



CONTROVERSY: Donald Trump supporters demonstrate, some without masks, at the entrance to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center

All Trump cares about is fomenting division

WHEN I watched Donald Trump standing on his balcony the other evening, visibly gasping for breath and looking as though he was being held up by a pole shoved down his shirt, I couldn't help thinking of President Merkin Muffley (played by Peter Sellers in the wonderful *Dr Strangelove*).

Muffley was 100 per cent bonkers and with the political nous of a bullfrog; yet compared to Trump he was a veritable Lincoln (which Donald probably thinks is a reference to a classic car).

Muffley, like Trump, was obsessed with his image. So obsessed, in fact, that one of his advisers tells him: "Perhaps it might be better, Mr President, if you were more concerned with the American people than with your image in the history books."

Trump, of course, doesn't give a toss about the American people as a citizenry bound together in collective cause, purpose and belief. Never has. Never will. All he cares about is fermenting and fuelling division, setting citizen against citizen and undermining the 'united' in United States.

But what needs to be remembered about Trump is that he isn't just a one-off. And nor is he someone who became bonkers because power went to his head and tipped him over the edge. He won by being bonkers.

He won by playing to a gallery that was already enraged by what was going on around them and hated just about anyone they perceived to be doing them down. They roared their approval when Trump told them he would 'drain the swamp'. They wrapped themselves in the flag and flocked to his rallies when he promised to build a wall and MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN. And while he may never have used the N word in any of his speeches he did make it clear where his racial preferences lay.

Alex KANE



His pitch was rabid. His language was crude. His grasp on reality was tenuous at best. He had nothing in common with most of the people he claimed to champion. Yet he won. Not the popular vote (he trailed Hillary Clinton by almost three million votes), but by playing the house rules and winning the Electoral College vote – the only one that actually counts. And he won by ignoring the advice from the grey suits in the Republican Party to play to the centre on key issues. Hate delivers votes in a way that the centre ground never can.

Trump never shied away from any controversy during the 2016 campaign; lied when it suited him and dismissed as fake news anything that smacked of criticism. He laughed when caught out in a lie and then

demonised his critics and pointed them out at his rallies. He was, by a considerable distance, the worst ever candidate for the Oval Office and yet 62,984,828 people voted for him.

If the polls are to be believed a substantial chunk of those voters intend to vote for him again this time. And that's because they believe that a second-term Trump, who doesn't have to worry about re-election, will be able to do anything he really wants. That's the message being pumped out to those voters – most of whom remain as enraged as they were in 2016. The last time I wrote about him I suggested he still had a route to victory. But I think that route has been blocked. I don't think he can win.

But even if he loses, America is still faced with a huge problem. Those millions of Trump supporters will be angry and they will want to demonstrate that anger. If their man isn't in the White House they will take to the streets (probably with his blessing). They will be looking for the next Trump and it won't be someone who wants to soften the image or blur the message.

These Trumpians/Trumpets will want someone meaner, tougher, undiluted and congenitally incapable of compromise.

Joe Biden is not, however, the man to bring the country together by countering the Trump/post-Trump narrative. Trump's base despise him and will continue to despise him. And I'm not persuaded that the Republicans (the official leaders of the party who acquiesced to Trump's takeover of it) will be able to find a figure around whom the Trump base will rally. So it looks as though the United States is going to be weathering its internal political storms for quite a few years yet.

Which is, of course, good for China and Russia and very bad for the rest of us who care about democracy.

What needs to be remembered about Trump is that he isn't just a one-off. And nor is he someone who became bonkers because power went to his head and tipped him over the edge. He won by being bonkers

ON THIS DAY

OCTOBER 9 1970

'Unity Means Poverty'

MR Oliver Napier of the Alliance Party has challenged politicians advocating a United Ireland to tell the truth about what it would mean – especially to people such as 'the Catholic workers and the Catholic unemployed'. For them, he said, it would be 'a descent into abject poverty and, in due course, the immigrant ship'.

Speaking at a meeting of Duncairn Alliance, Mr Napier said: 'It is time that those who advocate a United Ireland explain to their supporters the economic realities of their political goal. If they are honest, Nationalists will explain that a United Ireland will require a great financial sacrifice. The affluent Catholic middle class living on the Malone Road can afford to make these sacrifices. But the sacrifice which would be demanded of the Catholic workers and the Catholic unemployed will be a descent into abject poverty.'

Irish Army 'Invasion'

CONTINGENCY plans which included the possibility of limited incursions by the Irish Army into the North, possibly as far as Derry, were discussed by the Dublin Cabinet after the rioting in the North in August and September last year. So said the former Minister for Justice, Mr Michael O'Morain on the third day of the new arms conspiracy trial. He revealed that the Cabinet decided to prepare contingency plans and these were left to the then Minister for Defence, James Gibbons and the former finance Minister, Charles Haughey who were to work on them together.

Mr O'Morain said there were several officers of the Special Branch operating in NI in the autumn of last year.

Ulster '71

DETAILED plans for Ulster '71 – the 'Northern Ireland Festival' – were announced yesterday at Chamber of Commerce House, Belfast. Sir Cecil Bateman announced that Ulster '71 would include a huge 37-acre Expo style exhibition and exhibition park in Belfast – the biggest ever seen here. There will be a series of Festival Fortnights in towns and villages throughout NI. Allied to this will be an unprecedented tourist drive throughout the world.

'In other words, something for everyone to share in.' The primary aim of Ulster '71 is to interest industrialists and tourists in the North. But, in addition to its serious side, Ulster '71 will give everyone an opportunity to relax, enjoy himself or herself and have a little fun.

'(Ulster '71' was the Unionist government's logo for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Northern Ireland State. In the event the campaign's catchy jingle, 'Ulster '71, Come and Join in the Fun' coincided with internment and bloodshed on the streets of Belfast and Derry.)

EDITED BY ÉAMON PHOENIX
e.phoenix@irishnews.com