



## Nixon and Obama -- Soul Brothers?

by Patrick J. Buchanan ([more by this author](#))

Posted 10/23/2009 ET

Four decades ago, Lamar Alexander worked in Richard Nixon's White House. Sen. Alexander today says Barack Obama's White House reminds him of that place, that time, that mindset and those people.

Intending no disrespect to my old colleague, these days are not at all like those days, and this president and White House are nothing like the White House in which this writer worked from Inauguration Day 1969 to August 1974, when Marine One lifted off the lawn.

Richard Nixon had been elected in the most turbulent year since the Civil War.

Between New Hampshire and November, there was the Tet Offensive, LBJ's announcement he would not run again, the murder of Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis, race riots in 100 cities and Washington, D.C., the takeover of Columbia University by radicals, the assassination of Robert Kennedy, a Democratic convention in Chicago marked by rancor inside the hall and police-radical confrontations outside, and a campaign in which Hubert Humphrey was shouted down at rallies until he agreed to a bombing halt in Vietnam.

No, these times are not those times.

Nixon took the oath as a minority president, 43 percent, in a hostile city, with both houses of Congress against him and a national press corps that had loathed him since he exposed the establishment golden boy Alger Hiss as a Soviet spy, 20 years before.

Obama took the oath with close to a filibuster-proof Senate, a near 80-seat majority in the House, the media at his feet, not his throat, and a city in adulation that had voted 93 to 7 for Barack Hussein Obama.

Not even JFK entered office with more goodwill.

While Obama inherited an economic situation far worse than did Nixon, Nixon inherited a war far more divisive and bloody than Iraq and Afghanistan combined, with 535,000 troops in Vietnam or on the way, and 200 soldiers coming home every week in caskets and body bags.

By October 1969, Nixon had ordered 100,000 troops home from Vietnam, proposed a Family Assistance Plan, enunciated a new Nixon Doctrine, welcomed the Apollo 11 astronauts home from the moon and become the first President to visit a communist country, Romania.

Obama has held a beer summit and won a Nobel Peace Prize.

In both October and November of 1969, 500,000 demonstrators marched on Washington to -- in the words of David Broder -- "break Richard Nixon" as they had broken Lyndon Johnson.

Wrote Broder, "The likelihood is great that they will succeed again."

"Instead of making pronouncements about not being the first U.S. president to lose a war," admonished Time, "Nixon would perform a better service by preparing the country for the trauma of distasteful reversal" -- i.e, a U.S. defeat.

Nixon answered the demonstrators and their media auxiliaries with a Nov. 3. speech calling on "the Great Silent Majority" to stand with him and against those out to destroy his policy and presidency.

When the three networks -- primary sources of news for two-thirds of the nation then -- trashed his speech, Nixon authorized a counterattack by Vice President Agnew, which caused an avalanche of telegrams to pour into ABC, CBS and NBC denouncing them, in solidarity with the administration.

By December, it was not Nixon who was broken. Antiwar activists never mustered those numbers again, and the media had been exposed as out of touch with Middle America.

That month, Nixon rose to near 70 percent approval, and Agnew was the third most admired man in America, after Nixon and Billy Graham.

Nixon and Agnew had not wanted the fight, they had not started the fight, but they had not backed down -- and they had won the fight.

What were they supposed to do, Lamar? And when has Obama encountered anything like that?

Lamar left the White House in mid-1970 and decries Agnew's depiction of Albert Gore Sr., of his home state of Tennessee, as "the Southern regional chairman of the Eastern Liberal Establishment."

But was that not true? Gore was defeated in 1970 because he had lost touch with Tennessee. And Lamar's friend Bill Brook won.

They may have called us all paranoid, but as Henry Kissinger once mordantly observed, "Sometimes, even paranoids have real enemies."

As for an "enemies list," the only mistake was writing it down.

Does Lamar not think Nixon had enemies out to destroy him?

Does he not believe there was rejoicing in Washington when Nixon fell, or smug satisfaction when Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos were lost -- on the faces of those who persuaded themselves that America could not succeed in Vietnam because they had failed?

No one denies Nixon made mistakes. Even he conceded, "I gave them a sword, and they ran it through me."

But those enemies were not a figment of his or our imagination. The Nixon-haters were real, and they were legion.

In 1969-1970, Nixon had a choice: capitulate or fight.

Compared with what he went through, Obama had a cakewalk.

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Mr. Buchanan is a nationally syndicated columnist and author of [Churchill, Hitler, and "The Unnecessary War": How Britain Lost Its Empire and the West Lost the World](#), ["The Death of the West,"](#) ["The Great Betrayal,"](#) ["A Republic, Not an Empire"](#) and ["Where the Right Went Wrong."](#)

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