

WHO'S GOING TO SAVE THE WORLD FROM FASCISM NOW?

Years ago in Milan I was talking to Antonio Porta about the future of the Left. When I said some disparaging things about Stalinists, he replied: "Remember, if it weren't for Stalin you and I would be having this conversation in German." He was right. The heroic Russians at the Battles of Stalingrad and Leningrad (a total of two million dead), and the British RAF pilots, most of whom sacrificed their lives in the Battle of Britain, kept the Nazis from sweeping through all of Europe, and then proceeding to invade our shores. Those three countries—Russia, England, and the United States—were the only thing standing between world democracies and the Fascist axis of Germany, Italy, and Japan. Right now the governments of those three anti-Fascist countries seem to have switched sides.

When I lived in Italy in the early 70s, there were plenty of Fascists. Since the Italian constitution outlawed the Fascist party, they were secretive and renamed themselves the *Movimento Sociale Italiano*, later the Northern Alliance. Now Fascists throughout Europe are quite open about who they are and what they want. Americans, particularly the American media, have always assumed that using the word "Fascist" after World War II was unseemly hyperbole. If you look at Putin in Russia and his financing of Fascist parties in Europe, UKIP in England, Marie Le Pen in France, Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, the right-wing autocrats in Eastern Europe, and Trump/Bannon in the United States, these are real card-carrying Fascists. We are not talking about Conservative vs. Liberal, but



about people who prefer dictatorships and ethnic cleansing. The "Tut, tut, you don't really mean that" response at this point is crazy.

Trump's "America First Alliance," that I assume includes the brown shirt internet trolls as well as propagandists and goon squads, sounds like an attempt to neutralize the spontaneous outrage against Trump's decrees and the demonstrations that have resulted. At least some news sources are pointing out what most Americans are too young to remember: "America First" was the slogan for people who wanted to keep the U. S. out of World War II. They were not pacifists but Nazi sympathizers. Charles Lindberg, "Lucky Lindy" of the first transatlantic flight and the chief spokesman of the movement, was an enthusiastic supporter of Hitler and Nazism.

The most frightening thing is that all of these countries have fallen, or are currently on the verge of falling, into Fascist hands, not by blitzkrieg and conquest, but by the ballot box.

We must remember that Hitler did not seize power by a coup, but was made Chancellor in 1933 with a little more than 43% of the vote. It was a democratic election. The Right in Germany, that had deadlocked with the Left, backed Hitler. They thought he was a clown, but they also thought he would be easy to manipulate. In 2017 we have relearned the bitter lesson many in Germany learned in the 30s. Not only can you not manipulate a megalomaniac, you can't even reason with one. The hardcore supporters of Trump are about a third of the electorate. Add the 10% percent of the electorate, Republicans who disliked him but thought the gains they could make (getting rid of Obamacare, drastically cutting Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, returning the Supreme Court to the far right for decades) were worth the risk, and that gives you the 46% who voted for Trump. It does not take a majority to drag you into this kind of political catastrophe.

Why do people keep returning to Fascism? By 1945, Germany, Italy, and Japan had been reduced to rubble. The struggle to get back to some semblance of normality in these three countries took a long time. When I visited Munich in 1969, there were still bombed out areas to be seen. The same when I visited Dresden in 1985. Considering the historical results of Fascist regimes, how good must this Kool Aid taste to be so seductive?

I hear a lot of people talking about hanging on until the next presidential election in 2020. At the rate Trump is going, there may not be anything of our democracy left to save by that time. The Washington D.C. police arrested six reporters during the Women's March on the day after the inauguration. If people believe that the police, the FBI, the National Guard, or the Army will step forward and preserve our constitutional democracy, I would just like for them to think about that. Recently there was a White House leak that Trump is planning to use 100,000 National Guard troops to round up and detain "illegal immigrants." He has previously referred to the Nisei concentration camps of World War II as a good idea. In case you are breathing a sigh of relief because you aren't a Muslim or a Mexican

immigrant, I would remind you that the incarcerated Japanese-Americans were U. S. citizens. If Trump can get away with this round up, you and other people who resist him may be next. Obama, in his farewell address, nailed it when he said the Constitution is only a piece of old parchment paper. It has no power at all unless the people at large insist on its principles.

Yes, I watch SNL and enjoy Stephen Colbert's attacks on the Trump regime, but laughter isn't enough. Neither is resignation. When I hear people say "We've got to put up with him for four more years," I get crazy. What makes anyone think he will relinquish power then, even if he loses both the popular vote and the electoral college? Or that elections will even be held? In 2004 the Republican head of the Electoral Commission floated the suggestion that the presidential election be delayed for fear of a terrorist attack. Immediate rejection by both parties in Congress put that to rest. But it was tried.

No rational person can now imagine that Donald Trump is going to "moderate" with time. In fact, as horrible as these early weeks have been, he is still testing the waters to see how much institutional blowback there will be. The weaker the

resistance, the more he will accelerate the Bannon agenda. As Paul Krugman argued in his February 27 *New York Times* op-ed, the only thing standing between the horror scenario of worldwide Fascism and us—is US, all of us. We are not going to be saved by the cavalry, by benign UFO extraterrestrials, or by Canada. Our only chance is to fight like hell against Trump and his minions, and that includes the entire Republican party, many waffling Democrats, and all the business leaders who have thrown in with him. Scare the hell out of the CEOs and upper echelon executives who are collaborating with Trump. If they start losing market share because of effective boycotts, their stock holders will dump them. We've got to make all of these people more afraid of us than they are of Trump and his "America First Alliance."

We are in the midst of an existential crisis. We need bodies in the street, but we also need new ideas on how to achieve the preservation of our constitutional democracy. I sure don't have much more than what I have already stated, but I know that you out there may have practical ideas on how to strengthen the Resistance. If you do, please email them to me and I will publish them in the next *Caliban Chronicles*. I look forward to hearing from you.

New feature of the Caliban Online site: links to the personal sites of our editorial staff. Deanne's is a gallery of her art work, Daniel's is his HS Marketing Solutions site, and Larry's is the usual stuff with the addition of some content: *Caliban Speaks: Essays, Rants, and Riffs* (a compilation of the Caliban essays from the original print magazine—30 years old, but amazingly pertinent to our current crisis), the first chapters of two novels, *The Map of Who We Are* and *Annie's Soup Kitchen*, and *The Plain Talk of the Dead*, a 1988 book of poetry. All free downloads.

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