

Military Resistance 15A9



**“Wall Street Is Emerging As One
Of The Biggest Winners Of The
Trump Transition”
JPMorgan And BofA Enjoy Post-
Election Boost:
“Goldman Sachs Veterans Looking Set
To Secure At Least Five Top Jobs In His
Administration”**

1.13.2017 by: Alistair Gray and Ben McLannahan in New York and Laura Noonan in London; The Financial Times Limited.

Wall Street is emerging as one of the biggest winners of the Trump transition with two of its biggest banks reporting stellar earnings off the back of the post-election market rally and Goldman Sachs veterans looking set to secure at least five top jobs in his administration.

Although the president-elect attacked the financial sector during the campaign — and directly criticised rival Hillary Clinton for her ties to Goldman — the prospect of sweeping deregulation in banking and other US industries has buoyed global stock markets, helping Wall Street to record trading revenues.

JPMorgan Chase's trading business, the largest in the world by revenues, reported its best ever fourth quarter. Net income jumped 96 per cent from a year earlier to \$3.43bn. At Bank of America's global markets business, net income soared from \$171m a year earlier to \$658m, helped by cost-cutting.

Anthony Scaramucci, a Goldman alumnus, put his fund management group SkyBridge Capital up for sale as he prepared to become a Donald Trump economic adviser. He would join the incoming Treasury secretary, National Economic Council chair and chief White House strategist as Goldman veterans in Mr Trump's inner circle when the president-elect is sworn in next Friday.

Goldman partner Dina Powell is to become a White House economic adviser, while Jay Clayton, a Wall Street lawyer picked to head the Security and Exchange Commission, represented Goldman in private practice.



"The Goldman and Wall Street takeover of government raises incredibly serious concerns," said Dennis Kelleher of Better Markets, which backs tougher financial regulation. "They're not evil people. The problem is their whole life — their thinking and net worth and measure of success — is invested in the mentality that what's good for Wall Street is good for America."

Financial stocks have been on a historic rally since the election, with total gains since November 8 for the 63 largest groups in the sector of \$459bn. The S&P 500 Banks index is still up 24 per cent since Mr Trump's election.

Bank executives on Friday reiterated hopes that Mr Trump's victory, along with the Republican sweep of Congress, would usher in an era of higher interest rates, lower taxes and lighter regulation.

“The optimism for positive change here at Bank of America, and among our customers is palpable,” said Brian Moynihan, BofA’s chairman and chief executive.

Jamie Dimon, his opposite number at JPMorgan, said: “Hopefully when all is said and done, people will be looking at all the regulations done in the clear light of day, and will correct the things that should have been corrected.”

The results raise expectations for rivals Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley and Citigroup, which publish earnings next week.

Jason Goldberg, US banking analyst at Barclays, said: “While companies have been reluctant to quantify any potential positive impact from the changing political backdrop, most sounded optimistic that pro-growth policies would be beneficial over time.”

But some analysts warned the stellar trading numbers might reflect a one-off boost from greater volatility in financial markets — particularly because the earnings from the banks’ consumer divisions — and their retail-focused rival Wells Fargo — were more subdued.

At Wells Fargo, profits declined for a second year running and fourth-quarter earnings fell short of analyst forecasts.

California-based Wells also saw expenses rise, in part because it has been hit by a series of lawsuits and investigations. An accounting hit of \$592m caused by hedging further weighed on the Wells results.

The performance of JPMorgan’s retail division was also indifferent, in part because the US Federal Reserve’s recent decision to raise short-term interest rates came too late in the year to give earnings a significant boost. JPMorgan’s net income from retail slipped 2 per cent from a year earlier to \$2.4bn, and the bank posted a fall in net revenues from its credit cards and car-loans division.

Elsewhere, the 12 per cent rise in fixed income trading revenue at BofA was lower than the 15 per cent Mr Moynihan had pointed towards last month. JPMorgan’s net revenues for the quarter of \$23.4bn also fell shy of analysts’ estimates of \$24.2bn.

BofA said it would buy back an extra \$1.8bn of its shares after fourth-quarter net income rose 43 per cent to \$4.7bn.

MORE:

Trump’s Approval Rating Is The Lowest Of Any Incoming President In Nearly 25 Years:

Trump Could Be In Line To Have The Lowest Job-Approval Rating Upon Taking Office In Gallup's Polling History.

December 21, 2016 By Sonam Sheth, Politico [Excerpts]

President-elect Donald Trump's transition approval rating is lower than that of his predecessors over almost the past 25 years, according to a new Gallup poll.

Trump's approval rating hovers around 48%, which is at least 17 percentage points lower than the lowest approval rating that any of the past three presidents had during his transition.

George W. Bush had a 65% approval rating when he first took office, Bill Clinton took office with a 67% rating, and Barack Obama entered with a 75% rating.

Trump's disapproval rating of 48% during his transition is also the highest of any president in the past quarter-century. The Gallup study notes that a potential factor driving down the president-elect's approval rating is that members of the opposing party are much more critical of Trump than they were of previous opponents.

Obama and Clinton had approval ratings of nearly 50% from members of the Republican Party, while Bush's was almost 50% from Democrats.

According to the poll, Trump's support among members of his own party, 86%, also lags behind Bush's Republican support (93%). He also does significantly worse among independents than his predecessors did.

Trump could be in line to have the lowest job-approval rating upon taking office in Gallup's polling history.

Initial job-approval ratings for presidents generally tend to be about 8 points lower than their transition approval ratings, the study notes.

