

TOO LATE? MAYBE. TOO SOON? NOT A CHANCE.

The Coup Has Already Happened So What Are We Going to Do About It? A lot of people are waiting for something dramatic to happen, some line to be crossed, an epic event like the firing of special counsel Robert Mueller III that will allow them to say that *now* we have had a coup and *now* we are ready to do something about it. We already had the coup.

The current situation of the United States is obscene, insane, and incredible. If someone had pitched it for a thriller novel or film a few years ago, they would've been laughed out of whatever office their proposal made it to because fiction ought to be plausible. It isn't plausible that a solipsistic buffoon and his retinue of petty crooks made it to the White House, but they did and there they are, wreaking more havoc than anyone would have imagined possible, from environmental laws to Iran nuclear deals. It is not plausible that the party in control of the federal government is for the most part a kleptomaniac criminal syndicate.

It's an incompetent criminal syndicate full of leaks and stumbles, easily played by the professionals across the sea. For example, Russian trolls used social media and a petition to try to prevent Trump from making Mitt Romney secretary of state. The allegations British spy Christopher Steele turned over included, as Jane Mayer put it in the *New Yorker*, this: "*The Kremlin, through unspecified channels, had asked Trump to appoint someone who would be prepared to lift Ukraine-related sanctions, and who would cooperate on security issues of interest to Russia, such as the conflict in Syria. If what the source heard was true, then a foreign power was exercising pivotal influence over US foreign policy—and an incoming President.*"

There are so many pieces to this picture, and so many of them point to Russia. **The criminal Oliver North**, the illegal arms dealer convicted of three felonies related to his cover-up of the Iran-Contra deal, is now the head of the NRA. *Bloomberg News* reported last month, "*The NRA's relationship with Alexander Torshin, a Russian politician and deputy governor of Russia's central bank who has been linked both to Vladimir Putin and to Russian organized crime, is too troubling to ignore.*" The organization seems to have received money from Russia, including this sanctioned oligarch, and it certainly gave a lot of money to Trump. There are weeks where every day a scandal erupts that would have been the defining crisis of previous administrations, and they pile on top of each other, obscuring the ones beneath. Amy Siskind, in her book *The List*, has tried to compile all the not-normal creeping-authoritarianism of the Trump era, but her project is itself almost too vast to comprehend.

In the case of the parasitic wasp species known as *Glyptapanteles*, the larvae eat through the caterpillar's skin and build a cocoon. "At this point, something remarkable and slightly eerie happens," *New Scientist* explains. "The caterpillar,



still alive, behaves as though controlled by the cocooned larvae." The hijacked caterpillar serves its parasites, not itself, and it dies just as they emerge. Something is going to burst forth from the shell of what they once were. Or perhaps it has. Perhaps they're it. Or perhaps you can picture the Russians inside the Trump team inside the Republican Party inside the American right wing as a set of Russian dolls. It's certainly true that Russia's waging a one-sided cyberwar against this country—through hacking of emails and election rolls, through professional trolls and online propaganda and surveillance. The response? The Trump Administration, according to Politico and other sources, is considering eliminating the administration's top cybersecurity job.

The current administration is endeavoring to make itself increasingly unaccountable to us and appears to be all too answerable to a hostile foreign regime. It's not clear if Russia had any direct effect on, say, exiting the Iran nuclear pact, but Russia is a beneficiary (along with Saudi Arabia, another regime the Trump family is tangled up with). As former US ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul tweeted on May 10, "*Days after Trump leaves Iran nuclear deal, oil prices are rising and ruble is strengthening.*"

Over and over we've seen Trump contort his administration to serve Russia, whether he's trying to hold back sanctions or to undermine the Paris climate treaty. The question isn't whether we're in a zombie horror movie starring an insane clown puppet with some very long and yankable strings, but what we're going to do about it. Because what all those little pieces add up to, what the tangle sorts out as if you pay attention is: this is life after the coup.

After the coup, everything seems crazy, the news is overwhelming, and some try to cope by withdrawing or pretending that things are normal. Others are overwhelmed and distraught. I'm afflicted by a kind of hyper-vigilance of the news, a daily obsession to watch what's going on that is partly a quest for sense in what seems so senseless. At least I've been able to find the patterns and understand who the key players are,

but to see the logic behind the chaos brings you face to face with how deep the trouble is.

We still have an enormous capacity to resist the administration, not least by mass civil disobedience and other forms of noncooperation. Sweeping the November elections wouldn't hurt either, if that results in candidates we hold accountable afterward. Or both. **I don't know if there's a point at which it will be too late, though every week more regulations, administrators, and norms crash and burn—but we are long past the point at which it is too soon.**

-Rebecca Solnit

Author of twenty books about geography, community, art, politics, hope, and feminism. She is a contributing editor to Harper's.

Submerged City

**That city will be no more, no halos
of spring mornings when green hills
tremble in the midst and rise
like barrage balloons—**

**and May won't cross its streets
with shrieking birds and summer's promises.
No breathless spells,
no chilly ecstasies of spring water.**

**Church towers rest on the ocean's floor,
and flawless views of leafy avenues
fix no one's eyes.**

**And still we live on calmly,
humbly—from suitcases,
in waiting rooms, on airplanes, trains,**

**and still, stubbornly, blindly, we seek the image,
the final form of things
between inexplicable fits
of mute despair—**

**as if vaguely remembering
something that cannot be recalled,
as if that submerged city were traveling with us,
always asking questions,**

**and always unhappy with our answers—
exacting, and perfect in its way.**

**-Adam Zagajewski
translated by
Clare Cavanagh**



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*"The question is not whether we
will be extremist, but what kind of
extremist we will be- will we we be
extremist for hate, or for love"*
-MLK

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