

The CHRISTIAN SCIENCE
MONITOR WEEKLY

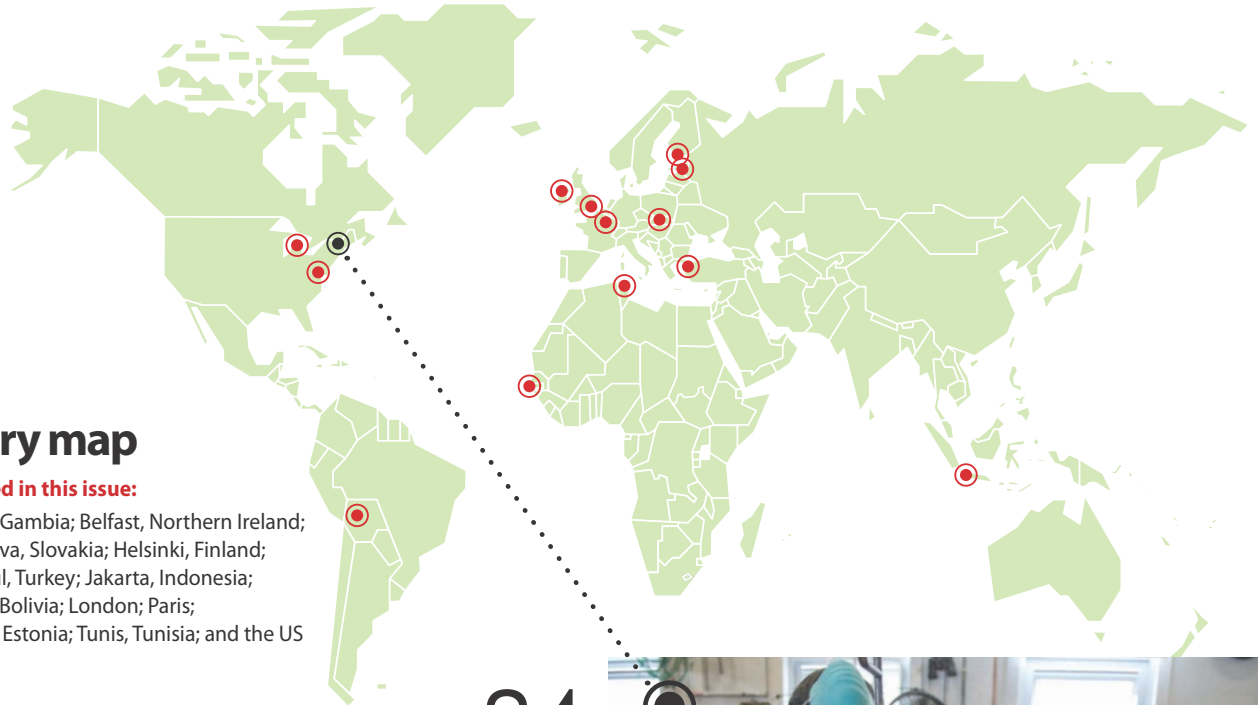
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**MAPLE SYRUP
INC.**

Vermont's rustic tradition goes high tech and high finance. So what happened to the hobbyist with a metal bucket?

BY STEPHANIE HANES



Story map

Covered in this issue:

Banjul, Gambia; Belfast, Northern Ireland; Bratislava, Slovakia; Helsinki, Finland; Istanbul, Turkey; Jakarta, Indonesia; La Paz, Bolivia; London; Paris; Tallinn, Estonia; Tunis, Tunisia; and the US

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COVER STORY

Maple Syrup Inc.

Vermont's iconic tradition goes high tech and high finance. Where's the rubber-booted hobbyist with the metal bucket?

BY STEPHANIE HANES

COVER PHOTO: ALFREDO SOSA/STAFF



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TUNISIA: ENDURING DEMOCRACY'S GROWING PAINS

Tunisians who had high hopes from their revolution find freedom can be disappointingly messy. BY TAYLOR LUCK



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PEOPLE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The Rev. Patrick Desbois has spent more than a decade documenting Nazi atrocities in Eastern Europe. Now he's turning his attention to Iraq's persecuted Yazidi minority.

BY SARA MILLER LLANA





FILM “A Quiet Place” is about a good deal more than scaring us.



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41 THE HOME FORUM Mom was an excellent cook. But she had blind spots, and one of them was fudge.

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– MARY BAKER EDDY

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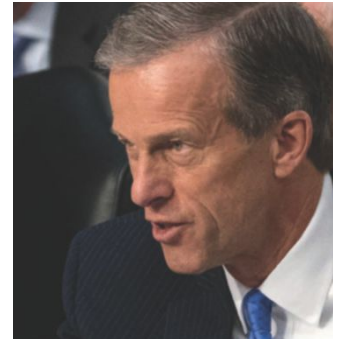
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'In the past, many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle have been willing to defer to tech companies' efforts to regulate themselves. But this may be changing.'

– **Sen. John Thune (R) of South Dakota**, addressing Facebook head Mark Zuckerberg during the first of two days of intense questioning from lawmakers on Capitol Hill. They pressed Mr. Zuckerberg about the social media giant's failure to adequately protect the data of its 2.2 billion users, and blunt Russian interference in the 2016 US election. Some observed that, for now at least, social media technology has far outstripped the capacity of lawmakers to fully understand and thus regulate it.



'I think the real question ... is what is the right regulation, not whether there should be or not.'

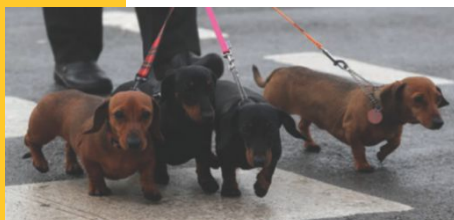
– **Facebook chief executive officer Mark Zuckerberg**, responding to a question from Sen. Lindsey Graham (R) of South Carolina about whether he supports regulating Facebook. Mr. Zuckerberg offered to have his team get back to Senator Graham with a list of proposed regulations. Observers said the broadly bipartisan message from the 40 senators who questioned Zuckerberg was that he needs to move beyond apologizing and take actions that prove Facebook can change. 'This episode has clearly hurt us,' Zuckerberg said. 'And we now have to do a lot of work around building trust...'

'This is a titanic, tectonic shift...
This is going to make every Republican donor believe
the House can't be held.'

– **An unnamed well-connected Republican**, speaking to Axios about House Speaker Paul Ryan's decision not to run for reelection in November. At a press conference April 11, Mr. Ryan said he wanted to spend more time with his adolescent children. Friends close to Ryan told Axios that after overseeing his career-long ambition of passing sweeping tax reform, he felt it was the best time to step aside, but did not rule out a future tilt at the presidency. His departure means 39 Republican members are not running for reelection (some are seeking other positions). House majority leader Kevin McCarthy of California is widely seen as Ryan's successor, with Steve Scalise of Louisiana second in line. Ryan will serve until the end of the current Congress in January. (See story, page 8.)

'China's door of opening up will not be closed
and will only open up even wider.'

– **Chinese President Xi Jinping**, speaking publicly for the first time since the start of an escalating trade dispute between China and the United States. At the Boao Forum in southern China April 10, Mr. Xi seemed to indicate a willingness to ease restrictions on car imports and pledged to grant greater access to financial markets and strengthen intellectual property rights (one of President Trump's main concerns). Mr. Trump tweeted: 'We will make great progress together!' Two days later, a Chinese government spokesman tempered Xi's comments on trade.



'The world needs a sausage dog museum.'

– **Josef Küblbeck**, who, along with fellow florist and lover of dachshunds Oliver Storz, opened the Dackelmuseum (or Dachshund Museum) in the Bavarian town of Passau earlier this month. The space is crammed with 4,500 items of sausage-dog paraphernalia, including stamps, prints, figurines, and, as Reuters reported, 'dog-shaped bread.' Mr. Küblbeck's and Mr. Storz's dachshunds, Seppi and Moni, will make cameo appearances at the museum. Dachshunds were originally bred for the popular 17th-century sport of badger hunting.

REUTERS



THE GREEN MOUNTAIN AUDUBON CENTER IN HUNTINGTON, VT.

ALFREDO SOSA/STAFF

Where maple syrup meets global economics

VERMONT MAPLE SYRUP, it turns out, can tell us a surprising amount about surprising things. Before reading Stephanie Hanes's cover story this week, I might not have thought that merquén-infused maple syrup would offer insights into the sense of uncertainty that has gripped so many workers in the West. Or that it would elegantly trace the arc of opportunity and caution for free market economies in the 21st century. But it does.

The recent upheaval in Western democracies has several causes, but perhaps the greatest is this: How are they coming to terms with their shifting role in the global economy? The answer generally has been that globalization has brought huge net benefits, yet it has created a clear class of people for whom the benefits have been sharply lower. These are the Western working classes. The jobs they once did are now being automated or done elsewhere, and in the United States in particular, workers have been left almost completely unprepared for the transition.

Now, what does this have to do with maple syrup? The Vermont maple syrup industry is showing us, in real time, how this happens – and, perhaps, a different way to look at it.

One rule of free markets is that technology and collaboration drive growth. Technology is perpetually revolutionizing how we do things. Inexorably, processes become more efficient and profitable. Collaboration creates bigger markets and a bigger positive feedback loop for innovation. In other words, it's always better to have a billion consumers and problem-solvers than a million.

In Vermont, technology has revolutionized sugaring. A decade ago, the main characters in Stephanie's story started

a sugaring operation with 28,000 taps – a number considered delusional by local farmers. By 2015, a hedge fund firm started an operation to tap 200,000 trees. Technology had changed the game, expanding the economic opportunity by orders of magnitude.

But what happened? New players – like the hedge fund firm – jumped into the game. The farmers who had previously defined the Vermont industry were significantly overshadowed, almost overnight. They should have been the new “losers.”

But here's where the story gets interesting. So far, no group of producers has had to close its sugar shacks. Why? Because the giant of the global maple syrup industry – Quebec – essentially runs a maple syrup cartel that often forces Quebec producers to produce less to keep prices stable. This wouldn't happen in a truly free market. The result: The system has spread benefits among many maple sugarmakers, even those in Vermont. The losers in this scenario have been the consumers, who pay more.

Does this suggest the Quebec maple syrup federation is a model? No. But even the staunchest supporters of globalization have begun to realize that the pendulum might have swung too far toward unfettered markets with too little thought for the consequences. What Stephanie's story shows is that economies can do different things depending on how they're shaped. The real question is this: What do we want to shape our economies to do?

BY MARK SAPPENFIELD
EDITOR

■ You can reach me at editor@csmonitor.com.

VIEW FINDER

JAKARTA,
INDONESIA



SO MANY FISH TO FRY

A worker is seen marinating fish in the Cilincing district in Jakarta, Indonesia. In this archipelagic nation, seafood and freshwater fish are dietary staples. BEAWIHARTA/REUTERS

Social circle polling: What is it?

A recent paper looks at its role and effectiveness

Almost a year and a half since Donald Trump's victory, political scientists continue to analyze the 2016 election. Some researchers are exploring more accurate ways to conduct polls through innovative concepts such as social circle polling.

Q: What is social circle polling?

Social circle polling, in which potential voters are asked how their friends plan to vote, can be more accurate than asking respondents about their own intentions, claims a team of researchers in a recent paper published in the journal *Nature Human Behaviour*.

Mirta Galesic, lead author of the paper and a researcher of human social dynamics at the Santa Fe Institute in New Mexico, analyzed polls from the 2016 presidential election in the United States and concluded that social circle polling could have predicted Mr. Trump's lead over Hillary Clinton as early as August.

A respondent may find it less embarrassing to report a friend's support of a controversial candidate. And because relationships can influence people's political beliefs, social circle questions can predict how respondents might change their minds before an election.

"What has not been fully appreciated is that these answers are not just answers about oneself, but answers about their social circle," Dr. Galesic says. "Asking these questions, we learn something about the general population beyond the respondent."

Q: Could it have better predicted the 2016 presidential election?

Research has found that people know their social circles well, and when it comes to judging characteristics of friends – such as potential voting preferences – they are largely accurate. Not only do social circle questions improve the quality of polling, but they also offer a quantitative boost by increasing the study's sample size.

Andreas Graefe, a forecast researcher at the Macromedia University of Applied Sciences in Munich, Germany, says social circle polling, or citizen forecasting, as he calls it, is the undisputed accuracy winner – but is hardly used. "People could say, 'This sounds way too easy to be true,'" he says. "People tend to think that complex methods are necessary to solve complex problems. But when we look at the research, the simple often works."

Q: Has it worked before?

Along with analyzing 2016 US election data, Galesic and her colleagues studied polls from the 2017 French presidential election. Featuring a runoff between a liberal centrist (Emmanuel Macron) and a far-right candidate (Marine Le Pen), that election was similar to the US one. But polls predicted the French election with stunning accuracy.

Although it wasn't explicitly social circle polling, mainstream French polling largely avoided the so-called social desirability bias, or the embarrassment factor that some pollsters say caused a "shy Trump" effect. Much of the French polling was conducted online, where voters might feel freer to express their true political beliefs.

Chris Jackson, director of public polling at the global research firm Ipsos, offers a caveat: "I don't think these approaches are so proven yet

that we can say these will allow us to be hyper-accurate. But I do think it is a very valuable tool, especially for socially desirable behaviors."

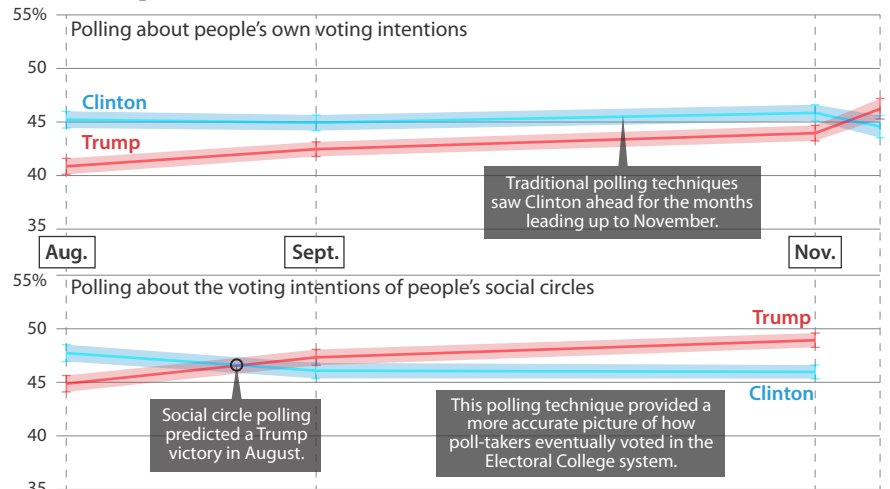
Q: What about the coming US midterm elections?

As Democrats look to the 2018 midterms as a potential redemption for 2016, with hundreds of state-level seats up for grabs and the possibility to control Congress, proponents say social circle polling could be particularly useful.

National polls were not that far off the mark in 2016: Mrs. Clinton did, after all, win the popular vote by nearly 2.9 million votes. But many pollsters, including Galesic, agree that polling was less accurate at the state level. Trump won Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, all states projected for Clinton, handing him the Electoral College and thus the presidency.

"In 2018 it is going to be [all] about state-level predictions, and if there is any polling that needs to improve in the US, it is state-level polling," Galesic says. "These social circle questions can help."

Snapshots from 2016



SOURCE: "Asking about social circles improves election predictions," Galesic et al.

JACOB TURCOTTE/STAFF

Q: Are other methods of polling under consideration for the future?

With the use of landline phones decreasing and the potential for hyper-focused, inexpensive web surveys increasing, political polling is moving online more and more.

One of the biggest questions for polling's future, says Mr. Jackson of Ipsos, is the extent to which social desirability bias still exists. "Our ability to collect information from a whole variety of sources is unparalleled in history," he says. "Social polling will be a piece in that puzzle, but it won't be the biggest piece or only piece. We are in a world where if you are not using a lot of different [polling] approaches, you aren't doing it right."

– Story Hinckley / Staff writer

one week

MUELLER PROBE

Is Trump immune from prosecution?

If any criminal wrongdoing is found, a 1973 policy may apply



ANDREW HARNIK/AP/FILE

SPECIAL COUNSEL ROBERT MUELLER: The former FBI director is probing Russian interference in the 2016 election. He's seen here leaving Capitol Hill after a closed-door meeting in Washington in June 2017.

WASHINGTON – One of the basic questions facing special counsel Robert Mueller in his probe of President Trump is what to do if he finds evidence of presidential wrongdoing.

Since 1973, the US Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel has maintained that a sitting president may not be prosecuted or indicted. That policy was first articulated during the Nixon administration's Watergate

'IT WAS FIRST ADOPTED FOR NIXON. THEY REAFFIRMED IT FOR CLINTON.... I'M SURE THEY WILL REAFFIRM IT FOR TRUMP.'

– Paul Rosenzweig, R Street Institute

scandal, and was reaffirmed in 2000 after the assorted scandals of the Clinton era.

