

Is Trump Hitting His Stride on Coronavirus?

The president is showing true leadership in responding to the coronavirus.

by Conrad Black



The near-term future of America's physical and financial health now depends on weighing public-health and commercial data in a gigantic cost-efficiency study as disease and economic recession compete as the principal public enemy and the main call upon the nation's human and financial resources. This was a foreseeable stage but is on us more quickly than had been generally expected. In such an unprecedented crisis, the command decisions of the president will be determining, and he clearly signals that the time to choose is close. In this official process, where one would have hoped for bipartisanship and the smooth coming together of both parties

in the national interest, the Democrats have walked off the table, and their presumptive presidential nominee treated us to a waxen live-stream from a little podium in his living room in Delaware on Monday, a nostalgic dip into rank amateurism. Harry Truman's home movies from Key West in his Hawaiian shirts look more presidential than Joe Biden frantically signaling the cameraman with what he thought to be an invisible hand as he pretends to be an alternate president. And in Congress, the administration's \$2 trillion relief bill, backed by a \$4 trillion Federal Reserve liquidity facility, has been stalled for two days by the far-left House caucus that propelled Speaker Nancy Pelosi into the spurious impeachment fiasco. They are demanding concessions to labor unions, diversity requirements in employment standards among beneficiaries, the imposition of parts of the Green Terror, including large acquisitions of solar panels and windmills, abortion subsidies, and \$300 million for the National Endowment for the Arts, a worthy but at this point somewhat esoteric cause. This is profoundly unserious, and a bill will surely be agreed soon. The Democratic tactics will assure that the president gets all the credit for it.

The Trump-hating media and their desperate Democratic allies don't dislike the president any less because there is a public-health crisis, and their principal effort has been to stir up and maintain a state of public fear that grips the country while they snipe and carp at any shortcoming they can discover or invent in the administration's response to the crisis. The pure fiction that Trump had disbanded the federal government's pandemic response group is an example of that. So are attempts to blame Trump when individuals self-medicate disastrously when they have mistakenly thought they were swallowing a remedy the president had recommended. Now that the numbers of coronavirus sufferers are taking on a pattern, a possible ameliorative treatment of the coronavirus is being distributed in New York, and testing will increase to 150,000 people per day next week, the fearmongers are howling that any

relaxation of the virtual lockdown of the country will cause nightmarish numbers of needless dead. Some of those screaming this from the cyber-rooftops are doubtless sincere. But some are trying to provoke as much economic damage as possible to hang around the president's neck on Election Day.

The United States is now outdone only by Germany and Canada, among countries with sophisticated public-health systems that publish believable numbers, in the small proportion of reported cases who die from the coronavirus. This is 674 people out of 51,542 cases reported, as of late afternoon Tuesday, or 1.25 percent of identified cases, and if those who are immune-challenged are removed from that figure, the percentage descends to less than half of 1 percent of the identified cases. Even though most of the people tested appeared to have possible coronavirus symptoms, only a little more than 15 percent of those tested have tested positively. Because the United States is ramping up its treatment capabilities so quickly, it has an inordinate number of the world's reported cases, 23 percent of the world's new cases reported on Monday, though it only has about 4 percent of the world's population, but the world fatality rate is about 4 percent, more than three times the American rate. The disease is still spreading unavoidably, but if care is taken to insulate the elderly and infirm from contact, the mortality rate descends to a point not greatly above seasonal flu fatality numbers.

Though it is hard to be precise about it, less than 1 percent of the adult population of the U.S. have apparently reported coronavirus-like symptoms; of those, about 20 percent have been tested; of those, about a quarter have tested positive; and of those, apart from clearly vulnerable people, fewer than half of 1 percent have died. In epidemiological terms, this is a very serious penetration of the population by a very nasty virus, but it does not justify continuing the extreme restrictions on the economic life of the country, and

specifically this lethal threat to the economic well-being of tens of millions of Americans.

All lives are precious, and it is morally offensive to be forced to compare the cost in lives of the pandemic against the economic cost of extending maximum exposure-reduction measures. Democratic Party spokespeople are uniformly advising against premature relaxation of controls of travel and assembly as the president speaks of aiming for a staged reopening, starting with allowing people to go to church on Easter, April 12. The concern is that a premature relaunch of normalcy could bring a double-top on the virus and bring the fatality rates back up. Obviously, any return to normalcy will be in stages, and the next step in determining the way forward will be the president outlining the steps of restored economic life, which could vary between regions. As long as he can get a reasonable number of the scientific community, some of whom seem to have had a propensity to think the enemy is only a bacillus and not economic suicide, to agree that the steps he takes, sequentially and tentatively, are justifiable with careful monitoring, it will be hard for his enemies to ambush him. Psychotic media cases await any opportunity to tear the president to pieces, no matter the facts or the public interest.

To the intense irritation of his enemies, who have engaged in great merriment mocking the evolution of the president's views about the coronavirus and some of his communication lapses, he has led effectively, and the generally rather hostile Gallup polling organization reported on Tuesday that Mr. Trump has the support of 60 percent of Americans on this issue and has reached a high point of approval generally at 49 percent. The response to the absence of testing facilities and the mobilization of the resistance to the pandemic has been so swiftly and smoothly conducted with the governors irrespective of partisan matters, he is carrying and leading opinion, as he should. On Tuesday evening, he referred to winning the battle

with “the invisible enemy” and reaffirmed Easter as his target date for beginning to relax some restrictions, but was careful to put humanitarian concerns ahead of commercial ones. He had Dr. Anthony Fauci of the White House Coronavirus Task Force standing beside him and addressing the media, squashing reports that there were some key differences between them.

Anyone can see the progress the country has made in addressing this problem in the two weeks since it was really taken in hand, including the swift assembly of an astonishingly comprehensive financial-relief program. Joe Biden’s discountenanced performance as he connected with the nasty, noisy morons on the ghastly television experience *The View* on Tuesday is comprehensible: This was his sequel to the farce he delivered on Monday at the podium placed in his living room. President Truman spoke nothing but the truth when he said the buck stops with the president. At times like this it is an onerous burden that, if successfully discharged, rightly raises the status of the person who leads the nation successfully in great crises. The vivid Democratic contemplation of Donald Trump’s failure in this crisis is, with reason, giving way to the unspeakable fear of his success.

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