

War Payments
Have Russians
Rolling in Cash

All Over Towns, Spoils
of Risking One’s Life

By NEIL MacFARQUHAR and MILANA MAZAEVA

Expensive new cars and motorcycles crowd the streets. Apartment prices have more than doubled. And once-strapped residents are suddenly seen wearing fur coats and carrying ostentatiously overflowing grocery bags.

That is how one resident of a small, long-impoverished industrial city in Siberia describes her hometown these days. The explanation for the burst in prosperity lies in the isolated cemetery, with rows of Russian flags marking the new graves of soldiers killed in Ukraine, and also downtown, where a billboard lists the scores of local men who went to fight.

“I was stunned by how many,” said the resident, the wife of a middle-aged firefighter who enlisted last summer without telling her beforehand. “Money from the war has clearly affected our city.”

The Kremlin has been showering cash on men who enlist. It wants to avoid an unpopular draft, while also addressing the lack of men with sufficient patriotic zeal to join up. There are large signing bonuses, fat monthly salaries and what Russians call “coffin money,” a substantial payment to the families of the tens of thousands of soldiers killed in battle.

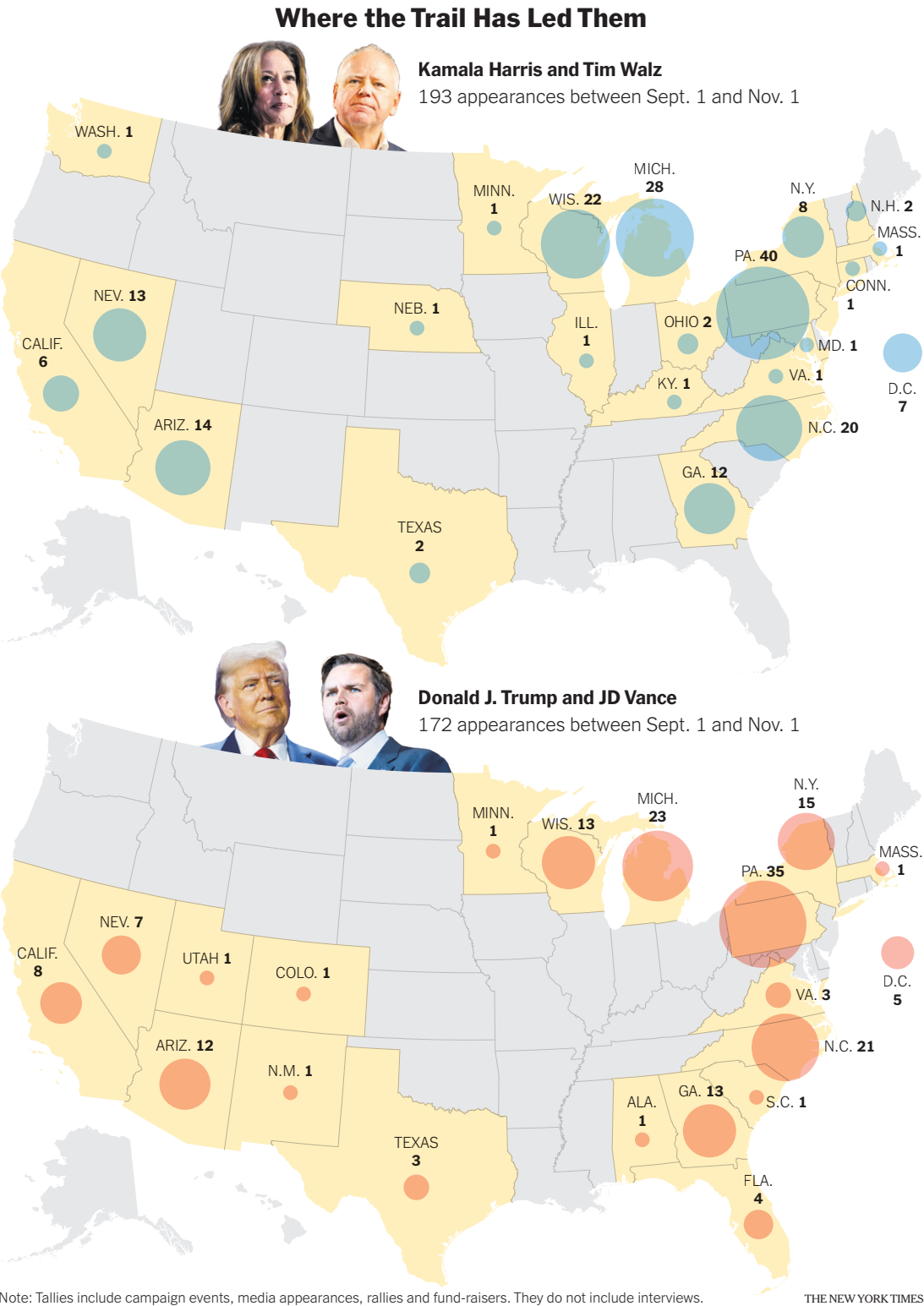
The money is changing the face of countless Russian backwaters like the Siberian city. “The allure of extremely high salaries and other benefits has been a major factor in attracting voluntary recruits, especially from relatively poor regions,” said a report issued this year by the Bank of Finland’s Institute for Emerging Economies.

