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ALEXANDER COCKBURN AND JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

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Bill's Bad Year

From Charmer to Sleazeball

By Alexander Cockburn

She may not end up as the Democratic nominee, but the fall default option isn't so bad for Hillary Clinton, namely an active life in the public eye as the junior senator from New York. Substitute Illinois for New York, and the same is true of Barack Obama. But there is one person for whom the nomination battle has been bad news ever since March, and that's Bill Clinton.

Clinton left the White House eight years ago with the highest job performance rating – 65 per cent – of any president since World War II. He was one point ahead of Ronald Reagan. That didn't mean that Americans thought much of his character and morals. Almost four out of five gave him an F on moral and ethical standards.

Two terms of George Bush Jr. improved Bill's lowly F-character rating, particularly among liberals and blue-collar workers. They forgot Clinton's endless political liaisons with the Republican right, his onslaughts on welfare, his job-exporting trade deals. They just remembered that America of the mid to late '90s was more of a fun place than it is now. People were happier, and, in a perverse way, the essentially trivial Lewinsky scandal helped Bill in retrospect. If the worst thing about him was a fling with an intern, was that really so bad?

The clamor over the stained dress drowned out whimpers from the prudish that Clinton was as corrupt as any president in U.S. history and had put the White House up for sale. Tycoons ponied up \$200,000 for a night or two in the Lincoln bedroom. Among the last documents he signed as president was a pardon for the fugitive financier Marc Rich.

War Hero?

Meet the Real John McCain: North Vietnam's Go-To Collaborator

By Douglas Valentine

If you have no idea what war is about, thank God. It's not what you see in movies or told by your government.

When my father was in New Guinea with the 32nd Division in 1942, his fellow American soldiers would point their long Springfield rifles skywards and shoot at American pilots flying overhead.

"Glory Boys," the ground troops called them.

The pilots had comfortable quarters beside the airstrip in Port Moresby. When orders for a mission came down, they'd climb in their planes, rattle down the runway, and soar over the Owen Stanley Mountains with the clouds, breathing fresh, clean air. The Glory Boys weren't trapped in the broiling jungle, in the mud and pouring rain, their skin rotting away, chewed by ghastly insects, bitten by poisonous snakes, stricken with cerebral malaria, yellow fever, dysentery, and a host of unknown diseases delivered by unknown parasites.

If the Fly Boys died, it was in a blaze of glory, not from a landmine, or a misdirected mortar, or a Japanese bayonet in the brain.

One day, my father and his last remaining friend, Charlie Ferguson, were walking through the jungle up to the line. On the way they passed a group of bare-chested Aussies in shorts, sitting round a grindstone sharpening their knives. Every once in a while one of the Aussies would hoist his rifle and casually put a bullet into a Japanese sniper who had tied himself into the top of a nearby tree. Not in any place that would outright kill him but some place, painful enough to make the point.

A little further toward the front line, my father and Charlie came upon Master Sergeant Harry Blackman, a man in his forties, regular army, a grizzled combat veteran. A few days earlier in a fight with the Japanese, a young lieutenant, a "90-Day Wonder", had curled up in a fetal position when he should have been directing mortar fire. As a result, U.S. Army mortar rounds landed on several U.S. Army soldiers up on the line. Blackman, in front of everyone, took the lieutenant behind a tree and blew his brains out.

As my father and Charlie walked through the jungle, they saw Harry Blackman perched on the lower limb of a huge tropical tree, babbling incoherently, driven stark raving mad by sorrow and jungle war with the Japanese.

Several days later, my father was sent on a patrol into Japanese held territory. He was the last man in a formation moving single file through the jungle. Plagued by malaria and exhaustion, he kept falling behind. Around noon, a group of Japanese soldiers sitting high up in trees dropped concussion grenades on the patrol. As he lay on the ground, unable to move, my father watched the Japanese slide down the trees. Starting with the point man on patrol, they pulled down the pants and castrated each man, before clubbing him to death with their rifle butts or running a bayonet into his gut.

War. If you're a Glory Boy like John Sidney McCain III, you really have no idea what it is. You drop bombs on cities, on civilians, maybe on enemy forces, maybe on your own troops. Glory Boys like McCain rarely get a taste of the horror they inflict on others. Their suffering

rarely extends beyond the worry that they might get shot down.

