

Subject: A New Years message from Ernie Crist

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HAPPY NEW YEAR:

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"History is the bunk" Henry Ford is quoted as having said. He also said that the only way to predict the future is when it is past. But Thucydides, the Geek Historian who wrote the History of the Peloponnesian War, said that those who know the past can determine the future. It is reasonably safe, he said, since the past is shaped by our makeup (Homo Sapiens) and since human nature will not change, History will repeat itself. Indeed, Thucydides was reluctant to write the History of the Peloponnesian War. He thought it might be a waste of time.

If wars are the result of human nature then wars will continue as long as there are humans. What ruined Greece will ruin other societies. Sparta and Athens did not go to war against each other because they had different economic systems but because they were the same. The territorial imperative and competition applied equally to Sparta as it did to Athens, albeit in different forms. It was the real determining factor in their behavior. Thucydides changed his mind about writing the History of the Peloponnesian War, which put an end to Greece's aspirations and cultural supremacy, only because he thought that Man could learn from the past.

The Anthropologist Ardrey thought that war might well put an end to mankind since man had become a specialized tool making animal. It started with our human ancestor using a club in the fight over a waterhole and it will end with weapons of mass destruction. They are variations of the same theme. Modern weapons are merely sophisticated clubs. But since the destructiveness of these new tools was now so monstrous, in comparison to the original club, it was doubtful that man would survive as a species.

The English Historian Arnold Toynbee thought that History was the result of events determined by the competition of cultures. Certain cultures are better suited to meet the challenges of the Zeitgeist and thus have a better chance to survive. Toynbee pointed to the Prussian state as an example of a culture doomed because of its emphasis on militarism.

On the other hand, the great German philosopher Hegel thought that the Prussian State was the ideal state since it accepted responsibility for the individual from the cradle to the grave while leaning on the great German tradition of hard work and dedication to excellence. Prussian Militarism, however, was the product of Germany's past. In the face of humiliation by its neighbors for centuries it reacted and the result was the rise of Prussian hegemony over Germany. Prussian Militarism combined with Germany's growing industrial might was looking for a more prominent place in the sun. Thus World War I became a struggle for the division and the redivision of

the world's markets at a time when the world was already divided into colonies.

Hegel believed that the essence of nature is one of constant struggle between that which is and that which is going to be - a struggle between the Thesis and the Antithesis from which will emerge the Synthesis a new form which, in turn, becomes the Thesis again. Karl Marx applied this theory to the evolution of societies - every class society carries the seeds of its own contradictions and subsequent destruction within itself. Within the womb of a particular society there matures its own Antithesis. Every social order eventually gives birth to another which, in turn, matures and gives rise to yet another. Since the State is always an instrument of the privileged, reluctant to give up control, such changes are usually violent.

Marx saw history as a series of class struggles. Everything else is marginal, he thought. It is always a struggle between the haves and the have nots - a struggle between exploiters and exploited. Rome was doomed because it was committed to slavery. The rigid slave society was a superior organization compared to the primitive tribal society which it had replaced. It enabled Rome to muster organizational and productive superiority in many areas. Unlike the tribal community from whence it sprang, it produced surplus wealth which could be used to maintain large armies, administrations and infrastructures. But as Slavery became beset by its own inherent and growing contradictions Rome was doomed. The onslaught of German tribes or even the Huns was incidental. Rome fell from within, said Gibbons.

Here we have a meeting of minds between Marx and Gibbons. On the other hand, the Feudal system which sprang from slave society was a higher form of class system. It relied less on brutal force to coerce its subjects to produce surplus value for the benefit of the Lord. It was a more efficient economic system. Yet it was under the mantle of Feudalism that a new class came into being namely a mercantile class which, in turn, became the grave digger of Feudalism. Once again it was the struggle for survival and self interest by a new class which unwittingly pushed societies into a new system namely capitalism.

And now we have a new imperial force in the world, namely, the United States. Its specialization is that it is completely tied to Capitalism, a form of society which has done much to teach the world to mass produce and, as Karl Marx put it, has rescued the world from village idiocy. Its productive capacity and accumulated wealth is such that it could solve the world's problems in a jiffy. But Capitalism is inherently unable to distribute its wealth fairly since its only motive for existing is to realize maximum profits.

