

Obama Defends Mob Rule

The former president effectively said that mob rule in what he thinks is a good cause is itself desirable and good.

by Conrad Black



President Barack Obama's address at the funeral of Representative John Lewis in Atlanta on Thursday, for the most part, was a moving tribute to a courageous pioneer in the civil rights movement. The total immersion in beatific praise that was accorded to the congressman throughout his prolonged itinerary between his physical death and actual burial was doubtless substantially deserved. (It does not allow for his dismissal of President Trump as "illegitimate," and other reflections that were unseemly coming from a man so much praised for his graciousness and civility.)

But embedded in Obama's eloquent eulogy were reflections on the current political condition of the United States that were untrue and could incite unjustified violence. It is certainly right and necessary to credit all those Americans who fought

for human rights and took great physical risks, and suffered in many ways as John Lewis did, and to praise them for their courage and for their idealism.

Without the great national achievement of civil rights, the claim of the United States to be a beacon of democracy and racial equality would be a fraud. And it is a part of the just recognition of that achievement that it should not be artificially minimized in service to current political arguments.

This is precisely what the former president was doing when he urged his listeners

to be vigilant against the darker currents of this country's history with the whirlpool of violence and hatred and despair that can always rise again. Bull Connor may be gone. But today we witness with our own eyes police officers kneeling on the necks of black Americans. George Wallace may be gone but we can witness our federal government sending agents to use tear gas and batons against peaceful demonstrators. We no longer have to guess the number of jellybeans in a jar to cast a ballot. But even as we sit here, there are those in power who are doing their darndest to discourage people from voting.

He added that he knew that "this is a celebration of John's life. There are some who might say we shouldn't dwell on such things. But that's why I'm talking about it. John Lewis devoted his time on this earth fighting the very attacks on democracy and what's best in America that we are seeing circulate right now."

In this passage, the president implied that it is a routine matter for white policemen to kneel on the wind-pipes of African Americans and strangle them. Of course, it is not and it is because all of the United States and the entire world were horrified by the video of what transpired in the death of

George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25 that the late upheavals occurred.

The former president effectively assimilated the disgusting racist brutality of 1960s Birmingham, Alabama public safety commissioner Bull Connor with the comparatively restrained actions of federal officials preventing mobs from tearing down statues to some of the great statesmen of American and world history and burning down the federal courthouse in Portland, Oregon, including its occupants. And he assimilates the reservations of the current administration to the clearly problematical implications of a huge transfer from individual physical voting to mail-in ballots, despite rich precedents of fraud and incompetence, to the systematic bigoted disenfranchisement of African Americans.

Although there are many (including myself) who think that Obama was not a successful president, there has never been the slightest suggestion that he was anything but a very intelligent man, and there is no doubt that he understood clearly the implications of what he was saying at the Lewis funeral. He knows from his own experience and his remarkable career better than almost any other person could the great strides that America and especially its African American population have made since the early days of the civil rights movement 60 years ago. He knows that it is outrageous nonsense, and in these times grossly irresponsible, for a former president to imply that the worst aspects of racial discrimination and official violence are apt to return.

And Obama certainly knows that the violence that he alluded to in recent weeks was not generated by peaceful protesters defending themselves against official oppression. The half-billion dollars of arson damage and the hundreds of millions of dollars of looting and pillaging in Minneapolis in the immediate aftermath of the death of George Floyd have absolutely *nothing* to do with the nonviolent pursuit of civil rights for which John Lewis was justly praised.

Since President Obama appears to have taken at least partial control of the Biden campaign, which is being conducted by the Democratic partisans who control 90 percent of the national political media—all in the absence of a physically and intellectually viable presumptive nominee—his stance must be taken as a semi-official position of the Democratic Party.

The Democrats, through their last elected president, are declaring urban terrorism, arson, manslaughter, pillaging, and the destruction of federal government monuments and buildings all to be justified protest. The former president effectively stated that mob rule in what he thinks a good cause is itself desirable and good.

And this may be assumed to be the content of his call for “our children to grow up in a democracy—not just with elections, but a true democracy, a representative democracy, a bighearted, tolerant, vibrant, inclusive America of perpetual self-creation.” This, presumably, is what Obama thinks he detected in weeks of mindless urban rioting and vandalism in June and July. It was certainly “vibrant,” but not at all “big-hearted, tolerant, or inclusive.”

Two days after Attorney General William Barr testified before the House Judiciary Committee that it was a shocking state of affairs when one of the two great historic political parties could not bring itself to declare its opposition to mob violence, the official former leader of that party effectively declared the Democrats’ sympathy for mob violence. It is perhaps slightly comforting to know that toward the end of his remarks, President Obama expressed his contentment that recent events have “taken our whole nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in the formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.”

One of the positions widely adopted by the rioters whose conduct so invigorated the former president is that

Washington, Jefferson, and Madison in particular were slaveholders undeserving of the admiration they have received from posterity. Of course, the American ethos was compromised at the outset by the acceptance of slavery, but both Washington and Jefferson were aware of its moral shortcomings; Jefferson called it "a fire-bell in the night." The other principal founders, including Adams, Hamilton, and Franklin, were abolitionists and saw that slavery needed to be addressed.

To the extent that he approves of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, President Obama creates some distance between his own views and those of Antifa and the more radical sections of Black Lives Matter. This is a small consolation, and the episode shows how terminally morally and intellectually decayed the Obama-Clinton-Biden Democratic Party has become.

First published in