

RELEASE IN FULL

CONFIDENTIAL

August 31, 2010

For: Hillary
From: Sid
Re: Some paragraphs on the Tea Party

First, of course your instinct is right to attempt to save the situation. I think, however, it is fraught. Being right might easily be worse than being wrong. (Doing absolutely nothing, meanwhile, would bear no cost, just to note the benefits of irresponsibility.) How any advice can be proposed without potential pitfalls is a mystery to me. It may be that Bill delivers the message in public, on the stump, as his own. This message below, on extremism and the GOP, ought to be given soon, on Labor Day or immediately thereafter. The momentum of the right urgently needs to be blunted; it must be redefined; the political discussion must be shaped and shifted; and the GOP must be put on the defensive and begin to pay the price.

I will send you another memo soon.

Here, for better or worse, is some language on extremism and the Republican Party:

The Republican Party today is a captive party. It is captive to the swamp fevers of the extreme right. It is captive to its out-of-power desperation for political power—willing to do and say anything to grab it—willing to use extremists to help climb back to power—willing to give the extremists power. No one is speaking up for responsible conservatism within the Republican Party. Who will play the role of William F. Buckley, Jr.? Or Richard Nixon? Or Ronald Reagan? Or Barry Goldwater? They all drew lines at crucial moments to separate the party from the extremists. Now who has the courage to condemn the outrageous bigotry and slander against the President? Have they at long last no sense of decency?

If the Republicans don't have the nerve to speak up for their own best heritage, then someone has to do it. The Republican Party is in a state of political disorder. Into the middle of its chaos a Trojan Horse has been thrust in the form of a self-proclaimed Tea Party as though the extremists behind it have something to do with the American Revolution and are not a stealth takeover operation of a confused political party funded by the same people who paid for the extremist movements against President Eisenhower and President Kennedy.

There is a straight line between extremists then and extremists now. One of those lines is a money line. Follow the money. Another continuity is the far right John Birch Society that is praised today by Glenn Beck. Listen closely. Yet another of those lines are the same accusations of disloyalty. Ike was a Communist. John F. Kennedy was a Communist. They said President Nixon was a tool of international Communism. And when the Cold War was ending they said Ronald Reagan was "a useful idiot of the Kremlin." Now they are saying that President Obama is a socialist and at the same time a fascist. They say he's a racist and a secret Muslim. They claim the President of the United States is not an American. It's so crazy it sounds like a science fiction novel, but we've heard it all before. The extremists have not changed. From Ike to JFK, from Nixon to Reagan, and now Obama, it's the same old horsestuff.

For anyone with common sense it might seem like one big joke, a big put-on, or maybe just a big con job. But it's dangerous. It's toxic. Why? In the name of the founding fathers, the Constitution and the flag, in the name of taking back our country and restoring it, they would transform our democracy into something we wouldn't recognize. The extremists of the far right want to replace the greatest experiment in constitutional democracy with their own far-out ideology—trashing everything from religious liberty to protections from a dog-eat-dog boom and bust economy. Public education, a safe environment, national highways, safe transportation, Social Security, Medicare, health care for all, even the Federal Reserve created to curb economic chaos—they want to get rid of all of it. If you think that if they had their way they wouldn't kick the country into an economic abyss, then I've got a reality show in Alaska for you. And that's not all that's in their sweeping blueprint for power.

The Republican Party is being purged of moderates, responsible conservatives, anyone who has a thought they don't like. It's divide and conquer. Divide the Republican Party. Divide the nation. Region against region, South against North, West against East, rural America against cities, state governments against the federal government, religion against religion, and soon, before you know it, it won't look or feel like America. Out of loud declarations of love of country, they will break this country apart.

How far do the extremists want to go? The demonizing of enemies and even religions is a means to an end. That end is political power. Political power for their political leaders—characters who are hardly outsiders but dusty denizens roaming the corridors of power for decades. They pant for political power—political power for favors, exemptions and loopholes for the Daddy Warbucks and Scrooge McDucks funding them. Political power for special interests. Political power against the national interest. Political power against the common good. Political power against the good society.

President Obama is their target because the people have put him in his office and he stands in the way of the extremists. They are against him precisely because he's making progress. And progress is not what they want. They want power for themselves. So they will say anything to tear down the President.

But they are at war with more than President Obama. They are at war with President Andrew Jackson. That's how far back they want to go. They want to go back the 1830s. They want to go back to before the Civil War, "lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification," to

quote Martin Luther King, Jr. in his famous “I have a dream” speech. They want to interpose their rule and their power above that of majority rule and democratic government—and nullify the law of the land in the name of their strange doctrines. So when I say that this is dangerous and toxic, we’ve been there before. Fanatics have divided America in the past. We know, as another president said, “A house divided against itself cannot stand.”

And when you see them demonizing the President, Ike, JFK, Obama, take your pick—when you see them accusing members of the Republican Party of treason—when you hear them compare the American experiment in democracy to Hitler’s Nazi state or Stalin’s Communist totalitarianism—when you hear them talk of “liberty” and they mean taking away Social Security from people who worked their whole lives to earn it—when you hear them talk of “freedom” when they want to bring back good old fashioned discrimination—when you hear them talk of “the Constitution” when they want to get rid of the letter and spirit of the government designed by the framers of the Constitution—when you hear them talk of “democracy” when they want to get rid of direct election of senators—when you hear them talk about “restoration” when they want to gut public education and Medicare and basic economic and environmental protections—trashing the work and progress of generations—then you know that behind the patriotic words lies a truly radical agenda.

It was Dwight Eisenhower who warned: “Should any political party attempt to abolish Social Security, unemployment insurance, and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again in our political history. There is a tiny splinter group, of course, that believes you can do these things. Among them are H. L. Hunt (you possibly know his background), a few other Texas oil millionaires, and an occasional politician or business man from other areas. Their number is negligible and they are stupid.”

It was John F. Kennedy who said: “In the most critical periods of our nation's history, there have always been those fringes of our society who have sought to escape their own responsibility by finding a simple solution, an appealing slogan, or a convenient scapegoat. Financial crises could be explained by the presence of too many immigrants or too few greenbacks... So let us not heed these counsels of fear and suspicion... Let our patriotism be reflected in the creation of confidence rather than crusades of suspicion. Let us prove we think our country great by striving to make it greater.”

Outspoken conservatives like William F. Buckley drew the line and stood up for principle against the extremists, calling them “idiotic” and “paranoid.” Barry Goldwater, at the end of his life, said, “Do not associate my name with anything you do. You are extremists, and you’ve hurt the Republican Party much more than the Democrats have.”

Then, this sort of thing, instilling a tone of confidence: Come together, right now... for a new era of progress... rebuilding America... the work of a new generation... building on the progress of generations... facing any challenge... resolving that we can and will overcome any obstacle... keeping the faith, not succumbing to temptations of fear and suspicion... not retreating but advancing... not dividing the American people for short-term politics but bringing the American people together for long-term progress... combining our will, our work, our

intelligence, creativity, enterprise, and energy to make a new world of freedom for ourselves and our children...