The policy seeks to insulate the president from pressures that would “impermissibly undermine the capacity of the executive branch to perform its constitutionally assigned functions,” according to the formal policy issued by the Clinton administration.

Now, 19 months into the Trump-Russia investigation, legal analysts ask whether Mr. Mueller should toss the 45-year-old policy, if needed, to indict Mr. Trump.

Today's debate is driven by Trump critics who worry that if Mueller has no ability to prosecute the president, Trump will escape accountability. It's a familiar position through decades of executive scandals.

“I just think [the policy] is wrong for the reason that nobody is above the law,” says Paul Rosenzweig, a senior fellow at the R Street Institute. He was a senior counsel in independent counsel Kenneth Starr's investigation of President Bill Clinton.

Despite his legal assessment, Mr. Rosenzweig says he believes Mueller will follow Justice Department policy and not seek to return an indictment charging Trump.

“This has been their consistent policy no matter who the president is,” he says. “It was first adopted for Nixon. They reaffirmed it for Clinton. And if they are called upon to do

it, I'm sure they will reaffirm it for Trump.”

Mueller has presented no evidence of wrongdoing by Trump. The Washington Post reported recently that Mueller told Trump's lawyers that the president was not currently a criminal “target” of his investigation. The recent FBI raid on Trump lawyer Michael Cohen's office and home was reportedly unrelated to the Russia probe, but may be linked to payments made to women who say they had affairs with Trump before he became president.

Investigators are looking into whether Trump and members of his campaign conspired with Russia to meddle in the 2016 election and whether the president obstructed justice, in part by firing the FBI director.

Trump calls the investigation a “witch hunt” that undermines his legitimacy.

“The question in this case isn't ‘Should the president be above the law?’ It is ‘What is the law?’” says Brian Kalt, a constitutional scholar and law professor at Michigan State University. “If this case comes up to the Supreme Court, we are not deciding what we think of Trump or what we think about immunity,” he says. “We are deciding what we think the Constitution requires.”

Mueller was appointed special counsel under Justice Department regulations that require him to comply with the “rules, regulations, procedures, practices and policies” of the Justice Department.

That suggests Mueller is bound by the no-prosecution policy. But some analysts say such a restriction is inconsistent with the entire purpose of having a special counsel who can wield independent judgment in the face of suspected presidential wrongdoing.

– Warren Richey / Staff writer

HOUSE SPEAKER

Why did Paul Ryan choose to leave?

Many politicians cite ‘family,’ but he may really mean it

WASHINGTON – Whenever a speaker of the House says he is heading for the exit, it is always about much more than the comings and goings of a single member of Congress.

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House Speaker Paul Ryan, who announced April 11 that he will retire at the end of his term this year, says he is leaving for family reasons and because he has accomplished a big career goal: tax reform.

While politicians often cite their families in such announcements, the Republican from Janesville, Wis., may actually mean it. His dad died when he was 16, and his three teenagers weren't even born when he first came to Washington two decades ago.

"If I'm here for one more term my kids will only ever have known me as a weekend dad," he said. "I just can't let that happen."

But consider the context: Washington is seeing a young speaker who is third in line to the presidency and ran as a vice presidential candidate willingly leave the nexus of power when his party controls the White House, the Senate, and the House. No speaker has given up the gavel on his own terms since Democrat Tip O'Neill in 1987.

The timing is notable for what it signals about a divided GOP and the approaching



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

EXIT: House Speaker Ryan tells reporters on Capitol Hill April 11 he won't run for reelection. Many Republicans fear a 'wave' election of Democrats.

midterm elections. President Trump is attempting to remake the party in his image, an image not in sync with an "establishment" conservative like Ryan – either in demeanor or on key issues such as the Mueller investigation, trade, and immigration. Republicans are deeply split and sense a blue wave approaching in November.

"Trump as president has been a challenge for traditional Republicans like Ryan. He represents a different direction for the party, but also he is a whirlwind of a president and unpredictable," says Matthew Green, an expert on the speakership at Catholic University in Washington.

Ryan's decision to get out of politics, at least for now, deprives the GOP of one of its stars. When he was first elected to Congress in 1998, Ryan was a boy wonder, still in his 20s. His study of conservative economics, under the mentorship of the late Rep. Jack Kemp, and his ability to articulate his views

and master the minutiae of policy, made him a Wonk with a capital "W."

His youthful appearance, commitment to physical fitness, and family portrait made him a poster boy for Midwestern values. Mitt Romney, the GOP's 2012 presidential nominee, shocked no one when he made Ryan his running mate. Mr. Romney saw Ryan as a junior version of himself, committed to conservative principles, but also willing to work across the aisle.

RYAN'S DECISION TO GET OUT OF POLITICS, AT LEAST FOR NOW, DEPRIVES THE GOP OF ONE OF ITS STARS.

By then, Ryan had risen to the chairmanship of the House Budget Committee, and then finally reached his dream job, chair of the tax writing House Ways & Means Committee. But after less than a year, in 2015 he was tapped to be speaker, a position he took reluctantly. He didn't want to spend so much time fundraising and away from his family.

Trump's rise challenged him. Ryan stopped short of withdrawing his support after the release of the "Access Hollywood" tape on the eve of the 2016 election, but he made it clear that Trump's comments disgusted him, and refused to be with him in public.

Nevertheless, he worked with the president on a massive tax cut, succeeding also in turning back the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate.

Ryan has his detractors. His work with the unconventional president led many Democrats and Republican "never Trumpers" to say that Ryan had "lost his spine."

Back in Wisconsin, the departure of Ryan means the GOP has a weaker grip on his seat. Since his announced retirement, Ryan's seat has shifted from solid Republican to lean Republican, according to the independent Cook Political Report.

– Francine Kiefer / Staff writer

Anti-Semitism roils British politics

Labour Party forced to examine strains of bigotry in its ranks

LONDON AND PARIS – It wasn't a massive demonstration. But the hundreds of protesters who congregated outside Britain's Labour headquarters earlier this month to rail against what they say is significant anti-Semitism among party leadership, shows

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PRIME NUMBERS

1.008 TRILLION

US annual budget deficit (in dollars) in 2020 predicted by the Congressional Budget Office, the first such forecast since President Trump signed off on major tax cuts and big increases in military and domestic spending.

6,000+

National Guard troops sent to bolster security along the US southern border at the height of George W. Bush's Operation Jump Start from 2006 to 2008. Defense Secretary James Mattis has approved 4,000 for President Trump's current operation.

66 BILLION

Value (in dollars) of a mega-merger between German drugmaker Bayer and US agribusiness giant Monsanto, which gained the approval of the US Justice Department early this month.

1

Children born to US Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D) of Illinois April 9 – the first time in US history that a sitting US senator has given birth.

12

Length (in years) of the prison sentence given to former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. He surrendered to police on April 7.

60,000

Iranian rials needed to buy one US dollar on April 9, a record low for the currency. Analysts blame internal and external pressures, including President Trump's pending decision on the US-Iran nuclear deal.

7

Miles that a runaway train with 1,000 passengers traveled backward in India April 7. No one was injured. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has promised a \$134 billion rail system upgrade.

1

Blockbuster video stores remaining in the continental United States (in Bend, Ore.) after the one in Redmond, Ore., closed in March. There are still six Blockbusters in Alaska.

Sources: Bloomberg, ABC News, Business Insider, CNN, The Guardian, Bloomberg, The Washington Post, GeekWire

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a sustained pressure on the left as it finds itself wrestling with assertions that may go deeper than individual members.

Two recent protests, organized by Jewish groups, have been directed at party leader Jeremy Corbyn, stirred by his support – in the name of free speech – for an anti-Semitic mural in London in 2012. The resurfacing of his years-old comments revived concerns that Mr. Corbyn, at best, turns a blind eye to anti-Semitism in party ranks, and at worst, permits it, in overt and subtle forms.

Labour’s troubles are further heated as Western countries grapple with a rise in populism that has eroded norms on political correctness and even fanned xenophobia. That has put Labour, which professes to defend minorities, under a harsh spotlight.

The accusations, magnified by politics, are also seen as a sign of a greater capacity to recognize the problem. This has led to soul-searching about old and deeply ingrained party attitudes and traditions.

“The Labour leadership in general has not always recognized the nature of the problem,” says David Feldman, director of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism at Birkbeck, University of London. “This isn’t an issue about Corbyn; it’s an issue about ways of thinking on the left.... It’s not about individuals; it’s about elements in the political culture.”

That culture can be found in radical socialist thinking and writing from the early 19th century in its critique of the “evils of

‘THIS ISN’T ... ABOUT [JEREMY] CORBYN; IT’S ... ABOUT WAYS OF THINKING...!’

– David Feldman, University of London

capitalism,” Professor Feldman says, “often personified by a rapacious Jewish banker.” More recently, anti-Zionist sentiment on the left, born of sympathy for Palestinians, can morph into anti-Semitism. And legitimate debate can degenerate when distinctions between Israeli politics and Jewish culture are blurred. Too often, Jewish culture and the politics of Israel are conflated.

Many in Labour have voiced discomfort with some of Corbyn’s positions as a staunch supporter of Palestinian rights. He once referred to members of Hamas and Hezbollah as “friends.”

The recent protests against Labour are only the latest to dog the party under Corbyn’s leadership. In April 2016, Facebook comments by lawmaker Naseem Shah compared Israel to Nazi Germany; she was temporarily banned from the party after apologizing. That same month former London



Recalling a major step toward peace in N. Ireland

FORMER LEADERS TONY BLAIR (L.) OF BRITAIN AND Bill Clinton appear at an event to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, in Belfast, Northern Ireland, April 10. Mr. Clinton and Mr. Blair were major architects of the pact, which ended 30 years of violence.

Mayor Ken Livingstone said that Hitler had been a Zionist before the Holocaust. He was indefinitely suspended from the party.

The outcry led to an investigation by British lawyer Shami Chakrabarti into anti-Semitism in the party. Her report concluded that it’s not endemic, but there is an “occasionally toxic atmosphere” and listed a package of reforms.

David Hirsh, a professor at Goldsmiths University and author of “Contemporary Left Anti-Semitism,” says the issue has gained traction because Corbyn has moved into mainstream British politics since he was elected to lead Labour in 2015. “Jeremy Corbyn isn’t some kind of magic evil anti-Semite, but he is a man from a political tradition and political faction which embodies this kind of anti-Semitism,” says Professor Hirsh, the founder of Engage, a campaign against the academic boycott of Israel.

He says that the issue is confounded by the rise of populism. In many places in Europe, populist parties on the far right have gained power, often with anti-migrant and anti-Muslim messaging that can also be anti-Semitic. Corbyn’s win was a populist surge on the left, and with it has come simplistic thinking about Israel, Hirsh says. “There are a lot of people on the left who have been educated to believe that Israel is the key evil on the planet, and anyone who defends Israel is a racist or pro-apartheid.”

– Nicola Slawson / Correspondent and Sara Miller Llana / Staff writer

YEMEN CONFLICT

UN resolution is roadblock to talks

Both sides want to negotiate, but precondition ignores facts

ISTANBUL, TURKEY – Hoping to improve the chances for peace where his predecessors failed, the United Nations’ new special envoy for Yemen has completed his first meetings with key players in a devastating war.

The good news is that the envoy, Martin Griffiths, is encouraged about the prospects to ease a three-year conflict that has left some 10,000 people dead and ravaged one of the world’s poorest countries.

“What I heard has inspired me and gives me hope,” Ambassador Griffiths said in Yemen’s capital, Sanaa, March 31. “All the people I met, both in Riyadh and Sanaa, spoke about their strong desire to move ahead with a political solution.”

The bad news is that Griffiths’s efforts may be hobbled by UN Security Council Resolution 2216 from 2015, which has been used by the internationally recognized Yemen government and its chief supporter, Saudi Arabia, to legitimize military intervention against Shiite Houthi rebels and

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create a serious obstacle to negotiations.

Analysts say the conflict has now evolved beyond that resolution, which explicitly requires that the Iran-backed Houthis give up their weapons and leave cities.

Any framework for peace, analysts say, must now account for the following:

- Widespread Houthi gains in a war that lasted years longer than expected.

- Fragmented parties and multiple power centers on all sides, many of which benefit from a war economy.

- Desperately urgent humanitarian needs for millions of Yemenis.

- A war that's now a stalemate, despite some 17,000 airstrikes, which the UN blames for two-thirds of civilian casualties.

"The fact is, this is a very rigid Security Council resolution for a conflict that's been very fluid and evolved quite a bit over the last three years," says Adam Baron, a Yemen expert with the European Council on Foreign Relations, contacted in Lebanon. The UN resolution "outlines something that – even if parts of it are still valid – it's something that really does fail to address the complexities of the Yemen conflict as it exists today."

The 2015 resolution was supported by the United States and Britain, allies of Saudi Arabia that have sold billions of dollars of weaponry to Saudi Arabia and its chief coalition partner, the United Arab Emirates, throughout the war. They have also provided

intelligence and midair refueling services for coalition jet fighters.

Human rights groups accuse all sides of war crimes, but single out the Saudi-led coalition for "indiscriminate bombing" that has devastated civilian infrastructure and is most responsible they say for creating what the UN says is the "worst man-made humanitarian crisis in the world."

There is no sign that the US, Britain, or Saudi Arabia is interested in a new UN resolution that would raise the Houthis' negotiating status vis-à-vis the internationally recognized Yemen government, which resides in exile in Riyadh.

Resolution 2216 has been used by that Yemeni government, Saudi Arabia, and its



RALLY: Armed Houthi men gather in Sanaa, Yemen, to mark the third anniversary of the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen last month.

allies to insist that the Houthis surrender and withdraw – as required by the text – as a precondition for peace talks, analysts say. The Houthis have indicated a willingness to talk, and even to hand over heavy weapons to a government that represents all factions, but only as a result of talks.

"There is a political solution, but I think the new UN special envoy – as much as the former UN special envoy – is faced with this impossible precondition to the negotiations," says Marie-Christine Heinze, a Yemen specialist and president of the Center for Applied Research in Partnership with the Orient in Bonn, Germany.

The 2015 resolution "condemns the Houthis, rightly so, for the coup that they did," says Dr. Heinze. But she adds that today Houthis have little incentive to simply surrender their arms and territory at the outset, before talks begin.

Without a change, or some creative diplomacy, the UN special envoy "can't address all sides on an equal level and broker a solution that keeps the dignity of all sides intact, which is an important precondition for all mediation efforts," says Heinze.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian stakes have risen. A UN pledging conference in Geneva earlier this month generated more than \$2 billion in pledges, with \$930 million coming from Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

– **Scott Peterson** / Staff writer

DC DECODER

Whatever happened to 'drain the swamp'?

Donald Trump first uttered the rallying cry "drain the swamp!" just three weeks before the 2016 election. Promising to "make our government honest once again," he unveiled a five-point proposal aimed at reining in the influence of lobbyists.

Today, experts on government ethics say, President Trump is presiding over one of the most ethically challenged administrations in modern history. Scott Pruitt, head of the Environmental Protection Agency, is only the latest example. Mr. Pruitt has been accused of an improper housing setup connected to an energy lobbyist, unconventional pay raises to favored political appointees, and reassignment or demotion of senior staff who questioned his spending.

Other Trump cabinet members have already gotten the heave-ho. Former Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin, fired

in March, had faced criticism over travel expenses. Mr. Shulkin, who had also served as an undersecretary in the Obama administration, maintains he was let go because he resisted pressure from the Trump White House to privatize veterans' health care.

All presidents deal to some extent with alleged wrongdoing by senior appointees, but "I have never seen anything like this," says Scott Amey, general counsel for the Project on Government Oversight, a non-partisan government watchdog group.

Why is this happening, especially under an outsider president who promised change? One answer may center on what, exactly, Trump meant by "drain the swamp."

"We thought he was saying, 'Hey, there's going to be a new sheriff in town,' and that he would do things differently with the revolving door [between government service

and lobbying] and cleaning up ethics laws and regulations," says Mr. Amey.

But so far, draining the swamp has been more about deregulation and shrinking the federal workforce and less about strengthening or even adhering to the norms and rules of ethical behavior for government officials. Trump's attacks on the news media and on entrenched members of Congress – of both parties – have also tended to label them as members of the "swamp."

Some conservatives have spoken of a "witch hunt" against Pruitt – the same language Trump uses when speaking of the Mueller investigation. "Instead of confronting the issue, or arguing against the allegations, they resort to name-calling. It is very sad," says James Pfiffner, professor of public policy at George Mason University.

– **Linda Feldmann** / Staff writer



SARA MILLER LLANA/THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

TIME FOR CHANGE: Marian Kulich hands around a petition for a referendum on fresh elections during a candlelight vigil for a murdered journalist in Bratislava, Slovakia, March 23.

CORRUPTION SCANDAL

Slovaks are asking for 'normalcy'

Ten years of EU membership have not eased Slovakia's woes

BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA - Marian Kulich is one of tens of thousands of protesters on the streets of Slovakia in the biggest show of people power since the Velvet Revolution.

What began as an outcry over a young journalist's murder has in the past month morphed into a mass general movement to end cronyism in this post-communist state.