To date, Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush have the lowest initial job-approval ratings, at 51% each.

MILITARY NEWS

Desperate Assad Conscripting 50-Year-Olds As Beleaguered Syrian

Regime Forces Halved By Deaths, Defections And Draft-Dodging: “I Cannot Serve For This Brutal Regime Which Has Destroyed The Country”

“There Can Be No Peace Under Assad”

13 JANUARY 2017 by Telegraph Reporters, The Telegraph

Karim Habib never imagined he would join the millions of refugees fleeing his country, but on Monday he got a call he had long been dreading.

A friend in the Syrian army informed him that he would soon be called up for military service, which the 48-year-old oil worker believed was long behind him. He decided to pack his bags and head for the border.

“I did not think they would come for me,” he says from a relative’s house in Beirut, the capital of neighbouring Lebanon. “But they are recruiting more men now than at any other time during the war.

“The regime is so desperate they are coming for anyone that can carry a weapon. The age limit is supposed to be 42, but now even those in their 50s and those with health problems are having to fight.

“They are being stationed around the country - manning checkpoints in Aleppo and even on the frontlines around Damascus,” he said.

Reservists in Bashar al-Assad’s coastal heartland of Latakia also received orders late last month to immediately report for duty with the newly formed 5th Corps.

President Assad’s regime may appear stronger than ever, propped up by its Russian and Iranian allies and fresh from victory in Aleppo, but its beleaguered army is struggling.

“The 300,000-Strong Pre-War Force Has Been Halved By Deaths, Defections And Draft-Dodging”

The 300,000-strong pre-war force has been halved by deaths, defections and draft-dodging.

“There are no longer any men between 18-50 on the streets any more,” Mr Habib - using a pseudonym to protect his family still in Syria - told the Telegraph. “Those who try to avoid the call are imprisoned and tortured, so I felt I had no option but to leave.”

Mr Habib had a good job working as a manager at an oil company in the capital - making him one of the middle class Syria will desperately need when the conflict is over and the country tries to get back on its feet.

For now he waits in Beirut for his wife and three young children to be granted visas for Germany, where he holds citizenship and hopes to start a new life. But many others in Mr Habib’s position did not have the option of fleeing.

Under the cover of the regime’s offensive on Aleppo, thousands of civilians were captured and forcibly conscripted.

The United Nations has raised concerns that as many as 6,000 men of military age are missing after heading from east Aleppo into government-controlled areas.

“The regime has a serious manpower problem, which has so far been compensated by tens of thousands of foreign fighters and loyalist militias along with the Russian air force and Iranian advisers,” Faysal Itani, a resident senior fellow with the Atlantic Council’s Rafik Hariri Centre for the Middle East, told the Telegraph. “How it will control the territory it captures if the foreigners get bored and leave is an important question.”

With the Russians announcing a military scale-back and its most battle-hardy ally Hizbollah suffering huge casualties, the regime is having to dig deep.

Despite the ceasefire, brokered by Moscow and Ankara, government forces have continued offensives on strategic areas and are in need of troops to help reclaim them.

The regime is keen to regain control of the outskirts of Damascus, the capital and seat of power in Syria. The town of Wadi Barada is of greatest importance as the valley is the primary source of water for five million people.

Government forces have in recent days been pummeling the besieged town with air strikes and artillery fire on the ground.

“Damascus and the surrounding suburbs are at the top of Assad’s bucket list,” said Mr Itani. “Once that’s in hand, he will turn his attention to holdout pockets in Homs and Hama, and then Idlib.”

Idlib, which is controlled by a messy alliance of rebel groups dominated by the Islamist Jaish Fateh al-Sham, is now the largest opposition stronghold.

The government has been using it as a holding pen, sending rebel fighters from east Aleppo and other areas which have surrendered under so-called reconciliation deals.

Damascus Ali Haidar, Syria’s national reconciliation minister, said last week that he expected more accords in coming months to send thousands of fighters to Idlib from areas near Damascus and south of it, as the army advances.

But he said that the state could not allow Idlib to remain in insurgent hands indefinitely. Unless there was an international deal that addressed the situation, “then the other option is to go to an open battle with them”, he said.

“Mr Assad Has Promised To Retake The Whole Country, But It Is Likely A Promise He Cannot Keep”

Mr Assad has promised to retake the whole country, but it is likely a promise he cannot keep.

The opposing powers brokering peace talks later this month in Kazakhstan look set to carve Syria up into different zones of influence.

Mr Assad would keep Aleppo, which is important to Iran as it serves as a supply route from Tehran to Hizbollah in Lebanon, as well as coastal regions where the Russians have bases.

However, the president will be sure to lose control over much of northern Syria, where Turkey has stationed troops looking to create a “buffer zone” along the border.

The Kurdish question also still remains - whether Syria’s Kurds will be allowed to form their own federal state as they have in neighbouring northern Iraq, or whether they will be left out of the deal altogether.

As for the future of Mr Assad, it now looks increasingly likely he will stay in power until the next presidential election. He could then be replaced by a candidate from his Alawite sect.

It may be some time before Mr Habib is able to return.

“All I know is that I cannot serve for this brutal regime which has destroyed the country,” he says. “There can be no peace under Assad. Most who have fled will not return until he is gone.”

