

RAVAGED DEMOCRACY

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I've watched the CNN report last night on the "Trump Insurrection" of January 6th. I have some items to comment on, but I suppose that you're as weary of "Trump...Trump...Trump" 24/7 as I am. So this will be a brief note on how I'm thinking about interpreting the recent events and the possible near-future events.

The questions I will ask here all spring from my observations on the television news's documentation of the day of the insurrection and on tonight's CNN program. The main question that arises for me is this: Were the Capitol Police, the FBI, and other law enforcement officers who were present during the storming of the Capitol building acting in accord with some set of Rules of Engagement or with direct orders from their commanders? If so, what were those rules or orders?

As I watched again the surreal footage from outside and inside the Capitol, I was dumbstruck by the way the officers responded to the rioters. At the doors into the Capitol building, the officers put up stiff resistance to the onslaught of rioters—a fight which took the life of one Capitol Police officer. However, inside the building the officers acted with deference, even neighborliness, toward the rioters as the intruders pushed their way into the building by brute force. One still photo of the event showed a youngster taking a selfie with a cooperating officer dressed in helmet and riot gear.

I was astounded that although many of the officers were pictured with batons and with sidearms, they did not appear to use them on the rioters

once the vandals were inside the building. I understand that the officers were overwhelmed by the sheer, seemingly endless surge of rioters. But I also took note of the film of the FBI officers who had blockaded with furniture a set of doors into the Senate chamber, and who had drawn their service weapons and aimed them at the intruders who were peering through the broken windows at them. This scene happened to have been recorded both from inside the chamber and from outside the blockaded doors. The footage from outside the doors—from the rioters' perspective—showed the vandals breaking out the glass of a window set into one of the. When the window was completely broken out, a woman rioter climbed up and began to climb through the opening. She was standing on the bottom sill of the opening, when she suddenly fell backwards into the crowd of rioters. She had been shot, I believe twice, by an officer inside the chamber.

She lay on the floor, severely wounded. There was a sudden hush among the vandals, as the reality of the possible consequences of their action struck them. The voice-over in this clip reported that paramedics arrived shortly afterward to care for her, and the next film clip showed the paramedics rolling her off the Capitol grounds and into an ambulance. But most impressive to me was the stunned "What happened?" look on the faces of people who just ten seconds before were shouting at voice-top and pushing—and being pushed from behind—against the Senate chamber doors.

When I saw the clip of the paramedics loading the injured woman (who later died of her wounds) into the ambulance, I paused to wonder how the paramedics got from the parking lot a hundred yards or more from the Capitol into the building, hauling with them their gurney. Did they enter by a secret door and go up to the correct floor on a service elevator unknown to the intruders? Or did the whole invasion on the Senate side of the building suddenly stop to let the paramedics and the gurney pass through the mass

of rioters and then through the police resistance lines—you know, “Excuse me...Excuse me, please. We’ve got an emergency on the next floor up. Step aside, please.” “Oh, sure. Make way for the paramedics, guys! There you go.” “Thanks, pal.”

As I watched the rioters, it was clear that among them were people with various intentions and levels of willingness to act. Among these types of fellow-citizens, I discerned the following groups:

1. Trained Insurgents. Some of these were U.S. military veterans, I suppose, and some were members of paramilitary groups who spend their weekends in hidden camps in the woods on the local mountain, training for insurrection. Also, I suppose some in this group were current law enforcement officers and firefighters, out of uniform, but ready to put their skills to use in the cause of Donald Trump and/or of their skewed notion of patriotism. – And it may have been sympathy with their Trumpian cause that prompted some of the on-duty Capitol police officers to behave toward them like partners in the cause, rather than like adversaries. – And then, I also remember footage at those same Senate chamber doors, I believe, from earlier in the invasion, in which three or four police officers were arm-in-arm, blocking the doors against a torrent of rioters. Then suddenly, they unlocked their arms and walked to the right of the doors, along the walls, and away. What caused this complete abandonment of their defensive position? I wonder if perhaps one of the rioters in front, close to their faces, said to them, “Look. I know you’ve got families, kids. But you also know why we’re here, to defend our nation, just like you. We don’t want to hurt you or kill you. But if we have to, to get where we need to go, we’ll have to. It would be better for your families if you came home tonight.” At that point, John Wayne would have emptied his .45 revolver into the front line of those *banditos*, but that’s not how it works in real life when