The call "For a Decent Slovakia," as the protests have been dubbed, has already taken down three-term Prime Minister Robert Fico and his administration. But Mr. Kulich is determined not to stop there.

On Friday, March 23, he joined 25,000 protesters in a candlelight vigil in downtown Bratislava in a display of discontent that could be a turning point for the region.

"I have to be here. I can't stop," he says, as he passes around a petition calling for a referendum on fresh elections. "When I look at what is happening in this region, I feel very worried about the future."

As Russia exerts its power and influence over the West and the European Union struggles to overcome populism and anger at the political establishment, it's the newest post-Soviet members who have posed some

of the most complex challenges to Brussels in recent years.

Some nations have rolled back democratic checks or allowed unchecked corruption; others have cozied up to Russia's Vladimir Putin. But the catalyst for the mass protests in Slovakia was the February murder of investigative reporter Ján Kuciak, who had been digging into state corruption and Mafia ties, and his fiancée, Martina Kusnirova.

For many here the murder, still unsolved, proves how "pathological" corruption has become, says Jozef Bátora, a political science professor at Comenius University in Bratislava, and the reaction to it shows an overwhelming desire for normalcy.

"We have been part of the EU for more than 10 years now. It has been almost 30 years since the Velvet Revolution," Mr. Bátora

'WHEN I LOOK AT WHAT IS HAPPENING ... I FEEL VERY WORRIED ABOUT THE FUTURE.'

- Marian Kulich, Slovak protester

ra says. "It is time to be a normal society."

Young people have taken a leading role in the movement in large part because they can identify with the victims. Buttons worn on lapels in Bratislava feature a snapshot of the couple. Mr. Kuciak was just 27.

On March 23, students called for an impromptu vigil in a sign that they refuse to stand down after a larger nationwide protest was canceled.

"We want a transparent government that we can trust," says 19-year-old high-schooler Bronislava Garčárová. She says she sees her role as a continuation of her parents'

fight against communism and for a higher quality of life.

"We young people want to stay in Slovakia, but we can't. We have to go abroad to have a better life," says Ms. Garčárová. She is planning to study theater and language at a university in the Czech Republic.

The disillusionment among young people has boosted the far right in Slovakia as EU enthusiasm has waned. Some analysts have worried that the generation, far removed from the struggles against both communism and fascism, has failed to learn from the past.

But the protests seem to have underlined how and what youths stand to lose by veering too far from EU norms and standards, says Tomáš Valášek, the Slovak director of Carnegie Europe in Brussels.

"They are 18, or 19, and are saying, 'I live in an open, borderless Europe, and I can see societies much better managed than ours,'" he says. "Yet people are no less hardworking than anyone else out there. They are asking, 'Why should I not see the benefits of my tax money?'"

In spirit and ethos, the movement "For a Decent Slovakia" has drawn some comparisons to the pro-EU protests in Kiev's Maidan, except that Slovaks are fighting for accountability inside the bloc, while Ukrainians were fighting to move closer to it.

Still, belonging to the EU, to the dismay of many in the region, has not guaranteed accountability of the democratic process, says Kulich. He was a teenager during the Velvet Revolution. In the 1990s he protested with the nation against authoritative Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar. Kulich says the fight for democracy is not yet won.

He travels around Eastern Europe for his job in information technology and worries about Mr. Putin's reach in the post-Soviet sphere, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's concentration of power, the illiberal turn in Poland, and society's resignation about corruption.

Candles flickered in an icy wind as the silent vigil ended with the singing of the Slovak national anthem. But then protesters spontaneously marched to the doors of Parliament. "Mafia," they yelled. "To jail!"

This shows, to many, that this movement won't be ending soon. Grigorij Mesežnikov, head of the Bratislava-based Institute for Public Affairs, says the mood has changed. "We are following you," he says the protesters are saying. "It is not like it was before. This seems, at this point in time, as a tipping point in the sense that people are no longer accepting the systematic nature of the corrupt regime."

- Sara Miller Llana / Staff writer

RACE FOR GOVERNOR

Will Michigan elect a Muslim?

An Arab-American physician has broad appeal for voters

DETROIT - In April 2007, a college senior named Abdulrahman El-Sayed delivered a six-minute commencement speech at his graduation ceremony at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

A few minutes later Bill Clinton, the keynote speaker, took the same microphone. After the ceremony, Dr. El-Sayed says in an interview, the former president told him, "I hope someday you'll consider running for office."

"I really appreciate that," El-Sayed responded. "But I don't know if you saw my first name?"

Eleven years later, El-Sayed is in the middle of a potentially historic gubernatorial campaign. If elected, he would become the first Muslim governor in US history. At 33, he would also be among the youngest in decades. Campaigning on an ambitious plan to revitalize Michigan's struggling cities, he's emerged as a legitimate challenger for Michigan's Democratic nomination in August, behind former Michigan Senate minority leader Gretchen Whitmer.



DAVID EGGERT/AP

ON THE STUMP: Democratic gubernatorial candidate Abdulrahman El-Sayed speaks in Lansing, Mich.

"It's not a surprise that he's generated a very strong and passionate following," says Michigan Democratic Party chairman Brandon Dillon. "When you meet him and hear him speak, you can't help but be impressed."

El-Sayed grew up in Bloomfield Hills, a wealthy Detroit suburb, in a blended Arab-American family. Both of his parents immigrated to Michigan from Egypt. His

childhood amounted to a very American cultural mashup: His father was a part-time imam, and one of his grandmothers was a Presbyterian deacon; he played high school football and spent summer holidays with relatives in Egypt. It's a background, El-Sayed says, that connects him with a wide cross section of voters.

After completing two years at the University of Michigan's medical school, he won a Rhodes Scholarship, then went on to earn a doctorate in public health from Oxford University and a medical degree from Columbia University.

In 2015, with Detroit a year or so out of bankruptcy and reeling from a burgeoning water shutoff crisis, El-Sayed moved back to Michigan to lead a turnaround of the city's public health department. He was 30 - the youngest top health official of a major US city. In

'WHEN YOU MEET HIM ... YOU CAN'T HELP BUT BE IMPRESSED.'

- Brandon Dillon, Democratic party official

February 2017, El-Sayed announced he was running for governor.

He began as a relatively unknown long shot, but over the past year El-Sayed's campaign has gained momentum. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the campaign has also inspired Islamophobic backlash. One viral meme, traced to the pro-Trump Facebook page Patriots For America USA, warns that "Abdul El-Sayed is running to be the first Muslim governor ... to turn all of Michigan into Dearborn!" referring to the largely Arab Michigan city.

In late January, the campaign hit its first major controversy after questions about El-Sayed's eligibility surfaced in a Bridge Magazine story. Michigan's constitution dictates that a governor has to have been a registered voter in the state at least four years before the general election. El-Sayed was registered in New York as recently as March 2015. His campaign says that he's maintained an apartment in Michigan since 2008. The state's Democratic Party called on the campaign to clear up the issue in court. Last month, the campaign filed a request for a judgment in Wayne County Circuit Court.

Notwithstanding eligibility questions, El-Sayed is considered the biggest challenger to Ms. Whitmer, although "[i]t's very early," notes Mr. Dillon, the Democratic Party chairman. "We expect it to be a competitive primary."

- Trevor Bach / Contributor

meanwhile in ...



COUNTING VOTES IN GAMBIA THIERRY GOUEGNON/REUTERS/FILE

GAMBIA, voters will head to the polls this spring to elect local officials as expected, but it will be the last time they will vote using glass marbles. For the past 60 years, each Gambian has cast a vote by dropping a glass marble into a barrel painted in party colors. (Election officials listen to make sure each voter drops only one marble into the barrel.) When the barrels are full, the marbles are counted by pouring them into wooden trays with 200 or 500 holes. The system works well, discourages fraud, and allows illiterate voters to participate, Gambian officials have said in the past. But they will now be switching to paper ballots to meet international standards.

ESTONIA, citizens are enjoying a reputation as global leaders in digital governance. Known as e-Estonia, the system handles almost all government functions digitally, linking legislation, elections, banking, education, health care, and taxes on a single platform. Estonians can vote by computer from home and apply for loans without having to fill out lengthy applications (the system pulls all the necessary information for them). The country estimates that it saves 2 percent of its gross domestic product each year in government salaries and expenses. Marriage, divorce, and home purchases, however, still require a personal transaction.

FINLAND, robots are helping to teach children. Some Finnish schools are participating in a yearlong pilot program that uses a robot named Elias to teach students language and math. Elias speaks 23 languages and is able to understand and answer student questions. Elias can also give teachers feedback to alert them to students' potential learning problems. "I see Elias as one of the tools to get different kinds of practice and different kinds of activities into the classroom," one Finnish language teacher told Euronews. One thing Elias cannot handle: maintaining classroom discipline.

- Staff

POINTS OF PROGRESS

In Finland, many fewer homeless

A housing-first approach has created a European success story

As anyone who has visited Europe recently can attest, the scourge of homelessness has reached epidemic proportions.

The only exception to the trend is Finland, according to FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organizations Working with the Homeless. There, homelessness is on the decline.

Per the latest statistics, the number of homeless people in Finland has declined from a high of 18,000 some 30 years ago to approximately 7,000; the latter figure includes about 5,000 people who are temporarily lodging with friends or relatives. In short, the problem has essentially been solved.

At the core of this result was a move away from the so-called staircase model, whereby a homeless person moved from one social rehabilitation level to another, with an apartment waiting for him or her at the highest step. Instead, Finland opted to give housing to homeless people from the start, nationwide, so as to allow them an environment to stabilize their lives.

“Basically, we decided that we wanted to end homelessness, rather than manage it,” says Juha Kaakinen, chief executive officer of the Y-Foundation, which helps provide 16,500 low-cost apartments for homeless people.

To be sure, one of the reasons why Finland has made such strides in resolving its homelessness problem is that successive Finnish governments have made it a national priority. The elimination of homelessness first appeared in the Helsinki government’s program in 1987. Since then virtually every government has devoted significant resources toward this end.

Around 10 years ago, however, observers noticed that although homelessness in general was declining, long-term homelessness was not. A new approach to the problem was called for, along with a new philosophy.

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LONG-TERM HOMELESSNESS IN FINLAND FELL 35 PERCENT BETWEEN 2008 AND 2015.

GAMBIA

The West African nation’s president has suspended the use of the death penalty. Announcing the moratorium in February, President Adama Barrow broke sharply from Gambia’s former dictator, Yahya Jammeh, who used capital punishment with impunity. In 2017, a year after Mr. Barrow’s surprise victory over Mr. Jammeh, Barrow signed a United Nations treaty on the abolition of capital punishment.



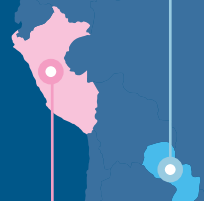
KUKU MARONG/AP
ADAMA BARROW GIVES HIS INAUGURAL ADDRESS IN FEBRUARY 2017.

THE GUARDIAN

PARAGUAY

Paraguay’s capital has solved its excess mango problem. Until a few years ago, more than 551 tons of rotting mangoes littered the streets of the capital, Asunción, every week from September to December. Street cleaners were forced to take the debris to the dump until late 2016, when a program called Mango Móvil began collecting the fruit and overseeing its distribution to prisons and educational centers.

BORNEO BULLETIN



INGO ARNDT/MINDEN PICTURES/NEWSCOM

A WEEKLY GLOBAL ROUNDUP

UZBEKISTAN •

The central Asian nation is showing early signs of unwinding decades of brutal authoritarian rule. Since the death of former dictator Islam Karimov in 2016, the government has taken modest steps toward justice and freedom: freeing some political prisoners and journalists; keeping a closer check on its security forces, including the removal of thousands of citizens from their “blacklist”; and ending forced labor for teachers, doctors, and college students during the annual cotton-picking season.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH



UZBEK SOLDIERS SECURE A STREET IN MAY 2005. SHAMIL ZHUMATOV AS/AA/REUTERS

MOZAMBIQUE

The East African country will host Britain's first black female ambassador. NneNne Iwuji-Eme will take up her post as British high commissioner to Mozambique in July. “I hope my appointment as the first British black female career diplomat to this position will inspire young talent, regardless of race or background, to pursue their ambitions in the Foreign Office,” Ms. Iwuji-Eme said.

AFRICA NEWS

PERU •

The South American nation will create two massive reserves to protect uncontacted tribes. The Yavari Tapiche and Yavari Mirim reserves will cover a combined 2.5 million hectares (6.18 million acres) in the country's northeastern Amazon, which is home to at least seven tribes that have had little or no contact with the outside world. The protected areas are being added at a time when oil exploration, logging, and a proposed road pose significant threats to such groups.

SURVIVAL



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The optimal solution, a group of four experts appointed by the Ministry of the Environment found, was Housing First. “Solving social and health problems is not a prerequisite for arranging housing,” they observed. “Instead, housing is a prerequisite that will also enable solving a homeless person’s other problems.”

The concept behind the new approach was not original; it was already in selective use in the United States as part of the Pathways Model pioneered by Dr. Sam Tsemberis in the 1990s to help former psychiatric patients. What was different, and historic, about the Finnish Housing First

‘[W]E DECIDED THAT WE WANTED TO END HOMELESSNESS, RATHER THAN MANAGE IT.’

– Juha Kaakinen, Y-Foundation

model was a willingness to enact the model on a nationwide basis.

“We understood, firstly, that if we wanted to eradicate homelessness we had to work in a completely different way,” says Mr. Kaakinen, who acted as secretary for the Finnish experts. “At the same time right from the beginning there was a national consensus

that the problem had reached a crisis point.”

As a result, in 2008 the Finnish National Program to reduce long-term homelessness was drafted and put into place. Helsinki and nine other Finnish cities committed to the program, with the Ministry of the Environment coordinating its implementation and local governments and nongovernmental organizations joining the team.

One of those goals was to cut the number of long-term homeless in half by producing 1,250 new homes, including supported housing units for tenants with their own leases and around-the-clock presence of trained, caring staff for residents who needed help.

As far as the cost of producing the 3,500 units between 2008 and 2015 – estimated at just under \$382 million – “the program pays for itself,” says Sanna Vesikansa, deputy mayor of Helsinki.

As evidence, she points to a case study by the Tampere University of Technology in 2011. It showed society saved \$18,500 per year for each homeless person who had received a rental apartment with support, because of the medical and emergency services no longer needed to assist and respond to them.

Across Finland, long-term homelessness



GORDON F. SANDER

NEARLY HOME: Two residents stand with resident coordinator Emmi Vuorela (r.) at a supported housing unit in Helsinki, Finland.

fell by 1,345 people, or 35 percent between 2008 and 2015. In some cities it was halved.

Finland’s success has spurred other countries, particularly Britain – where the problem has also reached crisis proportions – to adopt their own plans modeled on the Housing First plan. Kaakinen feels that can work, provided there is the kind of across-the-board commitment to resolving the problem that Finland has shown.

– Gordon F. Sander / Correspondent



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Tunisians who had high hopes from their revolution find that freedom can be disappointingly messy. **BY TAYLOR LUCK / CORRESPONDENT**

Enduring democracy's growing pains



AIMEN ZINE/AP/FILE

BIG MOMENT: Members of Tunisia's Constituent Assembly celebrate a new constitution in 2014. But it hasn't been easy to put its ideals into practice.

TUNIS, TUNISIA
 Tarek Dziri cannot forget Tunisia's revolution for a single minute.

Mr. Dziri was 26 years old and a new father, working as a chef in the town of Al Fahs, 40 miles south of the capital, when riots broke out in central Tunisia in December 2010 against the country's dictatorial then-president, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali.

On Jan. 12, 2011, Dziri and his friends decided to join the protest movement and demonstrate in front of the Al Fahs police station to denounce the killing of innocent civilians. Police officers fired on the young men; one bullet hit Dziri's shoulder, and a second lodged in his lung.

When police came to the local hospital that night, ostensibly to arrest him but most likely to "finish the job," Dziri says, a quick-thinking nurse smuggled him out in an ambulance and transferred him to Ben Arous hospital near the capital, an hour's

ride away. The ordeal left him paralyzed from the waist down.

Seven years since the revolution felled Mr. Ben Ali, things have changed for both Tunisia and Dziri, not all for the good.

Now in a wheelchair, Dziri has been unable to secure work. Government funding for him to complete medical treatment in France has stopped; so, too, has the \$175 monthly stipend to pay for medical supplies and painkillers. A bullet from the Ben Ali regime still sits next to his heart.

But even more painful, he says, is watching his country descend into polarized politics and name-calling, old regime figures slowly returning to power, and the government ignoring the pleas of the working class, all in the name of the revolution.

Among the Ben Ali-era officials who have been restored to positions of authority: current President Beji Caid Essebsi, Finance Minister Ridha Chalghoum, and Defense Minister Abdelkarim Zebidi. Senior mem-

▶ WHY IT MATTERS

While Tunisia's revolution stands as the most successful experiment in democracy launched by the Arab Spring, imperfections abound, including corruption and ineffective government. Yet Tunisians are learning to disagree civilly and make themselves heard.

bers of the security services who carried out Ben Ali's shoot-first tactics remain in their posts to this day.

