

Steve Bannon: Anarchist Operative
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Last week, this column explored Vladimir Putin's role in destabilizing democracies. We have our own home-grown anarchist: Steve Bannon, who has gleefully fomented chaos both here and in Europe.

Anarchy cannot get far because its very structure relies on no rules: selfishness does not organize. When the goal is to destroy governments, there is nothing to replace one order with another. Devoted anarchists have always fantasized about a brave new world that will emerge after the destruction of the bad old one. However, they have little evidence of that in history. On the contrary, the pendulum generally swings to dictatorship instead.

Bannon is a strange contradiction: a millionaire media executive, successful investment banker, film maker, and founder of a far-right newspaper, Breitbart. He also had served for seven years in the late 1970s and early 1980s as an officer in the US Navy. This doesn't appear to be the resume of an anarchist, which he most certainly became shortly before and after becoming the chief strategist for Donald Trump during his first seven months in office.

Bannon's relationship with Trump is also odd: at once the behind-the-scenes devil encouraging Trump's worst instincts and yet, when Bannon started getting too much media attention (TIME cover), Trump fired him. They have had a love/hate relationship ever since.

This anarchy ideologue sowed his poison around the world, advising numerous authoritarian political movements and promoting the unfortunate campaign for Britain to leave the EU. His method was to help destroy legitimate political parties and all the mores and traditions that had guided them, transforming them into political cults that worshipped blowhard dictators (Philippines, Brazil, Poland, Hungary, and US). There wasn't a right-wing proto-fascist party in Europe that he didn't support.

When he bullied his way into the Trump camp, he set about his agenda of dismantling as many democratic protections as he could, starting with the press. "The media is the opposition party," he said. He then partnered with some of the worst white extremists, among them Stephen Miller, to design Trump's program of attacking immigration, maligning Hispanics, Muslims, and Syrian refugees. He then went after the judiciary (judges with Hispanic names), and then a campaign of firing Inspectors General (including the Defense Department), replacing them with "acting" officials, often Trump's own hacks.

The Anti-Defamation League accused him of being a White Supremacist anti-Semite, and 169 Democratic House Representatives urged then President-Elect Trump not to give Bannon the job of political advisor, a post that didn't require Senate confirmation. Of course, Trump did not listen. His administration veered dangerously toward the ultra-right White Supremist thugs when Trump declared them "fine people" after the Charlottesville attack. They then served as January 6 storm troopers.

His final caper was a criminal enterprise to create a populist fund-raising campaign to "build the wall" (Trump's failed Mexican border wall project). In August 2020, Bannon and three others were arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit mail fraud and money laundering. They used the money for themselves. Before they could go to trial, Trump abused his pardon power once more and pardoned Bannon.

But it looks as if his crime spree is about to reap punishment. First, his Twitter account was permanently suspended after he urged that Dr. Fauci (national health director) and Christopher Wray (FBI) should be "beheaded."

A Congressional committee is investigating the attempted coup that incited the mob to invade Congress on January 6. This mob was summoned to prevent Congress from their legal validation of the presidential election. The Committee has subpoenaed a number of people who were conspiring with President Trump to carry out this coup. Bannon was one of them. He was present at the meeting the night before the siege (January 5) where Trump's cadre planned the event.

It is no secret that Bannon openly considers Vladimir Putin to be an ally in the support of right-wing nationalism and destruction of liberal democracy. Both helped Trump be elected.

He has been held in contempt of Congress when he refused to obey the subpoena. But this time, he has no president to pardon him when he is sent to jail.

687 words

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