

# The myth of the ‘stolen country’

What should the Europeans have done with the New World?

Spectator Magazine (UK): [26 September 2020](#)

By Jeff Fynn-Paul (Associate professor in history at Leiden University)

Last month, in the middle of the Covid panic, a group of first-year university students at the University of Connecticut were welcomed to their campus via a series of online ‘events’. At one event, students were directed to download an app for their phones. The app allowed students to input their home address, and it would piously inform them from which group of Native Americans their home had been ‘stolen’.

We all know the interpretation of history on which this app is based. The United States was founded by a monumental act of genocide, accompanied by larceny on the grandest scale. Animated by racism and a sense of civilisational superiority, Columbus and his ilk sailed to the New World. They exterminated whomever they could, enslaved the rest, and intentionally spread smallpox in hopes of solving the ‘native question’. Soon afterwards, they began importing slave labour from Africa. They then built the world’s richest country out of a combination of stolen land, wanton environmental destruction and African slave labour. To crown it all, they have the audacity to call themselves a great country and pretend to moral superiority.

This ‘stolen country’ paradigm has spread like wildfire throughout the British diaspora in recent years. The BBC recently ran a piece on the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Plymouth landings, whose author took obvious delight in portraying the Pilgrim Fathers as native-mutilating slave drivers. In Canada, in the greater Toronto school district, students are read a statement of apology, acknowledging European guilt for the appropriation of First Nations lands, before the national anthem is played over the PA system every morning.

As a professional historian, I am keenly aware of the need to challenge smug, feelgood interpretations of history. I understand that nationalism and civilisational pride carry obvious dangers which were made manifest by the world wars of the 20th century. And I understand that these things can serve as subtle tools not only of racism but of exploitation of many stripes, and as justification for a status quo which gets in the way of meritocracy and fairness.

But I also know that if the pendulum of interpretation swings too far in any one direction, things can go from bad to worse with lightning speed. It is times like these that we realise the stories we tell ourselves — about our history in particular — are of fundamental importance to the direction our societies take. The shift from Weimar Republic to Nazi Germany was accomplished, first and foremost, by a shift in who controlled the national narrative. Ditto with the shift to Communism in eastern Europe, as so movingly chronicled by the late Tony Judt in his book *Postwar*.

So what can be the harm in acknowledging every morning that Canadians live on stolen First Nations land? The problem is this: if you begin the day by acknowledging that your country, your society, and people of your ancestry are particularly egregious, this is a sure route to self-doubt, impotence and societal failure.

What's true at the personal level is true at the national. What well-meaning liberals do not seem to realise these days is that democracies thrive or fail on the basis of national stories. This is doubly so in republics like the US, where there is no apolitical figurehead to unite people in place of a monarch. In the end, stories are all we've got as a glue to cement us together as a society. If that story says that our democracy is rotten to the core, then how do we expect anyone to retain enthusiasm for democracy itself? As history shows time and again, as soon as a republic does not believe in itself and its ideals — that it is better than the tyrannies and autocracies surrounding it — that republic succumbs very quickly to autocracy itself. The riots that have recently erupted across the United States, the new and unaccustomed boldness that characterises dictators around the globe, attest to the breakdown of the Western democratic order which is being accelerated by these self-inflicted wounds.

This is not an abstract fear. By many measures, support for democracy among younger people is plummeting around the globe. Many in the US seem to have no clue just how much of a 'city on a hill' the US is still perceived to be, and how important that American beacon is to millions of people living under autocratic regimes. The mere thought of Obama's motorcade passing through my European province electrified schoolchildren across the region. For them, he was as close as you get to a real-life superhero. Such universal support for a politician is virtually unheard of. Even though republican regimes are historically less popular internationally, for billions of people around the globe the US still equates with democracy — it is 'the good place'. If the image of US is fundamentally delegitimised, if it's entire *raison d'être* is tainted, then increasing numbers of people wonder whether democracy itself is worth the trouble. So we have to be very careful what we wish for.