Meanwhile, coastal elites who benefited from Ben Ali's system of corruption have been granted amnesty under a reconciliation law passed by a parliament that included many former Ben Ali partners and allies.

Also, parliament dealt a blow to the Truth and Dignity Commission for reconciliation, refusing to extend its mandate in March,

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which effectively ended its ability to refer cases to the courts.

“We went to the streets giving our lives for a dignified life, freedom, and social justice,” Dziri says from Tunis, the capital, “and now politicians who were never with us in the first place are profiting.

“Is this what we really revolted for?”

To be sure, democracy is faring far better in Tunisia than elsewhere in the post-Arab Spring world. Tens of thousands of Tunisians have declared their candidacy for municipal elections in early May.

That contrasts sharply with Egypt, where democracy is in retreat: In late March, authoritarian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi secured a second term with 97 percent of the vote amid turnout of just 41 percent.

Nevertheless, freedoms and democracy are failing to heal old wounds in Tunisia, as decades-old social and economic grievances, inequality, and corruption persist.

The transition from a dictatorship has been sobering. Tunisians are learning that democracy is messy and divisive and that in politics progress is slow, compromise hard, and social and economic justice a long-term



TUNISIAN REVOLUTIONARY: Tarek Dziri, who was paralyzed after being shot by regime forces during the 2011 protests, has been unable to find work. TAYLOR LUCK

Suicide is on the rise in the town of 50,000. In January, 33 residents attempted suicide, the highest number of any area in Tunisia and nearly equaling the 39 suicide attempts in the rest of the country collectively, according to the independent Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights.

In a bid to bring attention to their plight, Dhaffouli and fellow Sidi Bouzid residents decided to launch a hunger strike in the capital in February. It was one display of many. The government reports 13,000 protests ranging from work stoppages to hunger strikes, most economic-based, in 2017 alone.

‘We had hoped for social justice and economic equality, not for corrupt political parties and a government that works in the interest of lobbies and wealthy businessmen and -women.’

– **Amel Dhaffouli**, one of the first protesters in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia

battle rather than a protest slogan.

Revolution, they say, was the easy part.

Consider Tunisian Amel Dhaffouli. Now in her 30s, she was one of the first to protest in her hometown of Sidi Bouzid, where the revolution was ignited after a young fruit vendor set himself alight in protest against police humiliation in late 2010.

In the years since, Ms. Dhaffouli and her friends and relatives have yet to find work in Sidi Bouzid, which, like most communities in Tunisia’s interior and southern regions, was deprived of investment and development in the five-decade rule of Ben Ali and his predecessor, Habib Bourguiba. Unemployment there hovers around 30 percent, twice the national average.

Passersby stepped over the Sidi Bouzid protesters’ sleeping bags in downtown Tunis, barely noticing the five fasting young Tunisians who once led their revolution.

“We had hoped for social justice and economic equality,” Dhaffouli says, “not for corrupt political parties and a government that works in the interest of lobbies and wealthy businessmen and -women.

“Things are worse off now than the days of Ben Ali.”

Partisan scramble

Governing Tunisia these days is a coalition of the Islamist Ennahda party, which was outlawed and repressed during Ben Ali’s era, and the secular Nidaa Tounes, a group-

ing of liberals and leftovers from the Ben Ali regime. A power-sharing arrangement was struck in 2015 after polls gave them the two largest blocks in parliament.

Yet, while the Ennahda-Nidaa coalition maintains stability at the top of Tunisia’s government, insiders and analysts say beneath the surface is a partisan scramble for control over independent institutions.

Tunisia’s electoral commission, judicial appointments, and anti-corruption commission – all nominally independent – have reportedly been stacked with political appointees, and wielded as tools to settle old scores and intimidate rivals, insiders say.

“This government is more interested in personal gains than improving the lives of marginalized Tunisians who led the revolution,” says Hamma Hammami, secretary-general of the opposition Popular Front, which led nationwide protests against rising prices in January.

Charging this hyperpartisan atmosphere is the media. Although Ben Ali’s ouster led to an explosion of new news outlets, political parties and donors have since bought up radio stations and newspapers, many of which now serve as nothing more than partisan mouthpieces.

“When election season rolls around, the media suddenly demonize the Islamists, young people will be portrayed as thugs, and terrorism is suddenly an imminent threat,” says Abderrahmen Ben Hassene, a history teacher and former revolutionary. “They use fear each election cycle to distract us from our real priorities: social and economic reform. And it works every time.”

But political parties are not the only groups benefiting from Tunisia’s post-revolution transition. Powerful lobbies have risen from the ashes of the Ben Ali regime to become players and kingmakers, including unions, manufacturers, landowners, and influential businesspeople.

Even unlicensed and unregulated importers and merchants who avoid tax and customs duties – the gray economy – reportedly back politicians and political parties in an effort to block any legislation that would tax them. The underground sector accounts for a staggering 45 to 50 percent of Tunisia’s gross domestic product, according to Oxford Business Group.

Fear of general strikes by government workers has left Tunisia unable to scale back what economists consider a bloated public sector, saddling the government with strug-

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gling state-owned companies churning out items ranging from matches and cigarettes to natural gas and cement.

Tunisia's 104 public companies, whose labor force has grown 50 percent since the revolution as politicians have doled out jobs as a solution to unemployment, cost the Tunisian government some \$1 billion in 2015 and have accumulated losses of \$2.72 billion.

Government gridlock

Contributing to government inaction is perhaps the country's greatest achievement: the 2014 Constitution.

The Arab world's most progressive constitution, it was drafted and ratified by a 217-member Constituent Assembly of post-revolution lawmakers and leaders. It enshrines the freedom of belief and conscience and ensures human rights, legal and economic equality between men and women, the right to a clean environment, and gender parity in elected bodies.

Yet the political system it created has struggled to put those ideals into practice. Critics say it barely functions at all.

The governmental system was a compromise. On one side were Islamists and leftists who feared a return to a one-man dictatorship, and on the other, unions and businesspeople who preferred a strong executive branch.

The result: a parliamentary government and a partially weakened presidency. As in many semi-presidential systems, the prime minister is head of government and the president head of state. But whereas the presidency in many other parliamentary systems is largely ceremonial, in Tunisia the president is a semi-independent executive with vaguely defined powers who approves laws, handles foreign policy, and appoints judges and national security and diplomatic figures – all on recommendations from the government.

This has led to chaos. It is at times unclear where policy is made and who carries it out. The government, beholden to its fragile coalition in the parliament, does not have the independence or stability to push through badly needed economic, political, and social reforms such as tax reform or an overhaul of the Ben Ali-era police. Tunisia has seen seven governments in seven years.

"We have all the polarization and infighting of a congress, but without the strong, functioning central government like the US or Europe," says Mohsen Marzouk, a former adviser to Mr. Essebsi, who resigned from Nidaa Tounes to form his own party following government inaction.

"The government is too weak to pass through any reforms or meaningful changes Tunisia needs," says Mr. Marzouk. "We

have gone from the dictatorship of one man to the dictatorship of political parties, and it has been a disaster."

The nation's security services are also the target of scrutiny. An alarm was raised in January over the handling of recent economic protests, which resulted in more than 900 arrests and the harassment of journalists, as a "return" to a police state.

But human rights advocates say the concerns resulted more from the actions of individuals than from a systematic policy, the result of an old-school security establishment trying to adapt to a new era, struggling to uphold both law and order as well as new democratic values.

It is a herculean task. Tunisian security forces monitor 700 miles of Mediterranean coastline and defend against Islamic State and Al Qaeda on Tunisia's borders with Algeria and Libya while also dismantling home-grown terrorist cells and providing security to the 13,000 peaceful protests held last year.



SPEAKING OUT: Protesters in Tunis, Tunisia, shout slogans against rising prices and tax increases in January. The government reported 13,000 protests last year. ZOUBEIR SOUISSI/REUTERS

When protests against prices descended into nationwide riots this January, several Al Qaeda militants infiltrated Tunisia. Though they were later killed in a shootout with security services, the lesson was clear.

"Terrorists are just waiting for us to fail, waiting for the second that we are under stress or distracted to take advantage and attack," says Col. Maj. Khalifa Chibani, Interior Ministry spokesman. "It is something that is always in the back of our minds; the threat is always there."

'Manich Msamah'

Between the crises are glimmers of hope.

When the government proposed the administrative reconciliation law granting am-

nesty for officials and citizens who benefited financially from the Ben Ali regime, young activists, many of them former revolutionaries, returned to the streets in force. The movement unified leftists, nationalists, Islamists, and residents of marginalized outer regions for the first time in years.

Under the slogan Manich Msamah, or "I do not forgive," thousands of young Tunisians used slang, football chants, rap, drums, and folk songs in protests bordering on festivals of defiance. Peaceful protests rolled on throughout the summer of 2017. Dziri, the injured revolutionary, took part in his first protest since his injury.

The law eventually passed in September, but it was watered down three separate times to encompass, in the case of civil servants, only those who did not gain financially from the corruption. Rather than a defeat, young revolutionaries saw it as a triumph, the shot in the arm the revolution needed.

"In the old days, we would be afraid to

speaking our mind or about politics in our own home," says Azza Derbali, a translator and Manich Msamah organizer in her late 20s. "This new generation that grew up with the revolution, they go to the streets and protest immediately to make their voice heard and make change."

Tunisians say this – being able to disagree civilly, to make one's voice heard, to peacefully organize, protest, and pressure – is what democracy, and the Tunisian revolution, is all about. It may also be Tunisia's saving grace.

"If I could go back in time and see those people in the streets in 2010, I would do it all over again," says Dziri.

"My body may heal or it may not. But our fear has been broken forever." ■

Bright spots in conservation

The past 48 years since the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970, have been marked by significant environmental challenges that continue to imperil large swaths of the planet. The coal-spewing Industrial Age is being followed by a period of population growth, exploitation of natural resources, and unchecked waste. Progress on these fronts has been slow, despite heightened public awareness of the impact of human activity on the planet's core ecological processes. The modern environmental movement has not been in vain, however. Technical advances, environmental regulations, and public conservation efforts have demonstrated quantifiable successes, such as improvements in air and water purity and energy efficiency in Western countries. Here are some bright spots in the struggle to protect the environment.

— Tom Culman / Staff

73%

The drop in US emissions of six common air pollutants (including carbon monoxide, lead, and fine particles) between 1970, when the Clean Air Act was passed, and 2016. Although the population and energy usage of the United States has increased, innovations in fuel efficiency and the regulation of major polluters have had a marked success. Globally, however, air pollution continues to increase, especially in low- and middle-income countries. And around the world, carbon dioxide emissions are once again on the rise after holding flat for three years.

20,000

Square miles of forest replanted every year. Still, deforestation occurs at a rate of more than 42,000 square miles a year. Trees help clean our water, air, and soil and could help reduce worldwide CO₂ levels. More nations are recognizing the economic and ecological value of forests and investing in reforestation projects. In January China announced plans to plant enough trees in 2018 to cover an area the size of Ireland (27,135 square miles). Around the same time, Britain announced plans to plant 50 million trees across a 97-mile “ribbon of woodland.”

350,000,000,000

Gallons of water per day that the US used in 2010, after peaking at 440 billion gallons per day in 1980. Per person, that comes to a decrease of 800 gallons a day. This was made possible largely due to increased water efficiency in agriculture and thermoelectric power. US household water use has also been tracking downward since the adoption of national water efficiency standards in 1992. While conservation is an important part of the water scarcity solution, 1.1 billion people worldwide still lack access to clean water.



1,864

Pandas remaining in the wild. The vegetarian bears have steadily increased in population since the 1980s, when numbers reached a low of 1,200 bears. In 2016, the panda was downgraded from “endangered” to “vulnerable.” The panda’s cultural importance to China and its worldwide popularity have made it something of a poster child for environmental activism. Some people, however, are left wondering if the resources being used to save the panda might be of more benefit spread among the other 25,000 threatened species.

KAREN NORRIS/STAFF

■ Questions? Comments? Email the science team at sci@csmonitor.com.



1 IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT
Sara Mamani sits at the wheel of the bus she drives. She is the second 'choli-ta' ever to drive a bus in La Paz, Bolivia.

2 NATIVE TONGUE Celia Laura stands in her classroom at San Calixto Private School in La Paz. Since 2013, Bolivian students learn Spanish, English, and an indigenous language.



'Cholitas' take the wheel

BOLIVIA – As recently as 10 years ago, Bolivia's indigenous Aymara and Quechua women were socially ostracized and systematically marginalized. Known as *cholitas* (an initially derogatory term that members of the community have reappropriated and now use with pride), these women – recognizable by their wide skirts, braided hair, and bowler hats – were banned from using public

transportation or entering certain public spaces. Their career opportunities, meanwhile, were severely limited, with most becoming either housecleaners or roadside vendors. While these women have been organizing and advocating for their rights since at least the 1960s, their movement was invigorated by the 2006 election of Evo Morales as Bolivia's first indigenous president. Ever since, many of the country's *cholitas* have been taking pride in their traditional identity and further asserting their rights. Portraying their accomplishments is not only a way to celebrate their success but to inspire women around the world to follow in their path. ■

► MORE PHOTOS ON PAGE 22



FLYING PETTICOATS Silvina La Poderosa jumps from a corner of the ring to land on her opponent, Reyna Torres, during a promotional fight in Senkata, El Alto. Wrestling became more popular after indigenous women were allowed to participate.



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3 A FACTORY OF HER OWN Catalina Silvera fixes furniture in her facility in El Alto, Bolivia. A self-made entrepreneur, she employs more than 50 people.

4 'CHOLITA' CHIC 'Cholitas' prepare themselves backstage before ascending the catwalk at a fashion show in El Alto.

5 I'M HERE! Congresswoman Cristina Paxi poses at the Plurinational Legislative Assembly in La Paz. After hearing that women couldn't be elected to high office, Ms. Paxi ran for a seat in the assembly's Chamber of Deputies in 2014 and won.

6 STOP AND GO Estela Loyaza (r.) talks with fellow traffic warden A. Quispe. Ms. Loyaza is one of 15 'cholitas' who work as traffic wardens in El Alto.

7 ON AIR Bertha Acarapi is a news broadcaster at ATB Television studios in La Paz. Ms. Acarapi is the second 'cholita' woman to work in Bolivian TV.



7



M S



A disposable tap is bored into a tree and connected to a vacuum system that sucks out sap at a sugaring operation in Cambridge, Vt.

MAPLE SYRUP INC.

STORY BY STEPHANIE HANES / CORRESPONDENT
PHOTOS BY ALFREDO SOSA / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

CAMBRIDGE, VT.

ON THE RUGGED WESTERN SLOPES of Vermont's Mt. Mansfield, a web of plastic tubing connects some 71,000 tree taps to one of the frontiers of Vermont's rapidly changing maple syrup industry.

For weeks now, sap has been flowing through these tubes into 10 tanks, each holding 7,000 gallons, at the Runamok Maple sugarhouse, a block of a building that looks more like a small factory than the shedlike shacks of New England lore. Multimillion-dollar equipment – reverse osmosis machines, a steam-powered evaporator, iPhone-connected monitoring systems – hums along next to inventory ready to be shipped around the world. Workers package up sleek

bottles holding cardamom-infused and pecan wood-smoked maple syrup – two of about a dozen flavors that Runamok's owners Eric and Laura Sorkin have developed in the two

years since they ditched bulk syrup production and started this artisanal, direct-to-consumer business.

The Sorkins have been upending conventions here since they started sugaring a decade ago, a few years after they quit jobs in Washington, D.C., to farm in Vermont. Back then they jolted locals with the size of their operation, deciding to jump into sugaring with 28,000 taps, an outrageously large number at the time.

"The most charitable way to put it is that we were a curiosity," Mr. Sorkin says with a laugh. "There were a lot of people who were not expecting it to work out."

But since then, rather than playing the role of "flatlanders

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Vermont's iconic tradition goes high tech and high finance. Where's the rubber-booted hobbyist with the metal bucket?



Laura and Eric Sorkin, owners of Runamok Maple, stand in their production facility in Cambridge, Vt. The artisanal firm produces a wide variety of flavored syrups, from lime leaf to ginger root.



Sap collected from trees flows through a network of pipes and tubing – 1,000 miles of it in all – and into tanks at Runamok Maple.

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who had more money than sense,” as Eric puts it, he and his wife have emerged as key players in what has become the big business of maple syrup. Armed with a sleek internet presence, contemporary packaging, and a product tasty enough to land on Oprah Winfrey’s “favorite things” list, the Sorkins have helped dramatically change what was until about 20 years ago an agricultural practice fundamentally unchanged since the 1800s.

And they are not alone. In the past decade, the Vermont maple syrup industry has boomed, bringing outside investors, private equity firms, and a host of new challenges and opportunities to the Green Mountain State. Many longtime farmers who once sugared as a way to make some cash in winter now have year-round operations with soaring syrup output, but also increasing capital expenses and debt. Technology and weather are changing, allowing the short maple sugar season to start earlier and end later. Meanwhile, the long shadow of Quebec – the world’s dominant maple syrup producer, whose prices and quantities are set by an OPEC-like federation – is ever present.