“It Seems Fair To Assume What Would Most Likely Have Benefited Santiago Was Help Dealing With His Traumatic War Experiences”

“It Is Known Psychiatric Drugs Are The Cause Of Just The Sort Of Inexplicable

Mass-Shootings Perpetrated By Santiago”



Esteban Santiago is taken from the Broward County main jail as he is transported to the federal courthouse in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, U.S., January 9, 2017. Amy Beth Bennett/South Florida Sun Sentinel via REUTERS

January 13, 2017 by Jim Gottstein. Alaska Dispatch News

Jim Gottstein was a plaintiffs’ attorney in the 1 million-acre mental health lands trust litigation, resulting in the creation of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority. For the past 14 years, he has donated his services to the Law Project for Psychiatric Rights.

He has won five Alaska Supreme Court cases regarding involuntary commitment and forced drugging on the grounds both are unconstitutional or illegal.

The glaring failures surrounding Esteban Santiago, resulting in the tragic killing of five people and wounding of eight others in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, prompts me to make some points about our misguided mental health system.

First, psychiatrists have no ability to predict who is going to be violent.

In a Jan. 3, 2013, Washington Post article, “Predicting violence is a work in progress,” after reviewing the research, writer David Brown, reported:

- “There is no instrument that is specifically useful or validated for identifying potential school shooters or mass murderers.”
- “The best-known attempt to measure violence in mental patients found that mental illness by itself didn’t predict an above-average risk of being violent.”

- “(S)tudies have shown psychiatrists’ accuracy in identifying patients who would become violent was slightly better than chance.”
- “(T)he presence of a mental disorder (is) only a small contributor to risk, outweighed by other factors such as age, previous violent acts, alcohol use, impulsivity, gang membership and lack of family support.”

In hindsight, the danger Santiago represented seems clear, but psychiatrists simply cannot predict violence.

Second, the mental health system clearly did not help Santiago. The system is fundamentally misdirected towards drug treatment for the completely unproven, and likely untrue, theory that what gets diagnosed as mental illness is the result of some brain defect.

It seems fair to assume what would most likely have benefited Santiago was help dealing with his traumatic war experiences.

Because of patient confidentiality we don’t know, but it seems likely Santiago was instead just given psychiatric drugs.

Third, it is known psychiatric drugs are the cause of just the sort of inexplicable mass-shootings perpetrated by Santiago.

As the International Society of Ethical Psychology and Psychiatry said in a statement following the Sandy Hook school massacre:

- Christopher Pittman was on antidepressants when he killed his grandparents.
- Eric Harris, one of the gunmen in the Columbine High School shooting, was taking Luvox. His partner, Dylan Klebold, had taken Zoloft and Paxil.
- Doug Williams, who killed five and wounded nine of his fellow Lockheed Martin employees, was on Zoloft and Celexa.
- Michael McDermott was on three antidepressants when he fired off 37 rounds and killed seven of his fellow employees in the Massachusetts Wakefield massacre.
- Kip Kinkel was on Prozac when he killed his parents and then killed two children and wounded 25 at a nearby school.
- In 14 recent school shootings, acts committed by persons taking or withdrawing from psychiatric drugs resulted in over 100 wounded and 58 killed.
- In other school shootings, information about the shooter’s prescription drug use and other medical history were kept from public records.

Fourth, the over-reliance on psychiatric drugs is extremely harmful and counterproductive. These drugs are so physically harmful that those diagnosed with serious mental illness by the mental health system have a lower life expectancy of 20-25 years.

In addition, it has been shown a noncoercive approach, that selectively uses neuroleptics (mismarketed as “antipsychotics”), can achieve an 80 percent recovery rate, while our system of “drugs for everyone forever” results in only a 5 percent recovery rate.

Dr. Loren Mosher, former chief of the Center for Studies of Schizophrenia at the National Institute of Mental Health, testified in one of my cases that he probably had more experience with unmedicated psychotics than anyone alive. He said he has never had to involuntarily commit anyone because he always made it a point to establish a relationship with his patient so they could agree on a course of action.

He testified that if somebody was about to do grievous harm he would stop them in any way needed, but he had never had to because of his approach.

Locking people up and drugging them against their will is not the answer. In addition to the drugs, the violence against patients by the mental health system begets violence from some of them.

We need noncoercive programs that help people deal with their problems and the traumatic events in their lives. We need to make people feel safe, listen to what they are telling us are their problems, and what assistance they would like.

Even the craziest person is telling us something useful if we take the time to listen and interpret. There are places that successfully do not use force against psychiatric patients.

We should start doing what works and provide noncoercive, truly helpful services for people diagnosed with serious mental illness.

MORE

**In Year Before Florida Shooting,
Suspect’s Problems Multiplied:
“He Told Me: ‘You Would Never Want
To Go To Iraq. I Saw Horrible Things,
Horrible’”
“He Was Very Different. He Was Sad”**

[Thanks to Clancy Sigal, who sent this in.]

JAN. 7, 2017 By LIZETTE ALVAREZ, FRANCES ROBLES and RICHARD PÉREZ-PEÑA; New York Times [Excerpts]

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Signs of Esteban Santiago's unraveling had mounted over the past year. But it was not until early November, when he walked into an F.B.I. office carrying an ammunition clip — leaving a pistol and his infant son in his car — to complain about a C.I.A. plot against him, that his behavior became disturbing enough to earn him a short stay in a psychiatric hospital unit.

In the months before, the police were called repeatedly to his home about domestic disturbances, and the National Guard kicked him out because of “unsatisfactory performance” after nearly a decade of service.

Mr. Santiago, an Iraq war veteran, increasingly spoke to relatives and associates about voices in his head that were tormenting him.

