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NEWSLETTER ON FASCISM, TOTALITARIANISM USA

#3,

June 5, 2017

<http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/2017/06/omni-totalitarian-fascism-newsletter-3.html>

Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace and Justice

(#1 Jan. 10, 2012; #2 April 17, 2014)

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Q: Will US bulwarks of freedom, equality, and democracy (Bill of Rights, etc.) prevent fascism? Or has money and our economic system already defeated democracy from within?

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Trump's Totalitarianism, Neofascism

"This Is Not Populism." *Monthly Review* 69 no. 2 (June 2017). (Also see his earlier essays: Foster and Gregory Meyerson. "Fascism and the Crisis of Pax Americana." *Socialism and Democracy* 22, no. 2 (2008). Neofascism in the White House." *Monthly Review* 68, no. 11 (April 2017).)

Donald Trump and Fascism, Google Search, 6-3-17

3 Essays from *In These Times Newsletter* JUNE 3, 2017 ON STRUCTURAL OBSTACLES TO PROGRESSIVE POLITICS, DANGER OF CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION, NEED FOR ANTIFASCIST MOVEMENT.

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Earlier Newsletters on Totalitarianism in US

#1

<http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/2012/01/fascism-usa.html>

#2

<http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/2014/04/>

HISTORY OF US FASCISM

John Broich, “How the U.S. Press Normalized Mussolini and Hitler.”
Peace in Our Times (Spring 2017).

4 V3N2—Spring 2017 *Peace in Our Times* • peaceinourtimes.org “Journalists didn’t recognize the threat of fascism until it was already too late.” MORE

[DB1] <http://www.classwars.org/PeaceTimesSpring2017.pdf>

Yet some journalists, like Hemingway, and journals, like *The New Yorker*, rejected the normalization of anti-democratic Mussolini. John Gunther of *Harper’s*, meanwhile, wrote a razor-sharp account of Mussolini’s masterful manipulation of a U.S. press that couldn’t resist him.

The ‘German Mussolini’

Mussolini’s success in Italy normalized Hitler’s success in the eyes of the American press which, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, routinely called him “the German Mussolini.” Given Mussolini’s positive press reception in that period, it was a good place from which to start. Hitler also had the advantage that his Nazi party enjoyed stunning leaps at the polls from the mid ’20s to early ’30s, going from a fringe party to winning a dominant share of parliamentary seats in free elections in 1932.

But the main way that the press defanged Hitler was by portraying him as something of a **joke**. He was a “nonsensical” screecher of “wild words” whose appearance, according to *Newsweek*, “suggests Charlie Chaplin.” His “countenance is a caricature.” He was as “voluble” as he was “insecure,” stated *Cosmopolitan*.

When Hitler’s party won influence in parliament, and even after he was made chancellor of Germany in 1933—about a year and a half before seizing dictatorial power—many American press outlets judged that he would either be outplayed by more traditional politicians or that he would have to become more moderate. Sure, he had a following, but his followers were “impressionable voters” duped by “radical doctrines and quack remedies,” claimed *The Washington Post*. Now that Hitler actually had to operate within a government, the “sober” politicians would “submerge” this movement, according to *The New York Times* and *Christian*

Science Monitor. A “keen sense of dramatic instinct” was not enough. When it came time to govern, his lack of “gravity” and “profundity of thought” would be exposed.

In fact, *The New York Times* wrote after Hitler’s appointment to the chancellorship that success would only “let him expose to the German public his own futility.” Journalists wondered whether Hitler now regretted leaving the rally for the cabinet meeting, where he would have to assume some responsibility.

Yes, the American press tended to condemn Hitler’s well-documented anti-Semitism in the early 1930s. But there were plenty of exceptions. Some papers downplayed reports of violence against Germany’s Jewish citizens as propaganda like that which proliferated during the foregoing world war. Many, even those who categorically condemned the violence, repeatedly declared it to be at an end, showing a tendency to look for a return to normalcy.

Journalists were aware that they could only criticize the German regime so much and maintain their access. When a CBS broadcaster’s son was beaten up by brownshirts for not saluting the Führer, he didn’t report it. When the Chicago Daily News’ Edgar Mowrer wrote that Germany was becoming “an insane asylum” in 1933, the Germans pressured the State Department to rein in American reporters. Allen Dulles, who eventually became director of the CIA, told Mowrer he was “taking the German situation too seriously.” Mowrer’s publisher then transferred him out of Germany in fear of his life.

By the later 1930s, most U.S. journalists realized their mistake in underestimating Hitler or failing to imagine just how bad things could get (though there remained infamous exceptions, like Douglas Chandler, who wrote a loving paean to “Changing Berlin” for *National Geographic* in 1937).

Dorothy Thompson, who judged Hitler a man of “startling insignificance” in 1928, realized her mistake by mid-decade when she, like Mowrer, began raising the alarm.

