

Donald Trump, the centrist, has attracted an army of disaffected patriots

The United States is now moving in high gear into the most interesting election campaign it has had since 1968, and without the constant riots that occurred throughout that election year and surely, the assassinations (of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy) that shocked the world. As Canada has had a unique ringside seat on American people and events since before the American Revolution, we might dare to hope that the Canadian media would have a more insightful view of the presidential selection process than the usual Americophobic condescensions and alarmist shrieks of the international left group-think that afflicts most of the media on other continents.

The *BBC* and the *Guardian*, *Le Monde*, *Der Spiegel* and other printed imitations of Uriah Heep, have been wringing their hands raw and their alarm bells threadbare at the prospect of the U.S. Republican party being seized by the gnarled and furry hands of a caveman. Unfortunately, the Canadian media have generally failed to exercise the opportunity to see these events in their true light. I doubt if we will have to wait until the Republican convention in Cleveland to hear of the desecration of the party of Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Eisenhower and Reagan (and Richard Nixon, but he has still not been entirely liberated from the fictitious Watergate doghouse).

Donald Trump has been portrayed by the chief assassin of American history (albeit a bloodless one), Bob Woodward, slayer of Nixon, as "a fascist." I was asked, in apparent earnest, on *BBC's* flagship program *News Night* two weeks ago if Trump were not another Mussolini. I was reduced to Margaret

Thatcher's old rhetorical rejoinder: "Do my ears deceive me?" I gently remarked that Donald Trump does not dress his followers in black shirts, march on the capitol, murder his chief opponent (Giacomo Matteotti in Mussolini's case), invade Ethiopia, stab France and Britain in the back, or, in Mr. Churchill's words, "turn (his country) into a vassal-state of Hitler," and will not end his days trying to escape his country in the uniform of a foreign army, instead being shot and hung upside down in a gas station.

I have known Donald Trump cordially for more than 15 years, and he was an ideal business partner in a co-development of a large property in Chicago and a loyal friend in my late legal troubles. What lunacy has possessed our media to be so horrified at someone who expresses mass exasperation over 20 years of misgovernment, failed fiscal and foreign policies, crumbling infrastructure, state education, a retrograde health-care reform, hemorrhaging public debt, the invasion of the country by 12 million illegals, and a self-satisfied political class incanting soporific lullabies about the "greatest nation in human history."

That it may be, but its best days are receding, its leaders cannot utter the phrase "Islamist terror," and while the armed forces are running out of money to carry out their huge worldwide mandate, they are hassled with pettifogging about transgender washrooms and the commander-in-chief lectures the nation that its greatest threat is climate change. Previous administrations required that most mortgages be commercially unjustifiable and the resulting real estate financing collapse gave the world the greatest economic crisis in 80 years. The deficit accumulated in 233 years of American independence has been doubled in seven years and the business growth rate last quarter, after this steroid-bloated efflorescence of the money supply, was an anemic one quarter of one per cent. Successive wars in the Middle East have cost scores of thousands of casualties and trillions of dollars, provoked an immense

humanitarian crisis, and the U.S. leads a desultory alliance that is allied with Iran and Russia in what is left of Iraq and opposes Iran and Russia (ineffectively) in the remnants of Syria.

Last week in his major foreign policy address, Trump said of the Middle East: "We tore up what institutions they had and then were surprised at what we unleashed: civil war, religious fanaticism, thousands of Americans killed ... I challenge anyone to explain the strategic foreign policy vision of Obama and Clinton. It has been a complete and total disaster." He was careful enough of Republican sensibilities not to mention George W. Bush, but it was obvious he considered him a failure in office also. This is the point – four consecutive terms of presidential failure and congressional failure, in almost every area. This is an American record, surpassing the Taylor-Fillmore-Pierce-Buchanan run-up to the Civil War, and the presidents in the 1920s (Harding, Coolidge, Hoover) who gave the country isolationism, the closing down of immigration, enforcement of Prohibition and the Great Depression. In the circumstances, it is a testament to the strength of American democracy that the leader of the opposition isn't a rabble-rousing street bully like Mussolini.

Trump's infelicities are legend, and are disconcerting, though in some cases they have been exaggerated. But he has cast the Archie Bunker net to pull in the masses of the angry Americans who won't take it anymore and whose presence was unnoticed by everyone else seeking the White House. Now he is gradually refining his message to placate the traditional and more decorous and centrist voters. In Indiana on Tuesday, he polled almost as many votes as Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders combined. Trump has steadily risen in the polls from what was assumed, as late as his defeat at the hands of Sen. Ted Cruz in Wisconsin last month, to be a bubble that could burst any day to securing the Republican nomination and running closely with Clinton.

She is having inexplicable difficulties with the septuagenarian former Stalinist kibbutzim, Sen. Bernie Sanders, and 70 per cent of the country finds her untrustworthy. She will have to deal with her speech of apology to the Muslims, her inaction while the ambassador to Libya was murdered, the serious legal problems with her emails, and her many recorded misstatements, such as that she was fired on by snipers in Bosnia, a conjuration she blamed on "jet lag." Trump has steadily outperformed his polls and the primaries show that he has attracted very large numbers of generally politically inactive voters and working-class former Democrats. A spectacular campaign between two vintage hardballers is about to begin. It will be what Nixon used to call a "rock'em, sock'em campaign."

Most Canadian media on the Trump candidacy have drunk the liberal Kool-Aid that he is a knuckle-dragging reactionary. Typical was a Huffington Post piece on May 2 by Remi Francoeur that tried to incite fears that Trump would act against Canada in the NAFTA agreement. He has made it abundantly clear that his problems are not with U.S.-Canada free trade, but with the \$58-billion trade deficit with Mexico, and the steady inflow of illegal immigrants. He has never uttered a word of recrimination against Canada.

Apart from taking a hard line against Islamist extremists and horrifying trade deficits, he is the radical centre. Useless idiots on the left who try to disrupt his meetings are responding to a caricature – the conservative intelligentsia have more reason to despair that he isn't one of them. He isn't, but the United States is not governed from the right-wing end zone, any more than from the opposite end of the field, where Hillary is scruffing after votes with Sanders. Donald Trump is a centrist who has attracted an army of disaffected, economically vulnerable, patriots. There is nothing very frightening in that.

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