Again, my criticism of the current excesses of the left is absolutely not a call to embrace the worst aspects of the right. This is no code or excuse for jingoism, racism or any other ism. I fully support the lessons of the world wars that excessive nationalism, that unilateralism, are ugly and a bad idea. It is rather a caution: a sense that we have to be careful how far we go, and how quickly, in our rush to signal our support for the historically downtrodden. On a personal note, I add that it gives me zero pleasure to have to write this piece. Fifteen years ago, I would have been the one at the barricades helping Native Americans rally against an oil company or some such. Writing this, I incur considerable personal and professional cost in order to come out of the closet as a (shock, horror) centrist, who believes that the left is currently rampaging out of control and must be stopped before it's too late. One arena in which I can best help is the interpretation of history, upon which much of the current leftist hysteria is based.

The narrative of the 'stolen country' or 'Native American genocide' does not stand up to scrutiny by any honest and clear-sighted historian. It is a dangerously myopic and one-sided interpretation of history. It has only gained currency because most practising historians and history teachers are either susceptible to groupthink, or else have been cowed into silence by fear of losing their jobs. Reduced to its puerile form of 'statement of guilt', this myth puts 100 per cent of the burden on

Europeans who are held responsible for all historical evil, while the First Nations people are mere victims; martyrs even, whose saintlike innocence presumes that their civilisation and society were practically perfect in every way. This is no way to honour or respect the realities of First Nation lives and their agency. And it helps perpetuate the idea that the US and Canada are fundamentally illegitimate societies, and that by implication, every other country on Earth is legitimate. If we were to be honest, there is not a single country on Earth which did not displace natives, or which did not engage in nasty wars or ethnic cleansings at many points during its history. The current fad for holding up the US and Canada to special scrutiny and particular opprobrium is therefore distorting at best.

## **Was the land stolen?**

As an economic historian, allow me to point out some of the most obvious structural problems with the 'stolen country' paradigm.

First, no matter who 'discovered' the New World, it is inevitable that a large proportion of New World inhabitants would have died within the first few decades after first contact. This is universally acknowledged by specialists in the field. The New World population was smaller and more homogenous than the Old World population. Thus, its people had less immunity to disease than the people of the Old World, where disease communities from Africa, Asia and Europe had been intermingling for millennia. Even though some European captains did try and spread smallpox around a few forts and villages from time to time, the effect of their efforts was almost negligible compared with the natural spread of disease. So the claims of genocide by disease have almost nothing to do with European actions, apart from their simply reaching the New World. And of course, Europeans of the time had no way of envisioning the continent-wide epidemic repercussions of their actions. Verdict: not guilty.

Let us also acknowledge that Native American society was just as warlike as any other in human history. The anthropologists' vision of Native Americans as peace-pipe-smoking environmentalists which gained purchase in the 1970s has long since given way to a more Hobbesian portrait of pre-Columbian reality. In North America, most Natives were primitive farmers. This means that (with some exceptions) they had no permanent settlements: they farmed in an area for a few decades until the soil got tired, before moving on to greener pastures where the hunting was better and the lands more fertile. This meant that tribes were in constant conflict with other tribes. It also meant that chiefs were continually vying for power, creating confederations under themselves, and that the question of who owned the land was in a more or less constant state of flux. In most of North America, the idea that any one piece of land belonged to any one tribe, for more than 50 or 100 years, is therefore highly questionable. In short, if you looked at a map of Native Canada 200 years before Europeans arrived, it would have been entirely different. In the meantime, some groups of natives would have slaughtered, bullied or enslaved others. Should we not be grieving for those Native Canadians whose land was stolen by other Native Canadians? Or is that somehow OK? I don't suppose there is an app for that.

