

Hillary's Version

Her view of 'what happened,' and of what America needs in the future, could not be more wrong.

by Conrad Black



The American political community has not taken adequate notice of Hillary Clinton's book *What Happened* (the title is not posed as a question). It was generally panned when it came out a couple of months ago for blaming everyone but herself for her defeat. I have never been a Clinton-basher, and I was astonished by the venom, untruthfulness, and zealotry of her account. Mrs. Clinton writes persuasively of seeking "grace" after her defeat, and concluded most of her speeches throughout the 2016 campaign calling for "love and kindness," yet she is unrelievedly ungracious. She describes her opponent as

a clear and present danger to the country, . . . an unqualified bully [whose] towering self-regard blotted out all hope of learning or growing, . . . a charlatan . . . [who is] sexist, misogynist, [who] appealed to the ugliest

impulses of our national character, . . . [is] on the wrong side of justice, history, and basic human decency, . . . [is] hostile to civil rights and voting rights across the board, is for nuclear proliferation, against NATO, and for torturing prisoners, . . . lacks character, values, and experience, [and] will be the most reckless president in American history, and put at risk our country's national security and well-being.

She claims that Trump implied she would be assassinated by "the Second Amendment people," when he was referring to their talent at lobbying the Congress; and implies that he called the Sandy Hook school massacre in 2012, where 27 people were killed, including many children, "a hoax" (an outrageous falsehood). She calls Trump "an America-bashing misogynist," like Vladimir Putin and Julian Assange (of WikiLeaks), really thinks he might have been conspiring with Russian intelligence and WikiLeaks, and even attaches some credence to the "golden shower" rumor that Trump organized a group of prostitutes to do unsanitary things on a bed in a Moscow hotel where the Obamas once slept.

In sum, she declares Donald Trump to be "the least experienced, least knowledgeable, least competent president our country has ever had, . . . who doesn't think in terms of morality or human rights, he only thinks in terms of power and dominance." Her opponents are always "the extreme right," though Trump is in fact a centrist on most issues except law enforcement, well to the left of the Ted Cruz Republicans. "He dreams of Moscow on the Potomac." She writes that Trump has "an affection for tyrants, hostility toward allies, and alleged financial ties to shady Russian actors." He has "degraded national life" and "is a tumor on the American soul," and comes to the very edge of an accusation of outright treason. There's not much "grace, love, and kindness" here.

Previous narrowly defeated presidential candidates have been

almost uniformly civilized. It never seems to have occurred to Hillary Clinton that Trump won because the previous 20 years of government had been utterly and bipartisanly incompetent, in the White House and the Congress. Clinton, George W. Bush and Obama produced the housing bubble and the Great Recession, endless and fruitless war in the Mideast and an immense humanitarian tragedy, mountainous budgetary, current-account, and trade deficits, and, under Obama, serious increases in poverty and violence, a shrinking work force, and a foreign policy of telling America's allies and enemies to change roles and places. (Clinton proudly claims that the surrender to Iran's nuclear military ambitions avoided an arms race in the Middle East, and fears what a mess Trump might make of North Korea, oblivious to her own and her husband's bungling of the issue.) She somewhat grasps that tens of millions of voters don't enjoy being called "deplorables" (though she thinks they are anyway), but doesn't grasp that Trump was running as much against the Bushes and Obama as against the Clintons. She seems not to realize that he and his supporters concluded that the entire political class, including its national-media launderers, Wall Street paymasters, greasy lobbyists, and Hollywood cheerleaders, all had to go when the swamp is drained.

Mrs. Clinton attributes her defeat to the malice of James Comey (the former FBI director), popular misogyny, the Russians, Republican chicanery, the Electoral College, and the near impossibility of a party's winning three straight terms. She saluted Comey when he vastly exceeded his authority as a senior police official by announcing that she would not be prosecuted, but he subsequently (very clumsily) reopened and then closed the investigation of the email controversy. Mrs. Clinton describes this sequence as being "shivved by Jim Comey three times." It was an eruption of Comey's egotism and poor judgment, but he exonerated her twice, while admitting that she had lied to federal investigators – Martha Stewart went to prison for less – and he merely said some new emails were

being examined on the third occasion. Not much of a shivving.