The story of the Sorkins, and of their neighbors in the snow-draped mountains

of central and northern Vermont, however, is not just about maple syrup, one of the world’s last wild harvested foods and a cultural icon of the Northeast. Rather, it is in many ways the tale of global agriculture writ small. For here, beyond the reach of cellphone reception or tarred roads, the one-time mom-and-pop sugaring operations are increasingly beholden to international exchange rates, global commodity trading, world food trends, other countries’ regulations, and a noticeably changing climate.

What happens over the next few years here, say those involved in maple sugaring, matters not only in the relatively small latitudinal swath of North America where maple trees grow. Rather, it gives insight into the challenges and opportunities facing farmers around the world.



The Sorkins moved to Vermont to start a vegetable garden. Eric had been working as a lawyer and Laura as an environmental activist in Washington. But she was also a trained chef and was eager to get out of the office and grow food. Eric, as he puts it, was eager to follow Laura wherever she

went. So they ended up here, in the town of Cambridge (pop. 3,600), with a mountain-side plot and an old farmhouse with holes in the roof. They cleared land and built a greenhouse, and for about eight years they grew vegetables. But over time they tired of the operations side of the business and started looking for something new. Soon, they turned their attention to the trees around them.

Maple syrup is one of the world’s more fickle agricultural products. It is the golden brown remains of sugar maple sap after water is removed, the mixture is heated (but not too fast, or else the sap might burn), and the sugary remains are forced through a filter. These trees grow primarily in the “sugar belt,” which includes much of the Northeastern United States, some of the Upper Midwest, and southern Canada.

Maple sap “flows” during those times of the year when the weather creeps above freezing during the day and dips below it at night. During this season, explains Joshua Rapp, a forest ecologist at Harvard Forest, a research area managed by Harvard University, the vessels within the tree’s trunk that carry water from the ground remain

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‘WE ARE KIND OF FREE RIDERS. WE ARE BENEFITING FROM THE RESTRAINT AND EXPENSE OF THE [FEDERATION OF QUEBEC MAPLE SYRUP PRODUCERS]. IF THEY LET SYRUP FLOOD THE MARKET, IT WOULD COLLAPSE.’

– Dave Folino,
owner of Hillsboro Sugarworks in Vermont

full – there are no leaves to take the water or transpire it to the atmosphere. At night, when the temperature dips beneath 32 degrees F, that water flows from these internal pipes into adjacent, chamber-like air pockets and freezes. This creates more space within the vessels, which in turn creates a vacuum effect, sucking up more water from the ground. In the morning, when that frozen water in the internal chambers thaws, it flows back into the already-full vessels, pushing what’s there back toward the ground.

Maple producers intercept this downward-flowing maple sap. To do this, they drill holes into the tree’s trunk – a process that is still done by hand – and insert a collection device. “If you put a hole in the tree the water comes out of that hole,” Mr. Rapp says. “The water that’s falling back down the tree was frozen the night before.”

For generations, this falling sap was diverted into a spout inserted into the tap hole, which led to a metal bucket. The process depended on gravity. More recently, though, producers have turned to tubing and attached vacuum systems, which pull the sap out of the tree more quickly.

Although tubing reduces the hassle of

collecting and emptying thousands of buckets, it also introduces its own challenges. A pinprick-sized hole somewhere within the vast web of plastic can disrupt an entire vacuum system. Maple producers have been known to spend days trudging through snow-blanketed forests, looking for the spot where a tube may have been damaged by a moose, a downed tree limb, or an errant cross-country skier. “It’s a ludicrous way of making food,” Eric says.

When the Sorkins first mentioned their plan to start tapping the thousands of maple trees they had on their property, most longtime Vermonters cautioned them to go slowly. They should start with a few hundred taps, perhaps. Maybe a thousand. But after crunching numbers, the Sorkins decided to go with 28,000 – which overnight would make them the largest producer in the state. The locals took bets on how soon they would go out of business.

At least, Eric recalls, it was easy to find a builder for the sugar shack. It was 2008, the height of the financial crisis. They broke ground in September and started with their large sugaring operation in January of the next year. It worked.

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During the financial crisis, oil prices had spiked, which in turn sent the Canadian dollar to one of its strongest showings against the US dollar in decades. Because the price of bulk syrup is largely tied to prices set by producers in Quebec, which still supplies 70 percent of the world's maple syrup, that meant Americans were getting more per gallon for their syrup than they had in years. At a time when world markets were tanking, maple syrup was booming.

This, says University of Vermont economist Arthur Woolf, caught the attention of investors looking for anywhere they might make a profit. Outsiders, including some private equity firms, began buying up sugar shacks and woodlands.

"There's a lot of money that's pouring into maple in Vermont," Mr. Woolf says. "Twenty years ago, maybe even 10 years ago, this was something dairy farmers did. Things were slow in the winter so they'd tap some trees and they'd make some extra money.... Nowadays it is a full-time thing, with people buying thousands of acres of

'WE HOPE THAT ACCOMMODATES SOME GROWTH. WE'VE SPILLED OUT OF THIS PLACE.'

—Eric Sorkin, on moving his family's sugaring operation into a 55,000-square-foot factory that once produced letters for Scrabble games

land, putting up tens of thousands of taps."

In 2015, for instance, Sweet Tree Holdings, part of the portfolio of Connecticut-based Wood Creek Capital Management, a hedge fund firm, bought the former Ethan Allen furniture factory in the town of Island Pond, Vt. Sweet Tree installed four massive steam boilers at the plant, tapped 200,000 sugar maple trees, and promised to bore holes in 550,000 more, according to The Maple News and other publications – a move that quickly made it the largest maple syrup processor in the world.

But the growth does not just come from outsiders. "There's not so much a shift as there is an addition," says Matt Gordon, executive director of the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association. "It's a lot of the same people.... There are still a great many sugarmakers in Vermont who are multi-generational; their families have been sugaring since the time of Ethan Allen."

These farmers, too, Mr. Gordon and others say, are looking bigger – investing in new equipment and buying or leasing more land. This is one reason there hasn't been much acrimony between old maple families and newcomers. Everyone is going big, there is enough land to go around, and more companies with big operations just mean more jobs for locals with experience in the woods.

By 2015, the number of taps in Vermont had increased to around 4.55 million from 2 million in the early 2000s, according to the US Department of Agriculture. In 2017 it was 5.41 million. That meant that Vermont was producing in 2017 nearly 2 million gallons of syrup – up from 460,000 gallons in 2000, according to the New England Agricultural Statistics Services.

The Sorkins' 28,000 taps, which stunned people a decade ago, "would be completely unremarkable today," Gordon says.

■ ■ ■

This worries Dave Folino. For 40 years he has worked in the forests on the Lake Champlain side of the Green Mountains, not far from the ski resorts of Mad River Glen and Sugarbush. He still has the same sugar shack, although he has built onto it, bit by bit, as his operation grew from a hobby with a few dozen trees to the 15,000 or so taps he and his wife, Sue, have today.

Mr. Folino's Hillsboro Sugarworks is unusual in that it sells directly to consumers. The vast majority of sugarmakers in Vermont are in a commodities market – they grade their syrup, put it into drums, and then bring the product to one of the region's few large packers, which combine the syrup and resell it to retailers or food processors. These firms then incorporate it into everything from salad dressings to maple candy.

As the maple syrup industry skyrocketed, Folino noticed that many of his fellow sugarmakers seemed to be adopting the same strategy as the state's dairy farmers – producing more syrup when the bulk price is high, because the return is so good, but then also producing more when the price drops to make up for the lower income per unit. This has become even easier to do with the advent of maple-producing technology – both the tubing and vacuum systems, which let producers get more sap from each tap, but also reverse osmosis, a process that removes most of the water from sap before it is heated. This dramatically reduces the time and fuel it takes to boil sap into syrup.

Last year, Folino wrote an article for the trade publication The Maple News, warn-

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Adam Piche of Runamok Maple checks to make sure hot syrup has the right sugar density before filtering and flowing it into 55-gallon containers.

ing the industry not to follow the path of the dairy farmers. “Each side of the cycle drives increased milk production, and every round of low and high prices pushes farmers toward bigger farms with larger herds and supposedly greater economies of scale, but more debt,” he wrote. “Recently I’ve begun to worry that maple producers may be falling into the same trap.”

The article got attention throughout the maple belt. “I’m known for it now,” he says. “I’ll go to a meeting and they’ll say, ‘Don’t let Dave in! He’ll just tell us don’t add cows.’”

Folino says that he is trying to start a movement. And while he gives a short laugh when he says this, he is also totally serious. He’d love to get other maple producers to focus on marketing themselves directly to consumers, rather than relying on a bulk market. He’d also like syrupmakers to start talking about how and whether to restrict

yields. He says he knows this last point isn’t going to get much traction here.

“We like to think of ourselves as big free market people,” he says. “But really, we’re freeloading off Quebec.”



Indeed, Quebec is the elephant in the sugar shack of Vermont maple sugaring. There, the Federation of Quebec Maple Syrup Producers regulates, with the backing of the Quebec government, the production and sale of all maple syrup in the province.

That means that most of Quebec’s 13,500 maple producers must sell their product directly to the federation, which then resells it. The federation sets quotas for how much a farm is allowed to produce any given year (there are exceptions for very small producers), and also negotiates the price of syrup with a council of buyers. Because of the dominance of the Quebec maple industry – in 2016 the province produced more than 11 million gallons of syrup – the federation’s decisions impact producers everywhere.

The federation also maintains a well-guarded “Global Strategic Maple Syrup Reserve,” with hundreds of thousands of gallons, to counter any market fluctuations in maple syrup pricing, much like the US maintains a strategic petroleum reserve (except that a barrel of maple syrup is worth about 16 times as much as a barrel of crude, selling at just over \$1,000 to oil’s approximately \$65).

In 2012, this Canadian maple reserve became the focus of one of the world’s more brazen agricultural heists: the theft of some 3,000 tons of syrup, valued around \$13 million. Authorities later arrested 26 people in connection with the caper.

Although there have been Quebec producers who have chafed under what they see as the federation’s strong-arm tactics, such as using law enforcement and harsh fines to ensure producers are complying with quotas, overall the system has benefited most maple sugarmakers, including those in Vermont, says Woolf, the economist.

“The losers in all of this are the consumers,” Woolf says. “If there was a normal market situation, the price would be a lot lower than it is. If the federation disappeared, the Vermont market would decrease; Quebec’s would increase.”

Folino agrees. “We are kind of free rid-

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Workers at the sugaring facility in Cambridge, Vt., operate a reverse osmosis machine that removes much of the water in sap before it is boiled, saving time and reducing energy costs.

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ers,” he says. “We are benefiting from the restraint and expense of the federation. If they let syrup flood the market, it would collapse.”

Rather than classic supply and demand, then, foreign exchange rates with Canada have some of the strongest effects on US maple syrup prices. And this, says Luiz Amaral, global manager for global forest watch commodities at the World Resources Institute, is characteristic for all sorts of agricultural sectors. Currency changes in London, for instance, affect the price of basic raw materials that in turn impact a coffee grower in Nicaragua.

“This much more connected world affects the risks and opportunities farmers

‘NOWADAYS [MAPLE SUGARING] IS A FULL-TIME THING, WITH PEOPLE BUYING THOUSANDS OF ACRES OF LAND, PUTTING UP TENS OF THOUSANDS OF TAPS.’

– Arthur Woolf, University of Vermont economist

until March. “The spring season is moving earlier and earlier,” says Tim Perkins, director of the University of Vermont Proctor Maple Research Center.

Because of new sugaring technology, such as the tubing and vacuum systems, this climactic shift hasn’t caused much hardship, Mr. Perkins and others say.

Still, scientists are working to under-

indicates the peak of the maple syrup season but the overall amount of sap collected. In other words, the most sap is collected during a season when the average March temperature is around 32 degrees F, regardless of whether the season starts early or late.

“It was surprising to me,” he says.

Rapp and his colleagues have also discovered a correlation between the temperature in July and the sugar content of sap collected in the spring. A hotter July means sap with a lower sugar content.

On the ground, some sugarers, like Folino, are noticing other impacts of climate change. There has been an increase in erratic, violent weather: wind storms that have decimated sugarbushes and torrential rains that have caused mudslides through forests.

“There are already huge effects,” he says.

■ ■ ■

The most common worry among sugar-makers, though, remains the amount of syrup flooding the market, which puts downward pressure on prices. This is one reason that producers like the Sorkins are looking for new ways to differentiate themselves. Last year, they worked out a deal to buy the maple candy operations of Bascom Maple Farms, one of the largest maple syrup wholesalers in the US.

The Sorkins are also managing the logistics of moving Runamok into a bigger space. Recently, they purchased a 55,000-square-foot factory in the nearby town of Franklin that once produced tiles for the game Scrabble. “We hope that accommodates some growth,” Eric says. “We’ve spilled out of this place.”

In the meantime, he and Laura and other colleagues continue to brainstorm the next best flavor. They already have perfected their Makrut Lime-Leaf Infused Maple Syrup (“out of this world over coconut ice cream,” he says) and Ginger Root Infused Maple Syrup. Wasabi syrup was a disaster, but they found what they believe is the perfect amount of heat with their Merquén Infused Maple Syrup, flavored with spices from Chile.

“Maple,” he says, tasting one of their recent creations. “It’s an incredible product.” ■



Mary Hahr inspects samples of boiled maple syrup for color and clarity at Runamok Maple in Cambridge, Vt.

have,” Mr. Amaral says. “Their job isn’t just producing and producing more effectively. I often say the most important plot for agricultural producers measures three by three yards – it’s their office.”

■ ■ ■

This year the sap at Runamok and elsewhere in Vermont started flowing in earnest in early February. Nearly 8,000 gallons an hour coursed through the spaghetti-like tubing, into the massive sterile holding tanks, and then into the reverse osmosis machinery that begins to remove the water. A decade ago, this wouldn’t have happened

stand what sort of impacts changing weather might have on maple forests. Ecologist Rapp at Harvard Forest, for instance, is part of the Acer Climate and Socio-Ecological Research Network, a collaboration of researchers exploring everything from the chemical composition of sap to the way producers are responding to climate change. They have already found that the maple sugar range is shifting northward – a slow-moving trend that nevertheless will impact future generations of sugarers.

“Our sites in Virginia we expect to be in dire straits,” Rapp says.

The researcher has also found that the average temperature in March not only in-

DEUTSCHE WELLE / BONN, GERMANY

The US and its allies knocked Russia off balance

“It was anything but dull in the Security Council on [April 9], when Russian UN Ambassador Vasiliy Nebenzya faced off with his US and UK counterparts, Nikki Haley and Karen Pierce, respectively...,” writes Konstantin Eggert. “The United States and its EU allies pummeled Nebenzya with ... rhetorical abandon.... The drama at the United Nations unfolded hours after the collapse of Moscow’s stock exchange.... This was the result of the US Department of Treasury’s decision on [April 7] to publish a new list of Russian individuals and companies to be punished under the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act.... The Kremlin has little with which to counter the massive diplomatic and economic offensive....”

JAMAICA OBSERVER / KINGSTON, JAMAICA

Pleading for a de-escalation of the US-China trade war

“When two elephants fight, the grass is crushed. In the case of the looming trade war between giants China and the United States, tiny economies like Jamaica’s stand to be pulverised...,” states an editorial. “The US is Jamaica’s biggest trading partner and China is our biggest source of foreign direct investment. That means we have a vested interest in mutual beneficial relations between the two. We would urge the two parties to negotiate on the basis of the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which seek to lower trade barriers and discourage the erection of non-tariff barriers to trade.... The US and China need to put aside national pride and political posturing.... [A] trade war would be disastrous for the world.”

AL JAZEERA / DOHA, QATAR

The jailing of Brazil’s ‘Lula’ reveals unequal treatment of corrupt politicians

“Luiz Inacio ‘Lula’ da Silva, the most popular president in Brazil’s history, surrendered himself to federal authorities on April 7 to start serving a 12-year prison sentence,” write Mariana Prandini Assis and Pablo Holmes. “While Lula’s conviction is purportedly about fighting corruption and impunity, it, in fact, aims to teach the poor a lesson: the presidential legacy of a mixed-race worker, with little formal education, will be undone by the country’s elites.... Those who defend the legitimacy of Lula’s imprisonment argue that he has been convicted in a fair trial.... However, anyone who has closely followed the proceedings of [the ongoing corruption investigation] Operation Car Wash knows full well that not all politicians facing corruption charges were dealt with in the same fashion....”

THE HINDU / CHENNAI, INDIA

US postwar management of Iraq has been a disaster

“Fifteen years ago, on April 9, a few weeks into the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, a 39-foot statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad’s al-Fardous Square was brought down under the watch of American troops...,” states an editorial. “Within a month, U.S. President George W. Bush had declared ‘mission accomplished’ in Iraq. But one and a half decades later, the country is still fighting the ghosts of the destructive war.... The U.S. did not have a UN mandate to use force against Iraq.... Iraq now has a functional government, but with deepening sectarian and ethnic fault lines.... The Iraq war will remain a reminder of ... a grave failure of the international system.”

