**Canada’s “Freedom” Convoy – Observations from Ottawa** by Peter MacKinnon

I was absorbed in watching events out my window here in downtown Ottawa and live streaming from CBC TV for nearly 2 days non-stop. What follows is a description of what I've been seeing out my window and limited walking about the Market in the past 3 weeks.  I am situated less than 150 metres from the US Embassy on Sussex.  I can see the Peace Tower when looking out one of my front window.  My flat is the entire 3rd floor of a building constructed in the 1880s and today is the closest apartment to the centre of the Byward Market, the most popular gathering place in Ottawa for boutique shopping, bars, restaurants and nightly entertainment places.  The bar across the street from me has been in continuous operation since 1849, before Canada was a country and this place was Bytown.  I am also only a few minutes walk from the University of Ottawa.

The last three weeks have been like watching history unfold in slow motion.  It has been fascinating to watch and terrifying to realise what is behind this movement and why it was done in Canada first.  Noise was unbearable the first week with air horns and dozens of pickup trucks from country bumpkins constantly driving around the Market beeping their horns 24X7.

I was impressed with the police action over the past few days.  I think it will be a model replicated around the world by public security organisations in dealing with rowdy crowds.  Two of the keys were to allow an escape route for both trucks and protesters on foot as they were never surrounded.  Second was the methodical way the police were organised and coordinated to break the protesters into groups that were 'pushed' down side streets.  Behind the scenes organisation was extensive from canine units on standby to rooftop spotters and marksmen. The police organisation, from an ad hoc assembly of forces from across the country and all three levels of government, was most impressive.

It has been remarkably quiet today in the Market except for snow removal equipment, as my street is always kept clear.  I just looked out the window and the Market is nearly empty with a handful of pedestrians and dozens of open parking spots.  In fact, there are only 14 parked vehicles in space with 150 parking slots on the street. It is normal on a Sunday that parking is free and at a premium in terms of getting a spot.  The sidewalks would normally be full of people and strollers; but not today.

Last night there were protesters with signs and flags milling about the Market and blowing a loud mouth horn.  Cops were gone.  Yesterday until late afternoon every street intersection had between two to four police cruisers blocking the roads.  My block was sealed off at both ends, one end being the US Embassy.  All clear today.

During a slight lull in the blizzard yesterday (we had an Arctic blizzard yesterday with high winds and snow flying horizontally for hours and it was bitterly cold too). I witnessed a somewhat amazing scene of a full wedding party dressed to the nines, including two little girls, all standing on the steps of a high end restaurant across the street from me with a photographer dressed in a parka taking their pictures as the snow flew by and this all took place with high security all around in the Market, it was kind of surreal. Clearly an unforgettable wedding day, I am sure!

As to how the convoy ended, where, who said it was over, if it is, are questions I still have.

I was just reading some US media (e.g., USA Today) and going through its fact checking regarding social media claims as to what "really happened in Ottawa" that the mainstream media deliberately ignored, because as one of the protesters from last night was proclaiming on his large sign "media are part of the cabal, they must be taken down".  Here were some of the claims being debunked:

* there were 100,000 trucks
* buildings were burned down
* police used tear gas
* a woman was killed by a police horse
* attendance was at least 80,000
* the police were brutal, etc.

BTW, I did a simple calculation.  A standard big rig truck is 22 m long, so 100,000 trucks closely parked in a line would be 2,200 km long!  The people who post such dribble and the masses of gullible souls out there that believe unquestioning of such "facts" is mind boggling - they can't even think at scale or perhaps think at all, just go with the flow of some weird ideological bend just to be different as in "freedom"!  QAnon flags have been seen throughout the siege of the city core as have been shofars used my Jericho Marchers who tried unsuccessfully to get the Parliament building to collapse.  During the protest there have been groups of Nazi,  Trump and other fringe groups, mostly evangelical Christian supporters such as Jericho Marchers and evangelical open air ministries on the street in front of Parliament.

In my view, what is so unfortunate is that the digital generation primarily uses social media for their 'news' and never read what the cabal has to say.  I consider this bifurcation in society will become a social crisis point, as in a tipping point, that will fragment democratic society leading to a weakening of democracy and the rise of oligarchs.  Trumpians see this too and are doing their best to make it happen.  Canada was their first attempt and it is working, just read the social media coverage generated and promulgated in the US about the Canadian convoy.  There was a guy on horse back in the first week riding around with Trumpf swag for 2024 on a flagpole.

In summary, it is my view that a few disgruntled truckers were hijacked by elements of the Maverick Party in Alberta and other extreme right wing groups and individuals, in both Canada and the USA.  The convoy hostage taking of Ottawa's core became a crusade point for evangelicals of the far right with their daily Jericho Marches blowing shofars and chanting Christian babble about the end of the world.  They did their march several times every day - perhaps to keep warm, but I think not.  They were just one of the underlying groups in the convoy that came to tear down the Government, except these folks being so religious and knowing that God is on their side and will allow the marchers to cause the Parliament of Canada to collapse upon itself in order to save the world. I have subsequently found out that these Jericho Marches are common in the US in extreme right wing and evangelical happenings.  So is the practice of saturating 911 services in cities they protest in.  As you may know our intel services determined that the bulk of the 911 calls that nearly took down the emergency call service in Ottawa came from the US; as did a significant amount of anonymous money via social fundraising platform, which you know about.

I am sure you heard about the Manifesto the organisers tried to deliver to the Govcernment. There is the oligarchy story in clear view.

I wager that the hatching of this convoy concept was carried out in the USA and was designed to disrupt Canada in order to insight Americans with far right leanings to revolt and create chaos starting soon in America and continuing through to election day 2024 and likely beyond as by then America will need Brown Shirts to shape the new order.

\* \* \*