By improving the standard of living among Russia’s poor, the payments have spurred support for President Vladimir V. Putin and the war, researchers noted, while also changing the perception of fighters from patriots to “soldiers of fortune.”

The names and hometowns of the people living inside Russia who agreed to discuss these war payments are not being published to avoid possible legal problems for speaking publicly about the conflict.

Russia has stopped publishing various economic statistics, leaving only a patchwork of indicators about the effects of the war payments. Some studies have documented the influx, however.

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Trump Uses ’20 Playbook
To Lay Ground for Dispute

He and Allies Spread Distorted Reports,
Inviting Chaos if Harris Wins Race

By JIM RUTENBERG and ALAN FEUER

Former President Donald J. Trump and his allies are rolling out a late-stage campaign strategy that borrows heavily from the subversive playbook he used to challenge his loss four years ago.

This time, however, he is counting on reinforcements from outside groups built on the false notion of a stolen election.

With Election Day only two days away, Mr. Trump is already claiming the Democrats are “a bunch of cheats,” as his allies in battleground states spread distorted reports of mishaps at the polls to push a narrative of widespread fraud.

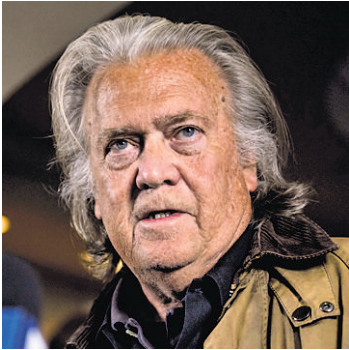
Mr. Trump and his most prominent supporters have pointed to partisan polling and betting markets to claim that he is heading for a “crushing victory,” as his top surrogate Elon Musk recently put it. The expectation helps set the stage for disbelief and outrage among his supporters should he lose.

And in a direct echo of his failed — and, prosecutors say, illegal — bid to remain in power after the 2020 election, some of his most influential advisers are suggesting he will yet again seek to claim victory before all the votes are counted.

Such a move ushered in his efforts to deny his defeat four years ago and helped set the stage for the attack on the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

In many respects, though, the effort that led to Jan. 6 never ended.

“It’s been four years of spread-



Stephen K. Bannon said Mr. Trump should claim victory.

STANDING BY A Republican movement driven by misinformation is set to reject the vote. MAGAZINE

Progressive Ideals Losing a Grip on the Country

By JEREMY W. PETERS

The last time Kamala Harris ran for president, during the 2020 primaries, people were losing jobs or friends because something they said or posted online came off as insensitive.

NEWS ANALYSIS An unfamiliar new language around identity was catching on, with terms like “Latinx” and “BIPOC.” The homeless were now “unhoused” and there were “pregnant people,” not women.

Back then, as the progressive movement tried to establish itself

as a bulwark to the Trump White House, considerations of race, gender and sexual orientation became urgent and unavoidable. And some progressives tried to enforce a strict set of cultural and political expectations almost everywhere — inside classrooms and board rooms, movie studios and publishing houses, congressional offices and political campaigns.

Even Oprah came under attack, when angry fans accused her of supporting cultural appropriation when she promoted a white author’s novel about a Mexican family.

If some Americans thought the left’s code of conduct went too far, most were not willing to say so. Polls taken in 2020 showed that large majorities of people — including self-described Democrats and liberals — said that they did not always speak freely about their beliefs for fear of retaliation.

Today, in this presidential election between Vice President Harris and former President Donald J. Trump, politics still burns hot, and voters are just as deeply divided.

But the country is also in a

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White Women
Ask Their Own
To Back Harris

By ERICA L. GREEN

NEW HOPE, Pa. — Armed with a clipboard and campaign literature, Liz Minnella strolled through a neighborhood in New Hope, Pa., optimistic that by the end of her day of door-knocking, the small town would live up to its name for Vice President Kamala Harris’s campaign.

