The Leaderless Revolution: Carne Ross (Now with Podcast link)

blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2011/09/08/the-leaderless-revolution-carne-ross-lseross/

Carne Ross was a successful British career diplomat who is now an anarchist. How'd that happen?

His new book Leaderless Revolution is an exciting narrative of his change from an apologist for Her Majesty's Government on Iraq and WMDs to an independent diplomatic consultant who advocates a new world order based on people power. So in that sense, it is an apologia, history and manifesto wrapped into 231 pages of politically passionate prose.

Put very briefly, he argues that we can't trust governments. This is not news, but he makes the case that this is particularly true because we live in a world where problems are just too complicated for one government – let alone a global organisation like the UN with 150+ members – to solve. Climate change is his best example. He says that Jackson Pollock's paintings are a better metaphor for politics today, than say, chess.

So, Ross argues, we should look at the growth of people doing it for themselves. Study the Arab Uprisings and we see how radical change is increasingly coming from movements that don't have regular organisational form. There is a new kind of politics out there, writes Ross, it can't guarantee success, but it offers a more ethical and practical hope than conventional politics.

Ross admits that this is idealistic and won't deliver overnight solutions but he offers some principles for action that can advance the cause: 'use non-violence' 'consult and negotiate' etc. At the end he makes a plea that we accept that we live in an uncertain world: 'Our dream of safety must disappear'.

I have a lot of sympathy for Ross' point of view and I have been exploring some of the same ground in relation to media and politics. In this post about the Arab Uprisings I talked about how factors such as 'diffuse dissent', 'strong weak ties', created a kind of leaderless revolution that exploited 'networked power'. Since then I have made other attempts to try to understand how social media is changing governance.

Download the podcasts here