit neatly within the pluralistic model Americans were encouraged to embrace.

Christianity was also (and rightly) seen as the primary obstacle to progressives' cultural agenda. It was Christianity, after all, that promoted the sanctity of life in opposition to abortion-on-demand; that declared marriage to be a holy, God-ordained institution between a man and a woman; that urged reliance upon God and not upon government; and that said — *shiver* — that all people and their governments were subject to a higher law and would be judged in the next life for their actions in this one.

In the secular European model, as in the Roman Pantheon, all religious "truths" are declared to be equally valid, provided all bend the knee to the ultimate truth, the state. And just as with Rome, Christianity by its very nature subverts any government with these ambitions. One finds this rebellious spirit in the Decalogue: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." As I explained in an interview with Fox News' John Stossel, in the biblical worldview, the state is a temporal institution meant to serve man, an eternal being. In the progressive model, this is reversed: man, a temporal being, serves the eternal state.

Nowhere have I seen these two diametrically opposed worldviews on display more than at the National Prayer Breakfast (NPB) in 2009. It has been my privilege to attend several of these events over the years. Since the first Eisenhower administration, the sitting president of the United States has gathered with ordinary men and women, public figures, heads of state, and various other notables to pray for our country.

Joining the newly elected President Obama and first lady Michelle on the dais at the 57th NPB were Vice President Joseph Biden, Reps. Heath Shuler and Vern Ehlers, Christian band Casting Crowns, and former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Tony Blair.

If you think that an eclectic gathering of this kind might be vague when it comes to identifying the entity to whom prayers are directed, your skepticism is not altogether misplaced. The NPB, once an explicitly and unapologetically Christian event, has

become, like America, pluralistic in nature. One may reasonably wonder about the price of such harmony. A unity that affirms no doctrine or creed is shallow and affirms nothing but unity for its own sake.

Tony Blair's keynote speech, then, came as no small surprise. Blair began with the usual greetings and well wishes to the new president, but swiftly moved to matters of more significance. He warned of the dangers of radical Islam and the rising tide of "an increasingly aggressive secularism, which derides faith as contrary to reason and defines faith by conflict." This was a clear shot at the militant atheists — guys like Richard Dawkins and the late Christopher Hitchens — who are treated like rock stars in Britain. Blair also expressed his doubts about the ability of even a moderate secularism to provide a basis for society:

> I only say that there are limits to humanism and beyond those limits God and only God can work…. We can perform acts of mercy, but only God can lend them dignity. We can forgive, but only God forgives completely in the full knowledge of our sin. And only through God comes grace; and it is God's grace that is unique. John Newton, who had been that most obnoxious of things, a slave trader, wrote the hymn "Amazing Grace": " 'Twas Grace that taught my heart to fear and Grace, my fears relieved." It is through faith, by the Grace of God, that we have the courage to live as we should and die as we must.

President Obama followed Blair with what was supposed to be an account of his own conversion to Christianity. But it was clear that he did not understand Christianity at all, because there was no mention of sin, repentance, or Jesus Christ. Christianity seemed to consist of "God's call to a higher purpose." His was a civic religion, in which God serves as a kind of cosmic cheerleader who accommodates himself to us and our purposes, rather than we to him and his. Both men quoted from the texts of other religions, but Blair quoted them to make a Christian point, while Obama quoted them to make a secular one. The contrast was striking.

Obama, seemingly annoyed by Blair's speech, pushed back at the former prime minister by saying that he welcomed people of all faiths and those who have no faith, suggesting that secularism was the future and faith a private matter. One might argue that a private faith is an irrelevant faith. But Obama, ever the pluralist, would have none of it. Proudly citing his own religious heritage, he said,

> I was not raised in a particularly religious household. I had a father who was born a Muslim but became an atheist, grandparents who were non-practicing Methodists and Baptists, and a mother who was skeptical of organized religion, even as she was the kindest, most spiritual person I've ever known.

Laying aside the oxymoronic language — grandparents who were "non-practicing Methodists and Baptists" and the irreligious but deeply "spiritual" mother — Obama was positioning himself as all things to all people while affirming absolutely nothing of substance. He was the spirit of the Pantheon personified. Above all, he embraced secularism and conceded belief in God (or a god) only to the extent that he felt such a gathering required it of him, and maybe a little less than that.

It was strange that Blair sounded like the American and Obama the European. Blair sought to give teeth to the sort of address that is often full of feel-good, meaningless god-talk. He seemed to be trying to warn Obama, Congress, and America of what lay ahead if we continued down the path we were on. Blair knew what he was talking about. Aggressive secularists have defanged western Europe and the United Kingdom ideologically and spiritually. As a consequence, they have made way for radical Islam. Secularism, as we have seen, is no match for such an absolutist doctrine. Blair recognizes that the reestablishment of the Christian faith is the West's only hope.

> What atheists can point to are secular societies that are still running off their accumulated Christian capital.

Some have questioned the sincerity of Blair's remarks, suggesting that he was simply playing the politician and giving his American audience what they wanted. Perhaps. In that setting, however, I can think of easier ways to do it. Besides, whatever capital he earned with the audience was immediately lost on a British press that wasted no time in condemning his speech. Obama, certainly, was in no mood to accept Blair's counsel. He seemed to regard himself as a new and better future, as one who is an oracle unto himself. Power breeds arrogance. All the more so when he who wields it dismisses all received wisdom and instead believes that truth is an island that he alone occupies.

At this point in our discussion, it seems appropriate to discuss the first chapter of the Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Romans. I will not quote it here in full, but verses 18 through 32 outline the progression of depravity a society, any society, will follow once it "suppresses the truth" about God:

> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Paul argues in this chapter that once we suppress belief in the transcendent, we sever our ties with absolute truth — with reality, in other words — and become, in effect, all sail and no anchor. We then pervert the truth and ultimately pervert life itself. This pattern progresses through three distinct phases: the worship of nature and elevation of animal life (verses 23-25); homosexuality (26-27); and, finally, an utterly "debased mind" (28-32). In so doing, he says, we "exchange the truth of God for a lie."