Then comes the misogyny of the American electorate, which did not prevent them from giving her more votes than Trump (albeit not as usefully distributed). Five previous presidents were elected with fewer votes than their chief opponent, because the United States is a federation where all the adhering states entered with the same level of jurisdictional sovereignty, regardless of population. If it were a straight matter of popular plurality, Trump would have campaigned in California, New York, and Illinois, where Clinton racked up big majorities; and if it were like the French system, where a second ballot is required between the two leading candidates where there is no majority on the first vote, Trump would have won anyway, as he would have picked up most of the Libertarian vote (4 million), while Clinton would have got most of the Greens (1 million).

Party control of administrations has lately tended to change after two terms, but the Republicans had three straight terms in the 1920s, followed by five straight Democratic terms, and the Republicans had three terms in a row under Reagan and Bush. It can be done, with a popular retiring president and a strong successor, but neither was the case in 2016. There was no argument to reelect the Democrats after the general policy fiasco of the Obama tenure, and the whole Democratic campaign was to pillory Trump as a gangster, a traitor, and a buffoon. Hillary also thinks she was a victim of the disenfranchisement of non-white and youthful voters, though there is no evidence that this happened, and neither Trump nor the Republican party would have had any ability to do it.

More alarming than Mrs. Clinton's ungraciousness is her dishonesty. She all but accuses Trump of treasonable collusion with Russia, and Russian interference in the election looms even larger than misogyny and Comey's skullduggery in her demonology of causes of the national tragedy of her defeat. But all the "evidence" she cites of Trump-Kremlin collusion is

taken from the now-infamous Christopher Steele dossier. Since the publication of this book, it has come to light that the Clinton campaign paid \$10 million for Steele's unverifiable pastiche of defamatory gossip and fabrications against Trump. The entire case against Trump has, after 16 months of FBI investigation, turned up no evidence. The Clinton campaign denied, until the facts came to light, that it had any knowledge of the origins of the Steele dossier, and now says that it doesn't matter who paid for it; and she now refers to it as "campaign information." The bipartisan leadership of the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee has confirmed that this dossier is the sole basis for the continuation of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation.

Mrs. Clinton professes to believe that she faced a hostile press throughout the campaign, an unimaginable liberty with the facts to anyone who saw the relentless sandbag-job the press conducted against Trump. She writes that, on October 31, 2016, the *New York Times*, which she thinks was hostile to her, ran "one of the worst stories of the entire election, claiming the FBI saw no link between the Trump campaign and Russia." It is nearly 13 months later and the Mueller leak machine has confirmed the same finding. The outright dishonesty of her citing a smear campaign she had commissioned and paid for as evidence of her opponent's perfidy is a historic pathfinder in electoral dirty tricks, vastly surpassing anything from hardballers like FDR, LBJ, or Richard Nixon (whom she falsely accuses of "crimes," though no serious evidence of any has been produced against him, though members of his entourage certainly were guilty of crimes). "Even if no direct ties ever come to light, we need to know how the right-wing war on truth opened the door to Russian attack," she writes. Yet everyone agrees that though the Russians meddled in the election, they had no impact on the result. The Russians took only \$6,500 worth of Facebook advertisements, without endorsing a candidate, in an election in which Trump and Clinton spent \$1.85 billion, most of it being spent by Clinton.

She has an unblemished record, she implies, and the fact that the majority of Americans don't trust her is due to the "viciousness of the Republican smear merchants." She says that the timely release of the Billy Bush tape of Trump's verbal indiscretions eleven years before (about the ease for a celebrity of groping women), though it was clearly fired as an intended game-ender, came as a surprise to her, and that she was heroic in "winning" the second presidential debate two days later, given the pressure she was under. In fact, Trump, with his campaign apparently in shambles and principal figures deserting or taking their distance, was under more pressure than anyone in the history of those debates going back to Kennedy and Nixon in 1960, and he won the debate. Trump's production, earlier in the day, of a trio of women who alleged sexual assault against her husband was, in Mrs. Clinton's view, a tawdry and outrageous resurrection of those she memorably described in the past as "the bimbos." Trump's coarse locker-room reflections are apparently disqualifying, but Bill Clinton's scandalous and possibly criminal sexual assaults on various women when he was governor and president do not alter the Norman Rockwell marriage of Bill and Hillary.