someone speaks your language to you like a brother. Real life works the way it worked in Tiananmen Square when that solitary man stopped a line of Chinese tanks by standing in front of them and talking. Maybe that's how it happened in front of those doors, as well.

2. Angry haters. Some people, some men especially, get off on expressing their unfocused anger and hatred by destroying people and objects. There seemed to be many such people in the mass of rioters that day. For them, I imagine the insurrection was a joyous indulgence in letting that anger and hatred rip. I suppose that it was these people who were trying to punch out the windows of doors which were open and faced a stone wall. "What the hell. I'll break it just for the hell of it." I suppose that it was largely these folks who initiated the hunt for Nancy Pelosi and for Vice-President Pence, who tore down the placard identifying Pelosi's office, and who trashed the Senate parliamentarian's office. Mindless people moved by the formative traumatic experiences of their childhood to act out their blind rage. Trump and his cause was just an excuse to have a good time letting that fury run rampant. – I imagine these were the guys clobbering police officers with the poles on which their Stars and Stripes were hung, and trying to pull the gas masks and face protectors off of police officers backed against walls and caught in sliding doors. It may be that police sidearms were not drawn more often precisely so that the cops wouldn't have to stand off against these guys, almost all of them certainly armed. These guys are the sadistic nasties. They live lives of hell and share their hell-blessings with others.
3. "Day-Trippers." That's an old hippie name for folks who go along for the ride, just to be with the people who are the source of the action. They had no intention of seriously doing any harm. They just wanted to be there and to observe the damage being done. So they armed themselves with cellphone cameras and took videos of all the action—

and also of all the visitors' sites, like the Rotunda and the sculpture gallery. They'll put their vids up on Facebook to show their envious friends that they were really there. -- They are the ones who walked in the visitors' path between the velvet ropes hooked to brass stands, so that on ordinary days, all the tourists could see and snap photos of the art, but no one could touch the works. Meanwhile, as the Day-Trippers were taking their selfies, the Angry Haters were unhooking the velvet ropes and carrying the brass stands away to use as battering rams.

4. People of Hope. These are the people who marched down Pennsylvania Avenue with the crowd of insurrectionists, because they believe what they hear on Fox News and from Trump himself. None of these folks climbed through windows in the Capitol building or ever thought of doing damage. They're of greater Christian purity than the destroyers, though they do not recognize themselves as such. They marched down the avenue, wearing their MAGA hats and carrying their "Jesus Loves You" signs (in case someone who needs that message could see it before their very eyes) because Trump told them to go to the Capitol to support and encourage the congresspeople who sided with Trump's claims about the rigged election. They stayed out of the turmoil in the Capitol building, praying as they stood on the sidewalks and watched, for these folks solve every problem by turning it all over to Jesus.
5. The Press. There were hundreds of press people in the crowd of rioters. They were not rioters themselves, but they were journalizing this historically important event. They often got caught up in the movements of the mob, and they had to work quickly and hard to avoid being swept away by the action of the moment, including episodes in which they were identified as journalists by the crowd, which then threatened to injure them.