THE GUARDIAN / LAGOS, NIGERIA

Learn from, don’t rue, life mistakes

“During a conversation with friends about how they wish they had never made certain mistakes, and thus, had the perfect life, I got thinking,” writes Jemima Tumba. “‘Can you really live life in absolute perfection?’ I asked myself. Of course not.... I do remember sharing the mentality of my friends.... Fortunately for me, my mentality ... took a 360-degree turn [sic]. I had just recently got my academic report ... and to say I performed woefully is an understatement.... There was a switch within me.... I gave up on being perfect at everything.... Life is an adventure, an uncertain journey of self-discovery.... Maybe the plan you have for yourself isn’t half as good as the one life wants to give you.... What makes your life beautiful ... [is] how you were able to rise above your mistakes and imperfections.”

Founded in 1908 by Mary Baker Eddy

EDITOR: Mark Sappenfield

CHIEF EDITORIAL WRITER: Clayton Jones



*"First the blade, then the ear,
then the full grain in the ear."*

Why motive still matters in America's worst massacre

Seven months after the Las Vegas massacre, investigators are still looking for the reason why the shooter, Stephen Paddock, wanted to kill dozens of concertgoers from a hotel room. But one possible factor stands out: his extensive gambling and the loss of a significant amount of his wealth before his shooting rampage. "Police said he spent everything," according to Clark County Public Administrator John Cahill.

IF PROBLEM GAMBLING HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE LAS VEGAS KILLINGS, THEN A SPOTLIGHT SHOULD SHINE ON HELPING PEOPLE LIKE STEPHEN PADDOCK.

Probing his motives remains important in order to prevent a similar mass shooting. The massacre was the worst in modern American history. If problem gambling had something to do with it, then a big spotlight should shine on helping problem gamblers. Last June, a gambling addict in the Philippines killed dozens by setting fire to a casino.

By Mr. Paddock's own admission in a 2013 deposition, he was "the biggest video poker player in the world." The retired accountant could wager thousands of dollars during binges. Such behavior suggests it was not an innocent pastime. While the casino industry has ways to deter compulsive players, its record is mixed, and its commercial interests can get in the way. Casinos are designed more to assist gambling than curtail it.

If Paddock was overcome with rage over his gambling losses, were there people who should have offered a helping hand?

Compulsive gamblers who seek help

A surprising number of gamblers actually request help or offer to be blocked from a gaming site. In a survey of gamblers by the British group Citizens Advice, more than 3 in 4 gamblers said they had tried self-exclusion. "Whilst the majority of those who had tried it found it effective to some extent, 19 percent found it not at all effective," states the group's Jan. 23 report, titled "Out of Luck: An exploration of the causes and impacts of problem gambling." In Britain, the online gambling industry plans to improve its procedures for self-exclusion while the government pushes for protections on

gaming machines.

Nearly half of the gamblers in the survey who had handed over control of their finances to other people found it to be an effective deterrent. Many others welcomed blocking software offered on online gambling sites and said it was useful.

"It is essential that gamblers and affected others are aware of the more in-depth help that is available to them and that they know how to access it," the report recommends.

The reasons for offering more help were made clear by the survey. For every problem gambler, between six and 10 additional people (such as family or co-workers) are affected, the report states. Two-thirds of gamblers reported mental distress and high debts. A fifth of families with a problem gambler have been unable to afford food at times.

How #MeToo speaks to he-men

Of all the global trends today, two seem to be on opposite poles. One is the #MeToo movement, which aims to elevate women in ways that would prevent abuse by powerful men. The other is the era of the ultra-masculine strongman. These men are rulers like Vladimir Putin in Russia, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in Egypt, and Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela who preside over nominal democracies.

With the appeal of strongmen on the rise in many nations, what could provide an alternative model of leadership? Might it be found in the #MeToo movement?

The answer to the latter question, of course, is yes. The #MeToo movement puts an emphasis on lifting the views of men about their identity to include the positive qualities of both the masculine and feminine. The best leaders – of either gender – can be both strong and nurturing, wise and cooperative, brave and consoling. In many companies, a popular concept of leadership entails "followership," or an expertise in effective listening and consensus-building.

Men in particular should express a "relaxed masculine confidence," as writer Richard Godwin puts it, that is not threatened by feminine qualities. For women, there are numerous female leaders who have dis-

The top factor in problem gambling, according to the report, is "ease of access to and lack of restrictions on gambling." Helping a gambler to self-exclude requires a number of actors to step up. The gambling industry can be better at using data and technology to identify and help problem gamblers. Creditors can spot rising debt and suggest counseling. Governments can be more aggressive in regulating the industry.

Problem gamblers are often seen as helpless in making a choice to curb or end their behavior. That is a questionable assumption. Self-control is possible. The Las Vegas massacre might yet become a lesson in making that point more well known. ■

played masculine qualities in difficult times. Britain's "Iron Lady," Margaret Thatcher, for example, led her country through the Falklands War.

TV show helps men redefine macho

Popular culture also can help one gender adopt the best traits of the other.

Bear Grylls, the popular host of reality TV shows such as "Running Wild with Bear Grylls," teaches contestants how to survive in the wilderness, an endeavor that could be seen as ultra-manly. But he rejects conventional views of manliness. When men arrive on his shows to test themselves, they "think it's all about machismo and muscles, but it's not," Mr. Grylls told The Times of London. "I don't think being macho is about banging your chest," he adds. "It's a much quieter thing. Being a man, hopefully, is showing those qualities of kindness, courage, and humility ..." that actually yield better results for surviving in the wilderness.

Such higher views of masculinity can help shape leaders who reject the destructive era of the strongman's false masculinity. The #MeToo movement is not just about ending sexual misconduct of powerful male leaders. It can also be about men and women redefining leadership itself. ■

READERS WRITE



Lifting humanity through a story

Regarding the Feb. 9 Monitor Daily article “‘Calls From Home’: Kentucky radio station connects inmates and families”: This was such an important story. What I love about the Monitor is your focus on every front page of some story that lifts my humanity. You so often point out what people are doing to make positive changes in this world, as well as highlighting the humanity of people who walk a different path from mine. I wish this story could be spread far and wide. Thank you for connecting it to government actions that affect the people in this story.

MARIANNE BORGARDT
Santa Monica, Calif.

Prayer after mass shootings

Regarding the Feb. 16 Monitor Daily editorial “After large-scale killings, aid groups find new ways to comfort”: Lovely piece. Right on. But I would appreciate also addressing the issue of whether prayer is enough in US mass shootings. One side says that it’s all we can and need to do. The other side says we need a fundamental change – e.g., the stricter regulation of guns that a strong majority favors. Christian Science affirms the efficacy of prayer – it’s not synonymous with doing nothing – but also the need for practical help that shows our faith by our works and reform. I believe permitting continued easy access to assault-type rifles, huge magazines, armor-piercing bullets, and secondary market weapons defies common sense and humane values. We should not duck the Christian and moral duty to prevent violence if we can. That means both effective prayer – right thinking – and right acting. And action embraces policy as well as after-the-fact care.

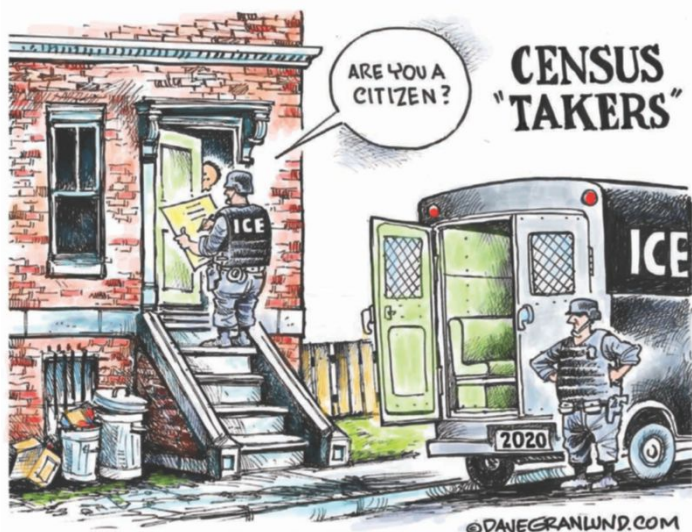
LANCE MATTESON
Mercer Island, Wash.

Making sense of confusing events

The March 5 OneWeek piece “Who will believe Mueller’s report?” was a great long article that put together a confusing series of events for me.

LYNNE LAWSON
Peacham, Vt.

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EMILY BLUNT (L.) AND MILLICENT SIMMONDS STAR IN 'A QUIET PLACE.'

JONNY COURNOYER/PARAMOUNT PICTURES/AP

ON FILM

'A Quiet Place' is about a good deal more than scaring us

IT'S A BEAUTIFULLY CRAFTED HORROR MOVIE.

By Peter Rainer / Film critic

As a film critic, I am sometimes asked if there are types of movies I regularly avoid. My prepackaged answer is always "Yes. Bad movies." But the truth is, I would just as soon skip serial killer or ninja flicks or, more to my point here, horror movies featuring gloopy, befanged alien invaders.

But what if we are talking about a *great* horror movie with befanged aliens? And what if the movie is about a good deal more than simply scaring us? What if it features a richly imagined family attempting to survive not only the monsters without but the demons within?

"A Quiet Place" is just such a film. At a brisk 90 minutes, it's one of the most inventive and beautifully crafted and acted horror movies I've seen in a very long time, and I think the main reason for its power is the family crisis at its core. John Krasinski, who costars, directed, and co-wrote the script (with Bryan Woods and Scott Beck), understands something crucial that is lost on far too many horrormeisters: The more we care about the people in a scare picture,

the scarier and more emotionally imposing it becomes.

The film's setting is an apocalyptic near-future where the planet's population has been decimated by ravenous crustacean-looking aliens who are sightless but possess supersensitive hearing and communicate by making dreadful clacking sounds. To quote the film's ad line, if they hear you, they hunt you. Following a brief and wrenching preamble culminating in a family tragedy, Lee and Evelyn Abbott (Krasinski and Emily Blunt) and their two young children, Marcus (Noah Jupe) and Regan (Millicent Simmonds), have enclosed themselves in their isolated upstate New York homestead surrounded by forests and cornfields waving ominously in the wind.

They speak almost entirely in sign language (subtitles are provided) to preserve the silence and because Regan has been deaf from birth. They walk shoelessly to dampen any noise. Even their recreations are scarifying. They play Monopoly with felt tiles and roll the dice on the rug. So many movies nowadays are so assaulatively loud

that the near silence of "A Quiet Place," with only the murmurous sounds of nature to intrude, is both a balm and a forewarning. The most resonant moments in the movie come when the silences are broken: When, for example, Lee ventures into the forest with his son and stands beneath a loud waterfall so their words are drowned out and the boy can briefly, joyously, shout. Or best: When Lee and Evelyn embrace in a slow, swaying dance while listening, through earpieces, to Neil Young plaintively singing "Harvest Moon."

I'm not a fan of connecting the dots between actors' real lives and their movie lives, but the fact that Krasinski and Blunt are married, with two children, or that Simmonds, who also appeared in "Wonderstruck," is actually deaf, gives the film a verity it might not normally possess. It explains, I think, the deep emotional investment on display. As effective as "A Quiet Place" is at creeping us out, there is something more powerful going on in this movie than just making us jump (which it also most certainly does).

What is at stake can be summed up when Evelyn, speaking of the perils their children face, tells her husband, "Who are we if we can't protect them?" It's the elemental wail of every parent afraid of what lies in wait. Lee has sealed off a basement bunker where he has been attempting to not only contact other survivors but also to construct a cochlear hearing device for Regan, which only fitfully works. Because of the tragedy that opens the movie, Regan's connection to her father is highly fraught. One of the film's most moving aspects is how, amid all the horror, they ache to reconcile.

We are constantly made to ask ourselves, how would we handle this situation? Because Evelyn is also pregnant, the impending birth, however carefully prepared for, cannot help but shoot a shiver through the screen. What should be a joyous event will be anything but. And yet the birth itself is a metaphor for the family's gumption and regeneration.

I would admire "A Quiet Place" even if it were just a terrific scarefest. I enjoy boo! movies when they are as expertly made as this one is, and when they don't pander. But what makes it a classic is that, like "Get Out," a body-snatching movie about racism, or "The Babadook," a supernatural horror film about childhood fears, it also works so well on so many other levels. It transcends its genre even as it fulfills it.

■ **Rated PG-13 for terror and some bloody images.**

TV

'Roseanne' embrace doesn't always include politics



ADAM ROSE/ABC/AP

ROSEANNE BARR (L.) AND JOHN GOODMAN STAR IN 'ROSEANNE.'

By Jessica Mendoza / Staff writer

For Thorin Engeseth, the hit comedy series "Roseanne" always comes with a rush of memories.

The show takes him back to the family home in Grand Rapids, Mich., where his mother – "an outspoken and opinionated woman" – had kept a happy household despite working two jobs to clothe and feed him and his two sisters.

On March 27, ABC revived the series, which catches up 21 years later with the blue-collar Conner family in fictional Lanford, Ill. Mr. Engeseth asked a friend in the United States to set up a computer facing the television so he could see the first episode via Skype from his home in Germany. He loved what he saw: a show that spoke to a new age, but reintroduced beloved characters who still captured the wit and cheer of the Middle America he treasures. "Sitcoms these days focus on wealthy families on the coasts," he writes. "[The new] 'Roseanne' is a little reminder that the Midwest still has its own stories."

There are, it turns out, plenty of Thorin Engeseths, at least here in the US. More than 18 million people tuned in to the revival premiere, with another 6.6 million catching the telecast over the next three days. By Monday – just two episodes in – ABC had renewed the show for a second (or 11th) season.

Nostalgia played no small part in the numbers, pundits say. Like Engeseth, fans of the original "Roseanne" were drawn to the new show because they loved the old one. They were eager to stir up the memories it evoked and curious to see how the Conners had fared. But what's kept viewers and critics talking about the show is its bid to represent both modern politics and blue-collar America in a way no sitcom has done in years, much less post-2016. The first episode saw the Conners taking on health care, unemployment,

► ROSEANNE NEXT PAGE

1 RETURN TO THE '60S

Sounding like some great, lost Nehru jacket- and bead-bedecked garage band from the late 1960s, The Shacks are actually four New York musicians barely into their 20s. **Haze** is their preternaturally assured, self-produced album, fronted by the wispy-voiced Shannon Wise. On the standout track "Follow Me," her beguiling vocals, backed by cheesy, reverb-drenched guitars, beckon us into her super-groovy, lava-lamp-lit world.



2 ENGAGE THE MIND

The American Public Media science podcast **Brains On!** can keep both you and the kids entertained in the car. The podcast explores topics from the science behind batteries to how underwater creatures survive to how dinosaurs became so big. It is available at www.brainson.org.

3 FAREWELL TO DAY-LEWIS

The film **Phantom Thread**, which is available on DVD and Blu-ray, is reportedly the last for legendary actor Daniel Day-Lewis.



AP

In it, he plays couturier Reynolds Woodcock, who embarks on a relationship with waitress Alma (Vicky Krieps) that becomes complicated. Monitor film critic Peter Rainer writes that actress Lesley Manville as Reynolds's sister, Cyril, and Krieps are both "marvelous." Regarding Day-Lewis's decision to leave acting, Rainer laments, "Might perhaps our greatest living actor want to reconsider?"

As Reynolds, he is so galvanizing that the slightest flicker of his hand, of his brow, opens up for us a wide thoroughfare into this man's stricken soul."

4 BARBIE AND SOCIETY

A Barbie doll is recognized across the world. What does her creation and her appearance (and how it has changed over the years) say about our society? The Hulu documentary series **Tiny Shoulders: Rethinking Barbie** chronicles the creation of the doll and looks at the history of feminist issues. The series debuts April 27.

5 JAZZ AROUND THE WORLD

During the cold war, the American government hit on an idea: Send jazz musicians, including Duke Ellington and Dizzy Gillespie, around the world as cultural ambassadors. But the musicians struggled with touting the values of America when segregation was still occurring. The PBS program **The Jazz Ambassadors** is narrated by Leslie Odom Jr. of "Hamilton" and airs May 4 at 10 p.m.



COURTESY OF LOUIS ARMSTRONG HOUSE MUSEUM

WHAT ARE YOU WATCHING?

Monitor readers share their favorite viewing selections.



'THE SHAPE OF WATER' AP

The animated film **Loving Vincent** employed more than 100 artists, each one rendering his or her art à la Vincent van Gogh. In addition, **The Shape of Water** is a downright gorgeous film, and the ending is more positive than I had anticipated.

One of my favorite films of all time is **Bride of Frankenstein**, directed by that genius James Whale. Whale was the subject of the movie "Gods and Monsters."

– **Michael E. Peterson, Eugene, Ore.**

A Woman On Paper, which aired on PBS in 2016, is a very compelling look at Georgia O'Keeffe's life and work.

