

GLEANINGS II - 753
Thursday March 22nd, 2018

Impact on the US economy of Trump's tariffs on washing machines (that target South Korea, a US 'ally') & solar panels (targeting China) - According to Goldman Sachs the former will hike the cost to US consumers by 8-20%, while according to the U.S. Solar Energy Industries Association the latter will destroy cost 50,000-60,000 jobs this year (*i.e. about as many as are created by the entire US coal mining industry*) & may, in addition, boost electricity prices - *there is a difference between these two : the former will be permanent while the latter conceivably may-*, & in Trump adviser Peter Navarro's view likely **will-**, be temporary, i.e. until domestic producers pick up the slack, albeit at a higher cost to consumers.

Populism coming to Canada? - On March 10th, the Ontario Conservatives elected Toronto City Counselor Doug Ford to lead the party in the June 7th election after its last leader was felled by sexual harassment allegations. This outcome has been criticized by some since the runner-up, Christine Elliott, had both won most party member votes & most ridings but, because of an arcane weighing of votes, got fewer 'points' than Ford who, while having won fewer party members votes & fewer constituencies, had done so by bigger majorities in the constituencies he did win. This was in a way a replay of the 2016 US Presidential election (albeit without a Russian dimension); for Ford too benefitted from a populist, anti-political class 'wave'; of his three opponents (all of them women) one, Christine Elliott, was the widow of Jim Flaherty, former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's Finance Minister, with a municipal & provincial political track record of her own that included eight years as a member of the provincial legislature, six of them as Deputy Conservative Leader (for whom this was her third run at the Crown), the second a daughter of former Prime Minister Mulroney with zero hands-on political experience of her own, & the third a grassroots party activist from small town Ontario - *Doug Ford, the older brother of the late Rob Ford, the former notorious headline-making Toronto Mayor, has made it clear he thinks it will be "easy" to make major budget cutbacks (after over a decade of profligate Liberal government spending that may have turned Ontario into Canada's 'Greece').*¹

Rundown 96 year-old Vancouver house listed for \$6.98MM - The 2,372 sq. ft, story & a half, four bedroom house in need of some tender-loving care sits on a 33-by-131 foot lot with a favourable zoning, has an assessed value of \$3.417,000 (incl. \$117,000 for the building) & two years ago changed hands for \$2.8MM.

Someone must have talked some sense into Trump - Late Thursday March 22nd the House passed 256-167 a US\$1.3TR omnibus spending bill that would keep the US government's doors open until September 30th. A few hours later, in the early morning of Friday March 23rd, the Senate followed suit with a 65-32 vote¹ &, not long after that, Trump tweeted he might veto it (& *keep the Washington 'gong show' going with another government shutdown?*), miffed that it didn't deal with the DACCA question & didn't provide enough funding for his pet Wall (that Mexico was supposed to have been paying for in the first place). And yet another few hours

¹ That, like the Liberal Trudeau government in Ottawa, had made deficit spending an end in itself.

¹ Both these votes show, for this day & age, a remarkable degree of bipartisanship, possibly due to lawmakers in both houses wanting to 'clear the decks a bit' so as to be able to spend more time getting ready for the mid-term elections.

later, protesting all the way, he did sign it (thereby clearing the way for the lawmakers to start getting ready for the mid-term elections (as they were scheduled to start doing in next week's Easter break. But the real Trump had emerged earlier when he did what he had been expected to do for some time, jettisoning his 55 year-old National Security Adviser, Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, one of the few remaining 'adults' in his entourage², replacing him with 69 year-old John Bolton, a lawyer & foreign policy hawk with government & White House experience who in the early Bush 43 years had been behind his fatal move into the second Iraq War and who long has been very inimical to both Iran & North Korea (*which in 2003 prompted the Iranian Foreign Minister to call him "rude" & "undiplomatic" & a North Korean spokesman to refer to him as "human scum" & a "bloodsucker"*), and who recently authored an Op-Ed piece advocating "a pre-emptive strike on North Korea" & advocated 'taking out the North Korean regime' and letting South Korea "take it over", *something that China would tale as a very hostile act - Bolton is obviously more of Trump's ilk, only smarter & therefore more dangerous?*), unlike H.R. McMaster (whose appointment as NSA once was called "his most imaginative decision to date") but who was too cerebral, & too independent-minded for Trump – being still a serving US Army officer & still well short of his rank's mandatory retirement age, McMaster won't lack options). It is also worth noting that, according to the *New York Times*, the *John Bolton Super PAC* was an early client of the now notorious *Cambridge Analytica* & paid it for two years starting in August 2014 US\$1.2MM for "behavioral microtargeting with psychographic messaging" services.