Sound familiar? Indeed, so relevant is this passage that it sounds like Paul wrote it last week. And he wrote this without the benefit of meeting, as I have, Princeton bioethicist Peter Singer. Atheism's current vanguard, having inhaled so deeply of a Christian

ethos that serves to restrain their actions if not their words, is fast being replaced by the children of their anti-religious revolution, and if the current cultural climate is any indicator, they will be all too willing to do what the New Atheists themselves would not do: take atheism to its logical conclusions.

For an idea of what that will look like, we need only consider Singer, who is, quite possibly, the most influential philosopher of the second half of the 20th century and beyond. In 1975, he published *Animal Liberation*, which gave rise to the modern animal rights movement. (Once, when dining with Singer in his hometown of Melbourne, Australia, I listened as he explained his animal rights philosophy. A vegetarian for obvious reasons, he ordered gnocchi. I ordered kangaroo. I'm not sure what compelled me to do it. Well, maybe I am.) He is the most philosophically consistent atheist I have ever met.

Dangerously so. Journalist Kevin Toolis writes of Singer, "[W]hat is legitimate for Singer is just plain murder for other people." It is Singer's view that man is an animal like any other and that he deserves no special status among the various species. That thinking is, he argues, the residue of Christian thought. Worse, he has argued that parents should get 28 days with a newborn child to determine if they want to keep it or euthanize it.

This is where atheism, pushed to its natural outcome, takes you. This is Atheism 101. As Fyodor Dostoevsky so eloquently put it, "If there is no immortality, there can be no virtue, and all things are permissible." If you think that philosophy hasn't permeated our society, consider Planned Parenthood's annihilation of the unborn, the push for live abortions, and the selling of baby parts. If this isn't evidence of debased minds, I don't know what is.

In his commentary on the above passage from Romans, the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas put it something like this: God made the angels all spirit and no flesh. He made the animals all flesh and no spirit. Man he made a composite of both spirit and flesh. As a consequence, man can either ascend to the higher or descend to the lower. We are presently descending to the lower — the animal.

Proponents of a society free from religious influence can point to no nation or civilization founded upon atheism that we might call even remotely good. The story of those regimes is well documented and may be summarized in a word: murderous. The secular regimes of the 20th century killed more than 125 million people. That is more than all religious wars from all previous centuries combined.

No, what atheists can point to are secular societies that are still running off their accumulated Christian capital. But beware. When the fumes in that tank run out, tyranny cannot be far away.

In his farewell address in September 1796, George Washington offered a warning to his fellow countrymen:

> And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

Washington was not simply playing to the masses by tossing them this morsel of religious rhetoric. He was referring to a dangerous European experiment named the French Revolution, which sought the destruction of the Church and the institutionalization of atheism. The experiment was a failure. What followed was regicide, civil war, and the Reign of Terror. Deciding that belief in something beyond oneself might, after all, be a good idea, the clever social engineers of France's Committee of Public Safety (a misnomer if ever there was one) responded with a half-measure, creating the ridiculous "Cult of Supreme Being" in 1794. It, too, was a failure. Washington recognized the pitiless nature of a godless society.

The naïveté of our modern social engineers is no less profound. On the one hand, they want to kick out the Christian underpinnings of Western civilization; on the other, they think they can maintain all that Christianity has given us: science, art, law, literature.

In his 1949 book *Christianity and Culture*, T. S. Eliot put the problem this way:

> It is in Christianity that our arts have developed; it is in Christianity that the laws of Europe — until recently — have been rooted. It is against a background of Christianity that all of our thought has significance. An individual European may not believe that the Christian faith is true, and yet what he says, and makes, and does, will all spring out of his heritage of Christian culture and depend upon that culture for its meaning…. I do not believe the culture of Europe could survive the complete disappearance of the Christian faith. And I am convinced of that, not merely because I am a Christian myself, but as a student of social biology. If Christianity goes, the whole of our culture goes.

To put it another way, you can't go over a waterfall only halfway. Eliot is right to say that Christianity has given rise to the West and to the very framework of our thoughts, ideals, and who we are as a people, even if we do not know or acknowledge it. I recall Indian scholar Vishal Mangalwadi telling me some years ago that the line "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal" makes not a bit of sense in anything other than a Western context. That is because nowhere but in the West is man's equality understood to be spiritual — rather than physical, material, or social — in nature, and that, he says, is entirely due to Christianity's ennobling influence.

In his magnum opus, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Edward Gibbon put Christianity in the dock and blamed it for the fall of Rome. Its principal ethics of love and forgiveness, he maintained, had sapped the Romans of their fighting virtues. This seems a heavy and questionable indictment against Christianity, especially when one considers that the Roman empire was already rotten to the core and but a century from collapse when in A.D. 313 Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, making Christianity a tolerated religion. Regardless, I am inclined to employ Gibbon's thesis here — but in reverse. It seems the decline of Christian virtue is sapping America — no, the whole of Western civilization — of her virtues, and, yes, even of her fighting virtues.

I have given a grim, perhaps even depressing, account of how we arrived at this pivotal point in our history and where we are likely to go next. Our culture, once such a safe place for Christians, has become increasingly hostile to them. Almost everywhere they look they see their views mocked, forced from the public sphere, or terminated by judicial fiat. They see public schools that are corrosive to the faith of their children. They see universities that are incubators of radicalism. They see the disintegration of the rule of law. And they see a political party that has more than hinted at its desire to dismantle the last remaining legal barrier that has protected Christians in this country for so long: religious liberty.

The evangelical strategy of the last half-century — a largely political strategy — has failed. The Great Commission, Christ's command that his disciples should "go into all the world and preach the Gospel," was understood in mostly political terms. Thus, top-down programs for cultural change, such as those championed by the Moral Majority and the Conservative Coalition, came to embody it. Jesus was recast as a Republican activist, and WWJD — What Would Jesus Do? — was reduced to political initiatives rather than changing the culture from the bottom up, one heart and soul at a time, as Jesus and the early Church had done it. As a consequence, Christians became insular and their influence minimal.

Simply put, the culture that evangelicals set themselves against politically began making more converts than they were. And with so much of the cultural space dominated by the Left, why wouldn't it? It is true that Christianity has been driven from many aspects of public life, but Christians have unwittingly accelerated that process by retreating from it and limiting their civic engagement to voting and InstaTwitFace posts.