This program was only half an hour long,



but what a wonderful half-hour it was – riveting, engaging, and inspiring!

– **Betsy Green, Chicago**

I have been recently watching a series from Britain called **Judge John Deed**. It's very interesting because it is about a man with some moral flaws but sterling qualities in other important areas. It stars Martin Shaw, who is magnificent in the role.

It is so important for each one of us to really appreciate and uphold fine, upstanding qualities in various individuals in public life (and in ourselves!) but to not utterly condemn anyone who may have some "growing" to do on other levels.

It is often the mistakes we make or have made in life that cause us to be more humane with others.

I also loved the **Inspector Morse** series with John Thaw, which led me to the other dramas the BBC has aired. I watch them all on DVD from the local library.

– **Marjorie Verhoeven, Hamilton, Ontario**

I would like to recommend **1776**, a film based on the Broadway musical. It's about the writing of the Declaration



of Independence, the Continental Congress's discussions for and against independence, and discussions about whether to allow slavery in the new country.

It then ends with the signing of the Declaration.

The movie is inspired by John Adams's letters to and from his wife, Abigail, and George Washington's writings.

This movie musical is beautiful both musically and intellectually and is also humorous and entertaining.

– **Diane S. Staples, Davie, Fla.**

We have been watching the TV series **The Crown** and the show **Victoria**.

We miss "Downton Abbey."

– **Peter Howard, Santa Rosa Beach, Fla.**



'VICTORIA'

COURTESY OF ITV PLC

► **ROSEANNE** FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

gender fluidity, and surrogacy through characters whose politics and opinions often clashed. The titular Roseanne – played by real-life Donald Trump supporter Roseanne Barr – knocks heads with her Hillary Clinton-loving, pink hat-wearing sister, Jackie (Laurie Metcalf), in a series of exchanges familiar to any American who's lived through the past two years.

The plethora of headlines that followed suggests that, like it or not – and many do not – there may be a real audience for a program that portrays white, working-class Trump supporters as other than objects of fear, hatred, or ridicule. "There are very few TV shows anymore that deal with blue-collar families. In a sense we haven't had that since 'Roseanne' went off the air," says Steven Ross, a history professor at the University of Southern

California who specializes in Hollywood depictions of labor and politics. Less high-profile shows have staked out some ground for the heartland. There's "The Middle," about a middle-class family in Indiana, that's now in its ninth and final

'Every show [can] present a message and ... give yet one more community a voice.'

– **Thorin Engeseth**

season. "The Drew Carey Show," set in Cleveland, ran from 1995 to 2004. But the "Roseanne" revival, Professor Ross says, taps into affection for cherished shows to punctuate the return to the screen of working-class Americans – millions of whom, in 2018, live in Trump country and

voted for the president. "I think that's a big deal, period," he says.

But the revival touched a nerve for more than just conservative viewers and Trump supporters. Engeseth disagrees with Ms. Barr's politics. Yet he hesitates to begrudge the actress her right to voice her opinions, both on and off the show. "I think that, though I oppose every move made by President Trump, there is a place for conservative politics alongside my own liberal ideals," Engeseth writes. "There is value in showing two sides of a very important political divide that many viewers face."

"Every show has the potential to present a message and to give yet one more community a voice," Engeseth points out. "'Roseanne' happened to give a voice to my own part of the country, and I appreciated that.

"And honestly, I'll watch anything that has John Goodman." ■

Facing the loss and wages of the Civil War

JEFFERSON DAVIS'S WIDOW PONDERES A DEBT SHE FEARS WILL NEVER BE FULLY REPAID.

By April Austin

"I've come to accept that our debt may stretch to one of those generational Bible curses," says Varina Davis, the title character in *Varina*, Charles Frazier's new novel. The wife of Confederate President Jefferson Davis is speaking about the debt her husband owes for lives lost in the Civil War. But she's also speaking of her own debt, as someone who enjoyed the benefits of a society built on the backs of enslaved people.

Frazier follows to a large degree the historical record of Varina's life, weaving her actual words into the book's dialogue along with those from his own imagination. He faced a more difficult task in "Varina" than in "Cold Mountain," his first novel, in which Inman, the lead character, was not modeled on a real person but inspired by family lore. Varina's story is more complicated than Inman's: Instead of trying to forget the war, she feels an obligation to constantly recall the fundamental moral failures that led up to it. "Remembering doesn't change anything – it will always have happened. But forgetting won't erase it either," she says.

Varina takes on this burden precisely because her husband refuses to acknowledge his own culpability. A prideful man, Jefferson can't admit to being wrong, nor does he ever apologize for his decisions, which resulted in so much bloodshed on both sides. Varina had premonitions of the South's defeat. She told a friend that "the way it would all play out was that the Southern states would secede and cobble together a breakaway country and would make Jeff its president and it would all fail disastrously."

Not surprisingly, given Varina's sentiments, the Davises' marriage was a rocky one. But it also had periods of calm, during which Varina bore six children, five of whom predeceased her. Despite her antipathy to many of Jefferson's



ZINA SAUNDERS

ideas, Varina completed his memoir after his death in 1889. She later tells an acquaintance, "When I wrote Jeff's memoir, it felt like solitary confinement inside his head."

The person to whom Varina, nearing the end of her life, confides all these memories is a middle-aged African-American man, Jimmie, who as a small boy was taken in by Varina and lived in the Confederate White House in Richmond, Va. (As hard as it may be to believe, the historical Jimmie really existed, and he lived with the Davis family and was treated as one of their own children.) Varina lost track of him when the family was captured after the fall of Richmond.

In the novel, Frazier imagines Jimmie, now called James, as an adult searching for clues about his past. As James and Varina talk during a series of Sunday afternoon visits, he becomes not only a seeker of information but also a teacher on the subject of black people. Varina may have regrets and misgivings about the war, but she still

carries more than a whiff of white privilege that makes her ignorant of how African-Americans experienced slavery. James sets her straight.

He calls her out when she reminisces about "those days when we all just took care of each other," asking who she is referring to as "we." If she meant slaves, he says, "you only remember what they allowed you to remember.... [T]hey kept their misery to themselves.... Think of it as a great gift, a mark of affection. Their protection of your memory." Varina's tart rejoinder: "Let's don't start getting ironic with each other."

"Varina" can be read on a number of levels. Many people will enjoy the tale of a whip-smart and sharp-witted woman who nearly outran federal bounty hunters after the fall of Richmond. Others will be fascinated by the story of the difficult marriage between these two strong-willed people. On a more subtle level – and Frazier's comments to an interviewer lend themselves to such a reading – "Varina" can be seen as a reminder that a national reckoning over the legacy of slavery

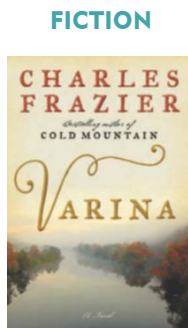
has yet to take place.

Frazier's Varina recognizes that her participation in, and acceptance of, the culture of her birth make her complicit in the enslavement of human beings. She didn't need to personally own slaves to be culpable. And her rejection of the premise of slavery did not make her any less responsible.

Frazier shows in Varina's story that regret is only the first step. Much harder is the process of coming to terms with the burdens of slavery. The harmful effects are felt by the descendants not only of enslaved people but also of those who profited from their toil. As Frazier said in the interview, "The debates over the legacy of the Civil War [are] not going away, and I think it's ... because we haven't managed to resolve those issues of race and slavery that have been haunting us for 150 years...."

"Varina" is a challenging novel and, while not as readily appealing and as flowingly written as "Cold Mountain," it provokes thought and encourages reflection on one of the most difficult issues of our time.

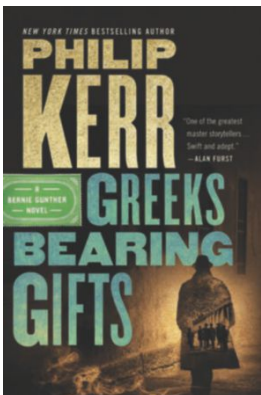
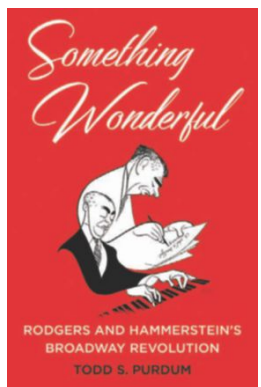
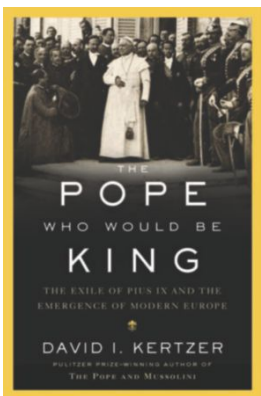
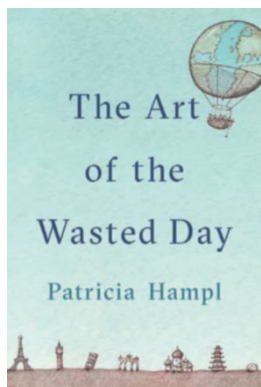
■ April Austin regularly reviews books for *The Christian Science Monitor*.



VARINA
By Charles Frazier
Ecco
368 pp.

10 BEST BOOKS OF APRIL

WHAT MONITOR BOOK CRITICS LIKE BEST THIS MONTH.



1 *Circe*, by Madeline Miller

Greek mythology is in expert hands in Madeline Miller's second novel. Miller weaves powerful imagery and emotion into a rich tapestry, depicting the agonies and ecstasies of the mighty forces and figures of the classical world. Banished to an island for her witchcraft, Circe, daughter of Helios, navigates visitors, prophecies, magic, and love with ingenuity and bravery, turning this story into an epic page turner.

2 *1983*, by Taylor Downing

Journalist and historian Taylor Downing offers a well-written, engaging book about 1983, when a series of bad decisions and misunderstandings led the Soviet Union to believe that President Ronald Reagan was preparing to launch a nuclear strike. Downing draws on previously unpublished interviews and documents only recently made public to explore a harrowing slice of history.

3 *Sharp*, by Michelle Dean

Award-winning literary critic Michelle Dean has written a fascinating cultural history of 10 American women writers, including Dorothy Parker, Susan Sontag, and Pauline Kael. The (male-dominated) literary establishment of their time branded these women as too political, too lightweight, and too opinionated, but they persevered. The eye-opener: how vicious literary feuds could be and how critical many of these women were of other women writers.

4 *The Pope Who Would Be King*, by David I. Kertzer

Pulitzer Prize winner David I. Kertzer tells the story of Pope Pius IX. Previously the Archbishop of Spoleto, Giovanni Mastai-Ferretti was elected pope in 1846, just as the Italian state stood on the verge of revolution. Pius IX was forced to flee and then required to forge the church's place in a changing world, making decisions that remain consequential today. This is church history at its most fascinating.

5 *See What Can Be Done*, by Lorrie Moore

Novelist and short story writer Lorrie Moore's first nonfiction collection includes pieces on everyone from Nora Ephron to Kurt Vonnegut to Edna St. Vincent Millay and everything from Christmas to pop songs to 9/11. Running all the way through the book is Moore's witty, insightful, and empathetic worldview.

6 *Something Wonderful*, by Todd S. Purdum

This joint biography of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II not only tells the life stories of the storied songwriting duo but also makes a case for the revolutionary nature of their contribution to American culture. Filled with lively anecdotes and theater gossip, this book is both an important piece of American history and a pleasure to read.

7 *The Art of the Wasted Day*, by Patricia Hampl

In an age of unrelenting electronic communication, Patricia Hampl gives license to unplug and daydream. In her latest book, she affirms the potential of quiet and solitude to enrich and bring depth to our experience – but not all see this, so the path requires courage. Hampl draws on exquisite examples of people who “wasted” their whole lives, and her delightful, meandering prose provides the perfect counterpoint.

8 *The Best Cook in the World*, by Rick Bragg

Rick Bragg's scrumptious food memoir is a tribute to his region, his family, and his mother, who was an unschooled but gifted cook. Languorously paced, grim, grand, funny, and memorable, Bragg's book is the work of a born Southern storyteller. And his recipes are all intriguing – biscuits and tea cakes to feasts showcasing pigs' feet, cracklins, and pokeweed.

9 *Gateway to the Moon*, by Mary Morris

Mary Morris explores identity, faith, and family in a tale that spans more than 500 years. Weaving fictional characters into history, the novel begins in Spain during the Inquisition and wends its way to a contemporary New Mexico village populated by the refugees' descendants. In each chapter, family bonds challenge and sustain characters as they grapple with events including betrayal, rape, and an opportunity to escape.

10 *Greeks Bearing Gifts*, by Philip Kerr

Sadly, Philip Kerr's 13th novel starring glum everyman hero Bernie Gunther will be his last: The author died in late March. Kerr's final novel is as uniformly superb as the others in this series about a homicide detective who gets his start working in Germany under the Nazis. This novel, set in Athens in 1956, offers Bernie a very engaging final outing.

How the Rev. Patrick Desbois unwittingly turned into a leading expert in the methods of genocide.

By Sara Miller Llana / Staff writer

Like many people, the Rev. Patrick Desbois in 2014 had never heard of the Yazidis, the ethnic religious minority being decimated by the Islamic State (ISIS) in northern Iraq.

At the time his gaze was still fixed closer to home. For more than a decade, the French Roman Catholic priest had been documenting the mass graves left by Nazi firing squads in the forests and fields of Eastern Europe. His work not only has garnered the gratitude of Jewish communities around the globe and France's highest honor, the National Order of the Legion of Honor, but, unwittingly, has also turned him into a leading expert in the methods of genocide.

He received an email from a Jewish donor in New York in 2014, just as the

'What Father Patrick [Desbois] does is important for Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Poles, Jewish and non-Jewish people.'

— **Kateryna Duzenko**, who has worked with the priest since 2010

assault on the Yazidis was at its height. "He said, 'Father, I'd love to support you for the past, but I prefer you take care of the genocide of the present,'" Father Desbois recalls. "When I received this email, it opened completely my eyes. It's true.... Today there are mass shootings, and we don't care, so is it because a guy is not killed by Nazis that it has no import?"

Desbois followed the news as Yazidis fled the jihadists of the Middle East. He knew Pope Francis was praying for them. He prayed. But in the end, he made a decision to go himself. "I said, 'I will not watch the TV. I will not issue a communiqué. I will not make a Facebook page, because people don't care,'" says Desbois in the offices of Yahad-In Unum, his humanitarian organization based in Greater Paris.

With that decision, Desbois has deepened his commitment to historical truth and to those persecuted because of their



COURTESY OF VICTORIA BAHR

'GOD'S CALL': The Rev. Patrick Desbois has spent more than a decade documenting Nazi atrocities in Eastern Europe. Now he's turning his attention to Iraq's persecuted Yazidi minority.

religion, whatever faith they may be. His decision comes amid a wave of anti-Semitism at home and religion-inspired killing in the Middle East. Desbois is fighting to ensure that mass killings are not only prosecuted by authorities but are also condemned by all of society.

He shared thoughts about his mission less than 48 hours after returning from his most recent trip to refugee camps in Iraq.

A grandfather's imprisonment

If a French priest seems out of place in a modern civil war, consider that his

path there began during World War II. His grandfather, a French soldier, was deported to the Nazi camp Rava-Ruska in Ukraine. He survived but refused to discuss the details, only driving Desbois to want to know more.

When Desbois arrived in 2002 at the site of his grandfather's imprisonment, the mayor said he didn't know anything about what happened to the Jews and others. Desbois refused to settle for that answer.

He kept returning, until a new mayor took him to the site of a mass grave, and

► NEXT PAGE

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he found 50 farmers who talked for the first time. He wanted to know everything about the lives of victims and witnesses alike during the war: when villagers harvested their potatoes, where they slept in their homes, how they celebrated their holidays, and, of course, how Jews were shot and who was hired to kill them, dig their graves, and then fill them in.

“These people were ready to speak,” he says. “It could have been finished [that] day. But when I came back to the car ... the mayor told me, what I did for one village I could do for 100 villages. And for me it was like God’s call.”

Since then, he and his team have visited not just 100 villages, but more than 2,000 sites across eight countries in Eastern Europe. Acting as part historian, part detective, they have painstakingly re-created a crime scene – between 1.5 million and 2 million Jews and Roma were shot and buried – that until then had been overshadowed by murder in Nazi extermination camps.

On a recent Friday afternoon, sun fills the offices of Yahad-In Unum (a combination of Hebrew and Latin meaning “together in one”). Kateryna Duzenko, a Ukrainian who has worked with the priest since 2010 as an

‘The lesson I retain is that we don’t have the right to be indifferent.’

– **Marc Knobel**, a historian and director of studies at CRIF, the Representative Council of the Jewish Institutions of France

interpreter, is now managing an interactive map by which users, if they know when and where family members were killed, can find events surrounding the execution. There is testimony when available and geographical and historical data.