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RAND PAUL OPPOSES POMPEO NOMINATION FOR SECRETARY OF STATE **(Politico, Burgess Everett)**

- On March 14th the Junior Senator from Kentucky² vowed to do everything he can, up to & including filibustering, to stop Mike Pompeo from becoming Secretary of State & to do the same to CIA Deputy Director Gina Haspel, Trump's pick as Pompeo's successor at the helm of the CIA, because of Pompeo's earlier support for the Iraq War & for "enhanced interrogation techniques" (or torture, as they are sometimes ferred to) & in Haspel's case because of her personal experience with them³. His opposition matters in Pompeo's case since he is a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee where the GOP has just a one seat advantage (but not so much in Haspel's since Senators' first 'kick at that cat' will be in the Senate Intelligence Committee of which he isn't a member. GOP Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell may try & bypass Paul's objection by bringing the nomination directly to the floor of the Senate if the Democrats on the Committee were to side with Paul (*some of them last year supported Pompeo's*

² Who, while serving as National Security Adviser had remained a serving officer in the US Army, and is still well short of its mandatory retirement age for officers with his rank.

² Sen. Mitch McConnell is the Senior one.

³ An attractive 61 year-old, she has been Deputy Director of the CIA since February 7th, 2017 (much of it as its de facto Director since Pompeo spent much of his time at the White House. A 32 year CIA veteran,, she seems to have spent much of her career in its 'spook' side and, while highly regarded both in-, & out-,side the CIA and among politicians in both parties, the two major blots on her CV are that in 2002 she was in charge of the agency's first "black site", code-named Cat Eye, in Thailand, for people suspected of al-Qaeda ties that used the "enhanced interrogation techniques", incl. waterboarding (one resident is alleged to have been water-boarded no fewer than 83x), & ordering the destruction of nearly 100 videos thereof.

appointment as CIA Director), while Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) said in an interview later that day that the Democrat Senators' support for Pompeo will hinge on how well, or badly, he will navigate his confirmation hearing next month.

Paul is not alone in his doubts about Pompeo. As to Haspel & the Intelligence Committee, one of its members is the same Sen. Diane Feinstein (D-CA) who in 2013 blocked another Haspel nomination because her involvement in Thailand in 2002 with enhanced interrogation techniques) - be all that as it may, if the Senate were to reject the Pompeo nomination, this could portend a first step, with the midterms looming, of an anti-Trump GOP rebellion.

CANADIAN HOME SALES AT 5-YEAR LOW (CP)

- The latest monthly figures from the CREA (Canadian Real Estate Association) show that, while they hit a record high last December, in February sales were down 16.5% YoY & 6.5% MoM to their lowest level in five years. Furthermore, that during the month home sales had been down in 70+% of the local housing markets it tracks & that the national average price for homes sold had been \$494,000, down 5% YoY, although, if Toronto & Vancouver, the country's most active/costly markets were excluded, the national average price had been \$382,000, up 3.3% YoY.

Two reasons for the slowdown. Last September Ottawa made it, as of January 1st, more difficult for house buyers to qualify for a mortgage. And last year's rush to beat the deadline was reinforced by fears of higher mortgage rates (that now are 50 bps higher than in mid-2017).

IRAN, SYRIA AND SAUDI ARABIA : TOP THREE STUNNING ADMISSIONS FROM TOP U.S. GENERAL IN THE MIDDLE EAST (Haaretz & Reuters)