Then, a little before 1 p.m. Friday, Mr. Santiago, 26, turned up far from his Alaska home, in Terminal 2 of the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport. There, law enforcement officials said, he retrieved his checked luggage, pulled a 9-millimeter handgun out of his suitcase and used it to kill five people and wound six others, setting off a panic that shut down the airport.

Late Saturday afternoon, the United States attorney for the Southern District of Florida announced that Mr. Santiago had been arrested and charged on a federal criminal complaint “in connection with the deadly shooting of multiple victims at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport.”

Law enforcement officials said they had not determined a motive or cause for the attack.

And while they said they could not exclude the possibility of terrorism, the initial investigation suggested that Mr. Santiago had acted alone and that there was no evidence that he had terrorist ties.

But family members said they had a pretty good idea of what led to the attack.

“He said he heard certain voices, that the U.S. government wanted to enroll him in certain groups for ISIS, and he was very paranoid,” Bryan Santiago Ruiz, an older brother of Mr. Santiago's, said in an interview on Saturday in Peñuelas, the small town in Puerto Rico where they grew up.

Esteban Santiago lived in Anchorage, and Bryan Santiago said he had visited him there, most recently staying with him from August through October.

“He said that the C.I.A. controlled him through secret messages over the internet and told him the things he had to do,” he recalled.

It was on Nov. 7 that Esteban Santiago went to the F.B.I. office in Anchorage “to report that his mind was being controlled by U.S. intelligence agencies,” Marlin L. Ritzman, the agent in charge of the office, said on Saturday

F.B.I. agents called the local police, who took him to a psychiatric facility.

When Mr. Santiago went into the F.B.I. office, he left a pistol and his newborn in his vehicle, Chief Tolley said, and he had an ammunition clip in his pocket.

The police confiscated the gun but returned it to Mr. Santiago in December, Chief Tolley said.

Bryan Santiago said his brother was held at the hospital for just a few days before being released and, as far as he knew, did not have any follow-up treatment, like medication or therapy.

Esteban Santiago was born in New Jersey but was raised in Puerto Rico, where he joined the Puerto Rico National Guard in 2007 before he finished high school. A classmate said he had always wanted to be a soldier.

In 2010, Mr. Santiago was deployed to Iraq for nine months, working with the 130th Engineer Battalion clearing roads of improvised explosives and maintaining bridges, according to the Alaska Army National Guard. His company was awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation.

Family members said Mr. Santiago was never quite the same after his return.

“After Iraq, something happened,” Hernan Rivera, 70, Mr. Santiago’s uncle, said Saturday afternoon as he stood in his driveway in Union City, N.J. “When he came back from Iraq, he was a different person.”

He described his nephew as a “normal kid” who enjoyed reading.

“He was a person who used to talk a lot,” Mr. Rivera said. “And then when he came back, he kept to himself, he’d go to his room, he wouldn’t talk to anybody.”

In 2014, Mr. Santiago moved to Alaska and joined the Alaska Army National Guard. He got a job as a security guard and found a girlfriend 14 years his senior. A few months ago, they had a baby; a law enforcement official said it was not clear whether that was the same child that he brought with him to the F.B.I. office in November.

In January 2016, the girlfriend told the police that Mr. Santiago had flown into a rage while she was using the bathroom, broke down the bathroom door and was “strangling her and smacking her in the side of the head” while screaming at her, according to a criminal complaint filed against him.

A month later, he was charged with violating a court order to stay away from his girlfriend after the police found that he had been living with her again.

In March, a deferred judgment was entered in the case, meaning that it could be dismissed if he stayed out of trouble, but the signs of unrest continued.

Chief Tolley said that once in March and twice in October, Mr. Santiago was the subject of domestic disturbance calls, but each time, officers lacked the basis for making an arrest.

In August, Mr. Santiago, who had reached the rank of private first class and had won several commendations for his earlier National Guard service — including the Army Good Conduct Medal — was discharged by the Alaska Guard for “unsatisfactory performance.”

In two other mass killings, perpetrators had drawn attention from the F.B.I. before carrying out their attacks.

On Thursday night, Mr. Santiago boarded a flight in Anchorage, changed planes in Minneapolis on Friday morning, and flew into Fort Lauderdale. Law enforcement officials said that he had a semiautomatic handgun in his checked suitcase and that he followed all legal procedures for transporting the weapon. He went into a terminal restroom, took out the gun and loaded it, then returned to the baggage claim area and started shooting, officials said.

While people who knew Mr. Santiago recently saw anger, instability and paranoia, those who knew him earlier in his life had known someone very different.

Relatives and acquaintances in Puerto Rico remembered him as being quiet and shy — so reserved that in his hometown, Peñuelas, on the island’s southwest coast, few people knew anything about him.

Workers at the barbershop, the bakery and the furniture store, and parishioners at the churches near his family’s home, said they did not know Mr. Santiago or his family at all. At the police station, officers said they did not recognize him from the photograph that has been shown repeatedly on network and cable television since his arrest.

A neighbor of the family’s, Carlos Cruz, a man in his 50s who has lived in the neighborhood his entire life, said he remembered speaking with Mr. Santiago just once.

Those who did recall him described him as highly intelligent, kind and very quiet, part of a somewhat nerdy group who listened to American rock rather than music in Spanish. He spoke of joining the military, seeing it as a way out of the sleepy, economically stagnant region.