“**No people ever recognize their dictator in advance**,” she reflected in 1935. “He never stands for election on the platform of dictatorship. He always represents himself as the instrument [of] the Incorporated National Will.” Applying the lesson to the United States, she wrote, “When our dictator turns up you can depend on it that he will be one of the boys, and he will stand for everything traditionally American.”

John Broich is an Associate Professor of History at Case Western Reserve University. He has written on environmental history, the history of race and empire, Royal Navy history, and WWII history. This article was originally published on *The Conversation*.

Roberto, Michael Joseph. “The Origins of American Fascism.” *Monthly Review* (June 2017).

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<https://monthlyreview.org/2017/06/01/the-origins-of-american-fascism/>

Cover photo from David Renton's *Fascism: Theory and Practice*.

Michael Joseph Roberto formerly taught history at North Carolina. His book tentatively titled *The Coming of the American Behemoth*, forthcoming from Monthly Review Press.

Donald Trump's presidency marks the most acute stage of the protracted crisis of U.S. imperial hegemony and its trajectory toward neofascism. The president, his closest advisers, and some key cabinet members are now promoting an openly **racist, xenophobic, and nationalist ideology**. As John Bellamy Foster has noted, none of this is new to right-wing politics. But he is right to argue that the scale and intensity of recent attacks on immigrants, women's rights, LGBTQ people, environmentalists, and workers signal a qualitative ideological break with the mainstream of liberal capitalist democracy. The question now is whether Trump and his circle of ultra-nationalist fanatics, Wall Street barons, generals, and assorted political hacks can engineer an American-style *Gleichschaltung*, "bringing into line" the rest of the executive, the judiciary, the military, and the media behind Trump's agenda "To Make America Great Again."¹

Following Samir Amin's analysis of fascism's revival in contemporary capitalism, Foster places Trump's neofascism in a larger historical context, pointing out key differences between the "classic" German fascism of the interwar period and the neofascism of our own time. He also finds important parallels. Both forms of fascism arose at crisis points in the history of world capitalism: Germany in the 1930s was an advanced industrial nation-state crippled by the Great Depression; and the United States today (despite its unrivaled destructive power) appears increasingly as a moribund capitalist empire sapped by persistent stagnation at home and challenged abroad by the rise of China and rival imperialist blocs. Foster thus confirms others' characterization of contemporary U.S. neofascism not as a historical accident, but as a slow-building structural crisis, one that could very well become a crisis of class rule itself.²

Most importantly for my analysis, Foster cites a 1952 exchange between Marxist economist Paul Baran and *MR* founding editor Paul Sweezy, in which both agreed that fascism was one political form in the monopoly-imperialist phase of capitalism, making it difficult to recognize the precise "jumping [off] place" between liberal democracy and fascism. Following Baran and Sweezy, Foster sees this break at the point when a "severe crisis threatens property relations." This is the back story that explains Hitler's rise to power. Comparably, Trump's neofascism is the outcome of a protracted crisis that marks our own qualitative break from neoliberalism. MORE

<https://monthlyreview.org/2017/06/01/the-origins-of-american-fascism/>

What can a class analysis tell us about fascism's national particularities and early forms? Why was there no mass movement for a separate fascist party in the United States? The lessons of several now-forgotten works of scholarship from the 1930s are critical to our understanding of American fascism—not only for what they tell us about its history, but also about how to fight it today.... | [more...](#)

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[Here is the final paragraph:]

But who is really in charge? On the basis of its particular development in the United States, the American *Gleichschaltung* seems more likely to be a collaboration than a dictatorship—a collective undertaking by those who administer Republican control at all levels of government.³² Though many of the leading figures of financial capital backed Hillary Clinton, these same members of the 1 percent now stand to benefit from the new administration's attacks on all forms of economic regulation and intervention, as already suggested by the "Trump wave" buoying global stock markets. At long last, the split in the ruling class that in the 1930s characterized the struggle between the progressive Roosevelt faction and the fascist monopolists appears to have been resolved in favor of the latter.³³

[american fascism in 10 easy steps](#)

[the origins of totalitarianism](#)

[the doctrine of fascism](#)

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Novels about US Fascism, Totalitarianism

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[How is America going to end? Five steps to totalitarian rule.](#)

www.slate.com/articles/news_and.../the.../how_is_america_going_to_end_2.html

Aug 6, 2009 - As Hitler and Mussolini prepared to storm Europe, **fascism** began to generate interest in the **United States**. In Sinclair Lewis' 1935 **novel**, It Can't ...

[Nine Must-Read Books in the Age of Donald Trump - Newsweek](#)

www.newsweek.com/nine-must-read-books-age-donald-trump-520589

Nov 13, 2016 - Nine Must-Read **Books** in the Age of Donald Trump ... The Origins of **Totalitarianism** by Hannah Arendt: Arendt was a Jewish intellectual and ... **American Fascists**: The Christian Right and the War on America By Chris Hedges: ...