- On March 13th, Lt-Gen. Joseph Votel, Commander of the US Tampa, FL-based Central Command ⁵, told the US Senate Armed Services Committee :
 - **About Syria** : When asked by Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) whether it was too strong a statement to say that with Russia's & Iran's help Assad had "won" the civil war in his country, Votel replied "I do not think that is too strong a statement", & in response to a follow-up question "if the US policy on Syria was still to seek the removal of Assad?", "I don't know that that's our particular policy at this particular point, our focus remains on the defeat of ISIS" - *shouldn't the general responsible implementing US policy in the region have a crystal-clear understanding what it is?*;
 - **About Iran** : "The JCPOA⁶ addresses one of the principle (sic) threats that we deal with from Iran, so if JCPOA goes away ... we will have to have another way to deal with their nuclear weapons programme. ... there would be some concern in the region, I think, about how we intended to address that particular threat if it was not being addressed through the JCPOA ... Right now I think it is in our interest to stay in the deal." - *While according to the IAEA Iran has stuck to the deal since Trump took office, in recent weeks it has fired warning shots, most recently on March 19th*

⁵ Who is hence responsible for all US military activities in the Middle East (incl. Iraq), parts of North Africa, and Central Asia (incl. Afghanistan).

⁶ Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the official name of the Iran deal.

when it said it could rapidly enrich uranium to a higher degree if the deal collapsed (while the general makes sense, contradicting Trump could cost him his job); and

- **About Saudi Arabia** : Asked by Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass) “Does the Central Command track the purpose of the *Saudi* missions to Yemen it is refueling? In other words, where a US-refueled *Saudi* aircraft is going, what targets it strikes, and the result of the mission?”, he replied “Senator, we do not” & to a follow-up Question “Is CentCom able to tell if US fuel and ... munitions had been used in strikes against civilians?”, “No, Senator, I don’t believe we are.”

Even more important was him telling the Committee China & Russia are pro-actively seeking to fill any perceived gaps in the US influence in the region by increasing defense cooperation with-, & sales to⁷- countries in the region and cultivating ‘multi-dimensional’ ties with Iran.

CHINA AND RUSSIA ARE ‘AGGRESSIVELY PURSUING’ HYPERSONIC WEAPONS, AND THE US CAN’T DEFEND AGAINST THEM, TOP NUCLEAR COMMANDER SAYS (CNBC.com)

- Air Force Gen. John Hyten heads the U.S. Strategic Command (& *so would be responsible for implementing any nuclear attack Trump may order*). On March 20th he told the Senate Armed Services Committee “Both Russia and China are aggressively pursuing hypersonic capabilities ... We’ve watched them test those capabilities ... *and* We don’t have any defense that could deny the employment of such a weapon against us.” Asked by Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-OK) what a hypersonic weapon is & what it does, Gen. Hyten ‘explained’ “A hypersonic threat is a system that starts out ballistic, so you’ll see it like a ballistic missile, but then it depresses the trajectory and flies more like a cruise missile or an airplane ... It goes up in the lower reaches of space and turns immediately back down and then levels out”, at which point, he said, “the weapon will fly at very high speeds” – *hopefully this gobbledygook met Sen. Inhofe’s needs.*
- So, while the Pentagon’s latest US\$686BN budget request emphasizes a plan to ‘offset emerging threats from Russia & China’, it lacks the means to deal with hypersonics. And, when Gen. Hyten stressed “I strongly agree with the need for *developing* a low-yield nuclear weapon ... as a deterrence ... to respond to the threat that Russia, in particular, is portraying”, he is reacting to a Putin announcement two decades ago already that “the Russian doctrine will be to use a low yield nuclear weapon on the battlefield” while earlier this month, in his two-hour state of the union speech, Putin cited other nations’ actions as a key factor in supercharging Russia’s arsenal &, more specifically said, among others, “You have failed to contain Russia ... the intercontinental hypersonic missile Avangard is capable of reaching targets at 20 times the speed of sound and will strike like a fireball”.

So Hyten et. al. may have fallen into a Putin trap by prioritizing the development of battlefield weapons while the real danger to America lies in hypersonic missiles whose primary targets will

⁷ Thus early last October President Erdogan of Turkey, a US NATO ally for Christ’s sake, set the stage for it acquiring advanced S-400 anti-aircraft missile systems from Russia, with the very next week, during King Salman’s visit to Moscow, Saudi Arabia following suit, with it since having been reported that Qatar is about to do likewise, the remarkable aspect of which is that these four countries are not necessarily on the same sides of various Middle East disputes.

be the US Navy's aircraft carriers, that like the battleships of yesteryear are big, fat, vulnerable & easy targets but absolutely critical to US control of the world's 'blue water' sea lines', the use of which is logistically critical to the viability of America's global status.

