

VOLUME XVIII, NUMBER 3, SUMMER 2018

CLAREMONT

REVIEW OF BOOKS

A Journal of Political Thought and Statesmanship



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A Publication of the Claremont Institute

PRICE: \$6.95
IN CANADA: \$8.95



PARTHIAN SHOT

by Mark Helprin



Charlottesville

SINCE THE EVENTS OF AUGUST 12, 2017, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA, has become infamous for something that it is not—a hotbed of racial strife. What happened? An “activist” high schooler was discomfited by an equestrian statue of Robert E. Lee. City Councilor Wes Bellamy, an Obama wannabe, ran with this until his project of removing the statue elided neatly with the broader racial polarization that makes Alinskyite hearts go pitter patter. This despite the fact that Mr. Bellamy, the Obama wannabe, had been caught in a series of racist and misogynistic declarations. No matter, he claimed, he had rather quickly become a different person.

Then, from all parts of the country even as far as what used to be California, the Nazis and the Klan came to town. In their signature event of the decade, they were able to leach from beneath the moron rocks only about 500 of themselves, of which perhaps four or five were locals. Yet the impression in the selectively inquisitive press was that 500 Nazis in a relatively small city were proportionally indicative of a metastasizing cancer throughout the nation.

There are about 10,000 Japanese restaurants, and perhaps 20,000 sushi chefs in the U.S. If 10% (i.e. 2,000) of them massed in Charlottesville demanding more salmon eggs, would this be indicative of a burning issue for America? Unlike sushi chefs, the Nazis, with their coyly bent “non-” swastikas, were looking to fight. Hundreds of them marched by torchlight on the night of the 11th, chanting “Jews will not replace us.” The slogan has a European pedigree, but, honest to Betsy, Jews have no desire to replace them. And if by “us” they mean non-Jews, they are demographically hallucinatory.

The city’s partially sane authorities and notables urged the population to ignore the Nazis and the Klan so as to render them like a tree that falls in the forest when no one is around. The less sane—of whom, in a university town, there is always a surfeit—pitched confrontation. Enter Antifa, the Communist fascisti as invisible to the mainstream media as were Stalin’s and Mao’s genocides, Castro’s executions, and, with special mention to the *New York Times*, the Holocaust. They came in ranks: shields, helmets, clubs, etc. But unlike the idiots they came to fight, some of whom had firearms, Antifa had the best weapon of all—well-meaning, overprotected Millennials fed upon virtue signaling.

I saw something similar during the 1969 “Harvard Bust,” when the SDS occupied and trashed University Hall, manhandled some deans, and purposefully recruited lots of liberals to form a barrier between them and the assaulting police. In the Marxist version of *épater les bourgeois*, the instigators (some of whom became tenured rashes upon the academy) declared that they wanted to “radicalize the *buzhies*,” their term for the bourgeoisie. Radcliffe girls bore the brunt of the assault, and were thrown from landings like chaff, their bones broken by batons. I saw a Massachusetts state trooper literally break his nightstick on the skull of a

boy lying motionless on the ground. But the ringleaders had escaped out the back. When I confronted one of them later—you would recognize his name—he told me that Mao said the leadership must be preserved.

SO, IN CHARLOTTESVILLE MANY SERIOUS INJURIES AND THREE deaths (two police in a helicopter crash; one peaceful demonstrator slain by a white supremacist who drove his car into her and dozens of others) came not from the tips of the two spears but from innocents. The national press ignored both the role of Antifa in joining battle and the city authorities in instigating it. They deliberately misapplied President Trump’s comment that there were good people on both sides, to the confrontation rather than to the issue of monument removal. And Trump, being Trump, did not manage or bother to correct them.

As innocent as Charlottesville may be of exaggerated charges, being part of America it suffers nonetheless what James Madison characterized as “[i]mbecility in the government; discord among the provinces; foreign influence and indignities; a precarious existence in peace, and peculiar calamities from war.” The now fashionable abandonment of civility, turning like an augur deeper and deeper into the country’s heart, appeared here 20 years ago when the “conservation chairman” of the Virginia Sierra Club wrote, “Officials who support the road should be mercilessly abused, shamed, ridiculed, and otherwise made to suffer pain.” Charlottesville’s mayor at the time of last year’s confrontation, Mike Signer, was recently quoted as referring to “the so-called freedom of speech.”

I first visited Charlottesville during the decade after World War II, and I remember it when it was segregated. I have now lived in Albemarle County for 21 years, I partake quietly in civic life, and I can tell you that only in the eyes of extremists and radicals are this city and this county the kind of reverse Potemkin Village opportunists have constructed in synchrony with ideologues who would tear apart the American fabric for the purpose of recasting a nation they cannot abide.

Refusing to let a crisis go to waste, dim-witted and ceaselessly repetitive town-and-gown social justice warriors have used August 12th to further their agenda, with the excuse that Charlottesville needs a version of de-Nazification in terms of income inequality and race. We claim Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe, who, one must interject defensively, would long have ceased to be slaveholders. Despite their differing temperaments and political leanings, they would probably think that Charlottesville’s city government fits Madison’s characterization as imbecilic. Among other things, in a struggle between Nazis and Antifa, it took sides rather than reject both in favor of the good people here who are the overwhelming majority, who regardless of race or any other distinction get along as tranquilly, positively, and respectfully as in the real America—the America to which radicals of all stripes are tragically blinded by their impulse to destruction.

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