['It will be called Americanism': the US writers who imagined a fascist ...](#)

<https://www.theguardian.com> › Arts › Books › George Orwell

Feb 3, 2017 - These words come near the end of Philip Roth's 2004 **novel** *The Plot* ... In 1944, an article called "**American Fascism**" appeared in the New York Times ... 1 on Amazon.com, while Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* ...

[It Can't Happen Here - Wikipedia](#)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/It_Can%27t_Happen_Here

It Can't Happen Here is a semi-satirical 1935 political **novel** by **American** author Sinclair Lewis, and a 1936 play adapted from the **novel** by Lewis and John C. Moffitt. Published during the rise of **fascism** in Europe, the **novel** describes the rise of **fascism** and **totalitarianism** in terms of traditional **American** political models ...

[Fascist and totalitarian regimes - Hotel America do Sul](#)

www.hotelamericadosul.com.br/fascist-and-totalitarian-regimes

May 2, 2017 - He, a professor, represents education, which, as his lectures remind **us**, **totalitarian**. The full **book** is available from Hurry!. **Totalitarianism** ...

[The creeping fascism of American literature | The Verge](#)

<https://www.theverge.com/.../sci-fi-sunday-it-cant-happen-here-the-iron-heel-plot-aga...>

Apr 3, 2016 - The **US** turning **totalitarian** covers an incredibly wide swathe of **fiction**. But what sets a **book** like *It Can't Happen Here* apart from a "Nazis win ...

[Popular Totalitarianism Books - Goodreads](#)

<https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/totalitarianism>

Books shelved as **totalitarianism**: 1984 by George Orwell, *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, ...

[George Orwell's Letter On Why He Wrote '1984' - The Daily Beast](#)

www.thedailybeast.com/george-orwells-letter-on-why-he-wrote-1984

Aug 12, 2013 - The letter, warning of the rise of **totalitarian** police states that will 'say that ... Plus, Orwell's advice to Arthur Koestler on how to review **books**. ... Stalin, (b) the Anglo-**American** millionaires and (c) all sorts of petty fuhrers° of the type of de Gaulle. ... Indeed the statement that we haven't a **Fascist** movement in ...

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It Can't Happen Here [and Donald Trump] by Sinclair Lewis, Google Search, 6-3-17

[It Can't Happen Here - Wikipedia](#)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/It_Can%27t_Happen_Here

It Can't Happen Here is a semi-satirical 1935 political novel by American author Sinclair Lewis, and a 1936 play adapted from the novel by Lewis and John C.

[Plot summary](#) · [Reception](#) · [Adaptations](#) · [Legacy](#)

Happen Here is the only one of Sinclair Lewis's later novels to match the ...

[Reading the Classic Novel That Predicted Trump - The New York Times](#)

<https://www.nytimes.com/.../classic-novel-that-predicted-trump-sinclair-lewis-it-cant-hap...>

Jan 17, 2017 - Doremus Jessup, the protagonist of Sinclair Lewis's 1935 novel "**It Can't Happen Here**," sees something dark and terrible brewing in American ...

[Getting Close to Fascism with Sinclair Lewis's "It Can't Happen Here ...](#)

www.newyorker.com/.../getting-close-to-fascism-with-sinclair-lewis-it-cant-happen-h...

Oct 19, 2016 - Alexander Nazaryan writes about a **stage adaptation** of Sinclair Lewis's "**It Can't Happen Here**" in the context of Donald Trump's Presidential ...

[4 Sinclair Lewis Novels More Relevant Than 'It Can't Happen Here ...](#)

www.weeklystandard.com/4-sinclair-lewis-novels...it-cant-happen-here/.../2006586

Jan 31, 2017 - **It Can't Happen Here** will probably be the next novel to sell out on Amazon; right now, it's the number-two recommended read by booksellers ...

[It Can't Happen Here by Sinclair Lewis — Reviews, Discussion ...](#)

www.goodreads.com › [Science Fiction](#) › [Dystopia](#)

Rating: 3.8 - 6,310 votes

The only one of Sinclair Lewis's later novels to match the power of *Main Street*, *Babbitt*, and *Arrowsmith*, **It Can't Happen Here** is a cautionary tale about the ...

[How does Donald Trump stack up against American literature's ...](#)

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/.../how-does-donald-trump-stack-up-against-american-...>

Jun 9, 2016 - What it's like to read Sinclair Lewis's '**It Can't Happen Here**' and Philip Roth's '*The Plot Against America*' in the era of Donald Trump.

[Who Says It Can't Happen Here? – BillMoyers.com](#)

billmoyers.com/story/says-cant-happen/

Feb 27, 2017 - It's a fear Sinclair Lewis turned into a 1935 bestselling novel, **It Can't Happen Here** — although, as Lewis told it, it sure as hell could happen ...