Rosemarie Zapata, 27, who attended middle school and high school with him, credited him with persuading her to join the Puerto Rico National Guard. At first, she failed the exam by two points, but it was Mr. Santiago who talked her into persevering and introduced her to his recruiter, she said.

“He told me, ‘Study, go, they will help us pay for college, so why don’t you try it out?’” she said. He convinced her that she could do it, saying, “You are going to defy all odds,” she recalled.

Years later, she ran into him in a Walgreens parking lot, shortly after he had returned from Iraq.

“He was very different,” she said in a telephone interview from Puerto Rico. “He told me: ‘You would never want to go to Iraq. I saw horrible things, horrible.’ He was very different. He was sad.”

Delia Candelario, who went to Josefa Vélez Bauzá High School with Mr. Santiago, said he played basketball with the best-behaved boys, who always followed the teachers' orders.

"He was the most peaceful of all of them," she said. "He participated in classes and all that, but he was pretty shy."

Another classmate, Joshua Ortiz, said Mr. Santiago was so quiet that when word got out that someone from their school had committed a massacre, hardly anyone could remember his name.

Mr. Santiago and his friends were "never known to be involved in any problem or any fight during the whole time we were in school," Mr. Ortiz said.

"We wonder, how could his life have changed so much for this to have happened?"

José Hernández, who taught Mr. Santiago history at the school, said: "He was brilliant and did not show any indications of being disturbed. It's one of those strange cases. There are students who you expect mischief from, but not this one."

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



"At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation's ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

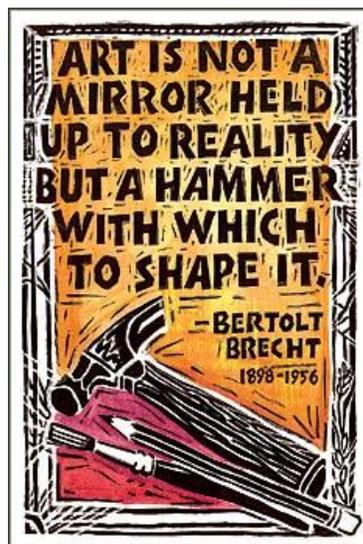
“The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

The rich are only defeated when running for their lives.

-.C.L.R. James

Questions From A Worker Who Reads: [Bertolt Brecht]



[Thanks to Alan Maass for quoting in Socialist Worker 1.12.17]

By Bertolt Brecht 1935

**Who built Thebes of the 7 gates?
In the books you will read the names of kings.
Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?**

**And Babylon, many times demolished,
Who raised it up so many times?**

In what houses of gold glittering Lima did its builders live?
Where, the evening that the Great Wall of China was finished, did the
masons go?

Great Rome is full of triumphal arches.
Who erected them?

Over whom did the Caesars triumph?
Had Byzantium, much praised in song, only palaces for its inhabitants?

Even in fabled Atlantis, the night that the ocean engulfed it,
The drowning still cried out for their slaves.

The young Alexander conquered India.
Was he alone?

Caesar defeated the Gauls.
Did he not even have a cook with him?

Philip of Spain wept when his armada went down.
Was he the only one to weep?

Frederick the 2nd won the 7 Years War.
Who else won it?

Every page a victory.
Who cooked the feast for the victors?

Every 10 years a great man.
Who paid the bill?

So many reports.

So many questions.

**“The Days When Someone Could
Rule The Syrian People Saying, ‘Shut
Your Mouths, I Will Do What I Want,’
Are Over”**

“Where The Regime Thinks It Is Most Stable Is Where It Is The Least So”

18th December 2016 by Ghayath Naisse, International Socialism Issue: 153 [UK]
[Excerpt]

I'm very optimistic, contrary to the general mood. The battle is hard.

But look, our revolution has been going for six years. What lessons have those six years brought?

First, that we can revolt, that the regime cannot simply crush the popular will, whatever it throws at it and whatever allies it finds.

Something is broken in the regime. Something has ended. If the Americans and the Russians and the rest impose on us a situation where Bashar al-Assad and his clan continue to reign, they will never again be able to reign like before.

The regime survives with a so-called “loyalist” milieu, consisting of over ten million people, almost half the population, still under its control.

And those people have a hatred, a real hatred, of that regime. Their daily life is martyrdom. There are immense demonstrations against the regime and the Assad family. There are great explosions ahead, and this is where they will happen. Where the regime thinks it is most stable is where it is the least so. The days when someone could rule the Syrian people saying, “shut your mouths, I will do what I want”, are over.

Then there's been the lesson of experience.

Long ago, if you were one of the “old” revolutionary socialists and you wanted to talk about socialism, you could say we want a workers' state based on workers' and peasants' councils and all that. People would ask questions, so you could say, this has happened, at least for a moment, in Germany, in Hungary and most importantly in Russia. You could say all that, but it was a very long way from people's experience.

Now all that is much simpler. Self-organisation is something people understand because of the coordinations. The Syrian people, without reading Lenin or Marx or Trotsky, have done this already in their struggles.

So when we talk of workers' and peasants' councils they understand it because they've done it; it's their lived experience.

The third lesson concerns the Islamist forces. They always used to say Islam is the solution. That hypothesis is now exhausted in Syria.

People have seen what it looks like when religious Islamist forces impose their model of government. That argument has been put to the test and failed.

What's left is socialism. It's down to us.

We believe that this is the only solution, the most humanist and most egalitarian, for the masses of Syria and of everywhere else.

The struggle continues.