There wasn’t a political yard sign in sight, which Ms. Minnella, who had only recently become a Democratic activist, took to mean that she might find some persuadable voters. When a blonde woman in a Villanova sweatshirt answered one door with a broad smile, Ms. Minnella, a Villanova graduate, thought aloud, “This is my lady.”

The woman, a 52-year-old Republican, was eager to talk, even though Ms. Minnella’s voter list had highlighted her daughter, an independent. Ms. Minnella tried to steer the conversation toward reproductive rights, but it eventually circled back to the woman’s fears that migrants would bring violent crime to her wealthy Philadelphia suburb. The woman thanked Ms. Minnella for the “civil conversation,” but her mind was unchanged — she was voting for former President Donald J. Trump.

The episode reflected the obstacles that white women who support Ms. Harris are confronting as they try to persuade their ideologically diverse counterparts to join her cause, an effort that could po-

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Ads Tell Voters
They Can Flip
Just This Once

By ADAM NAGOURNEY

The advertisement opens with three older women sitting around a table in a diner, talking about threats to Israel and American Jews and Donald J. Trump. One admits she “never cared for” the former president. “But at least he’ll keep us safe,” she says.

The advertisement, produced by the Republican Jewish Coalition Victory Fund, is an example of one of the most striking advertising tactics of this campaign.

Going after their skeptics, Democrats and Republicans are highlighting relatable characters offering measured testimonials — even acknowledgments of the shortcomings of the candidates they are pitching — to coax voters into crossing party lines. They implicitly speak to the reality that, in a polarized country where people are defined by their tribe, one of most difficult things is to step out of that box and vote against type.

It is intended to “create a permission structure,” said Todd Harris, a Republican consultant. “In order for a message to sink in, you have to have people listening and paying attention.”

The diner ad, for instance, tries to give Jewish voters, who are mostly Democrats, permission to vote for a Republican former president.

An ad from the group Vote Common Good, aimed at shy Harris supporters living in Trump households, shows a woman stepping into a voting booth with the re-

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Dead Poet Talking: Polish Radio Experiment Bares Pitfalls of A.I.

By ANDREW HIGGINS

KRAKOW, Poland — When a state-funded Polish radio station canceled a weekly show featuring interviews with theater directors and writers, the host of the program went quietly, resigned to media industry realities of cost-cutting and shifting tastes away from highbrow culture.

But his resignation turned to fury in late October after his former employer, Off Radio Krakow, aired what it billed as a “unique interview” with an icon of Polish culture, Wislawa Szymborska, the winner of the 1996 Nobel Prize for Literature.

The terminated radio host, Lukasz Zaleski, said he would have invited Ms. Szymborska on his morning show himself, but never did for a simple reason: She died in 2012.

The station used artificial intel-



Mariusz Marcin Pulit sought more listeners for Radio Krakow.

ligence to generate the recent interview — a dramatic and, to many, outrageous example of technology replacing humans, even dead ones.

Mr. Zaleski conceded that the computer-generated version of the poet’s distinctive voice was convincing. “It was very, very good,” he said, but “I went to her

funeral, so I know for sure that she is dead.”

The technology-enabled resurrection of the dead poet was part of a novel experiment by Off Radio Krakow, an arm of Poland’s public broadcasting system in the southern city of Krakow. The aim was to test whether A.I. could revive a moribund local station that had “close to zero” listeners, according to the head of public radio in Krakow.

The station also planned from-the-grave interviews with other dead people, including Jozef Pilsudski, Poland’s leader when it regained its independence in 1918.

Novelty value — and a storm of public outrage — worked to bolster Off Radio Krakow’s audience, which the head of Radio Krakow said grew to 8,000 overnight from just a handful of people after the introduction of three A.I.-generated

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METROPOLITAN Competition Up in the Air Dwindling open spaces and fast-fading traditions pose a threat to homing pigeon racing. Animal rights activists would be happy to see it go. PAGE 1	SUNDAY STYLES A Stimulant in a Sachet Zyn, a brand of nicotine pouches, is gaining popularity among young men, and social media has played a significant role in its rise. PAGE 4	SUNDAY BUSINESS The Daily Beast Seeks Buzz Joanna Coles and Ben Sherwood, veteran media executives, are looking to revitalize the news website, which has lost money and traffic. PAGE 4	ARTS & LEISURE How ‘Yellowstone’ Rode High As the wildly popular TV western prepares to air its final episodes, we look at how the show, now in its fifth season, seized the country’s attention. PAGE 6	SUNDAY OPINION Jamelle Bouie PAGE 4
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