The idea that the Europeans stole some land which had belonged in perpetuity to any one tribe is therefore ludicrous. The situation in most of North America was similar to northern Europe on

the eve of the Germanic migrations, or western Europe as the Celts were moving across the landscape. Precisely to whom the land belonged in any given century at these periods in history was anyone's guess. The very notion of property is a Graeco-Roman invention which most cultures found foreign until quite recently. But Europeans of the time had little chance of grasping this difference. What the Europeans did in the New World was insert themselves into a fluid power struggle which had been ongoing for millennia. Many Native American chiefs were ready to pledge allegiance to the Great 'Chief of the English', as a political expedient, just as various English colonies sided with this or that Native American 'Great Chief'. Despite a few sensational cases of duplicity, most of the time, Europeans tried to buy land from Indians, just like they would buy an acre of land in England. If the local chief assented to this and liked the price, where then was the crime? Many individual Europeans believed that according to the norms of both parties, they had legal usufruct to the land they were working. To judge this as theft is therefore anachronistic. As Europeans set up farming communities, and introduced guns to North America, Native American communities were forced to move further away from European lands as game retreated. The areas around white settlements were often empty for this reason, making the land seem all the more abandoned. Musket use by natives probably depleted animal stocks at a higher rate than previously, meaning that the very introduction of firearms might have spelled the doom of hunting and gathering in North America in the long run, even if the Europeans had otherwise left the country alone.

Another major structural issue is this: what precisely would our pious anthropology professors have had Europeans do with the New World once they found it?

This is not a joke. Political reality has a way of crashing in on the pipe dreams of liberal academics. The reality is, if the English had not colonised, then the French or the Dutch would have. If the Spanish had not colonised, the Portuguese would have. This would have shifted the balance of power at home, and any European country which had *not* colonised, would have been relegated to secondary status. And it is easy to overestimate the amount of control that European governments actually had. As soon as the New World was discovered, many fisherman and traders sailed across the Atlantic on their own, in hopes of circumventing tax authorities and scoring a fortune. Long before colonies were established in most regions, the New World was crawling with Europeans whose superior technology gave them an edge in combat. Nonetheless, it was extremely dangerous for Europeans to provoke fights with Native Americans, and most of them tried to avoid this when possible. In retrospect, one could in theory be impressed that so many European governments showed a genuine concern to rein in the worst excesses of their subjects, with an express eye to protecting the Indians from depredation. The logic was simple: they attempted to protect their subjects at home, in order to secure good order and a better tax base. So they would do the same to their subjects in the New World. For a long time, few Europeans harboured any master plan of pushing the Native Americans out of their own lands. In more densely populated regions such as Mexico, such an idea must have seemed an absurdity. Reality tends to occur ad hoc. Boundaries often took generations to move, and would have seemed fixed at the time. For several centuries, many Europeans assumed that they would long be a minority on the North American continent. In Mexico and Peru, they always have been.

Population density mattered, a lot, when it came to pre-modern global migrations. China and India were 'safe' from excessive European colonisation because they had the densest populations

in the world, and they were likewise largely immune to any diseases brought by Europeans. Sub-Saharan Africa had a lower population density depleted by slave raiding, but they still outnumbered European colonists by a large margin throughout the colonial era — again because European contact did not decimate their numbers through disease the way it did in the Americas. It is worth noting that no one claims that Europeans committed genocide in India, Asia or even Africa, although their technological advantages gave them every opportunity had they actually been of a genocidal mindset (as were for example the Mongols). In fact, the European track record shows them to be almost shockingly un-genocidal, given their clear technological advantages over the rest of the world for a period of several centuries. Few other civilisations, given similar power over so much of the world's people, would have behaved in a less reprehensible manner. This is not to give Europeans a pat on the back. Rather it is to point out that Europeans are regularly painted as the very worst society on Earth, when in fact they had the power to do far, far more evil than they actually did. Let us at least acknowledge this fact.