CHINA PRESIDENT'S CONFIDANTE LIU HE NOMINATED AS VICE PREMIER, YI GANG AS PBOC CHIEF (Channel News Asia)

- At the start of what was to have been his second five-year term but now has become his lifetime term, Xi is re-arranging the top government echelons (*in a form that will give him, via the Party, greater power over the economy*), hoping to rein in financial risks & the rapid buildup in debt without jeopardizing economic growth (*a very tall order indeed*). So he has merged its banking-, & insurance regulators, given new powers to *centralized* policy-making bodies, such as the central bank, created new ministries in the biggest government shake-up in years, and made 66 year-old Liu He, a "confidant" of his, Vice Premier. Liu, *who has a Master's Degree from Harvard's Kennedy School*, has been head of the General Office of the Communist Party's Central Leading Group for Financial and Economic Affairs & a Vice Minister of the NDRC (National Development & Reform Commission⁸), & as such was China's top economic planner (who last October was elected to the 25 member Politburo, second only in China's power structure to the seven member Politburo Standing Committee *headed by Xi himself*). So he is a heavyweight while the US-educated Yi with a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Illinois, is only an alternative member of the CPC Central Committee⁹ & a protégé of the now retired long-time PBOC boss, Zhou Xiaochuan - *so, while, as Vice Governor of the PBOC, Yi has since 2008 been instrumental in steering its monetary & currency policies, as Governor he will likely play second fiddle to Liu in all economic & financial matters.*

Elsewhere Xi had the rubber-stamp National People's Congress appoint Lt.-Gen. Wei Fenghe (63)¹⁰, the former commander of the Second Artillery Corps (China's missile unit) whom Xi as head of the Central Military Commission had become well acquainted with, as Minister of Defense to oversee the implementation of this year's 8.1% increase in China's military budget to US\$175BN (3x that of India but less than one-third of the US'), after Xi had overseen the downsizing of the PLA's manpower from 2.3-, to 2.0-, million & an anti-graft campaign that negatively affected 50+ top generals & officials, & another 3,000+ 'Other Ranks'. And on March 19th China's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi was promoted to China's top diplomatic post of State Councillor & made the top negotiator with India on the border issue¹¹, replacing Yang Jiechi,

⁸ In recent decades China's Premier became the country's economic 'top dog'. But there is no room for this in Xi's increasingly totalitarian regime (besides he knows it's far too important for him not to control directly); besides Premier Li 'came up 'through the ranks whereas Xi is a member of the princeling 'club'. So Liu's appointment is the latest step in Xi's five-year campaign to undermine the Premier's role in economic policy-making.

⁹ Which has a total of 204 full-, & about 170 alternate-, members.

¹⁰ And who, according to the South China Morning Post, had been "the first PLA department head not only to promise to support President Xi Jinping's unprecedented military overhaul from the very beginning but also to proactively meet Xi, who is also the CMC chairman.

¹¹ China & India have so far had 20 rounds of talks about their 3,348 km/ 2,153 mi. border, most recently last December, along which, over the years there have been frequent military confrontations and once, in 1962, even a war, due to their different perceptions thereof. Most recently one of those occurred last summer when there was a 73 days stand-off on the Doklam Plateau (wedged between Tibet, Bhutan, & Sikkim, India's Northern-most state) between the PLA seeking to build a road in an area

whose next assignment isn't known, although Xi must have big plans for him since last year he too became a member of the all-powerful 7-member, Xi-headed Politburo Standing Committee.

GENERAL SAYS CHINA NEEDS TO ARM SOUTH CHINA SEA ISLANDS (Economic Times)

- Not long after China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi had blamed "outside sources for stirring up troubles in the South China Sea" (claimed in its entirety by China & in part by five/six other countries - Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines & Vietnam, and Taiwan, Lt-Gen He Lei, Vice President of China's Academy of Military Sciences, told reporters on March 8th that China needs to build defensive structures on its *artificial* islands in the South China Sea to "display its sovereignty" (over virtually the entire crucial waterway).

Free transit through the South China Sea is of major strategic significance since 20+% of all world trade passes through it, and Vietnam & Indonesia each rely on it for 86% of their foreign trade, Thailand for 74%, Singapore for 66%, Malaysia for 58% (and China itself for 50%).

