

A series of articles on
The Charlottesville Incident

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Charlottesville, what's next? Part One

August 27, 2017

For longer than I wish to remember, I have been in retirement from my work with computer networks and the Internet. I had the privilege and good fortune to work in fifteen countries during those times.

After I left this profession for a less hectic life, I have taken trips to Europe and Asia to places I had not visited or had visited only for my job. The past few weeks, I have been thinking about some of these places in relation to the disturbances in Charlottesville, Virginia.

During these travels, I witnessed uprisings that reminded me of the one that occurred recently in Charlottesville. These uprisings were in present day Slovenia and Belfast, Northern Ireland.

As a close observer (not protester), I was in the middle of the Vietnam anti-war protests that took place in Washington, DC in the 1970s. I walked the streets while dealing with tear gas and anti-riot militia. The area resembled a war zone. I walked through the National Mall tent city and visited with the protesters. The place was akin to an urban slum.

I thought about how relatively subdued the goings-on were in Charlottesville in comparison to other unrests I had come across. I also thought about deadly rebellions occurring throughout history that I had not witnessed; uprisings to numerous to list.

While reading about statue supporters and opponents assaulting each other and statues, I thought of the Charles Bridge in Prague, Czech Republic, a city where I spent a few days a couple years ago. The bridge displays 30 statues, some of which are not liked by a number of Prague citizens. Yet these statues remain undisturbed.

Construction on the bridge began in 1357. Just imagine. In the year of 1357, the earth was considered by many people to be flat. Columbus did not sail to "discover America" until the late 1400s. For centuries, the statues have remained intact. The tour guide said they were accepted by the citizenry as part of Prague's history and were respected as such.

Many of my fellow humans do not share this view. Many fail to give credit to those who built the foundations on which we thrive. Not only the foundations of bridges and statues, but the foundations for the rule of law.

I watched a newscast this week explaining that some American citizens favor destroying monuments to Christopher Columbus, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and other notable people.

Columbus: because he was brutal to Native Americans. Jefferson and Washington: because they owned slaves. I wondered what these people would propose for those 30 statues on the Charles Bridge?

The propositions to tear down other statues have been fueled by the publicity surrounding injuries and a death in relation to a Robert E. Lee statue in Charlottesville. Some wish it to remain and some wish its removal. They are going after one another's throats to make their case.

If such violence continues to escalate in Charlottesville and other locales, it will lead to an imposition of police/national guard measures, similar to what happened in Washington, D.C. during the Vietnam anti-war protests and in Northern Ireland.

In irony, these actions will curtail the freedom of both sides to state their cases. Marshall Law is a drastic reaction to severe actions we humans may take toward one another. But make no

mistake, it can happen if events such as those in Charlottesville escalate to endanger the safety of people and property.

In the second part to this article, I will cite an example of how local protests can get out of control: the one I witnessed in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Charlottesville, what's next? Part Two

August 27, 2017

This is the second part of a discussion about the near-riots in Charlottesville. My experiences in Belfast, Northern Ireland, provide an example of how the chaos in Charlottesville can cascade beyond a city.

The riots and evolving killings in Belfast started “modestly” enough, but the opposing sides soon took to the streets and to other cities. What followed was a full-fledged war in the country. During my time there, Belfast was under martial law. The Europa hotel where I stayed had been bombed and was under repair. (It was bombed 36 times.)

The government’s role was to keep order, which eventually prevented the opposing sides from expressing their views (and killing each other). Order was kept by overbearing surveillance. The taxi I rode from the airport to the city was stopped and searched by the militia. They pulled out seats, stripped away linings in the trunk, and examined the contents of my suitcase and brief case. They looked under the hood and under the vehicle. The cab driver took it in stride. He informed me the incident was a “routine random search.”

I could not enter or exit a department store without being questioned and possibly searched. Soldiers, armed with AK-47s, guarded the exits and entrances of all buildings in the center of the city. The government had a mandate to keep its citizenry safe. It did so by suppressing the rights of that very citizenry.

As stated in the first part to this series, if opposing factions, such as those in Charlottesville, cannot confront one another without undermining the city’s economic base and the city’s overall well-being, Uncle Sam will step-in and establish order.

Ordinary citizens and local business owners do not give a hill of beans if a tribute to Lee or Grant festoons the local square. They have gone about their business for decades, without regard to Grey or Blue. They are perplexed that a group of outsiders take it upon themselves to disrupt their livelihood.

Ah, but is it for a cause! Never mind that the cause is largely irrelevant to most people who live or work near the statue. Like most statues, almost no one has paid any attention to it. It has gathered more pigeon droppings than it has readers of the statue’s inscription. Thus, like most statues, this one has rested mostly in obscurity.