The mixed farming/gathering economy of most Native Americans, coupled with their vulnerability to Old World diseases, therefore meant that North America was sparsely populated by the time Jamestown was founded in 1607, and unable to replace missing population at a very high rate. At this time, the New World was more sparsely populated than anywhere in the Old World apart from its subarctic regions and the Sahara. Furthermore, a great deal of North American land was located in the temperate zones — traditionally the ones most suited to agriculture, and therefore to growing large civilisations. Primitive farming and hunter-gathering can only support a tiny population at the best of times. But Old World rice and wheat agriculture — the farming regimes which supported the great civilisations of the Old World — can support a far greater population density per hectare. The huge disparity in population density between the Old World and the New — especially after the first contact epidemics had wiped out so many New World peoples — therefore made it likely that excess population was going to flow from the Old World to the New. Furthermore, as soon as Old World colonists began to set up the farming and city-dwelling regimes which they imported from home, population growth in the colonies was going to outstrip Native American groups in terms of population growth, even without further in-migration.

This brings us to the question of how cultural adaptation works. Many people have been told by their friends on social media that Europeans destroyed Native Culture. The problem is this: whenever a good idea comes along, which clearly increases one's living standards, one tends to adopt it. And who is to say that this adaptation is bad, especially if it results in higher living standards? Even as they discovered America, the Europeans were in the process of adopting dozens of superior Chinese inventions and ideas: paper money, gunpowder, pasta and fine porcelain are only the most famous. Should we accuse China of 'cultural imperialism' when they ruined 'native' Italian cuisine by introducing Marco Polo to spaghetti? Similarly, Native Americans were quick to adapt the many useful Old World ideas which Europeans happened to carry with them. To reiterate, most of these had not even been invented by Europeans, but had been adopted by Europeans from other Old World cultures. Why grind corn laboriously by hand for several hours a day, when one can use millstones instead? Why hunt with bow and arrow, when one can use a rifle? Why refuse to domesticate cattle, when they provide huge boosts in caloric intake for your family? Why refuse to adopt the wheel, for goodness sake?

By the time Columbus set sail, then, the Old World had dozens of clear technological and institutional advantages, which for the most part, New World populations were eager to adopt as soon as they saw them. Rather than jealously guard their technological superiority, many Europeans were ready to trade anything that Native Americans might want, including firearms. This made it inevitable that New World society would be changed beyond recognition, once sustained contact was initiated.

What about Columbus himself? Try as they might (and they have tried mightily), historians have been unable to find any evidence that Columbus was genocidal, or had any particular ill-will towards the Native Americans that he encountered. The guy lived in 1492. We could have forgiven him for literally 'going medieval' on any natives that he encountered. This was the same century in which the Mongols were exterminating every Russian, Muslim and Chinese person that they could get their hands on, sometimes slaughtering over 100,000 men, women and children at a go in some of history's worst blood orgies. Instead, we find in Columbus's journals a general sense of curiosity, of wonder even, and a genuine desire at many points to communicate and trade with natives, whose help Columbus realised he would need if his little expeditions were going to be successful. Let's remember that Columbus was first and foremost a merchant. His main purpose was to open a trade route to China. Europeans realised that China had better stuff. Like expert businessmen everywhere, Genoese merchants had long since realised that attacking the people you want to trade with is counterproductive.

From the get-go, Isabella of Spain expressly forbade the enslavement of her New World subjects. Instead, she showed a genuine desire to bring them into what for her constituted the folds of civilisation, as Christian equals. So historians must grudgingly concede that the Spanish Crown, for its part, was likewise not nearly as bloodthirsty, genocidal or racist as they clearly hope to find.

The priest Bartholomé de las Casas wrote an eloquent plea to the monarchs of Spain as early as the 1540s, chronicling in detail how wonton adventurers had taken advantage of the lawless situation in New Spain to exploit and slaughter natives against the express will of the Spanish Crown. A few things are worth noting about this: A) at least some Spanish people already had a genuine sense of compassion for, and desire to save, the Indians. B) Las Casas assumed that there was enough sympathy for his story at the Spanish court that he presented his book to the crown. Las Casas believed, therefore, that compassion for the Native Americans was, or at least could become, the dominant mood at court.