PUTIN WINS FOURTH TERM (AP, Vladimir Isachenkov)

- On Sunday March 18th, the fourth anniversary of Russia's annexation of Crimea, he handily won a fourth term¹² as Russia's president (*with 77% of the votes over seven other candidates, although his most prominent opponent had been declared ineligible to run*), amidst widespread reports of ballot box stuffing & forced voting. He remains popular despite his suppression of dissent *in large part* due to his increasingly aggressive posturing in world affairs *that tugs at the Russian hoi polloi's patriotic heart strings*. The authorities wanted a big turnout to validate the image that his so-called "managed democracy" offers Russians true choices & by 5p.m. Moscow time (*proudly?*) announced it had hit nearly 52%¹³.
- In the next six years Putin will likely *seek to* assert Russia's influence abroad even more aggressively than in recent years. Thus, just weeks before the election, he announced the development of "advanced nuclear weapons capable of evading missile defenses" & his bolstering of the Assad government in Syria is clearly aimed at strengthening Russia's foothold in the Middle East. But at home he will have to develop a strategy for diversifying the Russian economy away from oil (*while historically it has been very unsuccessful in producing anything other than weapons that anyone abroad wants ed*) & improving government services for those outside the Moscow Metropolitan region (*where only one in eight Russian citizens live*).

claimed by Bhutan & Indian troops preventing it as a security risk to the nearby 25 km-wide Chicken Neck corridor that connects the bulk of India's territory to its seven lightly-populated Northeastern states that to their East border on Tibet.

¹² After *briefly having been Prime Minister*, he first ran for the Presidency in 2000 & won a four year term over two other hopefuls with 53% voter support & another in 2004 with 72%, again over two other hopefuls. But he couldn't run in 2008 for constitutional reasons so Dmitry Medvedev ran to keep the Presidential seat warm for him for four years & won with 72% voter support over two others But in 2012, after Putin had made like the de jure Premier but de facto President for four years, he ran again in his own right & got re-elected with 64% voter support over three others.

¹³ While the final official number was 68%, more or less in line with 65% in 2012, 69% in 2008, 64% in 2004 & 69% in 2000.

Although the official figures don't show so, Putin's popularity appears to have eroded around the edges by the economic malaise that entered the Russian psyche when, as a result of the mid-2014 oil price collapse, its economy took a big hit. And on March 20th Sergei Shpilkin, a physicist by training who in 2012 won an award for his analysis of that year's election results, reported that his analysis of this year's election results suggested Putin may have received 10.3MM "suspected falsified votes" (i.e. almost 20% of his reported 56MM vote 'haul'); if so, this would reduce his **real** voter support ratio to 62%, from the 'official' 76%). But regardless of that, he faces more potential domestic problems than a non-Alberta dog¹⁴ has fleas. Russia's per capita GDP in real terms, after halving in the post-Soviet Union era, has doubled again since, albeit only back to its 25 year ago level, & now is 65th in the IMF's ranking thereof, one notch above the global average & well behind such economic power houses as Romania (#63), the Maldives (58), Croatia (57), Poland (56), Trinidad & Tobago (51) & Saint Kitts & Nevis (48). Russia's demographics are problematic¹⁵, its population is aging and every year fewer 16 year-olds join the work force than 65 year-olds exit it. Russian men's proclivity to alcohol over consumption means that, while the population's average life expectancy is 71 years (compared to 79 in the US & 76 in China), this is made up of 66 years for men & 77 for females. In the past year or so there have been a series of good-sized multi-city grass roots protest demonstrations despite the fact that since 2014 the head count of the 'Military Police, whose training emphasizes "riot control", has grown ten-fold. And it was interesting that last year, in the run-up to this year's election, Putin withdrew the Russian Army's ground forces from Syria & 'outsourced' his involvement in the ground war there to mercenaries whose personnel losses are kept secret from a Russian electorate that thinks that the money he is spending abroad would be better spent at home on things that would benefit them. And if that were not enough, if the IEA were proven right & US oil production were to grow by 7MM bbl/d in five years, the negative impact thereof on oil & gas prices will negatively affect his cash flow from oil & gas sales to its traditional markets & soon to China that are needed to fund his global ambitions.