Ms. Duzenko says people are still desperate for this information “all these years later,” but the organization’s work serves not just to bring peace to victims’ families. “As a Ukrainian, to know my history and know what happened, and accept that Ukrainians participated, makes me move forward and do better things in the future and prevent the same thing from happening in the future,” she says. “What Father Patrick does is important for Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Poles,

Jewish and non-Jewish people.”

When Desbois decided to pack his bags for Iraq, he realized that dealing with a “genocide of the present” required new methods. He made a crucial link at a barbershop in Brussels: The hairdresser was a Yazidi, and his father was teaching English in refugee camps in Iraq. Now the hairdresser works full time with Desbois as they interview the Yazidis who survived.

The early interviews were difficult. They weren’t talking to witnesses of crimes committed decades ago, but to victims themselves, still terrorized. “The first time it was only men [conducting interviews]. We realized we made a mistake. We couldn’t interview women with a troop of men,” Desbois says.

Now they employ Yazidi women in the camps as they set out to understand ISIS methods: how the militant group came into villages and put up checkpoints, forced them to convert to Islam, raped the women, and indoctrinated the youths so they believed they are children of the caliphate.

The takeover of Sinjar

More than 5,000 Yazidis were killed after ISIS took over the town of Sinjar in August 2014, and as many as 7,000 women and girls were rounded up to work as sex slaves. The United Nations has ruled that ISIS’s tactics amount to genocide.

Desbois has documented it in the book “The Terrorist Factory,” which is to be released this summer. He also penned “The Holocaust by Bullets.”

“We try to know the topography of the crime,” he says. Such details are crucial in getting beyond labels and religious slogans. Attributing crimes to the brand “Hitler,” he says, minimizes the responsibility of the individual killer, and the same is true of Islamic terrorists today. “Terrorists are first criminals. They kill innocent people. In name of religion, in name of God, in name of power, but in end they are killers.”

Desbois made his first trip to Iraq in May 2015, and to date he has visited more than a dozen times and interviewed 200 victims.

Yet unlike his work in Eastern Europe, he hasn’t stopped at preserving recollections. Rather, he’s fought for justice for victims and their reintegration into society.

“I couldn’t do an interview and say, ‘Bye-bye, I’ll come back in one month.’ It was impossible on an ethical level for me,” he says.

Desbois has opened centers in five refugee camps to help vulnerable children, many orphaned or so brainwashed they

How to take action

UniversalGiving (www.universalgiving.org) helps people give to and volunteer for top-performing charitable organizations around the world. All the projects are vetted by UniversalGiving; 100 percent of each donation goes directly to the listed cause. Below are links to three groups working to create a stabler environment for various children:

■ **One Mobile Projector per Trainer** (<http://bit.ly/OneMobile>) uses low-cost technology in the education of the world’s poorest people. Take action: Give money for a youth peacebuilding initiative in South Sudan (<http://bit.ly/PeaceSSudan>).

■ **Children of the Night** (<http://bit.ly/ChildNight>) rescues youths in the United States from prostitution. Take action: Support the Children of the Night home (<http://bit.ly/NightHome>).

■ **New VietGens** (<http://bit.ly/VietGens>) backs the young generation in poor areas of Vietnam. Take action: Make a donation to pay for food and health-care items for disabled orphan children (<http://bit.ly/VietChild>).

don’t remember their native tongue. He’s also created sewing workshops for women who lost everything to ISIS.

Marc Knobel, a historian and director of studies at CRIF, the Representative Council of the Jewish Institutions of France, says that Desbois’s work with the Yazidis represents the essence of the priest: his strength of spirit to work in a combat zone, to speak to those living through a massacre, and to look beyond faith groups to see his role as being part of all humanity.

“The lesson I retain is that we don’t have the right to be indifferent,” Mr. Knobel says. “We cannot forget the victims of the Shoah [Holocaust]. And it’s not possible to let Christians of the Middle East suffer. And it’s not possible to allow the Yazidis to be exterminated.”

Desbois says he believes mass killers, including ISIS, carefully designate their targets so the majority of the population feels little concern. Even though ISIS has killed Europeans in recent attacks and inspired radicalization and violence in the United States, most have not empathized with the Yazidis. They sleep well at night, he says. “My goal is to try to federate the maximum number of people who don’t sleep well.”

■ For Yahad-In Unum’s interactive map, go to yahadmap.org/#map.

ESSAY

How Mom made fudge by feel

SOMETIMES IT WAS ROCK-HARD. OTHER TIMES, IT WAS FUDGE SAUCE. BUT OTHER TIMES ...

My mother was an excellent cook. Her fried chicken was crispy perfection, and her corn pudding was fluffy and light. But she had blind spots, and one of them was fudge.

In my house, we all knew how real fudge was made – and it wasn't with marshmallow cream.

You started with sugar and cocoa in a saucepan. You stirred in milk, brought it to a boil, then let it simmer until ... well, this was the tricky part. You never really knew how long to let it simmer. Until it was done, of course, but doneness was subjective.

You tested for doneness by spooning a drop of the mixture into a cup of cold water. If it congealed into a ball firm to the touch, you could take the pan off the stove and add butter and vanilla. When it had cooled a bit (again, subjective), you started beating it vigorously with a wooden spoon. And just when it started looking dull rather than glossy (again, subjective), you poured it into a well-buttered pan.

Ideally, the fudge would harden after being cooled, beaten, and poured into a buttered pan. But this was never a guarantee. In fact, more times than not it would harden as you were pouring, a corrugated waterfall of chocolate. Or it might harden in the pan in such a determined fashion that it could be removed only by diligent chiseling.

Other times, you'd find yourself with the opposite problem: The mixture would appear to be done, so you'd take it off the stove and beat it till your arm ached, to no avail. That evening you'd spoon fudge sauce over your ice cream.

The problem lay in doneness detection. Just how congealed should the fudgy ball be? If there was a hungry crew waiting, it was easy to imagine the ball was more solid than it actually was.

A hopeless situation? It shouldn't have been. We could have noted the simmer time of each batch of fudge we made. We could have consulted a recipe, though this may have led us to the dreaded marshmallow cream version.

Or we could have bought a candy thermometer to measure the temperature of the liquid and know exactly when to take it off the stove and just when to start stirring. Except we would never do this, because this was cheating.

I can still remember Mom laughing after each batch of failed fudge. "What I really need is a candy thermometer," she'd say. But she never used one.

We all know experienced cooks who pride them-

selves on knowing how thick to roll the biscuit dough or how long to stir the gravy. But their results are usually consistent. Mom's fudge, on the other hand, could be a creamy smooth, melt-in-your-mouth delight; a grainy, dry, stuck-in-the-pan disaster; or fudge sauce for ice cream. And you could never predict which it would be. The most promising batch might never set. The most frustrating one could pull through. Was it the humidity? The distractibility of the cook?

Some of the best fudge I've made was fudge I almost forgot. A watched pot never congeals, perhaps. But deliberately ignoring the fudge doesn't work. You must honestly ignore it.

What you must never do, of course, is use a candy thermometer. I don't, and neither do my daughters. I've raised a trio of fudge scofflaws, renegades who think they can outwit the forces of nature and chemistry. Do they? You bet ... sometimes. As for the rest? Grab your spoon.

– Anne Cassidy



Old-fashioned chocolate fudge

YIELD Makes 36 pieces (or one big glop, depending)

3 cups sugar

3/4 cup cocoa powder

1-1/2 cups whole milk

1/2 cup butter (one stick)

1 teaspoon vanilla

PREPARATION: Grease well an 8- or 9-inch pan and set aside. In a medium, heavy-bottomed saucepan, stir together sugar, cocoa powder, and milk. Bring mixture to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, for 20 to 25 minutes, until a drop of the mixture congeals into a soft, somewhat flattened ball when dropped in a cup of cold water. (If you must use a candy thermometer, it should read 235 degrees F.)

Remove from heat. Add butter and vanilla, but do not stir! Let cool (to 130 degrees F. or still warm to the touch). Beat vigorously with a wooden spoon until it thickens and the color changes from glossy to dull. This is crucial to the fudge's texture. It's a subtle change that can take 15 to 20 minutes to occur. When it happens, pour quickly into the greased pan.

This is when you start hoping that it hardens. Let it cool in a dry place for at least an hour, until firm. (But if not, try it on ice cream!)

Words in the news

Bolded clues are linked to current events. After 35 years, what will Saudis finally get to see?

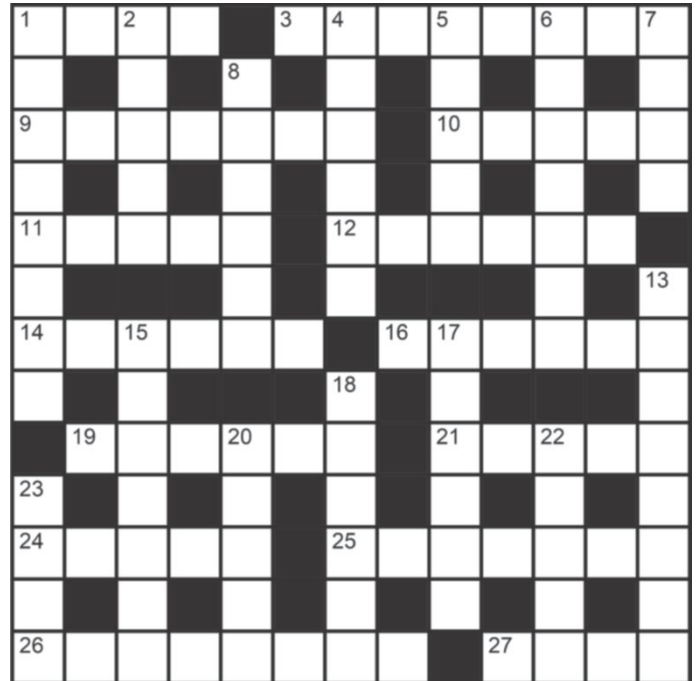
By Owen Thomas

Across

1. Hit, or footwear
3. **Data breach here may have compromised personal data of 87 million users**
9. Atomic particle with no charge
10. Teatime fare, often
11. Minor Hawaiian island
12. Tom, Dick, or Harry
14. Undisturbed
16. Spain and Portugal
19. Modern-day street tree that dates back to dinosaur times (alt. spelling)
21. Heirloom location
24. Roswell crash victim, supposedly
25. Ape
26. Practice
27. **Former South Korean president who was recently sentenced to a 24-year prison term for corruption**

Down

1. **Broadcaster who stirred controversy by mandating that all its news anchors read a promotional script critics say was politically charged**
2. Buttermaker
4. Every year
5. Standard fare in The Home Forum section of this publication
6. Reagan Supreme Court nominee
7. Castle part
8. **Environmental Protection Agency head who may be on shaky ground**
13. Remuneration
15. Piggy
17. **Former president of this country, now leading in presidential polls for an October vote, turned himself in to authorities to start**



- 18. **After 35 years, citizens in Saudi Arabia will now be able to see these**
- 20. **Bitter leadership rivals Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga now say they are**
- 22. Beauty pageant wear
- 23. "Aquarius" musical

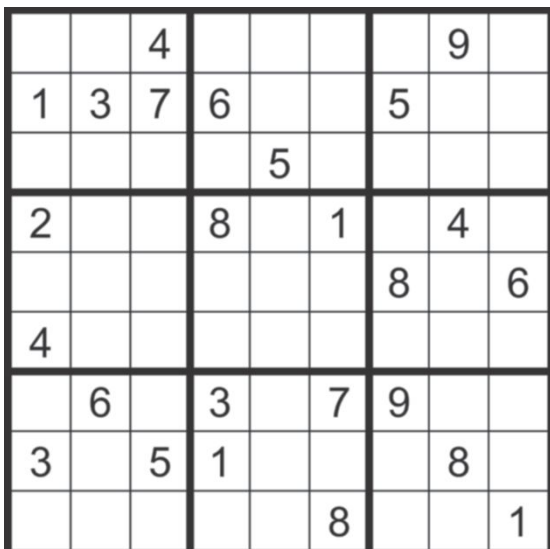
Sudoku

Difficulty: ★★☆☆

A monthly feature. Questions? Comments? Contact us at sudoku@csmonitor.com.

How to do sudoku

Fill in the grid so the numbers 1 through 9 appear just once in each column, row, and three-by-three block.



CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU SOLUTIONS



Correction: The April 2 sudoku puzzle was mislabeled. It was a four-star, not a one-star level of difficulty. Congratulations to anyone who thought it was easy!

Exactly how often is that?

I was researching plants to put in my garden this spring and was surprised to discover how many common vegetables are *biennials*. They have a two-year growth cycle, producing flowers and seeds after overwintering.

Carrots are in this group, as are kale, parsley, onions, broccoli, celery, and beets.

The definition of *biennial* is pretty clear. When applied to nonvegetation, it means “occurring every two years,” like the art exhibition that takes place in Venice, Italy, the Biennale. *Biannual*, in contrast, means “twice yearly” – a *biannual* sale happens twice a year.

Other *bi-* words can be confusing. Paul Beatty’s novel “The Sellout” features a club that meets *bimonthly*. The meetings, Beatty describes, “consisted mostly of the members who showed up every other

week arguing with the ones who came every other month about what exactly ‘bimonthly’ means.” The truth is, *bimonthly* is ambiguous, with no “correct” definition.

in a word

By Melissa Mohr

The same goes for *biweekly*. In American English, this generally indicates “every two weeks,” but in British English it more commonly refers to something that happens twice a week. If you say

“The paper comes out biweekly,” it’s not clear whether it appears every Tuesday and Friday or every other Monday.

If you want to be more precise about timing, the Latin prefix *semi-* might serve. While *bi-* means “two,” “twice,” or “doubly,” *semi-* indicates that a given unit of time is halved. So a *semiannual* sale happens once every half a year – just like

a *biannual* one. A *semimonthly* publication comes out twice a month.

British English has another useful term for “every two weeks:” *fortnightly*, a fortnight being 14 days. This sounds odd in American English and is becoming less common in Britain as well. Perhaps the least practical *semi-* word comes from the Victorian Era, when it was occasionally employed to refer to the timing of tides: *semimenstrual*, *mensis* being the Latin word for “month.”

Even if you decide to make a firm distinction between *bi-* and *semi-*, these words are used so interchangeably that it’s still confusing. If you really want to be clear, it is probably best to be less concise and simply say “once a week” or “twice a month.”

I’m glad this column is *hebdomadal* (from the ancient Greek word for “seven”) – once a week. It’s so much simpler.

Safety amid violent conflict

People around the world have been galvanized into considering what can be done to face up to both gun crime and terrorism. Young folk, leaders, and organizations have advocated various solutions. Amid the important conversations taking place, I’ve found there is great value in another way to consider safety and protection. Recent events have returned my thought to the dark days of “the troubles” during the late 20th century in Northern Ireland, when thousands were killed and thousands more injured. Personally, I was held at gunpoint twice, and several stores I owned were bombed. I am grateful to have survived those years.

What comforted and, I believe, protected me was a desire to better understand what could be termed God’s law of safety. Almost every day I prayed with ideas in the Bible such as this one: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isaiah 41:10). This and similar ideas helped me daily to diminish my fears, because they gave me a

spiritual sense of conviction that God’s love embraces us all, and that I could feel that love cloaking me in a mantle of protection.

This can be hard to reconcile with what we see going on in the world. But when we look deeper, we find that everyone’s real identity is the reflection of God, who is boundlessly good, and we begin to discern and know that goodness. When that sense of spiritual good is bright in our thought, it helps brighten the world around us.

As I prayed, I began to realize that if God’s presence is unbounded, then the kingdom of God is, too, or as Christ Jesus said, at hand (see Luke 21:31). So anything that tries to deprive us of health or safety is not from God and therefore has no power. This light of God’s presence, the forever presence of Love, comes to us as we open our hearts to it. This is what increasingly gave me that sense of protection during this dangerous time. When we’re open to the spiritual fact of God’s care for us, we’re naturally receptive to inspiration that keeps us safe. Two examples of this are especially vivid in my recollection.

In one case, a man set up a fruit stall right beside my office. On returning to the office after a quick lunch, I noticed the man

wasn’t there. A thought came to me strongly to look in the rear of the stall. When I did, in that split second, I saw a bomb there.

With the help of passersby and the police, we cleared the area, and when the bomb exploded, no one was injured. I believe it was an increasing sense of good as more powerful than the evil we may face that opened my thought to this intuition, which brought me and others safety.

Another time, I had set out on foot for a meeting when there came a clear conviction that I should not proceed. I turned around. About five minutes later a bomb exploded in the street where I would have been at that time.

Mary Baker Eddy, the discoverer of Christian Science, writes in “The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany”: “Mankind will be God-governed in proportion as God’s government becomes apparent, the Golden Rule utilized, and the rights of man and the liberty of conscience held sacred” (p. 222). We can each play a role in countering crime by turning consistently to God in prayer, listening for the guidance of divine Mind, and acknowledging the divine protection everyone has access to.

– Brian Kissock

A CHRISTIAN SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE



GET THE FULL STORY.

George Kaiser sits with Elijah, a student at one of the preschools that the philanthropist opened in Tulsa, Okla. ANN HERMES/STAFF

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