Magically, my father was spared that day when his patrol was slaughtered. Against regulations, he had stolen a cross-swords patch and sewn it on his shirtsleeve. At the age of 16, he thought it looked cool. On the morning of the patrol, when the new lieutenant told him to take it off, my father said, "Sure." He and the lieutenant started at each other for a while, and then the lieutenant moved away. Insubordination was the least of his worries. No one was expected to survive the patrol, anyway.

When the Japanese who had ambushed the patrol got to my father, they stood poised to mutilate and kill him. Then they saw the cross-swords patch. They apparently felt that dear old dad was an important person with inside information about American forces. Instead of killing him, they took him prisoner. When they realized he was just a stupid kid, the Japanese sent him to a POW camp in the Philippines, a labor camp where they worked prisoners to death or near it.

Being a POW is what my father and John McCain have in common; although their experiences as POWs were as different as their class and their character.

McNasty

In the fall of 1967, Navy pilot John McCain was routinely bombing Hanoi from an aircraft carrier in the South China Sea. On October 26, he was trying to level a power plant in a heavily populated area when a surface-to-air missile knocked a wing off his jet. McCain and what was left of his plane splashed into Truc Bach Lake.

A compassionate Vietnamese civilian left his air raid shelter and swam out to McCain. McCain's arm and leg were broken, and he was tangled up in his parachute underwater. He was drowning. The Vietnamese man saved McCain's sorry

McCain was held for five and half years. The first two weeks' behavior might have been pragmatism, but McCain soon became North Vietnam's go-to collaborator.

ass, and yet McCain has nothing but hatred for "the gooks". As he told reporters on his campaign bus in 2000, "I will hate them as long as I live".

You have to hate people to drop bombs on them, which is why the U.S. and Israeli governments stir up so much hatred against Muslims. That's why Saddam Hussein became a symbol of Iraq and why Bush tied him to 9/11 – so American soldiers would hate Iraqis enough to kill and abuse them in a thousand ways, everyday, for five years. Or, according to McCain, for 100 years if necessary.

The flip side to the equation is that people generally hate those who drop bombs on them. When the Germans dropped bombs on London, the Allies called it terror bombing. Everyone hated the Germans. Most Iraqis hate the Americans (who more and more resemble the Germans of 1940) for occupying their country. They especially hate our Gestapo – the CIA – and its torturers. But that's war for you, and John McCain is lucky the locals didn't eat him – like Uzbek nationalists trapped in a hor-

rid prison camp chewed on CIA officer John "Mike" Spann shortly after Spann summarily executed a prisoner. Spann (the John Birch of the war on terror) was killed in the ensuing riot, shortly before the CIA and its Afghan collaborators massacred the majority of prisoners on November 28, 2001. On his previous 22 missions, McCain dropped God knows how many bombs, killing God knows how many innocent Vietnamese civilians. "I am a war criminal", he confessed on *60 Minutes* in 1997. "I bombed innocent women and children."

If he is sincere when he says that, why isn't he being tried for war crimes by the U.S. government?

In any event, the man who rescued McCain tried to ward off an angry mob, which stomped on McCain for a while until the local cops turned him over to the military. McCain was in pain but suffered no mortal wounds. He was, however, in enough pain to break down and start collaborating with the Vietnamese after three days.

War is one thing, collaborating with the enemy is another; it is a legitimate campaign issue that strikes at the heart of McCain's character ... or lack thereof.

There are certainly degrees of collaboration. As a famous novelist once asked, "If you're a barber and you cut a German's hair, does that make you a collaborator?" Being an informant for the Gestapo and/or informing on the resistance and sending resistance fighters to their death is different than being a barber. In occupied countries like Iraq, or France in World War II, collaboration to that extent spells an automatic death sentence.

The question is: What kind of collaborator was John McCain, the admitted war criminal who will hate the Vietnamese for the rest of his life?

Put it another way: how psychologically twisted is McCain? And what actually happened to him in his POW camp that twisted him? Was it abuse, as he claims, or was it the fact that he collaborated and has to cover up?