Likewise, the relationship between English colonists in North America and Native Americans was never one-sided. To borrow a phrase from Facebook, the real historical relationship between these peoples is best described as 'complicated'. The very first Native American chief who encountered the English, Powhatan, almost immediately expressed an interest to live in an English-style house. He considered it to be superior to the types of houses that his own people built, and he was ready to adopt whatever European ways made his life more comfortable. John Smith is supposed to have built him such a house in his capital of Werowocomoco, and to this day a monument called 'Powhatan's Chimney' purports to be the remains of this house. Whether this is actually true or not, the fact is that many such acts of cultural borrowing were at work in English North America. We will say nothing of the many Native American habits that English

settlers gratefully adopted, since this would be angrily dismissed as ‘cultural appropriation’ or some other such bad-faith nonsense.

The story of Powhatan is outshined by the biography of his daughter Pocahontas. Of course there is much legend attached to this and there will be a ‘whitewashing’ of the legend. However, we have eye-witness accounts attesting that Pocahontas and other native children were in the habit of turning cartwheels around the Jamestown fort and playing with the boys there. Pocahontas and her friends are credited at one point with bringing provisions into the fort when the colonists were starving. Like any other neighbours, the settlers of Jamestown and the natives of the region had individual personal relationships that lasted for many years. But frontier relations were often capricious, and friendly games could turn to war, and back again, in a matter of months. At one point, John Smith was captured and brought to Powhatan; it is believed that Powhatan thereby hoped to bring Jamestown into his own dominions as Great Chief. He also sent an agent to England with a mission to spy out the population of that country — thus quite resourcefully attempting to size up the competition. He might even have imagined conquering England itself. Should we call Powhatan a ‘cultural imperialist’? At a later date, Pocahontas was captured in war, kept under house arrest, and eventually freed. In 1613, she converted to Christianity and took the rather less interesting name of ‘Rebecca’. She was given away by her father Powhatan to the successful Jamestown planter John Rolfe, and the two of them were given an estate totalling thousands of acres by Powhatan himself. Was this land ‘stolen’ from the Native Americans? Sources relate that the marriage helped foster several years of peace between the Native Americans and the Jamestown colony. In 1616 Pocahontas accompanied her husband to England, where she was treated as a celebrity, and an example of how the natives could be ‘civilised’. One can read this suspiciously, as any good Liberal critic is now taught to do, as an act of ‘white superiority.’ Or one could accept it at face value, as proof that many English people believed Native Americans to have the same innate human abilities as Europeans. Arguably, this is the exact opposite of racism. (Notice we don’t even have a word for this.)

There is therefore little real mystery of what happened to the Native Americans as a culture. They were certainly not exterminated at the behest of any concerted ideology of hatred or European superiority. After the initial disease-caused die-offs, and in spite of a few sensational wars and small-scale massacres, remaining Native Americans adopted so many Old World ‘life hacks’ that most of them were gradually assimilated into European culture. Only a minority stayed ‘wild’ enough to be placed on reservations. Even after that, many enterprising people left the reservation for a better life elsewhere. This was done on an individual basis, for the most part peacefully and willingly, leaving no fuss or much trace in the historical record. The stories of Powhatan and Pocahontas attest to the presence of this pattern at the dawn of English-Native American relations, and it continues to the present day. Now, such a statement would cause an uproar in almost any academic conference room these days. But the majority of the evidence and experience all points in this direction.