One other clip is worthy of mention. To me it is the most tragic of all of them. A young man with a dark beard, perhaps in his thirties, shouted into the camera of the team interviewing him on the fly, "This is all *your* fault. We were peaceful, law-abiding citizens. *You* made this happen." The sorrow and regret in his voice and in his demeanor touched me. I saw him as a sensitive man, perhaps a hard worker and a good family man, who had believed Trump's spurious claims of voter fraud and was set into fury by what he saw and heard on his chosen media and social-media outlets. Now he found himself in the midst of an unimaginable chaos, in which he *knew* he was doing wrong along with the others, but he could not blame himself for this part in the harm being done because then he would have had to admit that he had been played by Trump and that the responsibility for what he was doing was all his own. To avoid admitting that he was guilty of the desecration he was witnessing around him, he blamed *you*. I don't know who he meant by that word, but I suspect it meant "everybody but me." I suspect that day will haunt him, whether he is prosecuted or not.

At the end of the CNN report was a clip that clearly brought my thoughts about the way the police acted to something of a conclusion. Reporters on the scene were interviewing individual rioters who were simply walking out the doors of the Capitol to go home. The fun was over for them. One reporter interviewed one of the participants, who said in effect, "The police were so cool! When we were walking out, they were standing at the doors, saying, 'Good night. Take it easy getting home.!'"

Having heard that, my questions about the police handling of the insurrection came to me vigorously again. This attack on the seat of the people's government was not an organized protest. It was an attack by a

mob of rioters. Nonetheless, the police officers who were caught inside the building seemed to take no aggressive action to quell the riot. In the building, many officers had batons, but few seemed to use them. In addition, thousands of angry, violent people were ravaging the building, and indeed two lives were lost during the conflict: one rioter was shot by police, and one Capitol police officer was beaten to death. (I don't know how the other three of the five claimed deaths occurred.) The lives of the defending police officers and of the congresspeople they were trying to protect were clearly at risk. And yet, only the two shots which killed the female rioter at the Senate chamber doors were fired.

In this event, the lives of police officers were clearly at risk from the rioters, who were beating the officers with their fists, with the battering instruments they carried, even with flagpoles! Why didn't the officers fire on their attackers? They had clearly more justification to defend themselves with deadly force against this chaotic mob than other officers had when they killed Rayshard Brooks as he was running away from arrest, unarmed, or Breonna Taylor, as she was sitting on her couch, also unarmed.

The Capitol rioters were in the act of committing felonies, including endangerment of law enforcement officers. Yet even when police reinforcements arrived several hours later, only a few rioters were arrested of the thousands who appeared to participate.

Here are some questions that need to be answered about the incident:

1. Why were the police officers within the Capitol building so lenient toward the rioters? Were they under orders to do so? If that is the case, who gave those orders, and what was the justification for them? If such orders were given, will the officer who shot the female rioter be disciplined for insubordination or indicted for killing her? – The police treatment of these vandals, namely, not drawing and firing on the mob

attacking them, not using their batons within the building, cooperating with the attackers in giving way to them, in standing by immobile as Confederate flags (symbols of treason against the American democracy) and pieces of vandalized public property were brazenly carried through the hallways, in participating in selfie photo-shoots (!), and when dinner time approached and the rioters' lust for damage and destruction had been sated, in allowing the rioters to leave the building freely, without attempting to arrest them, but rather, bidding them Good Night—this police treatment of these criminals contrasts sharply with the merciless and coordinated police attacks, just weeks before, quite nearby, of the peaceful and legal Black Lives Matter protestors, where police courtesy and friendliness were nowhere to be seen as the police broke up the demonstration in order that Trump could walk across the street that they were protesting in, to have a photo op of him holding a bible and thereby staining Christianity with infamy forever. – The questions beg to be asked: Was the difference in police treatment a matter of racism, since the BLM protestors were mainly Black and “defector” Whites, while the Capitol building invaders were mainly “patriotic” Whites? Or was the reluctance of the police officers on duty a matter of cowardice in the face of the enemy within? Were the officers simply unwilling to die for the legislators and the institutions which represent our living democracy, such as it actually is? Or did they hesitate to draw their weapons for fear that they would be out-gunned by the rioters advancing on them, yelling into their faces, and pushing them back into indefensible positions?

