

The Decline and Fall of The Economist

Its Trump-bashing is a disgrace.

by Conrad Black

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Economist

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For decades, *The Economist* steadily built up its sales in the United States as it found a market that was constantly growing in wealth and numbers and that could not be reached by the banalities of *Time* and *Newsweek*. Henry Luce's American Century at *Time* tapered off into trite American vanity expressed in sophomoric attempts at sly writing. *Newsweek* was just the

leavings shaken out of the *Washington Post* and finally ended up offering no news at all, only a series of tired opinion columns, as if any sane person would pay to have such material printed on glossy paper and stapled. *The Economist's* world reach, authoritative departments, robust Oxbridge English, clever photos and covers, and even smart Fleet Street photo captions, plus its enlightened conservatism, were a winning formula in the U.S. (At the height of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, it ran a black-and-white cover of a riot scene with charging mounted police and clouds of tear gas over the title "In This United Kingdom.")

For a long time *The Economist* had too much faith in big and bossy government, and more concentration on apparent competence at execution and at the parliamentary despatch box or Washington press conference than on sound public policy. But *The Economist*, for a time, understood America. It was engulfed in the Watergate inundation and joined the righteous tide, unlike much of the continental European media that saw it all (accurately) as a pious exercise in Anglo-Saxon hypocrisy covering the crucifixion of a capable and successful president (and there remains no convincing evidence that Richard Nixon committed any illegalities). But *The Economist* also saw, unlike almost all of Europe, that Ronald Reagan was the man in 1980; that Jimmy Carter was too insipid and indecisive to lead; that the Soviet Union was effectively out of control in Afghanistan, Central America, and Angola; and that the United States was starting to resemble "the pitiful helpless giant" that Mr. Nixon had warned it could become.

After the end of the Cold War, *The Economist* took its stance inflexibly for an integrated federal Europe, world free trade and almost open borders regardless of the resulting disruptions of immense flows of desperate people and dumped goods, the disgorgement of hundreds of billions of dollars to fight chimerical climate change, and a depressingly misguided or passive America. *The Economist* had reservations about

George W. Bush's harebrained pursuit of democracy, as it produced democratically elected anti-democratic governments. It has been magnificent in its exposé of the failure of the American War on Drugs and absurd over-sentencing and incarceration levels, and is generally fairly strong in non-political areas.

But *The Economist* did not understand at all the intolerable failures for America of one-sided trade deals, open borders, a bungled retreat from Alliance leadership, over-taxation, and opening the welfare floodgates and flat-lining economic growth while enthroning political correctness and embracing a foreign policy that consisted chiefly of inviting America's enemies and allies to change roles and places. Like the corrupt, morally bankrupt media apologists for the Obama-Clinton failures and speculations, and the fatigued snobs of highbrow conservatism who have deserted the Trump Republicans, they rose out of the water like salmon in anger at Donald Trump's rough but effective campaigning methods, but completely failed to notice that he was the only candidate speaking for the country and the national interest, (though Bernie Sanders and Ted Cruz rounded up those on the far left and right).

The U.K. magazine has lost no opportunity to denigrate Trump.

There is plenty of room to criticize Trump's career and his official performance, but it is unprecedentedly unprofessional for *The Economist* to sandbag an incoming U.S. president, giving him no benefit of the doubt and admitting no possibility of success. In their edition dated July 1, summarizing his first five months, their special report is a disjointed travelogue and the lead editorial is just an onslaught on the president. It prejudices his tax-reform bill, yet to appear, as a giveaway to the rich, and falsely claims that he has "undermined the courts, the intelligence services, the State Department, and the [EPA]." It blames Trump, not the obstructionist Senate Democrats who are actually responsible,

for the slow confirmations of administration officials,. It spuriously implies improprieties in current relations between the government and Trump's business interests, and, fantastically, it blames the confection of the Frankenstein Monster of canards about election collusion with Russia on Trump, and not on the bloodless assassins of the Democratic party and their parrots in the national media. *The Economist* defends the boobs in the Congressional Budget Office (who have never predicted anything correctly in living memory) and blames lack of bipartisanship exclusively on Trump.

To *The Economist*, Trump already is and will remain "a bad president" who is responsible for America's failed state education system and uneven health care (after five months in office). Trade deals that import unemployment into the U.S. are desirable and the fatuous Paris Accord was a "forum where countries [would] work together to solve problems." I had to check that this was *The Economist* I was reading and not a handout from the Democratic National Committee or CNN (interchangeable). Most of Trump's official and media enemies are venal hypocrites and incompetents who created this crisis of American decline these last 20 years, and if Trump fails, they will complete the disaster they began. It is distressing to see *The Economist* in such company. Walter Bagehot (founder of the publication), and some of his recent successors, would be appalled. I still believe Trump will succeed, because he must, and that *The Economist* will return to its editorial senses.

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