A visit to my hometown of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania a few years ago provided some striking evidence for just how much long-term peaceful cohabitation was occurring between Natives and Europeans on the Pennsylvania frontier around the time of the American Revolution. (This is even after relations took a turn for the worse in the 1750s.) Plaques attest to schoolrooms full of Native American children who were being taught to read and write German by the Moravian

settlers. While modern-day anthropologists might recoil in horror at this act of ‘cultural imperialism’, it is likely that the parents of these children were grateful for the opportunities afforded to them (and the calories given to them) by the Moravian schoolteachers. It is also very likely that these children would grow up to marry and live on a farm, in European style. Who in their right mind would live in the woods, if they could live a far more secure life on a farm? This was the 18<sup>th</sup> century we are talking about, when life was hard enough for the great majority of Europeans. The Native Americans therefore showed common sense by gravitating towards habits which enabled them individually to survive and thrive. Accordingly, the colonial-era graveyard in Bethlehem contains a significant percentage of native people who, like Pocahontas 150 years before, had converted to Christianity and adopted a new name. There is no evidence that the egalitarian-minded settlers thought any less of these new converts to the faith. I was lucky enough to be a part of this history, first-hand. One of my two best friends growing up had a mother who went to the Moravian church; he was very charismatic and everyone who knew him thought it was cool that he had Indian ancestors. As we ran around in the woods looking for arrowheads, I was sometimes a little jealous that I had none.

Let’s take a moment to look at the Moravians, whom our Liberal friends will glibly dump into the bucket of ‘European cultural imperialists’. First, the Moravians were, quite literally, communists; I will let that settle without further comment on the irony that entails in this context. In the lands bordering Moravia, ‘white privilege’ meant the privilege of sending an annual tribute of children to be slaves of the Ottoman Sultan: a practice which went on for 500 years, and was not discontinued until 1918. For centuries, Moravians therefore lived under threat of their homeland being invaded, and their people slaughtered or carried into Islamic slavery. (And though it is meant tongue-in-cheek, even pretending to use the lens of ‘race’ here is wholly distorting: in the Mediterranean context, religion and ethnicity mattered far more than ‘race’.) My point is that the Moravians and many neighbouring peoples hardly came from a position of cultural dominance.

But it gets much worse. Moravia itself was originally Slavic-speaking, but it was also in the process of being taken over by culturally dominant Germans. So the very people teaching Native Americans to learn German in Pennsylvania were themselves victims of ongoing cultural imperialism which threatened the extermination of their ancestral language. And within a few generations, German itself would be all but eradicated from Pennsylvania by the majority English-speaking population. To this day, a few Amish still speak Pennsylvania Dutch, which is a version of German. They still refer to non-Amish as ‘the English’ and think of them as foreigners. To pretend therefore that Native Americans were the only ones in 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century America whose culture was being ‘erased’ is highly naive. It is pernicious even — and racist in itself. This is to say nothing about religion. The Moravians were only in Pennsylvania in the first place because they faced a threat of extermination for their religious beliefs at home. They were, quite literally, refugees seeking asylum from the most horrific conditions. They found refuge in the tolerant state of Pennsylvania, set up by the religious refugee William Penn.

## Conclusions

As this piece was going to press, an article was published by the BBC on the occasion of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower. After pretending neutrality at the beginning of

the piece, the author launched with relish into all the worst possible assertions that can be levied against the Plymouth colonists. He implied that they were slave owners, when in fact, only a single Plymouth colonist is documented as having owned a slave. He implied that Plymouth ran on dirty money from the African slave trade, which is likewise almost entirely false. He mentioned every instance that can be found of colonists murdering Indians, and the image accompanying the article showed a representation of a native who was mutilated by colonists.

