BC: The American Shakedown

BC stands for NEO’s Banned Classic. This article was originally published by our journal on 10.07.18. For some reason, this article is missing from Google search results. Since this article remains pretty relevant to those geopolitical events that are taking place on the geopolitical stage today, we deem it possible to present it to our readers once again. Should it go missing again, you may be confident that you will see it republished by NEO once more, should it still remain relevant by that time.

The American shake down of its allies continues as President Trump and his Defence Minister, James Mattis attend the NATO summit in Brussels on July 11. The Americans are once again complaining that their allies in the NATO war machine don’t contribute enough to NATO, meaning the US, to fight America’s wars. Trump is really saying in so many words, “Pay us tribute or face the consequences.”

The headline in the New York Times of July 3 was, “Trump Warns NATO Allies to Spend More On Defense, or Else.”

The “Or Else” is left to the imagination but the US has already begun to inflict economic damage on its NATO allies with trade tariffs in violation of existing trade agreements and the word trade rules it agreed to abide by, all on the pretext that its allies are, as Trump puts it, “ripping us off.”

Some commentators have claimed that this latest American tantrum about contributions to NATO heralds NATO’s breakup. But they do not remember that the American complaints are almost a ritual and every American president has complained that the US is fronting the bill while its allies get a free ride. But nothing could be further from the truth. We can discuss the agreed sharing of NATO costs as a percentage of GDP and so on but the figures do not give a real picture of what is going on because the numbers are always presented as the expenses of a joint defensive alliance when the reality is that NATO is not a defensive alliance at all.

It is an aggressive military alliance created to serve mainly US interests. Its operations since the early 1990’s have all been US wars in the interests of US and transnational capital. The allied contributions are not for their joint defence against attack but for US planned wars to which they are persuaded to contribute even though the wars serve no national interests of the other NATO member states. In other words, the NATO member states are paying the cost of American wars for American interests and get nothing back in return except, as the American people have, to suffer the misery of their people being impoverished by the wars, and for the Europeans, the flow of war refugees into their countries. So that, in fact, it is the NATO allies that should be demanding compensation from the US for forking out a lot of money that has gone down an American drain and accomplishing nothing except to make a few rich and to create chaos and misery for the rest.

Let us look at Canada, as just one example. The Canadian Parliamentary Budget Office reports that the cost to Canada for supplying men and material for the US invasion and occupation of Afghanistan is in the order of 15 billion dollars over 12 years. 15 billion dollars, that the US didn’t have to pay, handed to them for nothing of benefit to Canadians. Yet the Americans have the gall to complain. The cost of Canada’s participation in the aggression against Yugoslavia for 3 months of bombing in 1999 is estimated to be above one billion dollars and since several aircraft were shot down which Canada does not admit, no doubt higher than that; a war that did nothing for Canadians but advanced US strategic interests in the Balkans.
The cost to Canada for supplying its Special Forces unit, the JTF2 commando, to the US invasion of Haiti on February 29, 2004 to kidnap and remove President Aristide and put in place a puppet government, is estimated to be tens of millions. The estimated cost to Canada for taking part in the US led aggression against Libya, Operation Mobile, in which Canadian planes flew nearly 1,000 sorties, is estimated to be 350 million dollars. The estimated cost for Canada for supporting the US operations in Iraq and Syria, against ISIS, Operation Impact, is over a billion dollars and the cost so far of Canadian operations in Ukraine at around 20 million per year plus more costs for joint training exercises in eastern Europe.

None of these wars have been for the benefit of the Canadian people or the Canadian state. Canadian taxpayers were forced to fork over the money in bushels to give the Americans a gift and what thanks are shown? None. Instead, the complaint from the capo is, “It ain’t enough.”

We can engage in the same exercise with all the NATO countries that have willingly or forcibly given to the US corresponding amounts through the contributions of men and material to the US wars and total up the figure. But the point is that it is not the USA that is being taken for a ride in NATO it is the USA that is getting a free ride. Yet, it is difficult to find any comment by any NATO leader standing up to the Big Brother and saying, “You’ve got a lot of nerve. You get us all involved in committing war crimes in one country after another, we all risk going to prison one day as war criminals, we are all accomplices in mass murder, we have had losses in money and people, all to help you in your quest for world power and you come to us and point your finger and try to bully us. Not anymore.”

