

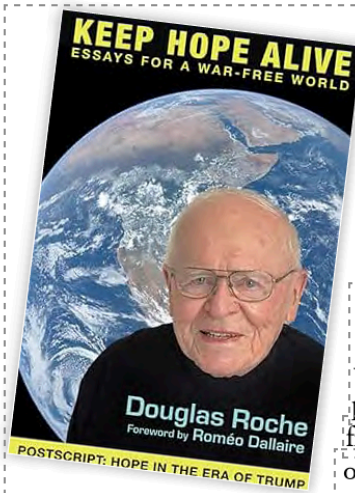
Keep Hope Alive A Call for Hope: Fresh Messaging from Douglas Roche

By Douglas Roche;

I was asked to write a review of Ambassador Douglas Roche's latest book *Keep Hope Alive* and more specifically the addendum which he penned in the light of the chaos with which Donald Trump and his team have been "flooding the zone" in domestic and international context. Some of that chaos, of course, involves Roche's beloved Canada, now in the Trump crosshairs for reasons more about presidential hubris than any sense that Canada has been "taking the US for granted" in economic terms and thus somehow or other "deserves" to be punished.

Before going any further, it is important for me to own up to a long and cherished relationship with Ambassador Roche, both at the UN and in Edmonton, Alberta where he lives and where I have visited frequently. Despite our spirited and at times diverging conversations about the role of the UN in global affairs, he trusted much of my advice both on the longer book and on this more recent addendum. I thought then and still believe that the audience which Ambassador Roche has assembled over a long career needed to hear from him again as the second and (in my view) more toxic Trump era got underway. I think that the quality of his reflections justifies both its writing and inclusion.

Hope is, indeed, an important dimension for those, like myself, who have watched the dissolution of values



and institutions which admittedly did not always bring honor to themselves, did not always inspire us to a better version of ourselves but which nevertheless provided a framework for our aspirations as a people, a people determined to avoid

a return to what some might call the "jungle." Regrettably, our current political and cultural iteration is too-often defined by ignorance, violence and self-interest, a condition which enables a craving for superstition and distraction, which creates gods in our own image and then unleashes the force of that heresy on the vulnerable and the "different," which consigns those with political authority to cowardice and acquiescence, giving pride of place to career and its benefits rather than to service and its sacrifices.

As Ambassador Roche notes, the current poster child for our generalized decline is none other than Donald Trump himself, the man-child in his second and more dangerous leading role who has set in motion policies which have antagonized friends and partners, undermined science, summarily fired any number of essential workers and surrounded himself with racially unaware pseudo-Christians who are making a mockery of his own pretensions to merit-based governance.

But Trump himself is a consequence of our decline more than the author of it. He has exploited grievance that he did not create. He has stoked a toxic nationalism and ethno-centrism which has long been a feature of the

US national identity. He has elevated riches in a manner consistent with the worst of our prior robber baron eras, prioritizing wealth as the lone success worthy of both honor and privilege, including the privilege to purchase seats at the head table of governance. With a toxic narcissism that some of his followers have literally canonized, Trump has succeeded at vindicating the darker side of my country, darkness that he may or may not understand as he seeks to exploit it, but that he surely inherited more than created.

Given all this dysfunction, it is important at this moment for us to recognize that hope is a practice more than it is a sentiment. It ultimately has little in common with the "positive fatalism" with which it is often mistaken, that "optimism" which assumes that everything will work out in the end, work out without struggle, without mindfulness, without intention and effort.

Especially in this time, the practicalities of hope are essential to keep in front of us. A genuine hope is that which allows the power associated with our aspirations to generate energy, even passion in ourselves. That for which we hope takes up living space within us, calling us to move our hands and feet and not just our mouths, to move in the direction of our deepest longings with courage, intentionality and humility. Hope is not comfort food so much as energy drink, fuel for living and, if we are so called, living for others.

As Ambassador Roche knows well, fatalism in any form is not hope, nor is it a recipe for constructive, sustainable change. The chapters and addendum in *Keep Hope Alive* attest to the range of his commitments, the depth of his faith, the passion he shares about the UN and other institutions which he knows could do better in implementing mandates and connecting with constituents. If our "long journey of humanity" is to

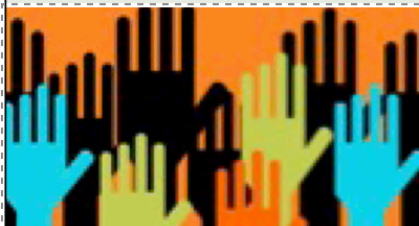
PEACE REVI

result in a genuine culture of peace, or even something just this side of human ruin, we will better aspire to follow Ambassador Roche's example of thoughtfulness, attentiveness, generosity and perseverance. The stakes are sky high now whether we choose to acknowledge them or not.

Ambassador Roche believes that we as a species can still build a "culture of peace" which affirms the best of ourselves, which forces us to acknowledge, so far as we are able to discern, that we humans are an integral factor in the nurture and maintenance of God's created order. May it be so. ■

Reviewed by Rober Zuber, a peace activist in New York.

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