World Class Cruelty

#1

Amidst Freezing Winter Weather, Zionist Occupation Authorities Deny Winter Clothing To Palestinian

Prisoners:

**“The Israeli Prison Service Had Accepted
The Clothes And The Other Kits, But The
Prisoners Said That They Did Not
Receive Anything”**

December 21, 2016 IMEMC News & Agencies

Amidst freezing winter weather, Israeli occupation forces have banned winter clothes for Palestinian prisoners in Negev Prison, it was revealed on Tuesday.

The Palestinian Prisoners Society (PPS) said that Israeli authorities prevented the entry of the winter clothing which Palestinian families had sent to their sons being held inside the prison.

According to PPS, all the families of the Palestinian prisoners have bought winter clothes and other kits for their sons, and sent them to the prison.

“However, the Israeli Prison Service had accepted the clothes and the other kits, but the prisoners said that they did not receive anything,” a statement from the organization said.

PPS also noted that Palestinian detainees inside Israeli jails, mainly the prisons in Al-Naqab Desert, suffer from the freezing weather in winter.

Days of Palestine further reports that approximately 1,000 detainees — out of over 7,500 — also suffer from a variety of different health problems.

Recent reports reveal that at least 250 of the 1,000 detainees suffer from serious diseases, and do not have free access to proper medical care.

MORE:

#2

Houston Police Force Torment The Homeless

“They Brought A Large Waste Management Truck And Are Forcing The Homeless To Throw Away Their Food, Pillows And Other Items”

December 28, 2016 by Derrick Broze via TheAntiMedia.org. [Excerpts]

Local activists attempting to hand out food and gifts were shocked on Thursday afternoon when Houston police forced the homeless to throw away the donations.

Around 1 pm on Thursday, several individuals met in downtown Houston to distribute plates of hot food, blankets, and other supplies to the city’s growing homeless population.

Soon after, Houston police arrived on the scene of two different intersections where the homeless advocates were giving out gifts and food.

According to witness testimony posted on Facebook, the police instructed the homeless to throw away everything they had been given.

“Not only were the police called, but they brought a large waste management truck and are forcing the homeless to throw away their food, pillows and other items,” reads one post.

A video from an ABC13 social media correspondent shows the police and trash vehicle parked under a freeway while a man narrates the situation. “Covers, Blankets, different things like that, pillows. They are throwing all of that away,” he says.

Shere Dore, a local activist who works with several organizations, including Food Not Bombs Houston, was involved in the food sharing and says the throwing away of the gifts was uncalled for

.

“I’m highly disturbed because lots of these items were not only given to the homeless by the community, but some of the blankets and jackets were literally purchased by homeless advocates like myself,” Dore told Anti-Media.

“HPD and the City of Houston are taking our cash and throwing it in the trash.”

Only moments before throwing away the gifts, the Houston police stopped Dore and a fellow advocate. Dore said her friend was taking photos of the police vehicle when the officer began questioning them, claiming someone had called and complained about people feeding the homeless.

In a video posted on Facebook, Dore tells the officer she will feed the homeless whether it is legal or not.

These types of situations are likely to increase in Houston due to a 2012 city ordinance prohibiting the sharing of food with more than five people at a time without fulfilling certain requirements created by city council.

The controversial measure, known as the “Anti-Food Sharing” ordinance by critics, was passed in 2012 despite resistance from one of the largest coalitions of political, activist, and religious organizations in Houston. The criticisms of the ordinance range from beliefs that it represents an attack on the homeless population to assertions it is another example of government restricting freedom.

The ordinance requires applicants to fill out a form and seek permission to feed someone while on someone else’s private property. If you would like to feed someone in a public park you must fill out another form.

The city argues that feeding the homeless food that has not been cooked in a certified kitchen could spread illness and that feeding them is only enabling homelessness. Although Houston police have yet to issue a citation for violation of the ordinance, it has been an issue of concern among activists since the moment it passed. In late November, ABC13 reported that activists delivered 75,000 signed petitions to City Hall calling for the repeal of the ordinance.

As Houston prepares to host the National Football League’s Super Bowl 51, there is concern that the homeless population will be forced out of the downtown area or subject to increased harassment from the police.

In November AP reported, “fences have gone up and dozens homeless people living under a Houston freeway overpass have been ordered out amid speculation the city is trying to make the area more presentable as it prepares to host the Super Bowl early next year.” The Texas Transportation Department claims the move was not related to the Super Bowl and insists they were responding to safety concerns for drivers and pedestrians.

Rio and Houston are not alone in their mistreatment of homeless individuals. In October 2014, the National Coalition for the Homeless released a report that found 21 U.S. cities have passed measures restricting feeding of the homeless since January 2013.

MORE:

#3

10 Palestinian Homes Demolished By Occupation Regime: “The Product Of A Systematic And Deliberate Policy Since 1948 That Has Viewed Palestinian Citizens As Enemies And Aliens”



Jan. 11, 2017 Ma'an

QALANSAWE -- Israeli authorities demolished 10 homes belonging to Palestinian citizens of Israel in the city of Qalansawe in central Israel on Tuesday morning, prompting a defeated mayor to resign after Israeli authorities refused for decades to approve the city's master plan.

Local sources told Ma'an the devastating demolition campaign sparked clashes between Israeli police and residents.

Mayor Abd al-Basit Mansour visited the area along with members of the municipal council and announced he would resign from his post, as Israeli bulldozers razed the homes to ground.

Mansour told reporters that, "We have been waiting for approval of a master plan for twenty years, but our request fell on deaf ears."