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WHO LAUNCHES HEALTH REVIEW AFTER MICROPLASTICS FOUND IN 90% OF BOTTLED WATER (The Guardian, Graham Redfearn)

- A team of scientists headed by Dr. Sherry Mason of the State University of New York Fredonia was commissioned by the nonprofit, Washington-based journalism project Orb Media Org. (that bills itself as "telling stories that challenge our assumptions) to analyze bottled water products. It found an average 325 plastic particles¹⁶ in 90+% (or to be

¹⁴ Although there are occasional sightings (that tend to be promptly reported on Alberta's 310-RATS hot line' & promptly & radically dealt with, since 1950 Alberta has been officially rat-, & hence flea-, free, helped by the winters that rats have difficulty surviving and the ongoing activities of an official 'Rat Patrol' in a 29 km-wide zone along its Eastern border.

¹⁵ Last September 27th, Economy Minister Maksim Oreshkin (35 years of age with just four years of government experience) told a Sherbank Corporate University audience that Russia's demography is "one of the most difficult in the world", saying that in the next six years "we are going to lose ... 800,000 working age people from the demographic structure every year and that because the 1999 birthrate had been the lowest ever, the number of 18 year-olds now entering the work force is "very low", while according to Anatoly Vishnevsky, Director of the Moscow-based Demography Institute at the Higher School of Economics "The demographic challenge is, of course, serious ... In some form or other it will probably require a greater flow of migrants to fill the deficit on the labor market. The second kind of answer is labor-productivity, which is not very high for us."

¹⁶ With the record being the 10,000 found in a one litre bottle of Nestlé Pure Life.

more precise 93%) of the 259 bottles of 11 different brands of water [incl. Aqua & Evian (Danone), Aquafina (Pepsi), Bisleri(the major brand in India), Dasani(Coca Cola), Pure Life & San Pellegrino(Nestlé), Gerolsteiner (a German-produced product sold in Costco), purchased at 19 locations in nine different countries (US, China, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Lebanon, Kenya & Thailand). And the scientists wrote *in their report* that they had “found roughly twice as many plastic particles within bottled water” than in a previous study reported on by the Guardian. To do their count they used a dye called Nile red that sticks to plastics particles but not to natural materials & is fluoresces under certain lights, a technique developed by Dr. Andrew Mayes, a University of East Anglia professor who told Orb Media that, although the study had not been peer-reviewed, he was “satisfied that it had been applied carefully, and appropriately, in a way I would have done in my own lab.”

- A second, also just released-, but unrelated-, analysis commissioned by a campaign group called Story of Stuff of 19 brands in the US also found that plastic micro fibres were commonly found in bottled water : in the Boxed Water brand they averaged 58.6 per litre, in Nestlé’s Ozarka-, & Ice Mountain-, brands 15 & 11 respectively & in Fiji Water 12. According to Abigail Barrows, who carried out the research for Story of Stuff in her Maine lab, “Plastic microfibrils are easily airborne. Clearly that’s occurring not just outside but also inside factories. It could come in from fans or the clothing being worn”.
- Nestlé criticized the use of the Nile red methodology on the grounds it could “generate false positives”, Coca-Cola told the BBC that it had strict filtration methods but that plastics fibres “may be found at minute levels even in highly treated products”, Gerolsteiner that it could not rule out plastics getting into bottled water from airborne-, or packing-, sources but that the levels in their products were lower than allowed in pharmaceutical products, Danone claimed the study’s methodology was unclear, & the American Beverage Association that it ‘stood by the safety of its bottled water.”

The WHO told the Guardian that, while there is as yet no evidence of the impact hereof on human health, it was aware that it was an emerging area of concern (especially as it relates to particles 1.5 micron (0.0015 mm) in diameter, or smaller or smaller, that are small enough to find their way through the intestine wall into the blood stream - Not long after WW II a friend of my eldest brother, a chemical engineering student, who was hot on the then still futuristic field of plastics, was at our home & I can remember my father, an extremely well-read & intellectually curious man, saying “that young man may well be onto something”. Well, since then, according to the Science Advance website Man has produced 8+ billion tonnes of the stuff (over half of it this century), 9% of which was recycled & 12% incinerated, with the rest now in landfills or the environment, incl. the oceans (in which it is estimated an incremental 8MM tonnes now ends each year - that number seems a little on the low side since it amounts to about one kilogram per capita world population.