

Deplorable Elites

by Conrad Black

While I have consistently dissented in this column and elsewhere from extreme versions of the anti-Trump barrage across the American and international media, he was not my first choice for the Republican nomination, and I have tried not to close the door prematurely on the election. The antics of the Democrats and their noisiest sympathizers in the last ten days have made any effort to retain a glimmer of hope that Mrs. Clinton might survive as election-worthy all the way to November 8 very challenging. Her reference to half of Donald Trump's supporters as "deplorable" is now old news, but the analysis of the implications of the assertion has been threadbare in the almost unanimously anti-Trump media. Mrs. Clinton regretted that she had so described half of his supporters: her retraction was on her arithmetic, not her characterization of tens of millions of Americans.

This is a familiar pattern, in media treatment of the clumsy assertions or asides of candidates, and in Mrs. Clinton's response to her own errors. In 2008, Barack Obama was inspired by a campaign trip to Pennsylvania to disparage those who in their ignorance and redundancy were sustained by religiosity and a love of firearms. The media almost uniformly failed to remark that this was a bit rich coming from someone who sat for 20 years in the pews of the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, listening to his assertions that AIDS was a white conspiracy and then that the terrorist attacks of September 2001 were not an unjust chastisement of the United States; or that firearms had little to do with unemployment.

In 2012, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney mentioned in what he took to be a closed meeting that the Democrats were bidding for the votes of all 47 percent of the American electorate that receive some form of state benefit,

leaving only the slightest margin for a Republican victory. (In fact, he had a won election after the first debate and then managed to blow it, and not because of this utterance.) The media view of Romney was that he had insulted half the people and pitched to racist and class-antagonist impulses. He was not hated by the media as a threat as Trump is, since the latter has succeeded despite them and denounced their biases, to the approval of very many voters.

The most severe strictures the vast hallelujah chorus of the Clinton media echo chamber could muster were that “deplorables” was a poor choice of words, and a minor gaffe, not at all comparable to Mitt Romney’s heinous mass slur about the 47 percent. (Democrats should have been more grateful to have so feckless and defeatist an opponent as Romney.)

The media are so stung by the billions of dollars’ worth of free exposure they have given the Republican candidate – on the false assumption that the public would be as repulsed by Trump as the lumpenliberal and highbrow-conservative media are – that they have taken, especially on CNN, to announcing for hours that they will be covering a Trump speech, to build their audience, and then cutting out of the speech after three or four minutes. As Mr. Lincoln said, “You can’t fool all of the people all of the time.”

It is clear that there is no Democratic campaign except Trump-fear, and waiting for Trump blunders and relying on the media clique to tear him apart before the whole country. For several weeks, there have been no Trump blunders; they were useful for rousing the Archie Bunker vote, which increased Republican primary turnouts by 60 percent, with the added benefit of inflating Democratic overconfidence. There have been Clinton blunders and unseemly media efforts to minimize or ignore them, and ever greater recourse to the argument that neither is a good candidate but that Mrs. Clinton is reliable and capable and a reassuring personification of continuity, while Trump is nightmarishly unacceptable for reasons too well known

to mention.

But there are no such reasons, now that he is taking care to be explicit, and to speak moderately and in syntactically correct sentences. It is the reverse of the old fable about the king having no clothes. The Republican candidate is fully clothed: He is not naked to his enemies and is not committing indiscretions. And with each week, Mrs. Clinton appears more firmly anchored in the quagmire of all the mistakes with which she has been complicit, these 20 years, while her opponent has been operating his business, albeit not without some controversy.

It is not possible that there is no element of accumulated public resentment of Clinton-Obama presumption, in the narrowing, now about even, polls. There was a foregone conclusion that it would be a Democratic landslide, even by a group of distinguished Democratic historians with whom I appeared on the Fareed Zakaria CNN program on the eve of the Republican convention, who reproached the Republicans for not deserting their hopeless candidate as that party had Barry Goldwater in 1964. I suggested, to blank stares and stammered responses of incredulity, that this election was not so one-sided as they thought and that the Republicans could not be blamed for not doing all they could to ensure the eradication of their party by the Democrats. (In 1964, Goldwater trailed Lyndon Johnson in the total vote by almost 23 percent.) As the Democrats' overconfidence melts, their desperation is becoming palpable.