[It really can happen here: The novel that foreshadowed Donald - Salon](#)

www.salon.com/.../it_really_can_happen_here_the_novel_that_foreshadowed_donald_t...

Windrip's election is the beginning of Sinclair Lewis's 1935 novel "**It Can't Happen Here**," rather than actual American history. A wonderful ...

[A Play Timed to Trump's Candidacy Asks What If - The New York Times](#)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/.../a-play-timed-to-trumps-candidacy-asks-what-if.ht..>

David Kelly, center, and other cast members of Berkeley Repertory Theater's "**It Can't Happen Here**" rehearsing earlier this month. Credit Laura ...

Donald Trump and Fascism, Google Search, 6-3-17

[Fascism under Donald Trump: The warning signs of fascism that ...](#)

<https://qz.com/.../fascism-under-donald-trump-the-warning-signs-of-fascism-that-ame...>

Dec 30, 2016 - "When **fascism** comes to **America**, it will be wrapped in the flag and carrying ... The election of soon-to-be president Donald **Trump** suggests the ...

[American Fascism, in 1944 and Today - The New York Times](#)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/12/opinion/american-fascism-trump.html>

May 12, 2017 - His article, "The Danger of **American Fascism**," described a breed of ... "**fascism**" — as in Mussolini and Hitler — is fairly applied to Mr. **Trump**.

[The post-fascism of Donald Trump - The Washington Post](#)

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/.../the-post-fascism-of-donald-trump/>

Mar 28, 2017 - **Trump** defies most every political analogy being used to understand him. ... "This is how **fascism** comes to **America**," declared Robert Kagan, ...

[Yes, Donald Trump is a fascist. | New Republic](#)

<https://newrepublic.com/minutes/124205/yes-donald-trump-fascist>

That law would seem to apply to Donald **Trump** in a different way: The longer he runs in ... Thanks to **Trump**, Vladimir Putin is going to troll **America** non-stop.

[A German Historian's Thoughts On Trump, Bannon, Fascism & America](#)

gothamist.com/2017/02/06/trump_bannon_german_history.php

Feb 6, 2017 - Prior to Donald **Trump's** inauguration, there was a lot of debate about how awful we should expect his administration to be. Some people said ...

[Congratulations, America — you did it! An actual fascist is now your ...](#)

www.salon.com/.../congratulations-america-you-did-it-an-actual-fascist-is-now-your-...

Jan 21, 2017 - Donald **Trump** is also a **fascist** authoritarian in the **American** mold and leader of the world's most powerful and influential “democracy.”.

[Donald Trump: His Brand of Fascism Won't Take Off in America ...](#)

fortune.com/2017/03/20/donald-trump-fascism-america/

Mar 20, 2017 - Why **Trump's** Experiments With **Fascism** Will Fail ... the greatest threat to the **United States** of **America** in 2017: not religious extremism, nor an ...

[Fascism in the USA, a rebuttal | TheHill](#)

thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/politics/312369-fascism-in-the-usa-a-rebuttal

Jan 1, 2017 - Krugman is just the latest to call **Trump** the next great **fascist**. Comparing him to Hitler has become a parlor game on the Left. Sporcle, a popular ...

[Donald Trump: Facts, Fascism and Tyranny | Time.com](#)

time.com/4690676/donald-trump-tyranny/

Mar 3, 2017 - 'We cannot deduce from Donald **Trump's** destructive chaos and ideological incoherence what the post-democratic **American** regime would be.'

[Can American Fascism Be Stopped? | Alternet](#)

www.alternet.org/election-2016/can-american-fascism-be-stopped

Dec 18, 2016 - **Trump's** win was both a perfect storm and the culmination of long-term trends. It is hard to contemplate the new administration without ...

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TRUMP'S NEOFASCISM

Three Essays by John Bellamy Foster

Foster and Gregory Meyerson. “Fascism and the Crisis of Pax Americana.” *Socialism and Democracy* 22, no. 2 (2008).

“Neofascism in the White House.” *Monthly Review* 68, no. 11 (April 2017).

“This Is Not Populism.” *Monthly Review* 69 no. 2 (June 2017).

MONTHLY REVIEW

AN INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST MAGAZINE

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REVIEW OF THE MONTH

This Is Not Populism

by John Bellamy Foster (the editor of *Monthly Review*).

I am concerned with power politics—that is to say, I make use of all means that seem to me to be of service, without the slightest concern for the proprieties or for codes of honor. —Adolf Hitler¹

The rise of Donald Trump to president of the United States is commonly thought to represent the triumph of “right-wing populism,” or simply “populism.”² The term populism is notoriously difficult to define, since lacking any definite substantive content. It is used in the dominant discourse to refer to any movement that appeals to “the people,” while attacking “the elites.”³ In the United States, populism has a much older history associated with the great agrarian revolt of the late nineteenth century.⁴ But today the concept primarily has to do with the growth in Europe, and more recently in the United States, of so-called right-wing populism—and only secondarily with what are labeled left-wing populist movements, such as Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, or Occupy in the United States.

