

Trump Goes Into Super Tuesday

Each week as I prepare to write about something other than the primary season, a new hobgoblin pops up that compels me to stick with the same subject. The extent of the Trump insurgency in the GOP, but pulling many traditionally Democratic voters as well, has been amply publicized and his progress through the primaries is a familiar story. But the proportions of the hysteria of his opponents are ever widening.

At the outset was distaste and mockery and learnedly dismissive comments at the dinner gatherings of the socioeconomically prominent and the party “strategists,” confirming in their complacency that all would be business as usual despite the Donald *divertissement*. Shortly before New Hampshire, there came the first signs of incipient alarm. After New Hampshire, alarm became a minor epidemic – preschoolers coming down with the sniffles. Charles Krauthammer, who has been dignified and sensible throughout, said that the powers that be in the Republican party now “recognize the scale of the insurrection.” From his traditional graciousness, he exaggerated their cognitive faculties and even their sense of self-preservation. The indisputably knowledgeable Karl Rove assured us that Donald was actually down a few points from his pre-New Hampshire polls. Realism had entrained on the campaign track and was on its way.

So it was, but pulled by a much different and more powerful engine than had been imagined. South Carolina had been discounted in advance, but Nevada, with Trump taking nearly half the Hispanics, was a violent shock. Every alarm bell in the country rang. Governor Chris Christie of New Jersey (who could have had the nomination and the election four years ago if he had listened to the entreaties of Nancy Reagan, Rupert Murdoch, Henry Kissinger, and many others), having exposed

Marco Rubio as an adolescent talking robot in a debate, announced for Trump and left the race with a well-placed parting shot. Senator Jeff Sessions of Alabama came aboard the Trump campaign, cracking the efforts of his majority leader, Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, who had already retreated within the sham-Alamo of the Republican old guard: the notion that Senate candidates could distance themselves from a nominated Trump and survive the inevitable Hillary victory. Karl Rove scrambled inelegantly within this quickly confected papier mâché defense: He would help rescue survivors after the Trump nomination and suicide election.

Rubio implied that Trump was, in the pauses in the debates, incontinent with fear. Ted Cruz, who had tried to marginalize Trump in a civilized way by calling him “a great entertainer” in the pre-South Carolina debates, now suggested that his tax returns would reveal connections to the Mafia. A coalition of the desperate grimly tried to lock arms. American history’s greatest, most successful, and most contemptible myth-maker, Bob Woodward, piously declared Trump a “neo-fascist.” He was accused of running a fraudulent university, of engaging foreign workers on construction projects 30 years ago, and of having a meaningful dalliance with David Duke and white supremacists including the KKK. To judge from polls in the last days of February, all of it has failed. Polls show Trump in the 40s, and at almost 50 percent nationwide in the last poll (CNN-ORC) before Super Tuesday.

Those who serenely uttered the political equivalent of “the economy is fundamentally sound” after the first tremors, and who advised passengers that a lifeboat drill would do no harm but was not necessary, were now incanting the less tranquilizing words “Abandon ship! Every man for himself.” The pros and sniggerers, so long in charge that they cannot rise or be evicted from their places without ripping their trousers or dresses off, while struggling to avoid indignities, have yielded to the pseudo-sociologists.

Ross Douthat in the *New York Times* – which has been quite composed, presumably because it sees the rise of Trump as favorable to the electoral prospects of Clintonian liberal Democrats (it endorsed Christie and Clinton as nominees) – decried the vulgarization of the political process that has facilitated “Caesarism,” of which Trump is an exemplar. Douthat blamed the celebrity culture: “You’re Fired” is about to run its course and become *The Gong Show* in the White House. This is rubbish from a distinguished columnist, wrapped in what non-classicists might imagine to be a recondite recourse to ancient history. Douthat didn’t mean a real Caesar, like Julius or Augustus, or the less creditable later Caesars (Tiberius, Caligula, Nero). He meant a gimcrack popular figure who fulfills the Monty Python promise of “something completely different” – a demagogue who is not a hypnotizing speaker, a billionaire who is not spending any significant amount of money, a bombastic egotist reaching a rich harvest of support the more he is accused of presaging the destruction of the republic. All those complicit in the failure of American public life are running for the tall grass, belly to the ground and devil take the hindmost.

The ideological conservatives, including the leading editorial figures of *National Review*, whatever their reservations about Donald Trump’s presidential aptitudes, chiefly objected that he was hijacking the Republican party for a very dodgy centrism. The Left, while rejoicing in what Karl Rove and Mitch McConnell assure them is Republican Trumpian suicide, revile Trump as precisely the extremist some conservatives regret that he is not. They have all missed the point. Trump has become inevitable because he raised the issues that dared not speak their names: immigration and trade-based unemployment, as well as stupid wars and pathetic appeasement of America’s enemies, and the pusillanimous indulgence by Bush-Romney Republicanism of the enormities of the Carter-Clinton Democrats when not going them one better themselves.

It was inconceivable to the ruling cadres – the national media, the learned commentariat, vocal Hollywood dreamers, Beltway influence-peddlers, fat cats of every variety, that the middle and lower classes would not be gamed any more if they saw an alternative. Donald is the alternative; they are being weighed in the balance, and they will be found wanting.

This is another American Revolution: The people, in whose name all official acts are committed, took the disdain of those who have failed the nation as a flattering endorsement of Trump, and the frenzied defamation, by these same serial authors of misrule, as a legitimization of Trump. Sanders might have got some of this if he had not been a quasi-Marxist and a sanctimonious hypocrite offering greater bribes than anyone with the public's exhausted treasury (a trillion dollars of loan forgiveness for America's students).

But Donald Trump is the only candidate who passes the double test: He is not complicit in any part of the bipartisan, inter-branch policy disasters of the last 20 years that have cost trillions of dollars and tens of thousands of lives, and put the homes of millions of families throughout the land under a dark economic shadow. He, unlike the other candidates in both parties, is blameless in all this, and he has actually built something and knows how to run something. Some of the governors have governed their states well, but they have not built anything (and Jeb Bush and Chris Christie had other problems as well). John Kasich has been a successful governor and was a well-respected congressman, but he's a bit homely and corny to be president, though he has now risen distinctly above the potty-mouthed Rubio, and the snide dirty-tricks champion of the campaign, Cruz.

The *Wall Street Journal*, in slavish obedience to the wishes of its chairman, Rupert Murdoch, has attacked Trump for imprecision, vindictiveness, reticence on his tax returns, and shabby hiring practices, and it has darkly warned that Mrs. Clinton will exploit Trump's shortcomings. All polls indicate

that tonight, Donald Trump will sweep almost everything except Texas and will be about even with Cruz in Texas. The people have had it; they do not really care about precise details; they don't believe any of it anyway, having heard it all before. They want a leader who will be a new broom, sweep clean, see it plain, and do it right. They are tired of self-serving mendicants pandering to voting blocs. Barring a disastrous stumble, only the Trump coronation awaits. Cruz and Rubio are hors d'oeuvres; he will swallow the bedraggled and discredited Hillary whole. They are the people, and they are always right.