The *New York Times* attacks Trump every day, last week stooping to a complaint that he had availed himself of some tax reductions as a developer, without mentioning that the New York Times Company had done the same to the extent of almost \$30 million. Bret Stephens wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* on September 13 that Trump's expressed desire to reintroduce the civil tort of defamation was a threat to freedom of expression. The right of free expression is not the right to

defame and neither the authors of the Constitution nor any other civilized country in the world would hold that it is. The frenzied animosity to Trump among the ruling political and media harpies is essentially a frightened attachment to the cocoon of the Bush-Clinton-Obama incumbency, where the power elite is immovable and the most senior positions are passed around a few families for decades on end. In such a culture, propped up by a docile media, a threat to the right to defame is a horrifying assault on civil liberties.

It is a related symptom of the problem that the continuing indulgence of President Obama's rewriting of history in a way entirely satisfactory to America's enemies is generally overlooked by the media. There was practically no dissent at his censure of Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt over their "autocratic" direction of the Western Allied war effort, "brandies in hand," in World War II. They snatched victory from the jaws of defeat and were the two greatest democratic leaders in the world in the last 150 years, since Lincoln. Obama even dissembled about sending back to the British the bust of Churchill that had been in the Oval Office.

Obama apologized for Truman's use of the atomic bomb, which saved the Allies a million casualties, and Japan probably 2 million casualties. And he apologized for President Eisenhower's role in removing Mohamed Mossadegh as leader of Iran. (Mossadegh was a lunatic who almost bankrupted the country. It was Carter's complicity in the removal of the Shah that was disgraceful.) These disparagements are not greatly less outrageous than Joseph R. McCarthy's infamous claims that Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, and General George C. Marshall, all among the nation's most distinguished leaders, in peace and war, were Communist dupes.

Two weeks ago, the president spoke in Laos and condemned the dropping of 2 million tons of bombs by the United States on Laos during the Vietnam War, more, as he said, than were

dropped on Germany and Japan during World War II. The media failed signally to put this assertion into context: Under the Laos neutrality agreement negotiated by the Kennedy administration in 1962, the country was turned into the Ho Chi Minh Trail – a superhighway for the invasion of South Vietnam by the North. Richard Nixon said at the time that the Laos agreement was just “Communism on the installment plan.” Ninety-eight percent of American bombing was on the Trail, and there was no significant damage to the Lao civil population; the Lao government did not seriously object to the bombing, as it was the only restraint on the Communist Pathet Lao movement and its North Vietnamese backers.

Of course, Mrs. Clinton and President Obama are not interchangeable, but she identified entirely with and was the chief executor of his foreign policy for four years, and is glued to him like a limpet now. It is all part of the practice, clearer each day, that there is no defense for, and comparatively little serious media criticism of, this long, cliquish incumbency that has produced disasters in every policy area for 20 years. With Mrs. Clinton, from Whitewater and the White House travel office, through Benghazi, the squalor of the Clinton Foundation’s pay-to-play casino and the e-mail debacle, it is always deny, prevaricate, “short-circuit” (i.e. lie), and then say it’s old news – “What difference, at this point, does it make?”

There was something in the “deplorables” comment that went beyond the familiar hauteur of left and right and profoundly rankled. What Mrs. Clinton was deploring was the ingratitude to the ruling elite of these bumptious unwashed, the updated dismissal of the gun-toting, churchgoing (Republican) rabble that so irritated Obama eight years ago. This wasn’t just good-natured criticism of the wrongheaded supporters of an opponent, or FDR’s cunning assault on nonexistent culprits as “money-changers,” “economic royalists,” “warmongers.” etc. This was Empress Hillary emptying the contents of her chamber

pot out the palace window onto the heads of those described in the phrase "We the people." The entire complacent incumbent Washington leadership are inviting the same people to give them a bloodless trip to the electoral guillotine. More-unexpected events have overtaken office-holders and office-seekers less deserving of such a fate.

First published in [Franklin Delano Roosevelt: Champion of Freedom](#) and