The proof of Christianity's retreat is difficult to refute. According to a 2015 Pew Forum survey, membership is declining in both Protestant and Catholic churches across America. Protestant evangelical denominations have remained the most stable — a loss of less than 1 percent in the last seven years — but that is hardly good news. This data means that the megachurch phenomenon is chiefly one of transfer of membership rather than one of conversion. Worse, according to LifeWay Research, seven in 10 Protestant children currently in the Church will leave it by age 23.

But there is hope. While Europe, with fewer people in churches on Sunday than in the city of Seoul, seems a lost cause, I hold out great hope for America. That is because the American Church's influence in American society is disproportionate to its size. Consider the numbers: according to Pew Forum, evangelicals number an incredible 26 percent of the U.S. population, while those who follow another strain of Christianity account for an additional 50 percent of Americans. My optimism only increases with the recollection that Jesus changed an empire with 12.

The American Church is a sleeping giant. But it cannot afford to slumber much longer. America must find its voice and its courage. And I want to put special emphasis on that last word, because courage, it seems to me, is what is most lacking among Christians. We have become what C. S. Lewis called "men without chests." To paraphrase a line from the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, we have come to think that safety and material well-being are the chief end of man. That is a secular, not a Christian, understanding of life. And that secular influence upon Christians has instilled in us a desire for the safety of our Family Life Centers and the comfort of our homes rather than a conviction that we must engage the world beyond our doors.

That must change. We are confronted with people intoxicated with their own revolutionary idealism who really believe that society can be a *tabula rasa* upon which they can create heaven on earth. But this vision is not inspired by the Christian conception of heaven; it is one without God, without any virtues beyond those which the state gives it, and without human dignity.

On the west side of the campus of my undergraduate alma mater, Samford University, there is a building called the Rotunda. To the casual observer, it has an attractive if otherwise undistinguished edifice, constructed as it is, like the rest of the university, in the Georgian style. Visitors who enter from the north side, however, are treated to the work of an artist of sublime skill. Gracing the walls are four oil paintings depicting miracles from the Bible: Moses brings forth water from a rock to quench the thirst of the Israelites, Jesus gives sight to a blind man, Peter and John mend the broken form of a lame beggar, and Jesus heals a paralytic. Of these, the fourth struck me most powerfully when first I saw it as a student. The man is withered, his body cold and colorless — except for his arm. It is there that Jesus touches him, and the flesh in the Master's grip is warm and pink. The artist has rendered the scene so skillfully that one imagines the whole body will soon be likewise restored.

Since the fall of man, there has never been a Christian nation. Instead, there have been nations with varying degrees of Christian influence. In the parts of those societies touched by Christ, the blood courses, fortifying, revitalizing, and sweeping away contaminants as it goes. At the cold and colorless extremities are those places the healing power of his Church has not yet reached. Here one finds cruelty, injustice, and indifference.

As militant secularists rush to banish Christianity from American public life, I have sought to give you a picture of what this country will look like should they succeed. For grasping the other arm of America is the hand of unbelief. Its effect is exactly the opposite of Christ's. What it touches, it destroys. That it has already done so to a large degree is evident in the blight of abortion, a creeping socialism that many mistake for Christian charity, the breakdown of the family, a rapid rise in crime, a decline in education, and suicides on a scale hitherto unknown. American society itself stands to be orphaned, cut off from its rich Christian heritage. Mercifully, Jesus Christ has not yet relinquished his grip.

If he does? As Eliot said, "The whole of our culture goes."

Two Years of Writing for *TAS*

They haven't been wasted.

by Dov Fischer

Rabbi Dov Fischer is Rabbi of Young Israel of Orange County, a Senior Rabbinic Fellow and West Coast Vice President of Coalition for Jewish Values, and an adjunct professor of law at two major Southern California law schools. He is author of two books, and his opinion columns have been featured in RealClearPolitics and have appeared in the Weekly Standard*,* National Review*, the* Wall Street Journal*, the* Los Angeles Times*, the* Jerusalem Post*, and* American Greatness.

If Hyphen Cortez is correct, you will never read this because the world will have ended before the annual *American Spectator* gala. Either the glaciers of Greenland will have melted and ruined the reams of pulp on which this essay is to be printed or the impact of cows from Australia to Argentina farting their very last will have proven too overwhelming for the printing presses to operate. Yet I invest the time to write this because I believe the world will not have ended, but that, *au contraire*, Reps. Jerrold Nadler and Adam Schiff still will be investigating President Trump's Russian collusion, Rep. Al Green still will be pushing for impeachment, and Joe Biden still will be gaffing (if he still appears to be conscious).

It now is some two years since I began writing regularly for *The American Spectator*. It has been a joyride for me, coming to encounter so many fun and enthusiastic readers and, yes, fans — as well as one or two anti-Semites and one or two Jewish self-haters who love to write comments like this one: "I just read Dov's super-long article, and what a waste of my time! I can't believe I wasted half my day!" (And the thing is, that guy writes *the same thing after every article*, like he's dealing with an addiction. Like, if you hated a writer that much, would you read him every day for two years? And what does it say about an intellect that needs half a day to read 1,500 or so words?)

My relationship with *TAS* goes back to the 1970s. I was a young conservative back then, attending Columbia University undergrad. All my professors were leftist Marxists. All my enemies were leftist Marxists. The thing is, all my *best friends* also were leftist Marxists — because that was pretty much all they had for me to choose from. Since Jeffrey Epstein has shown us what two days in solitary confinement can do to a person (all the more so if there is a hit out on him), imagine the solitude of attending a university that is 99 percent leftist Marxist and 0.99 percent anarchist, with two Orthodox Jews accidentally included by the computer for diversity.

So two momentous things happened to me in the mid-1970s: (i) I married the other Orthodox Jew there, a marriage that began so very great and then ended after 25 years (for good behavior) and (ii) I became enthralled with *The American Spectator*. Among the Intellectualoids. The Continuing Crisis. Boy Clinton. Public Nuisances. Ben Stein's Diary. And that latter marriage (Biblical polygamy?) remains in full legal force.