Covering-up can take a lot of energy. The truth is lurking there in his subconscious, waiting to explode. A number of U.S. officials and politicians have commented on McCain's eruptions of temper. Republican Senator Thad Cochran has openly said he trembles at the thought of an unstable McCain in the Oval Office with his finger on the nuclear trigger. In

CounterPunch

EDITORS

ALEXANDER COCKBURN

JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

ASSISTANT EDITOR

ALEVINA REA

BUSINESS

BECKY GRANT

DEVA WHEELER

DESIGN

TIFFANY WARDLE

COUNSELOR

BEN SONNENBERG

CounterPunch

PO Box 228

Petrolia, CA 95558

1-800-840-3683

counterpunch@counterpunch.org

www.counterpunch.org

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a July 5, 2006, NewsMax.com article, former Senator Bob Smith (R-NH) was quoted as saying about McCain: "I have witnessed incidents where he has used profanity at colleagues... He would disagree about something and then explode." Smith called it "irrational behavior. We've all had incidents where we have gotten angry, but I've never seen anyone act like that."

So, you say, McCain has a short fuse behind the plastered TV smile. So, he calls his colleagues assholes and shit-heads. In high school they called him "McNasty." That's just how he is. Always was, always will be.

Well, maybe. And maybe it's not a quality we want in a president. And maybe that repressed anger actually has its roots in a Vietnamese POW camp.

The Admiral's Boy

In the POW camp where my father was held and tortured by the Japanese, collaboration was a hanging offense. Indeed, the ranking POW in my father's camp, an English major, made a deal with the Japanese that resulted in four prisoners being beheaded. The other POWs held a war council that night. They drew straws, and the four who got short straws crept to the major's hut. They strangled him in his sleep.

McNasty says he was tortured in solitary confinement. However, on March 25, 1999, two of his fellow POWs, Ted Guy and Gordon "Swede" Larson, told the Phoenix *New Times* that, while they could not guarantee that McCain was not physically harmed, they doubted it.

Larson said, "My only contention with the McCain deal is that while he was at the Plantation, to the best of my knowledge and Ted's knowledge, he was not physically abused in any way. No one was in that camp. It was the camp that people were released from."

McCain had a unique POW experience. Initially, he was taken to the infamous Hanoi Hilton prison camp, where he was interrogated. By McCain's own account, after three or four days he cracked. He promised his Vietnamese captors, "I'll give you military information if you will take me to the hospital."

His Vietnamese captors soon realized their POW, John Sidney McCain III, came from a well-bred line in the American military elite. McCain's father, John Jr., and grandfather, John Sr., were

both full admirals. A destroyer, the *USS John S. McCain*, is named after both of them.

While his son was held captive in Hanoi, John Jr., from 1968 to 1972, was the commander-in-chief of U.S. Pacific Command; Admiral McCain was in charge of all U.S. forces in the Pacific, including those fighting in Vietnam.

One can only wonder when the calls from Admiral McCain started coming into the Hanoi Hilton's concierge. Rather quickly, one surmises, for the Vietnamese

This is the lesson of McCain's experience as a POW: a true politician, a hollow man, his only allegiance is to power. The Vietnamese, like McCain's campaign contributors today, protected and promoted him, and, in return, he danced to their tune.

soon took McCain to a hospital reserved for Vietnamese officers. Unlike his fellow POWs, he received care from a Soviet doctor.

The Vietnamese realized, this poor stooge has propaganda value. The admiral's boy was used to special treatment, and his captors knew that. They were working him.

For his part, McCain acknowledges that the Vietnamese rushed him to a hospital but denies he was given any "special medical treatment."

However, two weeks into his stay at the Vietnamese hospital, the Hanoi press began quoting him. It was not "name rank and serial number, or kill me," as specified by the military code of conduct. McCain divulged specific military information: he gave the name of the aircraft carrier on which he was based, the number of U.S. pilots that had been lost, the

number of aircraft in his flight formation, as well as information about the location of rescue ships.

So, McCain leveraged some details to get some medical attention, not anything too contemptible. Who's to judge someone in the position?

But McCain was held for five and half years. The first two weeks' behavior might have been pragmatism, but McCain soon became North Vietnam's go-to collaborator.