While Capitalism has elevated the West to a high standard of living it cannot do the same for the world's poor since it is essentially based on exploitation, cheap labor and cheap raw materials. As such, capitalism has failed in addressing the needs of 80% of the world's people who cannot ever hope to solve their own plight. As a result there is hopelessness and despair leading to violence.

At the same time, the US, as the defender of capitalist democracy, has gone one step further. It is preventing people of the Third World to even rid themselves of their own corrupt regimes as this would destabilize and subsequently jeopardize the "national interest" of the US, meaning the interests of global corporations and the real power in the world today. The US is thus the principle defender not only of Capitalism but is also perceived by the majority of the world's population as preventing them from advancing and settling their own affairs. This has been the case in Chile as it was the case in a thousand other places where people have attempted to rid themselves of corrupt regimes. The US has become a reactionary and moribund imperialist power in the service of Global Inc.

And this is the world today. It is a world full of irreconcilable contradictions. Irreconcilable because the world cannot realize its full potential under a system which makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. Underdeveloped countries cannot compete in a world dominated by large global corporations backed by US military power. But, in trying to make the world safe for Global Inc, the US, with its enormous military clout, can inflict terrible suffering. Indeed its power is such that it will win every military conflict in the foreseeable future but in the end will lose the war. The forces of social evolution are stronger than the strongest superpower on earth. In attempting to stop the tide of discontent, the US, and those allied with it, will invariably be sucked into a posture of overextension and eventual defeat.

So what is going to happen in 2002. The essential conflict will be between the world's poor against Global Inc and the US policeman. This struggle will take countless forms including wars and conflicts of a wide variety fought for many reasons including in the name of religion. The underlying factor, however, is dissatisfaction with a social order producing untold wealth on one hand, while relegating billions of people to a life of economic misery, hopelessness and despair on the other.

To the extent that the US is using its power to defend its special interests, there will be conflict, suffering and bloodshed. This conflict will be most acute in areas where the interests of Global Inc are the greatest and where the corruption of local regimes, courtesy of Global Inc. and its international policeman the US of A, is most pronounced. It will be primarily in areas where the awareness of this injustice, real or perceived, is the most highly developed.

I predict the following - the war of the underprivileged against Global Inc. will continue and, in fact, escalate. There will be no peace and no stability. Increasingly, corrupt regimes, propped up by US power, will come under pressure from their own people. The US policeman will become more and more bogged down in regional conflicts. Indeed the conflict will spread. There will be no way out other than for the US to give up its role as international policeman in the service of Global Inc which it will not and cannot do anymore than Rome could separate itself from defending the system which had given rise to it in the first place. What we will see in 2002 is a further escalation of US led police actions against people who in the

name of religion and other countless causes are rebelling against oppression and backwardness.

It will be a repetition of the Vietnam War except it will be on a global scale. The US, strictly speaking, never lost a battle in Vietnam but it lost the war against what was a primitive country. The message for 2002 is that the conflict will spread, that the contradictions between Global Inc and the rest of the world will become sharper and that it will draw in an ever wider circle of participants, including Canada. It will not be a uniform development but it will proceed with accelerated speed, nonetheless. As I said on Sept. 11 - the world will never be the same. Sept. 11 was day one of WW III. The countdown to Armageddon has started. There will be no stability as the system, essentially moribund and spiritually deprived, is going to its slow but painful doom one in which we are caught up whether we like it or not.

So what can we do. We can start right here in our own backyard. We can work to make this a passionate and livable community. We can unite to fight incompetence. We can unite to fight the "Leaky Condo" mentality. We can refuse to capitulate in the face of lies and deceit. We can hold high the banner of civic democracy. We can unite against a local government controlled by and for the benefit of the special interests of a few. We can fight against bureaucratic mismanagement which gives our community a bad name. If we do this we will give meaning to our lives and win the battle against accepting the inevitability of having to endure poor government, incompetence and corruption when, in reality, it is the first step in the devils play of doom.

Ernie Crist.