I read all the readers' comments after every one of my *TAS* articles appears. I do not respond to them directly because of the time constraints that accompany being a synagogue congregational rabbi, a law professor at two law schools, a practicing legal consultant, and a regular writer for two

other publications in the Orthodox Jewish orbit. But there is an occasional responsive or clarifying comment amid the comments from a "Colonel Reb" that tends to parallel my own thoughts exactly. As it happens, "Reb" is an affectionate honorific bestowed on rabbis by their congregants and friends. And, as it happens, four different governors of the Commonwealth of Kentucky (not a "State"!) have bestowed on me the privilege of being named to the "Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels."

Some readers, over the years, have written me some incredibly warm comments. Some have even asked as a compliment, "Hey, Dov, your stuff is so good. Why do you write for *The American Spectator*? Why don't you write for a larger publication and get your voice out there to more people?"

It is a fair question, and — assuming the world still exists when the gala happens — here's the answer.

The American Spectator lets me write in my own voice. They allow the snark when I feel snarky; they allow me to sound scholarly when I feel academic and trenchant when I feel coated with trench. They allow me to write on whatever burns inside me: the hypocrisy and lying of Democrats and their Left Media shills, baseball and the Yanks and Mets and how much I despise Colin Kaepernick and the NFL and the NBA and women's soccer thanks to the loathsome Megan Rapinoe, the hypocrisy and lying of the Left Media and their Democrat shills, country music and George Jones and Garth, the hypocrisy and lying of shills and their Left Media Democrats, Israel and the falsehood and myth of "Palestine," the hypocrisy and lying of Shill Leftists and their Media Democrats, and even Purim.

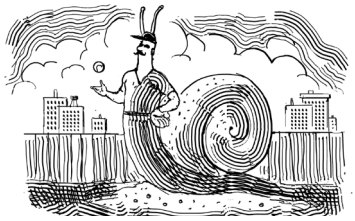
The American Spectator lets me write in my own voice. They allow the snark when I feel snarky; they allow me to sound scholarly when I feel academic and trenchant when I feel coated with trench.

So that's a thing. I get to write in my own voice. They leave in the puns. I cannot write without puns, and I cannot bear reading my own writing when the puns are edited out. Other publications' editors tell me, "Our readers won't get it." My *TAS* readers are smart enough to catch the puns.

But there's more. My pieces almost always are read by 10,000 or more people. That's not bad. How many likes does one need to have on Facebook? How many followers on Twitter? In other words, *TAS* has a far, far larger circulation than that, but Col. Dov alone has 10,000 and more reading. Often we have exceeded 50,000 on an article. And we even have documented that one of my pieces has been read by more than one million people just at the *TAS* site, and easily another two million or more elsewhere. People who send mass email distributions of articles they like even end up sending that one to me. I even got it in Russian. So it's not like *TAS* articles are like a tree falling in a forest — unless the forest is next door to Congress and Washington policymakers.

I know firsthand from personal emails I receive and people with whom I directly speak that *TAS* pieces are read by congressional representatives, U.S. senators, their aides, federal judges, local legislators, and the wonderful guy who frames my artwork. I get speech invitations from all over the country from people who read the stuff I write for *TAS*. They ain't inviting me because I'm a rabbi. I get librarians from small towns like the one in *Stranger Things* who phone to inquire whether I, an Orthodox rabbi, really am the author of a particular article being sought by some local with a library card and a dear heart. (Presumably they assume that rabbis can write only in Yiddish and with bad grammar.) On one occasion, a *TAS* reader hastily wrote to tell me that my personal website, rabbidov.com, had been hacked — and he told me so quickly that within minutes my webmaster was on it and securing it. My congregation is proud of me. My (second) wife of 18 years is proud of me. My kids ask whether all this writing means I have more money to give them.

I explain they need not worry. The world will be gone before they can use it. But, just in case not, be sure to feed Maalox and Mylanta to those nice Jewish cows, the Holsteins.



Going to Bat for the National Pastime

Still take me out to the ballgame.

by Larry Thornberry

As a longtime and deep-dyed fan of the Grand Old Game, I've been asked more than once if I think baseball is still "the national pastime."

Well, clearly not as much as it used to be. Watching a game takes a good deal more time these days, usually three-plus hours, thanks to all those strikeouts, deep counts, replay reviews, commercial breaks, and pitching changes without end, amen. So "national pastime" may be more of a marketing phrase than the current reality for the game I came up with and have loved for a lifetime.

There was a simpler and less cluttered time, in the middle of the last century and before, when baseball was the most popular sport in America by far. To call baseball the national pastime then would not have been off the mark. It was part of America's cultural connective tissue, especially for men and boys. If any boy at Woodrow Wilson Junior High School in Tampa, Florida, where I dozed five days a week between 1954 and 1957, had any ambition other than to become a Major League baseball player, he kept it to himself. (The high school curveball put an end to most of these plans, including mine.) The exploits of guys with names like Mantle, Mays, Musial, and Berra were closely watched, much admired, and often talked about. During the World Series each fall, only teachers with anger management issues or who needed more fiber in their diets objected to having the game playing on the radio.

After school, if one did not have an afternoon paper route or some other distraction, it was off to the playground for pickup baseball games. There was the odd basketball game in the winter, and in high school Friday night football was a big deal. People with a college background — which didn't include anyone in the blue-collar neighborhood I came up in — cared about college football. But the NFL was an afterthought. Perhaps a majority of young boys had never heard of it. It was baseball that we played year-round. You can do this in central Florida. It was the game we talked about and cared about. We even listened to games on the radio before television made it to Tampa in 1953. We then rejoiced in the Saturday Game of the Week, during which the loquacious Dizzy Dean animated baseball games and fractured the language. (Who knew that the third person past tense of the verb to slide was "slud?" As in, "He slud into third.")

A substantial fraction of the lawn-mowing and paper-route income of pre- and early teen boys of the day went to the purchase of baseball cards that came with a slab of bubble gum. These are still around, but they aren't the big deal they once were. Other than to excel on the playground diamond, our ambitions rarely reached beyond getting a complete

Larry Thornberry of Tampa is a longtime contributor to The American Spectator. *His work has also appeared in the* Washington Times *and the* Wall Street Journal.

set of Topps baseball cards each summer. Those who did were accorded high status in the neighborhood, and their opinions were sought on many matters. As we neared senior high, our interests shifted from cardboard baseball players to real girls. We found, to our sorrow, that getting a complete set of these was much more expensive and involved immeasurably more difficulties.