The Psywar Stooge

McCain cooperated with the North Vietnamese for a period of three years. His situation isn't as innocuous as that of the French barber who cuts the hair of the German occupier. McCain was repaying his captors for their kindness and mercy.

This is the lesson of McCain's experience as a POW: a true politician, a hollow man, his only allegiance is to power. The Vietnamese, like McCain's campaign contributors today, protected and promoted him, and, in return, he danced to their tune.

McCain provided his voice in radio broadcasts for the North Vietnamese. General Vo Nguyen Giap, a nationalist celebrity of the time, interviewed him. McCain's uneasy compliance was a moment of affirmation for Vietnamese. His Vietnamese handlers thereafter used him regularly as prop at meetings with foreign delegations, including the Cubans. McCain became what he is today, a psywar stooge.

Vietnamese radio propagandists made good use of McCain. He was on the air so often that, on June 4, 1969, a U.S. wire service headlined a story entitled "PW Songbird Is Pilot Son of Admiral."

The story reported that McCain collaborated in psywar offensives, aimed at American servicemen. "The broadcast was beamed to American servicemen in South Vietnam as a part of a propaganda series attempting to counter charges by U.S. Defense Secretary Melvin Laird that American prisoners are being mistreated in North Vietnam."

It's impossible to prove exactly what happened to McCain short of traveling to Vietnam, tracking down his captors, and picking up the trial were it starts. McCain says he only collaborated when he was brutally tortured. He says his predicament led him to attempt suicide.

That, one supposes, and the guilt of being a war criminal.

But wait! Not only is McCain still alive, he is running for president and promoting more war everywhere. Maybe he, not Hillary, should be called the Comeback Kid?

There are no public records from other POWs to confirm McCain's claims, but his detractors, like fellow POWs Ted Guy and Gordon "Swede" Larson, have yet to be silenced. Their work can be found at www.usvetdsp.com/mciahro.htm. Guy and Larson are part of a larger movement concerned with the fate of the 2,000 American Vietnam veterans still missing. They've been pressing McCain to own up to his POW experience, drop the war hero posturing and do more to provide a full accounting of the POWs and MIAs who were not as fortunate, privileged, or willing to collaborate as the would-be president.

McCain's supporters are trying to quiet detractors by ignoring them. "Nobody believes these idiots. They're a bunch of jerks. Forget them", said Mark Salter, McCain's chief staffer.

By and large the strategy has worked. The American media accept McCain's story as gospel and, in so doing, bolster the war hero image so essential to his career in politics. In a recent TV interview with John Kerry, victim of the Swift Boat Heroes for Truth Movement in the last election, another admiral's son, Chris Wallace, actually took umbrage when Kerry criticized McCain. Son of media admiral Mike Wallace, Chris made Kerry admit that McCain was a hero.

Hypocrisy and Anger

Perhaps McCain learned something from the Vietnamese propagandists who used him for their psywar projects? It's not the collaboration itself that makes John McCain unfit for office but the fact that he has managed to rewrite his collaboration into political capital. "He's a war hero, respect him." Or die.

As a family pedigree, the McCain family's stature rests on the status and prestige of its achievements in the military: rank, medals and, most importantly to John McCain's presidential campaign, the image of warrior masculinity. He's the straight talking maverick of the Republican Party, the 21st century rendering of Teddy Roosevelt.

Not exactly. McCain collaborated with

the Vietnamese as their psywar stooge, appearing in their radio broadcasts and news reports. In his current presidential campaign, he's cozying up to the hate-mongering Christian right he once criticized. He's reversed positions on so many issues that his Democratic rivals have assembled his contrasting statements into "The Great McCain Versus McCain Debates."

Underlying all of the schizophrenic reversals is McCain's hidden past of collaboration. Somewhere in the unplumbed

Put it another way: how psychologically twisted is McCain? And what actually happened to him in his POW camp that twisted him? Was it abuse, as he claims, or was it the fact that he collaborated and has to cover up?

human part of John Sidney McCain III, he knows his POW experience contradicts the war hero image he projects. This essential dishonesty, this lie of the soul, is a sign of a larger lack of character – like the major in my father's POW camp, but without the come-uppance. CP

Doug Valentine is the author of *The Hotel Tacloban*, the story of his father's experiences in a Japanese POW camp in World War II. Brendan McQuade assisted Mr. Valentine by providing timely research for this article.

