

Democratic Nominee Will Have To Justify an Appalling Administration



by Conrad Black

Peggy Noonan, the eminent *Wall Street Journal* columnist and much remembered crack speechwriter for Ronald Reagan, does not take it personally that I cite her as a bellwether of comparatively civil Trump-hate, and we agree that we will surely be supporting the same presidential candidate in 2028.

From time to time in this space I have referred to her latest

anti-Trump eructations, from her gasp of relief that the Wagnerian monster had been slain in 2020, then a matronly solicitude for those Republicans having trouble shaking the Trump habit, followed by various states of alarm ranging from the hope that only one or two Republicans would challenge Trump for the nomination so as not to divide the Republican opposition to him, to the more recent enthusiasm for an unlimited number of candidates to create chaos in the race.

In the Journal on July 8, she asserted that the majority of Republicans don't want Trump to run, which she knows is not what the polls show, and patted herself on the back for ducking a question from a pro-Trump friend about some of Mr. Trump's successes as president with the rejoinder that "Trump is a bad man." With that, she purported to find "similarities in the cults around both" Mr. Trump and Napoleon.

Yes, Napoleon, who is widely regarded as the greatest military genius and one of the most talented administrators and most compelling and fascinating personalities in all of history. Of course, this is not the Napoleon she is invoking. She got her Napoleon from my late dear friend of 35 years, British historian and commentator Paul Johnson, a wonderful but irascible and erratic man who either loved or loathed.

In the case of Napoleon, a subject Johnson addressed in a series of short histories sponsored by the late publisher George Weidenfeld in which many of us participated, Johnson fulminated throughout his 40,000 words that we were allocated, and gave the British view of 200 years ago that Napoleon was a proto-Hitler who was a threat to civilization and was solely responsible for all of the deaths that resulted from the seven wars of coalitions bankrolled by the British, just as surely as Hitler was responsible for the 12 million Holocaust victims and many millions of World War II civilian and military combat dead. (Mozart, Churchill, and Eisenhower were Johnson's good-guy subjects; quite right too, but Napoleon deserved more balanced treatment and generally receives it.)

There is a growing group of British historians, most recently Andrew Roberts in his brilliant biography, and a majority of historians in other European countries, that admired not only Napoleon's uncontested genius, but his ability to turn the terrible bloodbath of the French Revolution into a force for greater solidarity among the European nationalities, a higher standard of public administration, including the French Civil Code, than Europe had had before, and the beginning of the end of the absurd and ultimately catastrophic organization of Europe by a tiny group of interrelated and generally incompetent royal families.

I am one of the many students of the period who believe that a durable peace could have been made with Napoleon in about 1806, which would have kept a reasonable balance of forces in Europe, left the British Empire completely serene, resurrected Poland a century before it actually occurred, and prevented Bismarck from uniting Germany and enabling it in the twentieth century to overrun France, tear Russia to its vitals, pose a mortal threat to Britain, and conduct mass murder throughout Europe.

Yet none of this has anything to do with Donald Trump. She might as well compare him with other famous personalities of various nationalities and occupations with whom he had almost nothing in common, such as Arturo Toscanini, Babe Ruth, Gabriele D'Annunzio, King Farouk, Beau Brummel, Kublai Khan, Croesus, Harry Houdini, or Peter the Hermit.

Even Ms. Noonan has given up hope of trying to advise Mr. Biden how to seem like a real president. She discloses the cold terror of all anti-Trumpers in urging him to say: "I have done the job set for me by history: I removed Donald Trump and saw to the ravages of the pandemic," and retire.

It's not as simple as that; Mr. Biden was nominated by the Democratic Party bosses as an un-frightening figure to set atop Bernie Sanders' socialist program and to hide in his

basement while the Democratic machine staged an epic triumph of ballot harvesting. He didn't see "to the ravages of the pandemic;" he aggravated them even after Trump had produced a vaccine three years ahead of what had been projected.

Yet her concern is justified: the weary and befuddled people of the great United States of America simply cannot notionally look themselves in the mirror next year and reelect a senescent, sticky-fingered, ill-tempered, spavined, pocket-borough political wheelhorse who in his prime had trouble with the truth, elemental elocution, and complex issues, to four more years as president. Presumably the same puppeteers, fixers, and election managers who picked Joe Biden out of the ditch three years ago after he came fifth in the New Hampshire primary with 11 percent of the vote, and installed him as the candidate, can execute the same trick in reverse.

It will be a little more complicated to give Kamala Harris the sack, though it is hard to imagine that any person with an IQ in double figures imagines that she would be a competent president. Presumably the racial and gender complexities could be dealt with in the composition of a new ticket.

The Democrats are not brimming over with presidential talent; California's governor, Gavin Newsom, is a glib lightweight presiding over a pitiful disintegration of a great state and the Democrats are sure of California's electoral votes anyway. There must be a few Democratic senators and governors, including some females and non-whites, who could be launched quickly.

I don't much care for them myself, but Michigan's governor, Gretchen Witmer, and the House minority leader, Hakeem Jeffries, are among those who would at least be plausible to run for national office; there must be others.

That doesn't solve the problems of the Trump-haters. Whomever the Democrats nominate will have to try to justify this

appalling administration. It seems to be finally moving to try to reduce the flow of illegal migrants a little, and inflation is subsiding, but after terrible damage to the buying power of most American households. There is no visible moral authority to sponsor a move towards peace in Ukraine, both the Mideast and Far East have been dangerously mismanaged, and the green terror has victimized much of the country without achieving anything for the environment.

Donald Trump is not the same person that the Trump-haters started out with: he rarely says anything that needs to be walked back and every American knows that the country was in more capable hands with him than with Mr. Biden. It will be much harder to steal the next election with millions of unverifiable ballots or to stampede public opinion with media-led defamatory primal scream therapy. The country remembers Trump-Russia and the other frauds and smears and has seen the corruption of the politicized justice system. Even people who don't like Mr. Trump want a fair election. That is the Democrats' biggest problem.

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