Younger readers might find it hard to believe that the NFL was of little account as late as the 1950s. One of Tampa's network stations then carried Washington Redskins games in the fall, but few tuned in. (The Skins quarterback then was a fellow named Eddie LeBaron. He was 5-foot-7. This was before NFL linemen were big enough to have their own zip codes. Today Eddie would not be able to see over the cheerleaders, let alone over his own linemen to spot his receivers.)

But then along came some great Green Bay Packers teams, the Colts/Giants championship thriller of 1958, and Broadway Joe Namath's brash guarantee, and before you could say, "Personal foul — 15 yards — repeat first down," football replaced baseball as the nation's favorite sport. It shows no evidence of relinquishing its top-sport spot, even though the NFL has allowed a bunch of thuggish malcontents to inject tendentious and divisive cultural politics into what should be a sports-only venue.

Now baseball has to compete with the NFL and the NBA for sports loyalty and sports dollars. It's doing pretty well, what with the average attendance at major league games about 28,000 this season and TV audiences also substantial, although these numbers have fallen off a little bit over the past two seasons. Part of the reported viewer dropoff, in all sports, may have something to do with the new and harder-to-measure ways of viewing sports. I have to say, though: trying to watch a ballgame on a smartphone isn't very smart.

Some claim that football and basketball are more in tune with our febrile, quick-cut, short-attention-span, digital era than the slower (I prefer "luxuriously paced") game of baseball. There may be something to this. Baseball requires both attention to detail and an attention span to fully plumb its manifold pleasures. But I've always thought those who think baseball is too slow aren't seeing all that's going on.

Baseball has a host of problems, some of its own making. Bigger, stronger, harder-throwing pitchers with an assortment of new breaking pitches to confound hitters have led to *waaaay* too many strikeouts, which are not as entertaining to watch as the ball being put in play. Bigger, stronger hitters, coached to go for the long ball rather the artful opposite field hit to move runners along, have led to *waaaay* too many home runs, which can be more thrilling when there aren't seven or eight in one game. (As Dolly Parton has long proven, there can be too much of even the best of things.) And the guy who came up with the rigid pitch-count regime should be hanged.

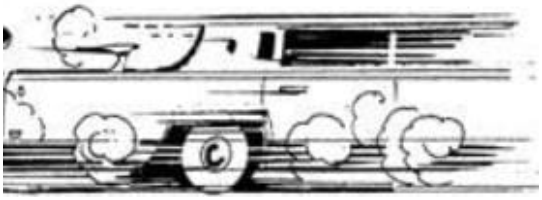
Techies have taken some of the charm out of the game, too. Field managers and team front offices are inundated with tons of matchup and performance data. Laptops have replaced spit cups in baseball dugouts. This is doubtless more sanitary, but not more entertaining. The Sparky Andersons and Casey Stengels of yesteryear carried all the "data" they needed in their heads. And don't even get me started on the computer jockeys of the sabermetrics crowd, who've saddled the game with new statistics that sound more like advanced algebra than baseball. Current chatter about launch angles and exit velocities may be of interest to engineers, but no baseball purist pays them any mind. And of course the economics of all major league sports are insane.

Baseball will survive these problems. It has prevailed over a lot worse for almost a century and a half now. It will survive because it still has the power to move us.

Baseball will survive these problems. It has prevailed over a lot worse for almost a century and a half now. It will survive because it still has the power to move us. The acrobatically turned infield double play, the circus catch in the outfield, the unexpected stolen base, the long, perfect throw from the outfield to nail a runner at third, the perfectly executed hit-and-run play can still thrill us. Trying to hang on to a one-run lead in the ninth against the heart of the lineup can create a level of tension unavailable in any other sport.

National pastime or no, baseball, like love, is here to stay. And until I move on to what follows this life, you can still take me out to the ballgame. For me, and for millions of other red-blooded Americanos, the last two words of the national anthem will always be, "Play ball!"

Dreaming of the Big Leagues, *2019 (Bill Wilson Studio)*



MPGs and Mass Triggering

American hot rods are revving back up.

by Eric Peters

American cars are back for good — if the government will let them stay. And what do we mean by American cars? We mean big ones. With big engines feeding big power to the rear wheels.

Without the big price.

For most of the postwar era, Americans drove exactly such cars because they were able to. Gas was cheap, and the federal government occupied itself largely with the Soviets rather than Detroit, which was left free to design cars according to what the market wanted. This happy time lasted until the early 1970s, when the federal government became interested in designing vehicles. Regulations were issued decreeing, among other things, how many miles per gallon they must deliver.

It did this irrespective of how much size — and engine — American car buyers wanted. Who were they to make such weighty decisions?

The effect was immediate. Big cars got small, and so did their engines. Horsepower waned as mpg waxed.

Within 10 years' time — from about 1975 (when the Corporate Average Fuel Economy, or CAFE, regulation gripped Detroit's throat with both hands) to 1985 — American cars became almost indistinguishable from imported economy cars.

Not — as Seinfeld likes to say — that there's anything *wrong* with that.

Smaller — and smaller-engined — cars have their merits. But Americans used to have a choice. Circa 1970, one could buy a 35 mpg VW Beetle — or a 350 horsepower Chevelle. By '85, very few American cars had more than 150 horsepower — and almost all of them were front wheel drive, with fours and sixes up front.

But some of them did get 40 mpg.

In desperation, Americans turned to trucks — still big and big-engined because of a "loophole" (per government gaslighting-speak) in the CAFE regs, which granted them a degree of mercy in the form of lower mandatory minimum mpg requirements. Trucks became the car of choice for Americans who didn't want to drive a K-car.

Then someone at Ford had an idea. Why not take a truck, *enclose the bed*, throw down some carpet, and add seats?

Voila — the SUV!

Americans were now more able to buy the cars they used to be able to drive — with four-wheel drive. Trucks and the SUVs they spawned became — and remain — the most popular American cars. So much so that even the import car brands began to build them, too — just as big, and with names like Titan and Tundra that appealed to American sensibilities. Hilariously, these vehicles often weren't available to the saps living on the home islands, where the government had never allowed bigness in the first place.

