

We'd Heard It All Before

We should have seen it coming. It was right there in front of us. We all said that, but by that time it was too late.

The signs were everywhere. Oh, they were subtle, and so it didn't seem as if things were out of the ordinary, but then the indications started popping up like weeds.

At first we simply ignored them, thinking that they were just aberrations that would fade away and be forgotten. Who could take them seriously, we asked ourselves, because it all seemed so improbable, so ridiculous.

Of course there were the alarmists that tried to alert us to what was happening, but the alarmists were regarded as, well, alarmists. We'd heard this kind of thing before, the predictions of doom and gloom, predictions that never panned out. They seemed to be false prophets, basing their admonitions on speculation and paranoia.

So went on with our lives, went to all the familiar places, did the things we ordinarily did, listened to the pundits that debated whether or not what this thing that seemed to be happening was indeed a thing, or simply a rather indigestible flavor of the day, as they would call it, forgotten tomorrow or the next day. We listened to them and felt reassured—not without a measure of concern, naturally, but all in all, we slept easily, believing that this was something that sooner or later would flame out, fall by the wayside, just empty rhetoric, to be consumed by and rejected because of its inherent irrationality. Quite frankly, we'd heard it all before. However, as time went on the rhetoric we'd dismissed grew louder, more strident, a constant drumbeat, and this thing became more pervasive, more present. It now seemed as if everyone was talking about it, taking sides, posturing, debating its merit, as if it truly had merit.

There were those of us who spoke up for us, logically and thoughtfully, and we were heartened by their eloquence, and we believed that surely a measured, reasonable approach to this looming threat would be recognized by all.

This was not the case. Even among our own ranks some of us began to display a grudging tolerance, if not acceptance, as if the situation we found ourselves in was an eventuality, inevitable, and we had best learn to tolerate it, to live with it.

Live with it? Those of us principled holdouts at first became disheartened, then indignant at these turncoats. We called them hypocrites, Judas's. Walls went up between us. Friendships were forgotten.

Before the alarmists headed for the hills they cried, we told you so. We should have listened.