No, we will not see that statement ever made because the NATO machine serves the interests of the capital of those nations which is tied into transnational capital that needs the US and NATO war machines to accomplish its objectives of securing dominance of world resources, world markets and the world labour supply. So they will whine a bit, complain, but pay they will. NATO is a club that is difficult to leave, as we see with Turkey that has suffered an attempted coup, tolerated at least by the US, threats of sanctions from the US for buying Russian air defence systems as well as threats of conflict between them in Syria. But Turkey is still in NATO and will stay in for the near future.

Instead, we will likely see more incidents such as the Skripal affair in the UK, which is being played for all it’s worth to generate in the minds of the public fear and hatred of Russia. The UK government is now making claims that Russia has gone beyond attacking a Russian émigré and his visiting daughter, neither of whom have yet been seen by the public or Russian officials or their families, and has now attacked the British people, and to get the working class on their side has claimed that two with little luck in life were their victims.

There is no proof offered, and first reports were that the two people concerned were victims of contaminated or overly strong heroin or some other substance, But this diagnosis was quickly replaced with claims they were struck by a nerve agent though explanations as to how and where soar into the upper reaches of fantasy. The fact that a chemical attack drill took place in the area some days before makes it even more suspicious, if, in fact, a nerve agent affected them. The mystery remains but the propaganda is again building after the death of one of the people claimed to be affected. The British Defence Minister, Gavin Williamson told Members of Parliament in reaction to the death, “The simple reality is that Russia has committed an attack on British soil which has seen the death of a British citizen.” Again, no evidence of this was put forward and none asked, and of course Russia denies having anything to do with it. But that is taken, once again, as more evidence of their guilt.

In both cases, the NATO Budget and the Skripal affair, the public is once again being played to generate support for war and clearly one of the main targets is Russia. One chance to avert a war is the meeting to be held on July 16 in Helsinki between President Trump and President Putin. But what hope can we have for peace in our time when Trump’s envoy to Moscow, M. Huntsman Jr. said Trump would use the meeting to “continue to hold Russia accountable for its malign activities,” including, “Mr. Putin’s election meddling and his military incursion into Ukraine”. How can President Putin get anywhere with someone spouting lies to his face?

The North Koreans are finding out that Trump’s glad hand, off hand manner, and his bragging statements that, “Don’t worry folks, it’s all gonna be fine, everyone’s gonna be happy, or else,” always really means the “or else.” Trump’s foreign minister, Mike Pompeo went to Pyongyang a few days ago supposedly to carry the peace process forward but instead went with demands instead of compromises, with diktats instead of an open heart and mind. As the North Koreans rightly said in a state news bulletin about that meeting,

“In the letter the Chairman expressed his expectation and conviction that good friendly relations forged with
President Trump through the Singapore summit meeting and talks and his confidence in the latter would be consolidated further in the process of future dialogue including the current high-level talks.

“The US side, (Pompeo) however, came out with only a unilateral and gangster-like demand for denuclearization, just talking about CVID, declaration and verification contrary to the spirit of the Singapore summit meeting and talks.

“The US side, without mentioning the issue of establishing a peace regime on the Korean peninsula which is essential for preventing the aggravation of situation and a war, took the attitude of even backtracking on the already agreed issue of declaring the end of war while attaching certain conditions and making certain excuses.”

President Putin will be faced with a challenge meeting with the leader of a government that has many faces and all of them masks. But perhaps something will come out of it for the rest of us and some acceptable accommodation reached so the world can get down to dealing with our most urgent problems, abrupt climate change and the accelerating ecological and existential catastrophe we face, about which they are doing next to nothing. It would be a dream for President Putin to say to Trump,

“My friend, instead of putting the heat on Korea for having the same nuclear weapons we have, why don’t we set the example and make a joint announcement that we, the first to make them, will be the first to destroy them. Just think of that. Think of the peace that would break out. What do you say, my friend?”

And there my dream ends for if he did the American President would scoff at the idea because US and transnational capital that control the NATO military machine are not interested in peace unless the world submits to their will and since that will not happen the wars will go on and on and to finance them the American shakedown will continue.

Christopher Black is an international criminal lawyer based in Toronto. He is known for a number of high-profile war crimes cases and recently published his novel “Beneath the Clouds. He writes essays on international law, politics and world events, especially for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook.”