The government *here* didn't like it much, either. Soon, the loophole in CAFE was closed, and trucks and SUVs had to meet the same mandatory minimums as cars. If not, their builders would be slammed with

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Eric Peters has been writing about cars, bikes, and the politics of the road since the early '90s. His books include Automotive Atrocities *and* Road Hogs*; his new car reviews are distributed by Creators Syndicate.*

fines for "guzzling" too much gas, despite the clear abundance of it ("peak oil" having turned out to be as scientific as Lysenkoism) and the strange fact that the government wasn't *paying* for any of it.

Fining car (and truck) buyers — which is what CAFE amounts to, since the fines applied to the car companies are simply passed on to the car or truck buyer — for freely choosing to spend more of their own money on gas in exchange for more vehicle and more power is pretty much the same species of vengeful, puritanical effrontery as "luxury taxes," except applied to average people. This makes it even more egregious.

But an amazing thing happened.

People — damn them! — *continued* to buy trucks and SUVs, and, even worse from the standpoint of the vengeful puritans at the EPA, big cars with big engines made a comeback.

Dodge, above all, had the incandescent gall to resurrect the *rear-wheel-drive* American sedan, propelled by no less than a big V6 and accessibly available with a much bigger V8 — accessible because of a not-big price. For one-third the cost of a BMW 7 or a Benz S, you could get the same basic thing draped in American sheet metal.

And not just the one, either. Two big rear-drive and available and affordable V8 sedans appeared: the Dodge Charger and its Chrysler-badged brother, the 300.

> Smaller — and smaller-engined — cars have their merits. But Americans used to have a choice.

Each of them is available with a Hemi engine that effortlessly makes more than 350 horsepower. In the case of the Charger Hellcat Redeye — as American a car name as there ever was — it's more than twice 350 horsepower. This thing comes with a supercharged 6.2-liter version of the mighty Hemi that bitch-slaps the soy boys at the EPA with just shy of *800* horsepower. With AC and a really top-shelf audio rig.

It's the first and only street-legal production car that can get air underneath the front tires when launched. Mass triggering the soy boys at the EPA.

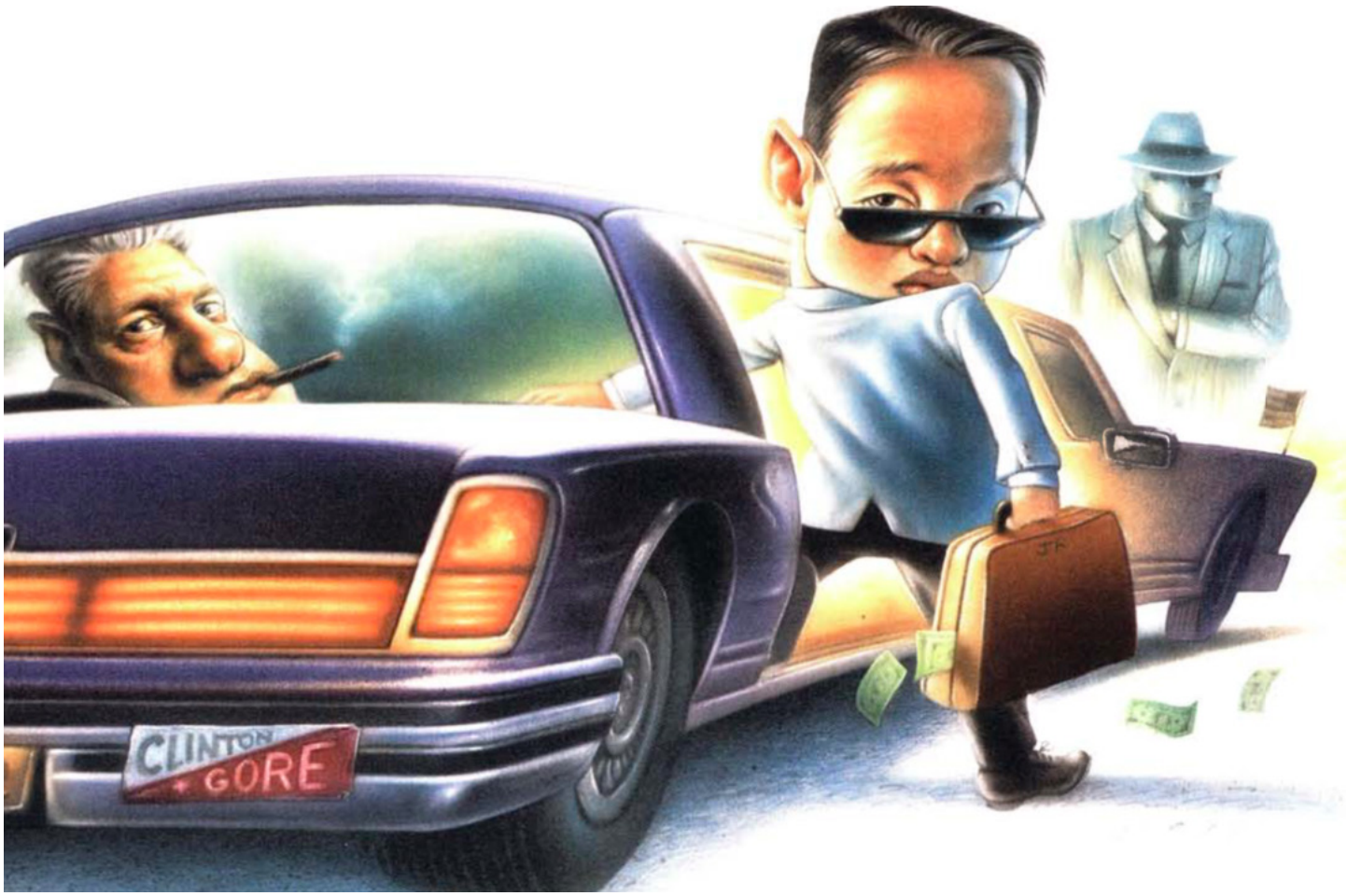
Especially when you consider that the thing costs $30,000 less than the base price of a new Porsche 911, which *cannot* get air under its tires, unless with the assistance of a block and tackle.