The article steadfastly refuses to mention any mitigating factors. It says nothing about massacres perpetrated by Native Americans on colonists, or on each other. It says nothing about generations of realpolitik which saw alliances between any and all groups at various times. It says nothing about opportunism on both sides, let alone friendship, or love. It perniciously implies that any such friendships and/or sexual relationships must have been tainted by violence or some sort of racist original sin, in which Native Americans were always victims or dupes. It does not mention that the colonists usually attempted to purchase land from local chiefs. Nor does our BBC article mention the disease which had wiped out over 90 per cent of the Native Americans who lived on the site of the Plymouth colony in the year *before* the Mayflower landed (the disease had been brought by fishermen, who had been sailing off Massachusetts for generations). Or the fact that the Plymouth colonists' main economic plan was to trade peacefully with the Native Americans for furs, until this was disrupted by the bad behaviour of English colonists at a neighbouring site. It does not mention that the Plymouth colonists had indentured themselves to the Merchant Adventurers, merely to pay for their own passage. They were, quite literally, economic slaves themselves, and desperately in debt. The article in question says nothing about how Plymouth authorities sometimes hanged Englishmen, or hunted down English fugitives, in order to demonstrate to their Native American allies that they took crimes against them seriously. Nor would the author dare to address the fact that the protestant dissenters of Massachusetts were intellectual ancestors of the global abolitionist movement which he and most of his fellows now take for granted, and give European culture zero credit for.

The question becomes, what good purpose does this calumny against the Pilgrims and other European colonists really serve? I ask this question in good faith. What myth about the Pilgrims needs tearing down with such one-sided ferocity? During the Cold War and the Gulf Wars, liberal historians called out excessive nationalism and jingoism, based on the legitimate fear that military types might start a war for no good reason. (In the case of Gulf War II, they apparently did.) So there is always a place for liberal critique within history. But on this issue, it's more difficult to see the value of Pilgrim-bashing to today's Native Americans, apart from making them bitter and resentful, and everyone else feel guilty and ashamed. There are after all very few Native Americans who identify as such; they are generally not subject to racism in the way that, say, African-Americans are, most are mixed race anyway, and most of them do not live on reservations. Many who do, are better off than many other Americans. So what grievances are

pieces like the BBC story really addressing? In Canada, I am aware that there are serious social grievances on some reservations, particularly in the far north, but it seems as though the Canadian government has gone a long way in recent decades to address these in a reasonable manner, by allowing Native American representatives to guide and execute policy as much as possible. Should this not be applauded and supported?

And whenever there are real grievances such as these, do we need to rewrite the entire history of European-Native relations in the most negative possible light in order to address them? Peel back the veneer, and we often find well-meaning white middle-class writers, whose cries of victimisation bespeak an essentialising racialism that they don't even recognise themselves. Would it not be more productive to be more nuanced, to acknowledge that there have been points of goodwill, friendship, positive communication and — shudder the thought — even mutual benefit, since the very beginning?

The real reason to perpetuate such a disastrously one-sided view, it seems, is if one is in a tiny minority of activists who has 'drunk the kool-aid' of Cultural Marxism — an ideology bent on bringing maximum embarrassment to Capitalism, Democracy, Western Civilisation and Europeans in general, in the vain hope that this will somehow bring about a sort of... what? Revolution? Really? Let's not be naive. The only reason to be this consistently, this unreasonably angry about things which happened centuries ago, is if one sees the entirety of experience through the lens of perpetual racism and victimisation, and crucially, if one does not believe in the power of democracy to correct these wrongs.

At base, such people do not believe in the democratic process. Marxists have always believed that a handful of self-appointed intellectuals are better suited to creating a 'good society' than the rough-and-tumble of real-world parliamentary debate. Has history taught them nothing? The ones who will really lose out if Anglophone democracy is further discredited are surely those people in the world who are most vulnerable and in need of protection. Do you wish to provoke an even wilder right-wing reaction to your irrational hate-mongering than we have already seen? Do you think that the autocrats you are emboldening will treat minorities and homosexuals better than the United States, Canada, and Britain? The Cultural Marxist's finger, once again, is pointed in precisely the wrong direction.

It is high time that historians spoke out against the dangerous misuse of history which supports the zealotry and iconoclasm currently emanating from our educational systems. This has become far too culturally dominant, far too damaging to global society, for us to ignore it any further. In the name of science, fairness, level-headedness, humanity, and democracy itself.