Right-wing populism is a euphemism introduced into the European discussion in the last few decades to refer to movements in the “fascist genus” (fascism/neofascism/post-fascism), characterized by virulently xenophobic, ultra-nationalist tendencies, rooted primarily in the lower-middle class and relatively privileged sections of the working class, in alliance with monopolistic capital.⁵ This can be seen in the National Front in France, the Northern League in Italy, the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, the UK Independence

Party, the Sweden Democrats, and similar parties and movements in other advanced capitalist countries.⁶

The same basic phenomenon has now triumphed in the United States, in the form of Trump's rise to chief executive. Yet mainstream commentary has generally avoided the question of fascism or neofascism in this context, preferring instead to apply the vaguer, safer notion of populism. This is not just because of the horrific images of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust that the term fascist evokes, or because it has been increasingly used as an all-purpose term of political abuse. Rather, the liberal mainstream's aversion to the neofascist designation arises principally from the critique of capitalism that any serious engagement with this political phenomenon would entail. As Bertolt Brecht asked in 1935: "How can anyone tell the truth about Fascism, unless he is willing to speak out against capitalism, which brings it forth?"⁷

In today's political context, it is crucial to understand not only how the failures of neoliberalism give rise to neofascism, but also to connect these developments to the structural crisis of monopoly-finance capital—that is, to the regime of concentrated, financialized, and globalized capitalism. Only based on such a thoroughgoing historical critique is it possible to conceive the necessary forms of resistance. MORE
<https://monthlyreview.org/2017/06/01/this-is-not-populism/>

The New Barbarism

As indicated above, the White House has been the site of competing allegiances: responses to the interests of monopoly-finance capital on one side, and to Trump's lower-middle class base on the other. While there is no doubt that the administration will ultimately prioritize the former over the latter, betraying its claims to populism, to retain any credibility with its base the White House nonetheless must perform an elaborate dance—promoting the interests of the corporate rich, while distancing itself from the upper-middle-class professional strata so loathed by Trump's supporters.⁵³ His policies must give "expression" to lower-middle class interests and, to some extent, working-class demands—even if these are not to be realized.⁵⁴ The political and strategic constellation represented by Bannon, Breitbart, and the Mercers is therefore vital.

Hence, the neofascist strategy that marks the Trump White House thus far is likely to continue, incorporating both the alt-right and plutocratic factions. Upon entering the White

House, Trump immediately raised up representatives of the alt-right, who had been key to his campaign. Here the role of Bannon, still Trump's chief strategist, and the main link to Breitbart, remains central. Ideologically the alt-right relies on the ideas of thinkers such as Evola, Dugin, and Oswald Spengler (the influential early twentieth-century German historian and author of *The Decline of the West*).⁵⁵ Bannon has demonstrated considerable acquaintance with Evola's work, professing admiration for Evola's "traditionalism...particularly the sense of where it supports the underpinnings of nationalism" and the expansion of white-European cultural sovereignty. For Bannon, the right's global struggle is to be seen in terms of a renewal of the historic war of the "Judeo-Christian West" against Islam, now extended to include the national-cultural exclusion of non-white immigrants into Europe and the United States.⁵⁶

A crucial part of the streamlined neofascist appeal that Bannon imparted early on to the Trump campaign and then carried over to the White House is geared to economic nationalism. Bannon argues that "the globalists gutted the American working class and created a middle class in Asia." This points to a kind of empire in reverse, where working-class, white Americans, who formerly benefitted from unrivaled U.S. hegemony in the world economy, are now seeing their jobs taken away by Asians, while they are being flooded by "illegal" Latino immigrants, and by refugees from Middle East countries dominated by "radical Islamic terrorists." Crony capitalists, financiers on the take, and liberal globalists are all to blame. Trump, Bannon, Breitbart, and the alt-right rely heavily on racially coded language (or dog whistles) as signals to reach their more militant, white supporters, who are encouraged to see immigrants, refugees, and non-white populations generally as constituting a combined economic and cultural threat.⁵⁷

