

Obama Betrays The Liberals

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American liberals stand betrayed. *Their* new president, the one they sweated to elect—a brilliant, charismatic leader with a professional background in constitutional law—has transmogrified himself from the champion who denounced in his campaign the illegalities of the Bush White House into a president bent on their perpetuation.

Liberals are stunned by Obama's plan to "restart Bush-era military tribunals" for some Guantanamo detainees, reviving what the *Associated Press* pointed out, is "a fiercely disputed trial system he once denounced." (May 15). Liberals are appalled by Obama's May 21st proposal to hold terrorism suspects in "prolonged detention" inside the U.S. without a trial. "Such detention," Senator Russ Feingold (D-Wis.) wrote him, "is a hallmark of abusive systems that we have historically criticized around the world."

If liberals chafed over Obama's centrist cabinet choices, they were dismayed by his decision not to release photographs depicting the sadistic tortures the Bush Gang inflicted on prisoners during a so-called "War on Terror" that was nothing but terror itself. A typical reaction comes from Joe Kishore, writing on the World Socialist Website (May 22): "Whatever verbal warnings Obama may make about the erosion of democracy in the United States, the actions of his administration facilitate and escalate its breakdown."

Obama's latest policy reversals come as liberals are still reeling from his April 16th speech to the CIA, ignoring its documented history of 60 years of overthrows and assassinations, and reassuring the Agency of its "right" to continue "covert activities," as if such conduct was not *prima facie* illegality in the eyes of law-abiding nations. Earlier, Obama's pledge not to prosecute CIA torturers that followed orders likely brought relief to the throne room in Langley that is a throbbing heart of the Dark Side. Obama calls upon the nation to "look forward" as he ignores his presidential obligation to prosecute those who, like Bush and Cheney, trampled the Constitution when they ordered torture in violation of international laws that by treaty are America's laws as well.

And if Matthew Rothschild of *The Progressive* magazine hasn't accused Obama of betraying his liberal subscribers, he charged in his May 21 column the President "tried to carve out an extra-constitutional arrangement for indefinite detention of some detainees without trial." Rothschild accused Obama of "chiseling away at the basic habeas corpus right that has been the foundation of our jurisprudence dating back to the Magna Carta of 1215."

One campaign promise on which Obama has *not* reversed himself is his pledge to intensify the war in Afghanistan, which, one liberal essayist predicted, will "doom" his presidency. This war is already under heated attack from the liberal quarter. Justin Raimondo of antiwar.com (May 20) denounces the appointment of Lt. General Stanley McChrystal to head

U.S. forces in Kabul. Asserting McChrystal oversaw torture at Camp Nama near Baghdad that was “notorious” for its “beatings, degradation of prisoners and outright, cold-blooded murder,” Raimondo writes: “That’s what they call ‘fresh thinking’ over at Obama’s Pentagon. If Bush and Cheney ordered it, it’s reprehensible and might even be a war crime. If, however, a known torture-enabler is elevated by Obama’s secretary of defense to the position of commander of our armed forces in Afghanistan – well, then, that’s a far different matter.”

The danger in Obama’s foreign policy was seen clearly by Andrew Bacevich, a Boston University historian, who described it in his best-seller “The Limits of Power”(Henry Holt), published the year *before* Obama won the White House. He quoted then Senator Obama’s view that “The security and well-being of each and every American depend on the security and well-being of those who live beyond our borders. The mission of the United States is to provide global leadership grounded in the understanding that the world shares a common security and a common humanity.” Of this, Bacevich states:

“Accept the proposition that America is freedom’s tribune, and it becomes a small step to believing that the ‘peace process’ aims to achieve peace, that Iraq qualifies as a sovereign state, and that Providence has summoned the United States to wage an all-out war against ‘terrorism.’”

Obama’s grandiosity perhaps explains why he boosted the Pentagon’s swollen budget (about as great as all other nations combined) by four percent in the absence of any significant immediate foreign military threat. As one disappointed lifelong Democrat with a son in the Army told me, “I had hoped he was going to put an end to the war.” This particular liberal now trashes appeals from the Democratic National Committee, adding, “In the next presidential election I may just not vote.”

And in a column entitled “Obama’s Betrayals,” author Sheldon Richman writes on MWC News, “In Obama we have a new Jekyll and Hyde. From harsh critic of Bush’s trampling of individual rights, Obama has transmogrified into a champion of the omnipotent state that cannot let the niceties of the traditional criminal-justice system stand in the way of ‘national security.’” Richman, editor of “*The Freeman*” magazine, concludes, “It’s time for the opponents of empire to see the man in the White House for who he is. Fortunately, that is starting to happen.”

Yes, indeed. And as this painful recognition sinks in like iodine burning into a raw wound, America’s humanist Left may yet muster its forces for a last-ditch fight to preserve a bit of sanity in this epoch of messianic presidents hell-bent upon waging war.

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