Why the U.S. Chose Northrop Grumman

The Realities of "Free Trade"

By Serge Halimi

PARIS

In theory, the United States is all for free trade and is the leading advocate of this system. But, faced with a recession and a colossal trade deficit, it is reconsidering, as everyone knew it would. The U.S. military contract for 79 refueling tankers, co-produced by European Aeronautic Defence and Space (EADS) at a cost of \$35 billion, is no exception. U.S. national interests are well protected. This "European" aircraft will be equipped with General Electric engines, produced in partnership with the U.S. company Northrop Grumman and assembled in Alabama. More than half the added value will be generated in the U.S.A. Much of the equipment on offer from the main competitor, Boeing – less readily available, with a more limited refueling capability and range – would not have been produced in the U.S.

Editorials in newspapers and the business press assure us that it is wrong to take strong measures to protect national companies and their employees. But history shows that most developed countries owe their prominent positions to trade barriers. Britain, France, Korea, Japan and Prussia did not acquire their industrial power by obeying David Ricardo's law of comparative advantage. And in the

HALIMI CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

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End Times describes the crisis of the old Fourth Estate: declining profits, lowered credibility, as evinced by the Judy Miller and Wen Ho Lee scandals. Wherever one looks, from the plunging profit margins of the New York Times, of the Los Angeles Times, to the death of the old alternative weekly market – marked by the take over of the Village Voice by Phoenix-based New Times – we find the omens of doom. St Clair and Cockburn set them forth and say Good Riddance.



COCKBURN CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Rich's former wife Denise, who campaigned ardently for the pardon, threw \$450,000 into Clinton's library fund, \$70,000 to Hillary's senate campaign, plus a \$3 million fund-raising lunch and another half million to Democratic causes – plus \$10,000 to Clinton's legal defense fund and \$7,375 for the Clintons' furniture. Dick Morris claimed the zaf-tig Denise paid a hundred visits to Bill in the White House, the year before the pardon.

Came the Bush years, mostly not fun at all, and Bill flitted around the globe, associating his name with worthy endeavors like the fight against AIDS. As an ex-president, he could never aspire to the elevated moral tone copyrighted by Jimmy Carter, but a solid chunk of Americans felt warmly toward him, most conspicuously blacks.

All that changed in the first primaries, most notably in South Carolina where he was widely regarded as having been dismissive of Obama as a black man. Since then, Clinton's transmutation has taken on a macabre tempo. It's like watching an old movie of Jekyll turning into Hyde. The bouncy charmer of January is now disclosed as a predatory lobbyist demanding outlandish sums for services rendered to an unalluring collection of patrons. The rewards are large. To take one example, committed to the Clinton Foundation is \$131 million from Canadian mining czar Frank Giustra. Clinton flew to Kazakhstan with him to hunker down with Kazakh tyrant Nursultan Nazarbayev, who leased Giustra valuable uranium mining rights.

For Hillary Clinton, the political embarrassments of her husband's lobbying have become a staple of the talk shows. Cokie Roberts of CNN said flatly that every time Hillary seemed to be bouncing back, her husband dragged her down and was this Bill trying to safeguard his legacy as the only person named Clinton ever to occupy the White House.

The recently disclosed \$108 million in income earned by the couple – mostly Bill – since they quit the White House hasn't particularly helped Hillary tie down the blue-collar vote in Pennsylvania or boost her national ratings. Nor has the \$800,000 paid to Bill Clinton by Colombia-based Gold Service International to promote the U.S.-Colombia trade deal that Hillary has

been denouncing. U.S. labor unions bitterly point out that Clinton (along with two of her own top staffers, Mark Penn and Howard Wolfson) has been lobbying for Colombia's Alvaro Uribe, while the latter has consolidated his regime's record as the most dangerous in the world for labor organizers. In the six years since Uribe took office, over 400 labor activists have been killed. In 2008, almost one unionist a week has been assassinated.

Even as Hillary was calling for President Bush to boycott the opening ceremony of the Olympic games in Beijing because of repression in Tibet, it emerged that Bill had roosted in 2005 on the payroll of the Chinese web firm, Alibaba Inc., which

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recently carried a government-issued Internet "wanted notice" urging the arrest of Tibetan protesters. Alibaba made a contribution to Clinton's foundation in return for a speech. Clinton tried to claim the money went to his AIDS-fighting operation. "They help me save lives in China," he declared fervently, but it seems Alibaba's money went into a different account.