The racial strategy can be seen in Bannon's repeated references metaphorically to the Camp of the Saints. This is the title of a novel by French writer Jean Raspail; undoubtedly one of the most racist works of its kind ever published. In 1975, when the book was translated into English, the usually staid *Kirkus Reviews* wrote that "the publishers are presenting *The Camp of the Saints* as a major event, and it probably is, in much the same sense that *Mein Kampf* was a major event." This rabidly racist novel depicts an invasion by 800,000 "wretched creatures," refugees on the derelict *Last Chance Armada*, who seek to take over France, as a beachhead into white Europe, "the camp of the saints." Meanwhile hordes of Chinese threaten Russia, a French cruise ship has been seized in Manila, and barricades have been erected by whites around black ghettos in New York. The title comes from St. John's Revelation (20:9): "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from the God of heaven, and devoured them." From page 1 on the book is full of murder, rape, carnage, atrocities, and the most extreme forms of racism, reducing people

to body parts: with severed (racially signified) body parts strewn everywhere. Its cover advertises it as “the apocalyptic, controversial, bestselling novel about the end of the white world.” It is intended to generate the emotional, subintellectual basis, in Evola’s terms, for unutterable violence—directed not just at Asians but at all non-white races, who are seen as racial threats.⁵⁸

The Camp of the Saints has been taken up by the alt-right as a kind of racist code. For Bannon, it refers to refugees flooding from the Middle East and Africa into Europe. As he declared in 2015, “It’s been almost a Camp of the Saints-type invasion into Central and then Western and Northern Europe.” A year later, he stated: “The whole thing in Europe is all about immigration. It’s a global issue today—this kind of global Camp of the Saints.”⁵⁹ After pointedly alluding to the Camp of the Saints in an interview with Jeff Sessions—now U.S. Attorney General, who Bannon has described as “one of the intellectual, moral leaders of this populist, nationalist movement in this country”—Bannon asked: “Do you believe the elites in this country have the backbone, have the belief in the underlying principles of the Judeo-Christian West to actually win this war [against immigrants, refugees and Islam]?” Sessions answered, “I’m worried about that.”⁶⁰ Others have taken this up as well. Iowa GOP Congressman Steve King, referred in a radio interview in March 2017 to the possibility of race wars in the United States today, strongly recommending that people read *The Camp of Saints* in this context.⁶¹

Trumpism is rife on a daily basis with **racism, misogyny, and extreme nationalism**. Bannon and Breitbart refer coyly to the alt-right movement as one made up of “working-class hobbits”—a term for its “forgotten” white, lower-middle class/working-class adherents. This refers back to a negative reference by Arizona Republican Senator John McCain to Tea Party “hobbits.”⁶² Bannon took it up as an ironic term, standing for Trump’s hardcore constituency. In doing so, though, he was undoubtedly aware of the earlier neofascist “Hobbit Camps” that had been formed in Italy, with a similar meaning. Indeed, the U.S. **alt-right**, as represented by Breitbart, could be described today as a toxic mixture of European neofascism, U.S. white supremacy, and Christian fundamentalism.

The Trump phenomenon draws on some of the most sordid aspects of U.S. past, including **genocide (of Native Americans), slavery, Jim Crow, and imperialism**. Of all U.S. presidents, the one that is seen by Bannon (and by Trump himself) as most closely related to the new resident at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue is **Andrew Jackson**—ostensibly because of the popular-democratic upsurge associated with him, and his attack on the Bank of the United States; but also undoubtedly because of his wealthy slaveholder status, his gruesome role in the Indian Wars, and his government’s forcible removal of the

Eastern tribes in the Trail of Tears. Trump declared in an interview in April 2017 that if Jackson had still been alive (he died sixteen years before the Confederate forces opened fire on Fort Sumter) and presumably had been president, he would have prevented the Civil War—an absurd statement doubtless meant as a dog whistle to his alt-right, white supremacist supporters, who idealize the slave South and the Confederacy.⁶³

Trump's own outlook and ambitions intersect ideologically with the **alt-right** as his **2011 book, *Tough Times: Make America Great Again***, shows. Trump declared on the campaign trail that “the only important thing is the unification of the people—because the other people don't mean anything.”⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the owner of Trump Tower in Manhattan represents monopoly-finance capital, first and foremost. Indeed, Trump's attacks on “crony capitalism” and his calls for “draining the swamp” are belied by the billionaires and lobbyists that he has brought into his administration, and the **cronyism** which is everywhere visible, starting with his own family and extending to the special access to the president given to those ultra-wealthy interests who belong to his Mar-a-Lago Golf Club.⁶⁵

The neofascist thrust of the Trump White House can be seen in those chosen to occupy key, strategic roles. An example of this is **Curtis Ellis**, a member of Trump's beachhead transition team, appointed as special assistant to the Secretary of Labor. Ellis, a Breitbart author, wrote an article in May 2016 for the World News Daily called “The Radical Left's Ethnic Cleansing of America.” In this article, which was to be celebrated by Bannon and featured on Breitbart, Ellis argued that, for the globalist left “the death (literally) of white working people is a desired outcome, a feature not a bug....The death of American working-class whites was planned by the radical left and carried out with willing executioners at the highest levels of American politics, academia and business.”⁶⁶ Such **nationalistic-racist** views aimed at the left and at non-white populations were strongly encouraged by Trump in his campaign for the presidency, and his actions since coming into office.

