**About Face**

**February 5, 2019 State of the Union**

By Martin Hittelman

On February 5, 2019, President Donald J. Trump read his speech to the nation for 82 minutes from a teleprompter. As with all of Trump’s speeches, it was a combination of lies, half-truths, assaults on those that do not agree with him, and proclamations of America First. It was essentially an attempt to save face.

As always, it was unclear as to how much of what he read, he actually believed.

The speech was filled with gratuitous remarks, many of which contradict his past actions:

* “the end of revenge politics”;
* “Together, we can break decades of political stalemate. We can bridge old divisions, heal old wounds, build new coalitions, forge new solutions, and unlock the extraordinary promise of America’s future;”
* “The decision is ours to make;”
* funds to cure child cancer;
* “protect patients with preexisting conditions;”
* pledging new funding to “defeat AIDS in America and beyond”;
* “Exactly one century after the Congress passed the constitutional amendment giving women the right to vote, we also have more women serving in the Congress than ever before;” (most of whom won opposing him);
* “the time for trivial fights is behind us”;
* “not a Republican agenda or a Democratic agenda but an agenda for the American people;”
* “We must reject the politics of revenge, resistance, and retribution—and embrace the boundless potential of cooperation, compromise, and the common good;”
* “We must choose between greatness or gridlock, results or resistance, vision or vengeance;”
* funds made available for an infrastructure package;
* legislation for cheaper prescription drugs and paid family leave;
* “We must choose whether we will squander our inheritance or whether we will proudly declare that we are Americans. We do the incredible. We defy the impossible. We conquer the unknown;”
* “Great nations do not fight endless wars,”

And then midway through the speech he threw down the gauntlet: “If there is going to be peace and legislation, there cannot be war and investigation,” he said. “It just doesn’t work that way!” In other words, end the Mueller investigation. End the other criminal investigations of Trump friends and family corruption.

Trump went on a rant concerning the wall but made no mention of his government shutdown: “Now is the time for the Congress to show the world that America is committed to ending illegal immigration and putting the ruthless coyotes, cartels, drug dealers, and human traffickers out of business.” He then spoke of “caravans,” MS-13, and the grief-felt by families who had been (according to Trump) murdered by undocumented immigrants. He did not mention that the crime rate for undocumented immigrants is less than that of the rest of the United States population. He also used El Paso Texas as an example of “Simply put, walls work and walls save lives.” His example of El Paso as a town that went from one with a high crime rate to a town with a low crime rate after a wall was built turns out not to be the case. That lie was clearly spelled out in a number of newspaper accounts.

He then went on to say that “No issue better illustrates the divide between America’s working class and America’s political class than illegal immigration, wealthy politicians and donors push for open borders while living their lives behind walls and gates and guards.” This was a clear attempt to turn the working class against the Democrats and new immigrants. Who these donors that live behind walls and gates and guards are was not made clear.

In addition to appealing to the racists, he also made an appeal to the evangelical right by calling on Congress to outlaw late-term abortions. He attacked “legislation that would allow a baby to be ripped from the mother’s womb moments before birth.” He considered abortion to be the execution of the fetus.

Trump made the outrageous claim that “If I had not been elected president of the United States, we would right now, in my opinion, be in a major war with North Korea with potentially millions of people killed.“ Despite the concerns of his intelligence agencies, Trump still believes that North Korea would likely not denuclearize. He announced a planned meeting with Kim Jong Un whose “relationship with Kim Jong Un is a good one.”

Trump made an attack on what he considers “socialism” and “new calls to adopt socialism in our country.” He attempted to describe the economic situation in Venezuela as a result of socialism rather than the United States efforts to destroy the country’s economy and the low price of oil. He then ties it to the democratic socialism of Bernie Sanders (which actually is closer to the good government policies of the Scandinavian countries). The Sanders approach is more like John Lennon reading Karl Marx socialism.

Trump then declared that “America was founded on liberty and independence, not government coercion, domination, and control.” “Tonight, we renew our resolve that America will never be a socialist country.” Meanwhile he continues to celebrate his elimination of regulations that protect the American people from all kinds of destructive practices.

Finally, Trump did not mention global warming or his attack on science.

I expect another two years of confrontation with those that would improve the human condition.