Opinion
News



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Where is my pitchfork? You will be asking that question too once you read Frank Pasquale's review of Thomas Piketty's new book "Capitalism and Ideology" published at Commonweal. Beautifully written, this review is also a blueprint for Democrats to remember what it takes to win elections. Spoiler alert: It is about economics.

From the New York Times: Svetlana Prokopyeva, a journalist in Russia, has been found guilty of "justifying terrorism." Here is a reminder of why it is one of liberalism's signature achievements to distinguish between words and deeds and, with narrow exceptions, we should only permit criminalization of deeds.

I do not want to jinx it, but here at Politico is the first article I have seen noting that Trump's plummeting numbers in the polls need to worry Republicans not only because they could lose the White House but because 2021 is a year in which legislative districts are redrawn. So, if the Dems make significant gains at the state level, as the GOP did in 2010, the effects are felt for a decade.

The president this past weekend presented himself as a champion of history. Sad thing is that he never read books about history, according to historian David Brinkley , so it is a bit like Harvey Weinstein presenting himself as a champion of women in

the workplace. I just don’t think this dog will hunt. But the radicals who want to tear down statues of non-Confederates might be able to do for Trump what he can’t do for himself, and move the goalposts such that people find Trump’s ridiculous claims less objectionable than the indiscriminate vandalism of the iconoclasts.

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Never trust totalitarians. In Hong Kong, after promising to protect the rights the inhabitants once enjoyed as British subjects, the Chinese government is cracking down against freedom of speech, removing books by certain political activists from libraries. The New York Times reports the story of how the government has changed the social contract overnight and abandoned its solemn commitments to preserve the religious and civil liberties of the inhabitants of the former British colony.

Speaking of British colonies, this op-ed by Villanova professor Elizabeth Kolsky, published at the Washington Post, is a perfect example of lousy social history — and of editors asleep at the job. In making the case that the American Revolution — July 4th and all that — was essentially about advancing white supremacy, both in America and Great Britain, Kolsky oversteps. She writes: "In the decades after U.S. independence, the British East India Co. conquered most of the [Indian] subcontinent."

The conquest of the subcontinent was well underway before American Independence, so it is hard to see it as the "legacy" of 1776. More importantly, while we should take no issue with the listing of abominations perpetrated by the British in the name of empire, if the imperial project was essentially about white supremacy, how to explain the horrific treatment of Ireland? If an historian examines racism in the late eighteenth and long nineteenth century but not avarice, they are missing one half of the picture, and it is perhaps the half that is still the most pernicious in its moral coarsening in our day.

Last Sunday’s Gospel reading, Matthew 11:25-30, put me in mind of the great alto-soprano duet, "He shall feed His flock/Come unto Him," from "Messiah" by George Friedrich Handel. We had this performed at both of my parents' funerals during the reception of Holy Communion, the first part speaking to the Eucharistic moment and the second to the funereal setting.

Here it is sung — and sung sublimely — by Victoria Massey and Victoria Joyce:

[Michael Sean Winters covers the nexus of religion and politics for NCR.]

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