Trumponomics and the Crisis of the U.S. Political Economy

“The neoliberal era in the United States,” Cornel West had declared, “ended with a neofascist bang.”⁶⁷ Neoliberalism was itself a ruling-class response to the deepening economic stagnation of the capitalist economy, as the quarter-century of prosperity from the late 1940s through the early 1970s broke down. Needing a stimulus, the U.S. economy resorted first in the Reagan period to military spending and tax cuts, but soon

benefitted more fundamentally from the long decline in interest rates (the so-called Greenspan put), which fed a period of vast debt-credit expansion and what Paul Sweezy called “the **financialization** of the capital accumulation process.”⁶⁸ The result was a bubble economy that continued into the Clinton and George W. Bush presidencies, then came to a sudden end with the bursting of the housing bubble and the subsequent crisis of 2007–09. Trillions of dollars were poured into corporate coffers in an attempt to “**bail out**” defaulting financial institutions, as well as heavily indebted non-financial corporations. The subsequent economic recovery has been one of sluggish growth or secular stagnation—a period of “endless crisis.”⁶⁹

Everywhere neoliberalism has come to stand for policies of austerity, financial speculation, globalization, income polarization, and corporate cronyism, creating what Michael Yates has called “**The Great Inequality**.”⁷⁰ “Across the advanced economies,” Michael Jacobs and Mariana Mazzucato write, “the share of GDP going to labor fell by 9 percent on average between 1980 and 2007.... In the United States, between 1975 and 2012, the top 1 percent gained around 47 percent of the total increase in incomes.”⁷¹ Wealth inequality has increased even faster. In 1963, the average wealth of families in the ninety-ninth percentile in the United States was six times that of wealth holders in the fiftieth percentile; in 2013, it was twelve times.⁷²

All of this has been accompanied by the erosion of U.S. hegemony in the world economy; the growth of a new imperialism based on the global labor arbitrage (taking advantage of wage differentials between the global North and South); the changing role of manufacturing and investment in the context of the digital revolution; and neoliberal attacks on labor. These factors have enormously undermined the position of the working population in the United States, while also intensifying the exploitation of workers in the global South. What was once seen—in hyped-up fashion—as a “social contract” between capital and labor in the heyday of U.S. hegemony and prosperity has now disintegrated entirely. With it has disappeared what was once called the “labor aristocracy,” a minority of relatively privileged, largely unionized workers in the advanced capitalist world who benefitted indirectly from unrivaled U.S. imperial hegemony and the siphoning of profits from the global South.⁷³ Monopoly-finance capital now freely outsources production from the global North to the global South, in what has become a new age of imperialism characterized by a race to the bottom for workers throughout the world economy.⁷⁴

The social democratic campaign of **Bernie Sanders** in the 2016 election showed the potential for a grassroots left upsurge in this context—the main fear of the ruling class. But Sanders’s extraordinary campaign, representing an approach that would undoubtedly

have won in a contest with Trump by drawing on a far wider working-class base, was blocked by a Democratic Party establishment that had long since put into place a superdelegate system and a structure of control through the Democratic National Committee, expressly designed to prevent such a left takeover of the party. The road was thus left open to Trump. In this context there is no real doubt about the source of Trump's success. He received a remarkable 77 percent of the vote among those who said their financial situation had worsened in the preceding four years.⁷⁵

Few understood this overall economic dynamic better than **Bannon**, the strategic brains behind the Trump campaign, who had worked on Wall Street as an investment banker—before moving to Hollywood and making ultra-right-wing political films, testing the zeitgeist, and finally taking over Breitbart. With a realism completely lacking in neoliberal circles, he remarked: “I don't think there's any doubt that the world is in the beginning state of a crisis that it can't avoid.” Raging against liberals, he stated that the left globalists destroyed “the American working class.... The issue now is about Americans looking to not get f—ed over.”⁷⁶

Trump's declarations about the “carnage” in the U.S. economy (in his Inaugural Address written by Bannon and his Breitbart colleague, Stephen Miller, now a special adviser to Trump), his claims that the United States should have taken the Iraqi oil as payment for its deposing Saddam Hussein, and his so-called “truthful hyperbole” regarding labor statistics (he claimed the unemployment rate in 2016 was “as high as 35 [percent]” or more) were all part of this same strategy.⁷⁷ This also included his attack on unfair trade (taken from the playbook of the left), his emphasis on protecting Social Security, his proposal to cut prescription drug prices through competitive bidding, and his promised trillion dollars for infrastructure spending. All of this was designed to draw support from wage workers that the Democrats abandoned.