One of Bill's assets twenty years ago was that he looked so boyish – so unlike a fleshy southern pol, marinated in dirty money. It's not the way he seems now. He looks like a sleazeball. His low character has caught up with him yet again.

Again? Back in 1979, Tim Hermach, now leader of the Native Forest Council and breathing the righteous air of Eugene, Oregon, was a businessman seeking commercial advantage. In 1979 this search took him to Little Rock, Arkansas, where his associate Tookie McDaniel said the swiftest way of getting a certificate of origin necessary for a rebar (reinforcing steel for construction) deal was by conferring personally with the new governor of the state.

In short order, a dinner was arranged with young Governor Bill at the Little Rock Hilton. Tim recalls that they were scarcely seated before Bill was greeting a pretty young waitress in friendly fashion,

putting his hand up her dress while announcing genially to the assembled company, "This woman has the sweetest c--- in Little Rock."

Tim, an Oregon boy by origin, tells us he listened with burning ears and mouth agape as Bill talked of womanhood in terms of astounding crudity. Badinage notwithstanding, some business was transacted. Hermach tells us that Governor Bill, "very openly, nothing shy about it, said words to the effect that our end use certificate would cost about \$10,000," said transaction being of a personal, informal nature. "Since ours was a \$2 million deal, we didn't care," Tim recalls.

Governor Bill also informed Hermach that they should go to the Stephens Bank the following day to complete all necessary arrangements.

These tractations concluded, Governor Bill repaired to the Hilton's nightclub with boon companions, where they cavorted lewdly with sundry flowers of Little Rock before repairing to bedrooms in the upper regions of the hotel. CP

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19th and early 20th centuries, when the U.S.A. had the highest growth rate in the world, its customs tariffs were around 50 per cent (44 per cent in 1913). President Ronald Reagan inveighed against protectionism but set limits on imports of cars, steel, sugar and textiles. His administration increased duties on cars with big engines (by a factor of 11) and on motorcycles, to rescue Harley-Davidson. And it pressured Japan to revalue its currency, just as President George Bush is asking China to do now. The U.S.A. has repeatedly asked China to revalue the yuan to reduce the U.S. trade deficit. But there has been a 10 per cent revaluation since January 2007, with no appreciable effect on its trade deficit with China.

The monetary policy pursued by the Federal Reserve with the tacit approval of the White House, although not openly protectionist, has obvious implications for trade. A weak dollar is good for exports and will reduce the impact of the current recession in the U.S.A. The European Union is almost alone in calmly allowing central bank policy on interest rates – high interest rates – to threaten

major industries established with considerable injections of public money. Groups like EADS are relocating their activities to the dollar zone to escape the dire effects of revaluing the euro. In an

What price did Europe have to pay for the honor of refueling U.S. aircraft, with equipment co-produced in the U.S., because the Federal Reserve keeps interest rates down?

interview published in Les Echos, Paris, on December 10, 2007, the French prime minister, François Fillon, said France and Germany had not invested substantial sums in Airbus to see the project transfer to the dollar zone. The state, as a shareholder, would make every effort to persuade Airbus not to relocate production.

The deal with the Pentagon also has political and strategic implications. What price did Europe have to pay for the honor of refueling U.S. aircraft, with equipment co-produced in the U.S., because the Federal Reserve keeps interest rates down? When it was announced that the contract had been awarded to EADS, Democratic Congressman John Murtha complained that the Europeans were not pulling their weight in Afghanistan. By coincidence, President Nicolas Sarkozy is about to send 1,000 more French troops there. Celebrating his new diplomatic entente with Washington, Sarkozy said: "It would have been unthinkable for EADS to win the contract for refueling tankers in the previous climate of tension between France and the U.S." Enough said. The Pentagon decision is a superlative lesson in free trade. CP

Translated by Barbara Wilson.

Serge Halimi is the director of *Le Monde Diplomatique*. This article appears by agreement with LMD, whose English language edition can be found at monde-diplo.com.

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