2. The second set of questions goes to the relationship between the Trumpian call to combat and the uniformed defenders of our democracy. Earlier in the day, Rudi Giuliani was the first “warm-up band” to be shown addressing the thousands of people who had assembled in

Washington at Trump's call. Giuliani seditiously called the crowd to challenge the Congress—in session at that moment to affirm the votes of the Electoral College that Biden had won the Presidency legitimately—with “trial by combat.” Then Donny Junior was shown, seditiously urging the crowd to be “heroes, not zeroes” when they marched on the Capitol. And finally, Trump spoke to them and frenzied them, urging them to “support” those congresspeople who had defended Trump's claim, and to “be strong” and to “overcome” those who opposed his claim to the Presidency.

At 2:00 pm, the mob breached the Capitol building. The force of 1400 Capitol Police officers who were on duty at that time—said to be among the best trained police officers in the nation, and all within a few minutes of the Capitol, if not already inside it—were unable to prevent the massive throng from breaking into the building. The chief of the Capitol Police, Steven Sund, stated that he had suspected days before January 6 that the crowd would be much larger than expected and had asked for the National Guard to be put on standby.¹ -- This report is in line with the report that since December 21, an Israeli citizen had been reading the social media chatter among the Trained Insurgents and the Angry Haters as they planned the attack of January 6. These people were openly making plans for an assault on the Capitol building, including a truck loaded with pipe bombs, and, he reported, they even had detailed plans of the building, including the locations of the offices and of its underground tunnels. But somehow, the Homeland Security people, including the director of the local FBI field office in Washington, said that they were unaware of this chatter, even though an ordinary citizen in a foreign country was able to access it—or else they willingly

¹ <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/former-capitol-police-chief-steven-sunds-request-for-national-guard-backup-was-denied-he-says-in-interview/ar-BB1cElx3?ocid=uxbndlbing>

dismissed it. In addition, senior officials of the FBI have reported that the agency was aware of the assault planning that was going on and had warned local officials, saying they could not explain the statements of the local field office chief.² (The finger-pointing has begun and the weakest will take the fall.) The NYPD intelligence people also sent a warning to the Capitol Police that violence was being planned for the January 6 march. In spite of all this prior information, no plans were made to reinforce the contingent of police guarding the Capitol building while Congress was in session there.—Chief Sund reported that the request he made for reinforcements prior to January 6 and on the day itself (a request he said that he made five times) were all denied by the Sergeants at Arms of both the House and the Senate, because “the optics were bad,” and also that his request that the Secretary of the Army approve the assignment of National Guard troops was at first denied because “the optics were bad” and then, an hour and a half later, was approved. The troops arrived at the Capitol at 5:40 p.m., long after the rioters had left the building.

Shortly after the rioters had left, the two congressional Sergeants at Arms and the chief of the Capitol Police, now under pressure by congresspeople who had feared for their lives, abruptly resigned. Will the reason for this calamity to the Republic and thus for their resignations again the well-worn myth of government ineptitude, where one hand not only doesn't know what the other is doing, but it doesn't know what it's doing, as well? That myth, despite occasionally being true, has served the bureaucracy well over the years. It runs like this. Some big guy in charge says, “Mistakes were made.” Then the whole case dissolves into promises of hearings or commissions to examine the

² <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/crime-courts/fbi-nypd-told-capitol-police-about-possibility-violence-riot-senior-n1253646>

event, but these hearings or commissions either never happen or never arrive at any actionable conclusion except to punish the fall guys. The upper guys are always protected. Are the two Sergeants At Arms and the Capitol Police chief, so low in the pecking order, the fall guys? Will the myth of government ineptitude be invoked again as a convenient and acceptable cover for the execution of a preconceived and intentional plan? Were these guys (up to and including the Secretary of the Army) just obeying orders from the Commander in Chief, who, it is said, was at the White House, relishing the show on his solid gold Hitachi TV?