“As head of the Qalansawe municipality, who doesn’t have the power to change anything, I decided to send my resignation to the Ministry of Interior.”

Dozens of locals crowded in the area in an attempt to prevent bulldozers from demolishing the structures, but Israeli police officers dispersed them.

One homeowner described the demolition as part of Israel’s policy of “oppression, injustice, and displacement.”

Qalansawe resident Ashraf Abu Ali criticized leaders of Palestinian communities in Israel. “What have they done to prevent demolitions in the Arab communities?” he asked, asserting that Palestinian citizens of Israel would “remain under threat as long as master plans and allocating land for construction are dealt with so recklessly.”

Another owner of one of the demolished houses, Hassuna Makhoul, said he held Qalansawe’s mayor responsible, along with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

He told Ma’an that Israeli police officers treated homeowners “violently” during the demolition raid.

Resident of the town Abd al-Rahim Odeh said large numbers of Israeli police officers and more than 20 bulldozers stormed Qalansawe “in an unprecedented act of barbarism.”

Local sources said Israeli police detained a young man from Qalansawe during clashes that broke out in the area.

Israeli police spokesperson Micky Rosenfeld confirmed to Ma’an that the demolitions took place “based on a court order,” amid heavy police presence in and around the area. However, he said that no detentions or clashes occurred, “as far as I know.”

Commenting on the demolitions, Israeli Minister of Public Security Gilad Erdan said that the “complex campaign reflects equal law enforcement in Israel as it should be,” according to Hebrew-language media reports.

Last month, Netanyahu reportedly held meetings, attended by Erdan, in which the prime minister instructed officials to “work to issue demolition orders for the illegal structures, located in Arab towns in northern and southern Israel, as well as in eastern Jerusalem.”

“There will be no double standards regarding construction,” Israeli media quoted Netanyahu as saying. “There will be equal enforcement of the law in Israel for both Jews and Arabs.”

Earlier in December, Netanyahu commented on the Supreme Court-ordered demolition of the illegal Israeli outpost of Amona in the occupied West Bank by assuring the soon-to-be displaced settlers that he would commit to “enforcing laws” on “illegal construction” in Israel, referring primarily to Palestinian communities that are often forced to build without Israeli-issued building permits.

The Jerusalem municipality also vowed to demolish scores of Palestinian homes in occupied East Jerusalem as a result of the ruling to dismantle Amona.

Bedouin communities in the southern Israeli Negev region said a wave of home demolitions there came as a direct retaliation from the impending evacuation of Amona.

According to Palestinian NGO Adalah, only 4.6 percent of the housing tenders published by the Israel Land Authority (ILA) in 2015 were dedicated to Palestinian communities in Israel, although the population comprises 20 percent of the population.

The Palestinian population in Israel requires 13,000 new housing units per year, yet in practice only 7,000 housing units are built, mostly by means of private, self-construction, according to the group.

“As a result of the government’s widespread failure to authorize a sufficient number of building permits in Arab communities, the phenomenon of ‘illegal’ home construction is widespread as residents seek to house expanding populations,” Adalah has said.

“The housing shortage in Arab communities in Israel is not the result of specific failures or unintentional neglect on the part of state authorities. It is instead the product of a systematic and deliberate policy since 1948 that has viewed Palestinian citizens as enemies and aliens.”

**“One Of The Main Elements Of
Military Hypnosis Is The Faith
Energetically Promoted Among
The Soldiers That They Are
Invincible, Mighty, And Superior
To All The Rest Of The World”**

**“The War Has Killed That Faith
Everywhere”**

**“In Recent Years, There Have Been
Numerous Alarming Symptoms: The**

Army Is Grumbling, Discontented, And In A State Of Ferment” “There Is Obviously Discontentment In The Ranks And A Vague Feeling Of Sympathy For The ‘Rebels’”

From “Up To The Ninth Of January,” 1905; By L. Trotsky [Excerpts]

The exact moment when maneuvers turn into a battle will depend on the numbers and revolutionary solidarity of the masses who have taken to the streets, on the thickening atmosphere of universal sympathy and support that these masses are breathing, and on the attitude of the troops that the government will send against the people.

These three elements of success must govern our preparatory work.

The revolutionary proletarian masses are already at hand. Across the whole of Russia, we must be able to summon these masses into the streets and unite them with a single slogan.

There is hatred for tsarism in every stratum and class of society, which means there is also sympathy for the liberation struggle. We must focus this sympathy on the proletariat as the only revolutionary force whose appearance at the head of the popular masses can secure the future of Russia.

Finally, the attitude of the army is less and less able to inspire the government with confidence.

In recent years, there have been numerous alarming symptoms: the army is grumbling, discontented, and in a state of ferment.

When the masses move decisively, we must do everything possible to ensure that the army does not see its own fate linked to that of the autocracy.

A successful political strike by the proletariat imperatively requires that it be transformed into a revolutionary popular demonstration.

The second important condition is the attitude of the army. There is obviously discontentment in the ranks and a vague feeling of sympathy for the ‘rebels’.

There is also no doubt that only a small part of this sympathy is directly due to our agitation among the troops.

Most of it results from the practice of using the army in clashes with the protesting masses.

All of the correspondents who have described battles between tsarist forces and the unarmed people emphasise that the great majority of soldiers resent the role of executioner.

The great mass of ordinary soldiers fire into the air.

All one can say in that regard is that anything else would simply be unnatural.

At the time of the general strike in Kiev, the Bessarabsky regiment was ordered to march on Podol.