But really, the soy boys shouldn't complain because the Hellcat Redeye doesn't even use *that* much gas: 13 city, 21 highway. Not much more gas, actually, than a new Toyota Sienna minivan — which "guzzles" it to the tune of 19 city, 27 highway. The Sienna doesn't come with almost 800 horsepower or get air under its front tires when you run it down the quarter mile.

It also doesn't trigger the soy boys.

This calls into question the whole mpgs-*über-alles* thing. The real target seems to be fun.

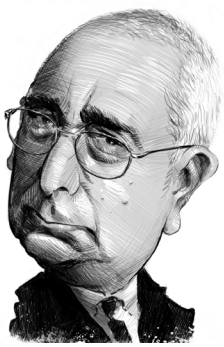
Thank the Motor Gods, it is making a comeback. Despite the best efforts of the government.



Breeding, Eating, and Killing

On Netflix and other great revolutions wrought by man.

by Ben Stein



Ben Stein is a writer, actor, economist, and lawyer living in Beverly Hills and Malibu. He writes "Ben Stein's Diary" for every issue of The American Spectator.

Lately I have been watching Netflix as fast as my old eyes will let me. Not just the usual Netflix about who was Himmler's favorite accountant at Auschwitz or how gay Ernst Röhm was. Nor about Hitler sneering as Berlin was incinerated.

Not even about some decadent royal court of long ago with everyone calling his boss "Your Grace ... " just before stabbing him or beheading him.

No. No indeed. I have been watching about nothing less than life on this Earth. As far as I can tell, the basic story is this: There is some unimaginably beautiful landscape or waterscape. In it is a herd of glowing, glimmering, shimmering fish or graceful, muscular quadrupeds. They move through their enchanted Edens until — whoa! — along come some evil wolves or squid or sharks to eat these beautiful creatures. The creatures have to flee for their lives or put up a fight to stay alive. If they make it, they have to trudge through grim landscapes of horror to get food for their young chicks or fishlets. Then they feed the damned little things. Then they do elaborate mating dances and then mate and breed and the whole thing starts again.

I may have this order wrong, but it's basically swim or parade, evade predation, bring food to your little one, then breed again and start the whole process again. Move around. Eat or be eaten, feed, breed, die. (All supervised by an ell-evil, all-devouring humankind killing the planet.)

That's life. As I watched, it occurred to me that this same routine goes for humans, too. Form a beautiful society. Then wreck it or try to wreck it by eating the most beautiful among them. Then breed and rebuild it. Only among us humans, the depredation part is called "revolution of the masses," and it kills a lot more people than it can eat.

All of this comes to mind as I watch the news about "the green revolution." It's just a way of the predators killing the beautiful. (I am sure AOC would say it's just the opposite: it's saving mankind from the predators. But tell that to the auto worker on welfare.) I thought of this in particular as I watched an interview with a genuinely insane man, a senator named Bernie, talking about how he's going to save the planet, cure cancer, and pay off the debts of college girls — all to save mankind. It's all just nonsense. Selfish nonsense. It's just slogans to replace one set of bosses with another set of bosses who will eat their fill, then be replaced by some new predators.

It scares me, and yet it's inevitable. Communism — or, as we now call it, democratic socialism — has such sweet slogans that an ignorant people cannot resist it or them forever. It doesn't matter that today's communism is explicitly anti-Semitic, always the canary in the cage of mass murder coming down the mineshaft (or the *Meinschaft*). If the Jews have to

be vilified to get us to real socialism, let it happen. Real racist socialism, then the Jews get it in the ass. It's for the good of the *Meinschaft*.

I can see it coming, though. The nation has been so mesmerized by the media's assaults on Trump, so bewitched by the phony charge of racism against anyone the media hates that week, that nothing can be allowed to get in the way.

The Muslims can rape in Sweden. They are not to blame. You're a racist if you notice it. Some gangsta blacks in New York can humiliate the local police and the cowardly politicians tell the cops they have to get humiliated or else they're racists. Israel can give its Arab citizens the best health care and education in the Middle East, but they're racists, too, because they're mostly white and because they're not barbarians.

To be alive is to prey upon the weak, to breed, and to eat. On some deep level, AOC sees it.

It all reminds me of those Netflix documentaries about the endless trudging meaninglessness of life. To be alive is to prey upon the weak, to breed, and to eat. On some deep level, AOC sees it. She's like one of those Arctic wolves waiting to drain the warm blood of the caribou. Then someone even darker in appearance and mood than she is will drain her blood. (It will come to Bernie a lot sooner. He's white and Jewish.) She's Madame Mao in waiting. She'll light the fires that will consume her, too. Bernie will long since have been ashes.

"Hardly anyone who is now alive can imagine how sweet life was before the revolution": so wrote Stendhal. We're about to see it again. Can we please have four more years of this sweetness before the real racists and real predators take over?

I Was a Teenage Scalper

And now the music industry scalps teenagers — and every other concertgoer.

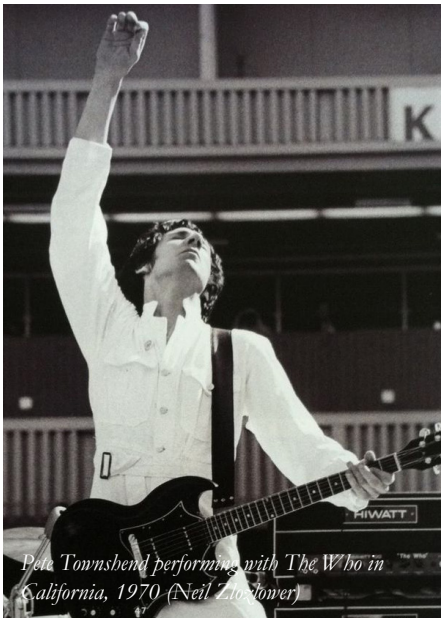
by Daniel J. Flynn

I decided to skip a performance by my favorite group at the very ballpark where I worked to pay for tickets to see them for the first time 30 years ago. Blame concert inflation, which, like ballooning costs for medical care and college tuition, ranks among the sharpest rises in price in recent decades.