The author is a relentless partisan: Republicans are under-educated pessimists, "the deplorables," as she called them last year. Reagan "sapped the spirit of the country," though he restored the country's confidence. (He also led the greatest economic boom in modern U.S. history and won the Cold War, but she doesn't mention that.) Dwight Eisenhower isn't mentioned at all, apart from having been Adlai Stevenson's opponent, and Richard Nixon was a criminal, never mind that Nixon ended school segregation and conscription, extracted the country from the Democrats' war in Vietnam while preserving a non-Communist government in Saigon, opened relations with China and the Mideast peace process, signed the greatest arms-control agreement in history with the USSR, founded the Environmental Protection Agency, reduced the crime rate, and stopped the endless rioting in American cities.

Since the publication of this book, former party chairman Donna Brazile has written that Mrs. Clinton rigged a number of primaries in her struggle with Senator Bernie Sanders for the Democratic nomination, and may have violated the Federal Election Campaign Act. Mrs. Clinton dismisses Whitewater (which led, circuitously, to the impeachment of her husband), Travelgate, the Benghazi tragedy (where the American ambassador to Libya was murdered by terrorists and she and Obama pretended that it was mob anger provoked by an anti-Islamic video produced by a private American citizen), and the email controversy that "amounted to precisely nothing" (I think not). She does not mention her speech of apology to the world's Muslims, a toe-curling embarrassment to the entire Western world, nor her inability to utter or write the words "Islamic terrorism or extremism," nor the very disconcerting pay-to-play activities of the Clinton Foundation, including the payment or pledge of \$145 million and a \$500,000 speech fee for Bill Clinton at a time when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's agreement was required to approve a sale of uranium assets in the U.S. to Russian interests.

Democratic senators whom she praises in comradeship have turned on the Clintons: Elizabeth Warren accuses her of cheating Bernie Sanders, and Kirsten Gillibrand says that Bill Clinton, because of his peccadilloes, should have resigned. They may be unjust, but this is what the Clintons' allies now think of them. Her righteousness is moth-eaten and threadbare.

Mrs. Clinton believes she is a good and sincere Christian, though she makes it clear that joining a church and being a communicant in it should be with the purpose of turning that church into an agency for leftward political action, what she calls "progressive reform." By this, we are left in no doubt, she means rounding up all those who are beneath the average in prosperity or acceptability in mainstream-majority society, or if not, at least highly dissatisfied with the lot of those who are, and mobilizing them as a democratic majority to impose

transfers of wealth and status from those who have earned or inherited it to the less fortunate or successful. This is a constant process of evaluating where the electoral majorities are, pitching to them as victims in the name of a benign state, and representing to those who pay for these transfers that it is their Christian and social duty and that they should rejoice in their opportunity to better the quality and stability of American life and society.

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In Mrs. Clinton's America, spiritual inspiration exists to pursue redistributive materialism, all "progress" apart from a little doughty self-help is the result of state intervention, the state has a practically unlimited right and duty to correct meritocratic as well as inherited or exploitive socioeconomic imbalances, and the U.S. Democratic party must be a secular church militant where those who oppose abortions (about half the American public) are, along with many other large groups, unwelcome. All politics is a constant process of "reform," in which, miraculously, the majority gain at the expense of the more accomplished (as well as more fortunate) minority. This isn't really Christianity or democracy; it easily slips into rank acquisition of votes with the money of part of the electorate in a cynical and corrupt manner, and Mrs. Clinton convicts herself of such attitudes with this astonishing display of rage, affected humility, idealism, and myth-making. It is a sobering and a disturbing read.

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