

The slanderous contempt for Donald Trump is unwarranted

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by Conrad Black



It has been disappointing to read of Canadian outrage at the treatment of 3M Corporation by the U.S. government, which interrupted its exports of respiratory masks. At the time, the scientific experts that U.S. President Donald Trump elevated to the vice-president's emergency task force (to protect himself from the frenzied attacks of the Democratic media and office-holders that he was a flat-earth philistine who opposed science in general), were telling him that the American health-care system could collapse under the weight of the coronavirus. The Imperial College of Medicine in London had helpfully predicted that it could kill over two million

Americans. The governor of New York was predicting a requirement of 40,000 ventilators, and the president had invoked the National Emergencies Act. An American company seemed to be selling to foreign countries articles required to save the lives of Americans. The administration's reaction was unexceptionable and no other national government would have acted differently. Fortunately, the projected death toll has been revised down drastically.

The media and office-holding Democrats want this crisis to damage the president politically so badly that he cannot win – this is their last chance to avoid the long-unthinkable re-election of Trump and they are lashing out in all directions. Mika Brzezinski on MSNBC opined last week that Trump was pushing hydroxychloroquine as a possible remedy because he might have a financial interest in it. Even in the United States where judicial interpretations of the Bill of Rights guaranty of freedom of expression have made defamation cases almost impossible to win, this was probably criminal slander, if the president wished to bother.



On April 2, Trump banned 3M from fulfilling its contractual obligations as Canada's sole supplier of essential N95 respirator masks. Justin Chin/Bloomberg

The U.S. administration quickly allowed the export of the masks to Canada. But there had already been a good deal of self-righteous vapouring in the Canadian media. The Globe and Mail on April 7 treated its readers to an editorial headed with the famous line of Michelle Obama and then Hillary Clinton: "When Trump goes low, we (should) go high." He wasn't going low and it wasn't an apposite source: the Democratic National Committee, and the Clinton campaign, in 2016 financed the pastiche of lies and gossip known as the Steele dossier and corrupted the U.S. intelligence services and the FBI into assisting in the propagation of it to try to defeat and then to hobble or remove Trump; i.e., they went lower than anyone in the history of American presidential politics. That was the

closest the United States has ever been to tanks on the White House lawn.

The Globe editorial concluded: Americans “have been ashamed (of Trump) for the better part of four years. A gesture of generosity on the part of Canada would be a reminder, to people of goodwill on both sides of the border, that this isn’t how the world is supposed to be. We’re better than this.” We’re certainly better than this pompous nonsense. Not only was the problem quickly resolved, the American political situation, as I have mentioned here before, is more complicated. Many Americans are embarrassed by Trump. He is a peculiar amalgam of Archie Bunker, John Wayne, George S. Patton and Leo Durocher (“Nice guys come last”), all recognizable American types, but none of them nor all together representative of the most companionable Americans. Foreigners like weak American presidents like Jimmy Carter and Barack Obama, except when they need American strength to protect them, as in the time of Franklin Roosevelt and intermittently since. And most of America’s allies have been freeloaders generously accepting an American military guaranty while completely failing in their commitments to contribute to the collective security of NATO, and Canada’s role in this in the last 25 years has been a disgrace. No less than most of the Europeans, we settle contentedly into thinking of the U.S. as a great St. Bernard that will do the work and take the risks while we hold the leash and instruct and scold. We are indeed, “better than this,” and so is the Globe and Mail. (I have known its editor for many years and he is a delightful and sensible man.)



U.S. President Donald Trump speaks about the U.S response to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic during an address to the nation from the Oval Office of the White House on March 11, 2020. Doug Mills/Pool via Reuters

This theme was trumpeted in the Globe (and elsewhere) for several days; on April 6, John Ibbitson wrote that “Team

Canada" was responsible for getting a new trade deal with the U.S., lamented Trump's "vandalism" and declared that "Trump and those who support him are no friends of Canada or of anyone else in the world." He came up with the unheralded 72nd anniversary last week of President Harry Truman signing the Marshall Plan for the economic reconstruction of Europe. (Lamentably few Canadians realize that Canada operated a parallel export credit scheme for Western Europe that was, for our size, equivalently generous to the American program.) If Ibbitson thinks President Truman and Gen. George Marshall (or prime ministers W. L. Mackenzie King and Louis St. Laurent) would have produced one cent of assistance for Europe if it were not for the Soviet menace, he's hallucinating. The relevant facts are that GDP growth per capita in the United States declined from 4.5 per cent under President Ronald Reagan, to 3.9 per cent under President Bill Clinton, to two per cent under President George W. Bush, to 1.5 per cent under President Obama. The elites, unaffected, didn't notice it, but the people and Trump, a populist billionaire, television star and impresario, did. The 20 years preceding Trump were the worst period of presidential misgovernment in the country's history: endless war in the Middle East to hand most of Iraq over to Iran and create an immense humanitarian refugee disaster, the greatest world financial crisis since the Great Depression, almost entirely generated by the Clinton and second Bush administrations, steady loss of ground in the world to China, a flat-lined "new normal" that included no growth in real income for more than half the people and, under Obama, higher rates of poverty and violent crime and a shrinking workforce.

Despite being encumbered with a fraudulent two-year investigation of election-rigging with the Russians, followed by a totally spurious impeachment carnival (in which Trump was accused of unimpeachable acts for which there was no evidence anyway), Trump has had, up to the current pandemic, the most successful first term in the country's history with the

possible exceptions of Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Richard Nixon. He has delivered on his promises of tax cuts, deregulation, drastic reduction of illegal immigration, better trade arrangements, constitutionalist federal judges, renovation of the military, the smashing of ISIL, revival of nuclear non-proliferation in respect of Iran and North Korea (which had swindled his predecessors), elimination of unemployment and net oil imports, reduction of poverty and violent crime and expansion of manufacturing and of the workforce. Trump has effectively, if histrionically at times, managed the public health crisis and produced an economic assistance package that will provide a swift restoration of pre-coronavirus prosperity. His punch-drunk Democratic opponents, to avoid the nomination of a raving Marxist, have had to elevate a spavined wheel-horse and they are heading for the last round-up.

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