

GET THE POINT

Who Should Pay?

By: Fritz Pointer

*It is not what we don't know that gets us into trouble,
It is what we know for certain that just ain't so.
Mark Twain*

"Make China Pay" comes the repetitive mantra of some people: Make China pay for the social, medical and economic consequences and costs of the Corona Virus (Covid-19) has implications for illegal global actions of the United States. Well, according to *Wikipedia*, a popular source: "The Spanish flu, also known as the 1918 flu pandemic with a death toll estimated to have been somewhere between 50 million and 100 million, making it one of the deadliest pandemics in human history, began in the United States (in Kansas) in March 1918." Apparently, because King Alfonso XIII of Spain had such a grave reaction to this Kansas virus, it was given the name "Spanish flu." There was, of course, the attendant collateral social, political, medical and economic damage. So, who should pay? Should America Pay?

"The Kansas, America Flu" would be more accurate. Kansas? Midwest America? What *could* be going on there? Jared Diamond, professor of physiology at the UCLA School of Medicine in *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (1999) assures us of "the links connecting livestock and crops to germs" (195). As a medical student, he learned of a married couple stressed-out by a mysterious illness. Forgetting what he had learned about patient confidentiality "he committed the awful blunder of requesting the woman to ask her husband whether he'd had any sexual experiences that could have caused the infection" (196).

It gets better: “the husband turned red, pulled himself together so that he seemed even smaller, tried to disappear under the bedsheets, and stammered out words in a barely audible voice. His wife suddenly screamed in rage and drew herself up to tower over him. Before the doctor could stop her, she grabbed a heavy metal bottle, slammed it with full force onto her husband’s head, and stormed out of the room. It took a while for the doctor to revive her husband” (196). The answer slowly emerged: “he had confessed to repeated intercourse with sheep on a recent visit to the family farm; perhaps that was how he had contracted the mysterious microbe” (196). If nothing else this story illustrates a complex, profound subject of great importance: human diseases of animal origins.

To label a virus after the first location that puts up an effective response, like “Wuhan Virus” or “Spanish Flu” (or “Kansas Flu”) only serves to demonize responses to new diseases, especially when that label is meant to place blame. HIV/AIDS was first detected in the U.S. in the 1980s. It has since spread to the whole world, but the international community has never demanded that the U.S. take responsibility or pay reparations. Diamond reminds us that, “The major killers of humanity throughout our recent history – smallpox, flu, tuberculosis, malaria, plague, measles, and cholera – are infectious diseases that evolved from diseases of animals” (196-97). I’ll add another “major killer” to Diamond’s list, war.

Let us begin with the United States being unwilling to atone for the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki targeting and killing hundreds of thousands of civilians – an ultimate act of terrorism (Make America Pay); nor has the U.S. provided compensation to all the Marshallese affected by U.S. nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands. From 1946-58, the United States conducted over 70 nuclear

tests in the Marshall Islands contaminating the land (Make America Pay); Marshallese suffering from cancer, their children being born with disabilities, extra limbs and heads, including what is called “jellyfish babies” (Make America Pay).

Nor has the United States paid a cent for the 3 million dead Vietnamese nor the 3 million victims of Agent Orange. Nor have they paid for the damage (material, economic, social, psychological) done by 1.6 to 2 million tons of bombs dropped on Laos in 1969 – bombs that destroyed schools, businesses, factories, bridges and, of course, killed people. Nor has the US paid for the thousands if not millions of people killed by the 108,823 tons of bombs dropped on Cambodia in 1970 (Make America Pay). Nor has the US paid for the 1 million people killed in Afghanistan, or the 27 million displaced in Iraq, Syria, Pakistan and Yemen. When will America pay for the 400 drone strikes that have killed at least 1.000 civilians? Or, for the wanton, unjustifiable barbaric destruction of the nation of Libya? Make America Pay!!!

The “Make China Pay” anthem is specious, simplistic and perhaps even racist. It certainly isn’t helpful. And for India, with its problems of hunger and poverty, to champion this slogan is particularly absurd as it, along with other ignorant countries, stupidly wastes \$2.3 billion dollars a year on nuclear weapons; joining China \$10.4 billion, France \$4.8 billion, Israel \$1 billion, North Korea \$0.6 billion, Pakistan \$1 billion, the UK \$ 8.9 billion and the United States at \$35.4 billion on nuclear weapons: to the tune of \$138,700 every single minute on weapons that can end life on earth rather than spending this money to protect the health of their citizens. Wasting billions every year on weapons that are now illegal now that 50 ratifications have been reached for the Treaty on the

Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which bans the production and manufacture of nuclear weapons. Money that could pay for at least 100,000 intensive care unit beds, tens of thousands of ventilators and tens of thousands of annual salaries for nurses and doctors, for schools, public transportation, universal health care, etc. Make China Pay? Yes. Make America pay? Yes. Make India pay? Yes. All humanity must pay. All humanity is paying.

Calvin Deuschbein in the article, “China Pushes Back U.S. Empire Lies” states: “The Chinese government and people have provided many shipments of much-needed medical supplies to over 150 countries and international organizations, and these efforts are still ongoing.” Deuschbein continues: “Preliminary statistics indicate that by May 5, 2020 Chinese provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, institutions and companies had **donated** more than 9.6 million masks, 500,000 testing kits, 305, 900 pairs of medical and other gloves, and 133,500 goggles **to 30 U.S. states and 55 cities.**” How’s that for a so-called villain or enemy?

It should not be required or demanded of China to pay, especially, for the incompetence, ineptitude, mismanagement and buffoonery of the political leadership of U.S., Brazil, UK and India in preparation for and addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. The constant “blame game” reference to COVID-19 as the “Chinese virus” is propaganda to prepare the U.S. public and lackeys to support conflict with China and it appears to be working – certainly in India.