The cheapest ticket available for The Who at Fenway Park this September in my search cost $66.85, which included a $17 processing fee and, inexplicably, a second $4.85 processing fee. In 1989, when I saw The Who for the first time along with three friends, tickets cost $23.50. Getting a bead on processing fees, I charged my three companions a $6.50 "tax" to make my own ticket more or less free. Months later, one friend, really wanting to see The Rolling Stones, apparently asked himself, "What would Keef do?," and proceeded to convincingly explain to his younger, sweeter girlfriend that if she did not come up with $60 (my processing fees rising sharply with demand by this point) then some hoods from a nearby city would murder him. For a U2 concert, I rented a U-Haul truck, stuffed a dozen or so concertgoers, a couch, and barbecue grill in the back, and proceeded to Sullivan Stadium satisfied in avoiding payment for an extra parking space.

Occasionally scalping tickets to friends for Tom Petty, Guns N' Roses, and other popular acts of the day provided a free concert ticket or supplemental cash at best and at worst resulted in a loss instead of profits — as occurred at the U2 event, a bath made more temperate by buying tickets below cost from fans desperate to unload extras on their way into the stadium — my aggressive, uncouth methods involved offering salt to quizzical faces seeking mere cost "because you're going to eat that ticket," only to sell them at face value moments later to others just as desperate to gain admittance.

Atop the risk of capital, scalping in high school often involved organizing transportation, a task made more difficult by a lack of a driver's license, and obtaining alcohol, which proved difficult, albeit less so, as a result of similar legal nuisances. For one show, underage me boldly took a three-quarters-gone beer to the concession



Pete Townshend performing with The Who in California, 1970 (Neil Zlozower)

Daniel J. Flynn, author of Cult City: Jim Jones, Harvey Milk, and 10 Days That Shook San Francisco*, is a senior editor at* The American Spectator.

stand claiming contamination from overbleached taps. "Drink it yourself," I implored only for the vendor to decline, as expected, and provide a fresh cup — a process repeated at seven more stands throughout the arena. This seemed just at the time given the exorbitant price of beer, the emptiness of our pockets, and unfair cultural hangups about teenagers drinking. And undercharging oneself for beer did not strike as such a moral leap from overcharging friends for tickets.

Like all middlemen, scalpers, accurately stereotyped as scally-capped gentleman dressed in track suits, became demonized. Performers blamed them for gobbling up seats and driving up prices. Ultimately, instead of beating the scalpers, the ticket conglomerates and acts became the scalpers.

When The Beatles played Shea Stadium in 1965, they charged $5. The average concert ticket price skyrocketed to five times that amount by 1996, and, according to *Pollstar*, to $91.86 this year. With price maximization per seat rather than a sellout the goal, the system eventually marginalized scalpers — yet another (somewhat) honest profession made obsolete by corporate greed.

The exorbitant prices make rock music, heretofore egalitarian on both sides of the stage, an enthusiasm indulged by the affluent or the fanatical. This, along with "artists" — the very word conveying a snobbishness — increasingly demanding passive listening instead of cathartic participation from audiences, helped exile the rock genre from top billing to an also-ran behind pop, country, and rap. "Awopbopaloobop alopbamboom" does not lend itself to seated, silent audiences. But shoegazing bands presenting themselves as "artists" often want just that.

In my youth, rock ruled youth culture. In the intervening years, video games, social media, superhero movies, and much else knocked it from its high perch. Music, which back then often dictated one's social circle, matters less; rock music matters much less. Surely $92 tickets do not help by pricing out young people from that genre's central, live experience whose energy exudes youth. Now, with Roger Waters, Bruce Springsteen, The Rolling Stones, and other senior citizens dominating the rock concert circuit, it seems more about recapturing, if for a night, youth.

As it turns out, I did just that after a friend — one who attended that first Who concert with me — offered a ticket for The Who at Fenway Park priced right at free. The Who, perhaps wisely, didn't sing the words "hope I die before I get old" on this stop on their "Moving On!" tour. Rock music also got old and perhaps died sometime before that aging. But, on occasion, for just $66.85, one can, if for a few hours, witness a resurrection.

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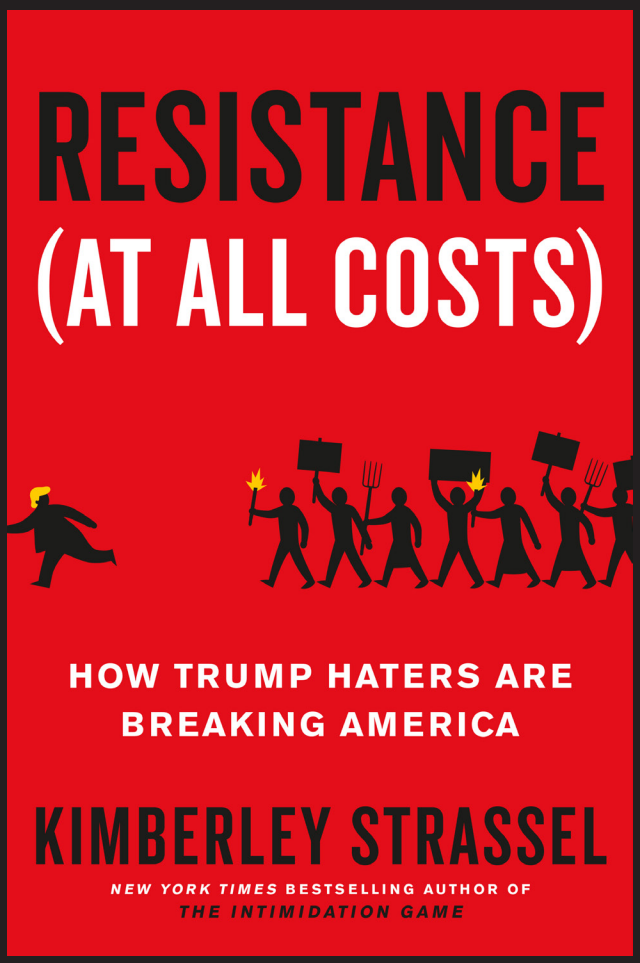

"Fifty years from now, when historians try to understand how America developed into lunacy, they'll read this book. Nobody's sharper, wiser, or more precise than Kim Strassel."

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