The regimental commander replied that he could not guarantee the mood of his troops.

Then an order went out to the Kherson regiment, but there too not a single half-company of troops would comply with the orders coming from their officers.

In that respect, Kiev was no exception.

Correspondents report that during the 1903 general strike in Odessa, soldiers frequently did not rise to the occasion. For example, in one case, they were posted to guard a doorway through which demonstrators had been driven, but they simply took it upon themselves to look the other way when those under arrest fled through adjoining doorways.

As a result, between 100 and 150 people escaped. Workers were seen chatting peaceably with the soldiers, and there were cases where they disarmed them with no particular resistance.

That is how things stood in 1903. Then came the year of warfare.

It is obviously impossible to say with any numerical precision how the past year has affected the consciousness of the army, but there is no doubt that its impact has been colossal.

One of the main elements of military hypnosis is the faith energetically promoted among the soldiers that they are invincible, mighty, and superior to all the rest of the world.

The war has killed that faith everywhere.

CLASS WAR REPORTS

Class War Mexico:

**“In Many Parts Of The Country,
Protesters Provided Free Access
On Toll Roads To Drivers By
Shutting Down Tollbooths”**

**“At Sonora’s Usually Calm Border
Crossing Of Laredo, Protesters
Blocked The Railroad That Crosses
Into Arizona By Setting Up A Camp
On The Tracks”**

**“Roving Contingents Of Protesters In
The Capital Gathered At Busy Metro
Stations, Overwhelmed Security Guards,
And Forced Them To Open Gates And
Turnstiles To The General Public,
Establishing “The People’s Metro”**

January 10, 2017 by Héctor A. Rivera. Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

Mexico was rocked by demonstrations and blockades throughout the first days of the new year, as thousands took to the streets to protest the government’s unpopular increase in gasoline, diesel and electricity prices.

After coming to power in 2012, President Enrique Peña Nieto of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) had promised that gasolinazos would not take place in 2017 and 2018. In fact, he claimed that with the privatization of the energy sector, gas prices would go down, as more competitors entered Mexico’s formerly nationalized energy market.

So when Peña Nieto’s government announced in the final days of December that gasoline prices would shoot up by as much as 20 percent, diesel by 15 percent and electricity by 4.5 percent, the reaction among Mexico’s already cynical population was angry disbelief.

Taxi drivers and truckers were the first to organize blockades on highways and at gas stations. Many women also joined the blockades, making the point that an increase in gas prices inevitably leads to an increase in the cost of basic foodstuffs and public transportation.

In many neighborhoods of Mexico City and its metropolitan area, committees and civil society organizations blocked access to gas stations every day, trying to convince drivers not to buy gasoline. In Ecatepec, a poor suburb of the capital, demonstrators commandeered a Pemex tank truck and distributed the fuel as part of their demonstration.

Roving contingents of protesters in the capital gathered at busy metro stations, overwhelmed security guards, and forced them to open gates and turnstiles to the general public, establishing “the people’s metro.”

In many parts of the country, protesters also provided free access on toll roads to drivers by shutting down tollbooths in the country’s extensive toll road network.

One of the most surprising developments of this wave of protests is that Northern Mexico, the part of the country that has generally been more conservative and in favor of U.S.-style development, has become mobilized like never before. By contrast, traditional strongholds of social resistance in the country’s South have been relatively calm.

The presence of organized crime and a militarized police force often dissuades people from public protests in many Northern cities. But this time around, the North has been leading the resistance, with the state of Chihuahua alone registering more than 50 protests and blockades.

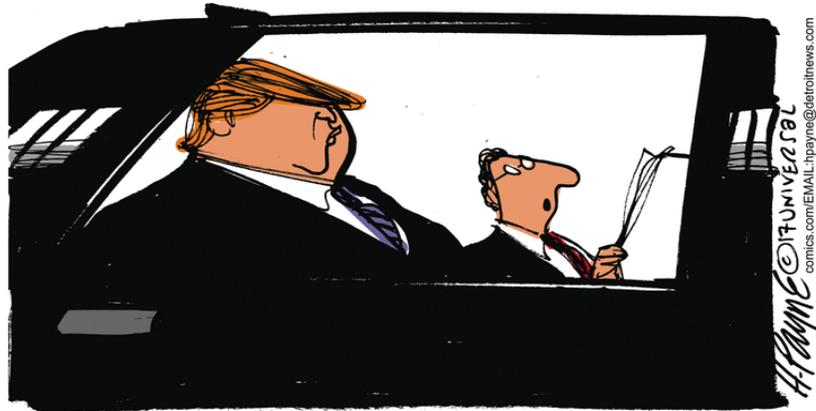
At Sonora’s usually calm border crossing of Laredo, protesters blocked the railroad that crosses into Arizona by setting up a camp on the tracks. Demonstrators also blocked the U.S. border in Tijuana, on the Pacific Coast, while other protests took place in Hermosillo, Mazatlán, Culiacán, Camargo and Monterrey.

Some of the most militant demonstrations have been in Rosarito, a small beach town popular with American tourists in Baja California. The town is home to Pemex’s Northern Distribution Center--people from neighborhoods surrounding the facility staged a three-day blockade, effectively shutting down distribution throughout northern Baja California.

Every time the police cleared the blockade, the protests grew stronger, until the government was forced on January 7 to fly in more than 200 additional federal police forces to break the blockade. Videos documenting the resulting police brutality circulated on social media with the hashtags #Rosarito #NoAlGasolinazo and #FueraPeña.

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