3. The third and final set of questions has to do with the immediate future and with how to interpret data and actions which haven't yet befallen the Republic. As I write this, it is late in the evening of January 11. In nine days, Mr. Biden is scheduled to take the oath of office as the President of the USA. But our democracy has never been weaker nor more vulnerable to attack from the invisible enemy within and among us than it is in these days between the first insurrection of January 6 and the second, expected armed insurrections on January 16 through January 20, according to a bulletin published by the FBI today. This bulletin warned that very competent warriors, many of them veterans of our military, with battlefield experience, are planning to attack not only the federal capitol in Washington D.C., but also every one of the statehouses in the 50 states, between today and January 20. Assassinations are planned, according to this bulletin, not only of current Vice-President Pence, but also of President-elect Biden, Vice-President-elect Harris, and Speaker of the House Pelosi.

If any central federal facility is breached during these anticipated actions, such as the Capitol or the White House, or any of the people named above injured or killed by insurrectionists or their allies, we will be in a state of civil war, pitting the existing federal government (or

what is left of it), as well as each of us who are not active participants, against forces which may be difficult to identify in the light of day but will be clearly known by the results of their surprise attacks. The prospects of such a battle, carried on perhaps over months or years, with or without the assistance of our foreign adversaries, are unimaginable and will surely effect every citizen in one way or another. The insurgent side will be under the command, of course, of the man who currently calls himself President, with no limit on his tenure except his demise.

If, on the other hand, advanced planning and the forces used to defend the democracy against destruction are effective enough to quell the rebellion, the nation will be saved but shattered, broken in spirit, the economy in ruins, and as COVID-19 spreads across the landscape like lice in a kindergarten classroom, a race war may commence—in place of the then halted insurrection against the federal government—between White Supremacists and people of color, during which there will be no neutral civilians, only partisans.

If, on the third hand, all this speculating is far-fetched and Biden takes over the Presidency and the nation staggers through COVID and the inevitable continued economic recession, these questions are worth asking: Will all the attention shift to the prosecution of the insurrectionists who executed the attack on the Capitol and the predicted insurgencies on January 20? Or will the traitors to our democracy find their way back into the wilderness, Trump having pardoned them, and live to fight a slow, insidious war against the nation, similar to the endless and peaceless prospects for the Israelis and the Palestinians? Will the players who fomented the revolt against the democracy (in the name of democracy!), namely, Trump himself, Giuliani, Ted Cruz, Josh Hawley, Donny Junior, the rest of the 143

senators and representatives who were initially ready to challenge the Electoral College vote, including those who after the attack on the Capitol repented, and the other department heads and spies and advisors to the various planners of the revolt ever be prosecuted? My sense tells me that No, they will never be brought to justice. Only the fall guys, including the infamous faces of those leaders of the January 6 attack, will be punished. And those proceedings will be so highlighted in the media, both on the right and on the left, that all attention will be shifted away from the boys in the back room, who will remain untouched, as was the case in the John Kennedy assassination, with the press focusing on L.H. Oswald and Jack Ruby—a brilliant sideshow.

Will we ever come to peace with one another again? Biden will try to follow Lincoln's approach to rebuilt nationhood as he goes about trying to enact his vision of an equally participatory government for people of all skin tones and of all levels of income. We know from experience that he will accomplish far less than he foresees in the future he will try to bring about.

And in the background, Trump will always be there, like the cockroaches that come out in our apartments only in the dark and in the stillness, but are always there, prowling.

What prescription do you have for healing all this pain and hatred, and for reviving the nation? I can only suggest an effort among each and all of us to revive and strengthen the practice of the **Human Arts** of mutual respect, openness to one another, interest in each other and willingness to listen and to understand, compassion for those who are suffering, willingness to laugh with one another in genuinely shared humanity, and generosity.

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