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With Enemies Like These, Trump Doesn't Need Friends



It is one year since an anonymous op-ed appeared in the New York Times. The author claimed to be part of a group of “senior officials in the administration” who are “working within to frustrate parts of [Trump’s] agenda and his worst inclinations.” The op-ed’s portentous title, “I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration,” conjured up an image of a sweating bureaucrat tapping madly away on a laptop beneath his desk in

a dark office, darting anxious glances at the door while wondering who will play him in the movie. If only the op-ed could have broken off in a strangled scream, it would have been perfect.

The piece made a huge splash. Speculation ran high as to the identity of the anonymous author (“a senior official in the Trump administration whose identity is known to us,” according to the Times). The most intriguing suggestion was that Vice President Mike Pence was the writer because the op-ed uses the word “lodestar,” an uncommon word favored by Pence. We still don’t know the identity of Mr. or Ms. Anonymous.

Have these invisible sentinels of the Republic been successful in thwarting Trump’s “worst inclinations”? Here are just a few of the things Trump has been up to since the anonymous op-ed ran on September 5, 2018:

December 22, 2018—January 25, 2019: Trump triggers the longest federal government shutdown in US history—35 days—in a hissy fit over funding for his border wall. Trump threatens to keep the government shut for “months or even years.”

February 15, 2019: Trump carries out a threat made during the government shutdown and declares a national emergency in order to divert funds to build his wall.

March 2019: The Trump Administration bars health care facilities which provide or refer patients for abortions from receiving federal money under the Title X program which funds birth control and other family planning services for some 4 million mostly low-income women.

April 16, 2019: President Trump vetoes a bipartisan Congressional resolution which would have ended ongoing US assistance to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates in their genocidal aggression against Yemen.

May 24, 2019: Trump declares a second national emergency in order to force through an \$8 billion arms sale to Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

July 2019: The Trump Administration proposes eliminating food stamps for 3.1 million Americans.

August 23, 2019: If you’re gay, you’re not OK, but workplace discrimination against LGBT is—this according to an amicus brief Trump’s DOJ files today with the US Supreme Court.

September 12, 2019: The Administration revokes an Obama-era regulation which protected sources of clean water by restricting the use of chemical pollutants near streams, wetlands, and other bodies of water.

The Administration's inside resistors didn't stop any of these policies. Did they even try? Missing from the op-ed is any sign of concern for the well-being of ordinary Americans. The author goes out of his way to assure us that he and his cronies aren't a bunch of goddamn Reds: "To be clear, ours is not the popular 'resistance' of the left. We want the administration to succeed and think that many of its policies have already made America safer and more prosperous."

Uh-huh. Which policies are those? The author mentions several "bright spots," including "effective deregulation, historic tax reform, a more robust military and more." In other words, the hidden resistance is perfectly happy with gutting federal agencies like the EPA, tax cuts for billionaires, and eye-popping \$700 billion-plus military budgets.

What does bug the author is "the president's amorality. Anyone who works with him knows he is not moored to any discernible first principles that guide his decision making. Although he was elected as a Republican, the president shows little affinity for ideals long espoused by conservatives: free minds, free markets and free people." In other words, Trump isn't reactionary enough.

The Bottom Line

From the White House to executive branch departments and agencies, senior officials will privately admit their daily disbelief at the commander in chief's comments and actions. *
* * Meetings with [President Trump] veer off topic and off the rails, he engages in repetitive rants, and his impulsiveness results in half-baked, ill-informed and occasionally reckless decisions that have to be walked back.

"Who stole my strawberries??" We have come to the heart of the matter. The smarter Republicans realize that Trump is an out of control Captain Queeg who might send the ship of state to the bottom and them along with it. That's the problem with Trump, not Trump's policies, not his vulgarity, his sexism or his racism. Those things are OK, but they need a gentler touch. The writer of the op-ed and his cronies want a reactionary in the Oval Office, but they'd prefer someone like George W. Bush or Ted Cruz. But if the choice is between President Trump and someone like Senator Bernie Sanders, the insiders will go with Trump every time.

In any event, it doesn't matter what they want. This secret group of insiders (if it even exists) hasn't succeeded in putting Trump on a leash. They have not and will not stop Trump from doing whatever he wants to do. With enemies like these, Trump doesn't need friends.

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