Likewise, the virulent attacks on illegal immigrants and refugees, the building of the wall between the U.S. and Mexico, and Trump's strong law and order stance (including suggestions that Black Lives Matter be put under federal surveillance) were all part of the attempt to consolidate mass support for Trump in class-economic and racial terms.⁷⁸

Casting aside the Obama-era Trans-Pacific Partnership, Trump has raised the prospect of trade and currency wars with China to save American jobs. He appointed as director of the White House National Trade Council economist Peter Navarro, author of *The Coming China Wars*, which accuses China of unleashing a “new imperialism” on the globe, and of

currency manipulation. The United States, Navarro argues, should end its “mutually parasitic economic codependence” with China and fight back economically (and militarily). Among Navarro’s other works are *Death by China* (2011) and *Crouching China: What China’s Militarism Means to the World* (2015).⁷⁹

Trump has vowed to more than double the rate of growth of the economy. Yet his economic policy is largely a supply-side one of generating windfalls to monopoly-finance capital through wholesale deregulation, and lavish tax cuts mainly for the wealthy and corporations. He repeatedly declared that he would hugely expand infrastructure spending, which would give a boost to the real estate and construction sectors. Yet since the Trump plan is based on tax cuts to firms rather than a massive increase in spending, and is supposed to be strung out over ten years, it will do little to stimulate the economy as a whole. Indeed, none of this can lift the economy out of stagnation. The most likely result is continued slow growth, possibly interrupted by a bubble effect in the financial sector.⁸⁰ The one thing that is certain is the business cycle. The economy is nearing its peak and recession is on the horizon—to be expected within a few years.

Any prospect for real economic gains for the mass of the population will run into the triple contradiction of economic stagnation, financial crisis, and declining U.S. hegemony that characterize the epoch of monopoly-finance capital. Rather than alter these conditions, Trump’s economic policy is likely to aggravate the problem. This means that the Trump regime will probably gravitate as its only economic option to further military spending increases, and imperialist adventures, coupled with greater economic repression of workers at home, particularly among the poorest sectors of the work force—conceived as the surest way to “Make America Great Again.”

The greatest danger under these circumstances is that an increase in internal **repression**—Bannon is on record as supporting Joseph McCarthy’s anti-Communist witch hunt in the 1950s—will have its counterpart in an increase in external repression and war without bounds, seen as a way of lifting the economy.⁸¹ Already certain restraints on the global use of force have been removed. A new upsurge in barbarism nationally and internationally is in the wind: this time armed with weapons capable of destroying the world as a place for human habitation. Indeed, the **exterminism** that is a real danger in these circumstances is already evident in the renunciation of all efforts to contain **climate change**, which Trump calls a “hoax.” This, then, threatens the eventual collapse of civilization (and even the extinction of humanity) under a continuation of capitalist business as usual.

Resistance in the “Post-Truth Society”

In “Writing the Truth: Five Difficulties” Brecht stated:

Nowadays, anyone who wishes to combat lies and ignorance and to write the truth must overcome at least five difficulties. He must have the courage to write the truth when truth is everywhere opposed; the keenness to recognize it, although it is everywhere concealed; the skill to manipulate it as a weapon; the judgment to select those in whose hands it will be effective; and the cunning to spread the truth among such persons. These are formidable problems for writers living under Fascism, but they exist also for those writers who have fled or been exiled; they exist even for writers in countries where civil liberty prevails.⁸²

Brecht would not be at all surprised that the rapid growth of neofascism in the United States and Europe has coincided with the declaration by the Oxford Dictionaries that the “word of the year” for 2016—in recognition of Trump’s political rise—was the adjective “**post-truth**.” Significantly, another word on the short list for word of the year was “**alt-right**.” The Oxford Dictionaries define “post-truth” as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.”⁸³

Blatant violation of the truth, and what Georg Lukács called “the destruction of reason,” has always been associated with fascism, and has helped prepare the ground for its rise.⁸⁴ It is impossible to understand our current social reality divorced from class analysis; nor is it possible to resist that reality effectively without class organization. A defining feature of contemporary liberal-democratic ideology, which set the conditions for today’s post-truth society, has been “the retreat from class,” and particularly from the notion of the working class—ironically brought back into the mainstream in relation to Trump.⁸⁵ This makes it possible for the vague term populism to cloak the growing neofascist threat of our time.

Resistance to these trends is only possible, as Brecht reminds us, by first having the courage, the keenness, the skill, the judgment, and the cunning to address the truth with respect to this demonic political phenomenon. It is necessary to recognize the truth in its historical, structural, and dialectical connections, insisting on the fact that today’s neofascism is the inevitable product of the crisis of monopoly-finance capital. Hence, the

only effective way to resist, is to resist the system itself. Against today's "neofascist wind," the movement toward socialism is the final barricade, the only genuine class-human-ecological defense.

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We will all be fitted at birth

with orange jumpsuits

then later strip-searched
and ordered to squat and cough.
Kafka's ghost will be there taking notes.

They will march us down darkened corridors
to be finger-printed and booked
for crimes unspecified.
Then the blue tattoos, the ankle bracelets.
Then release to wander freely the squandered Earth.

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