Tearing Down History

We Americans have begun a trek to (politically) correct historical artifacts. Not by appending another inscription onto the statue stating an opposing view. But by tearing it down and destroying history.

Facts are facts. History is history. Destroying a statue, whatever it may represent (good or evil), is tearing down history. It is a dangerous and slippery slope. The expungement of any historical artifact or fact can lead to yet more razing.

Who knows what might be next? As mentioned, some people believe the Jefferson Memorial and the Washington Monument should be torn down. Does this possibility fit with your beliefs?

I have a modest proposal to address this First Amendment issue, to be continued in the next article. I will also offer some advice to the saber rattlers in Charlottesville.

By the way, for the people protesting the existence of Robert E. Lee statues, don't forget the statues of Union General William Sherman, especially those that extol his destruction of the economies of several southern states and the very livelihood of the states' citizens. Also, don't forget to rename the famous WWII Sherman tank. Monument bashing is a two-way street. So is political correctness.

Charlottesville, what's next? Part Three

August 27, 2017

Continuing the discussion about the Charlottesville, Virginia, uprising, it is important that we Americans continue to honor the rule of law. Aspects of this idea include not ramming a crowd with a car and killing a person, or bludgeoning a political opponent with a bat. Yet, that is what happened in Charlottesville.

A Tin Cup of Oppression

A few years ago, I made a trip to Eastern Europe, a place with histories of almost uninterrupted plunder and killing. I now keep on my desk a replica of the tin cups used by prisoners in the Budapest House of Terror, a place where Stalin and his minions maimed the minds and lives of many people. (See the figure).

The cup reminds me of the stories I heard about the countless war related sufferings that have occurred in the countries I have visited, some ancient and some recent. It also reminds me of the good fortune I have had to be born in a country that has largely escaped the repeated carnages and police states experienced in many parts of the world.



While watching news on television, with coverage about the discontent of many American citizens about America, I take solace by looking at this cup. I also wish American malcontents would occasionally pause and reflect on just how good they have it.

Certainly, we have profound problems in America. Many of our prisons are disgraces. So are the denials of speedy trials, the perversions of plea bargaining, anti-republican gerrymandering, and the huge number of incarceration rates. The socially vacuous financial instruments of Wall Street discredit the idea of meritorious free enterprise. As well, torture does take place in some of our prisons.

But we work continuously to solve or at least remedy these problems. In some countries that I have visited, oppressive prisons, denial of trials, and outright torture are systemic to their culture. As one person put it: "America's practice of politics may stink, but it smells better than most countries."

I add another observation. In a *Fortune* magazine article (April 1975), Max Ways said, "Democracy is like a raft: You never sink, but damn it, your feet are always in the water."

We have a core of individuals in this country who are ignorant of the blessings bestowed on them by being born in America. We also have a cadre of people who, if given the opportunity, want to physically assault anyone with whom they disagree.

America's malcontents should take the two quotes above into account before they take to the streets or expose their ignorance on social media. They should work on fixing America's problems and not make them worse by their infantile confrontations.

I offer some advice to those who engage in protests that physically harm others and others' way of making a living: In the long run, continued riots, such as those in Charlottesville, will not gain your cause anything. As in most parts of the world, it will result in the curtailment of your rights to express yourself. Marshall Law tends to dampen free expression.

I also offer a compromise between the pro and anti statue protesters: Do not destroy the statues. Rather, move them to a museum. There, additional markers can describe the history of the statue itself, as well as the good or evil attributes of the person sitting on a horse or standing on top of a column. In this manner, history is not compromised or destroyed. It is amplified.

For now, all Americans should be aware that destroying a statue is not going to destroy the past. But by its destruction, we risk destroying our future. America's experience with slavery will forever be an ignominious page in our history books. We can help keep that page open and in our memories by keeping monuments safe from destruction by single-sided ideologues.

The violent agitators in Charlottesville need to read-up on their history, which will require going to sources other than Facebook or Twitter. In this study, they will come across a truth that spans across any nation's creeds: If you do not honor the rule of law, and stay within a framework of order, the state will impose its interpretation of the rule of law on you. You will not like the outcome of the state's interpretation of order.

Self-expression and protest is part of America's legacy and its greatness. It is essential to our political health and societal well-being, but not if this self-expression endangers others or leads to destruction of property.

The way of assertive yet non-violent expression has proven to be effective. As case studies, see Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, and Mahatma Gandhi.

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A short time before the Watts riots, to fund his way through college, Uyless Black worked in Watts, California as a bill collector. His efforts resulted in the collection of one solitary debt and a few car repossessions. Shortly before he was likely fired, he resigned from the job. Nonetheless, he came to know the urban underpinnings for riots, which devastated the meager income of Watt's citizens. He now resides in the safe haven of Hayden with his wife Holly and his five-pound watchdog, Milli. Interlopers, beware.