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BEST POLITICAL BOOKS OF 2017

Steve Bannon and the Bolsheviks offer Daniel Finkelstein some alt reading

Daniel Finkelstein

November 25 2017, 12:01am, The Times



Donald Trump's victory is mulled over in Hillary Clinton's surprisingly entertaining memoir
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Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine

by Anne Applebaum

What better way to celebrate 100 years since the Bolshevik coup this Christmas than this horrifying book on where it all led.

Anne Applebaum, the leading historian of Soviet crimes, uncovers how the combination of Stalin's stupidity and cruelty caused millions of people in Ukraine to starve to death. The way in which, having removed all the food and all the seeds, the Soviets blamed the disaster on kulak sabotage, moves one to anger, while the description of hunger and death moves one to pity.

Allen Lane, 512pp; £25

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question the conventional view that by the time a prime minister calls an election, the outcome is broadly decided. And when the studies are made, this book will be used as source material. Written by two political correspondents (Ross for Bloomberg, McTague for Politico) it is an insider account in the American style, with lots of detail on personal relationships, and even what people had to eat (the PM served chicken lasagne with boiled potatoes to her strategists). Anyone who wants to re-experience election night — with that dramatic exit poll — will enjoy this blow by blow account.

Biteback, 480pp; £14.99

What Happened

by Hillary Rodham Clinton

The campaign memoir of a defeated candidate is an unlikely source of entertainment or insight. And this is doubly so of one written by Hillary Clinton, because she is famously unrevealing and relentlessly political. But *What Happened* is spirited, well written and informative. It is not necessary to entirely buy her theory that the Russians and the FBI did for her in last year's presidential election to find this book worthwhile. She still makes some thought-provoking points and the descriptions of the campaign are fun.

Simon & Schuster, 512pp; £20

The Influential Mind: What the Brain Reveals About Our Power to Change Others

by Tali Sharot

In every chapter of this book about social psychology, its neuroscientist author manages an insightful and discomfoting observation about the human mind. She challenges some common ideas (warning about the wisdom of crowds, for instance), while reinforcing others (that we are not good natural statisticians). And it's illustrated with good examples. Her section on how instant feedback changes behaviour will leave you wondering about people's unwashed hands in every

MENU

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of the Presidency

by Joshua Green

Not long after the publication of this book on Donald Trump’s campaign, its main protagonist, Steve Bannon, fell victim to a palace coup and left the White House. Does that mean the book is no longer worth bothering with? Not a bit of it. This is an invaluable history of how the right started to realign the Republican Party around nationalism. For as long as that battle continues — and that will probably be a long time — reading Joshua Green’s book will be instructive. And it bounces along as well.

Scribe, 288pp; £14.99

The Five Giants: A Biography of the Welfare State

by Nicholas Timmins

Why make a book that was first published in 1995 one of the political books of the year? Because this third edition of the classic history of the welfare state adds 16 years to the previous account. Anyone who hasn’t read *Five Giants* will want to start at the beginning, particularly for the excellent account of the founding of the NHS. But those with previous editions will find, for instance, the e

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William Collins, 8

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BOOK OF THE WEEK

Review: What Happened by Hillary Rodham Clinton

Daniel Finkelstein

One Friday, about three years ago, I received a call. Hillary Clinton was