Attorney General Barre is Back — But So Are the Real Generals

In March I wrote that Trump’s attorney general was signaling to Pompeo that he was ready to join him and former National Security Advisor John Bolton in an effort to prevent Trump from being re-elected. Following the killing of George Floyd, Pompeo has been eerily silent. (Since there is no process other than impeachment for legally ousting a President, it will be up to the voters in November.) However, at this point, it would appear that key members of his own party will ensure that he is not re-elected. While Bolton has since resigned, Barre is among the growing list of top Republicans who are abandoning Donald Trump. It includes former presidential candidate Mitt Romney, and more ominously, the country’s top generals. Last to desert the sinking ship, Barre did so without departing his usual mild manner, contradicting the President’s claim that during last week’s demonstrations, he had been ‘merely visiting’ the White House bunker. While having every reason to defend the efficiency of those in charge of the President’s safety, who answer to him, Barre has in effect joined the growing list of dissenters.

The misleadingly soft-spoken ‘AG’ indulged in an unconstitutional exercise of his authority when he ordered the US military to implement aggressive crowd control against peaceful demonstrators across the street from the White House on behalf of the President, under the Insurrection Act of 1807 and the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878. The Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 was intended to limit the power of the central government to use federal troops to enforce the law, as codified in the Insurrection Act of 1807. It was enacted by President Rutherford Hayes, following the civil war, and was updated in 1956 and 1981.

Here’s what I wrote about Bill Barre in mid-May:

“From the start, Barre was suspected of being appointed Attorney General in order to do the President’s personal bidding, and indeed he immediately tried to bury the Mueller Report. By controlling the courts, Barre has also enabled the President to continue flouting the rule that he must release several years of tax returns, even as it is revealed that he tried to favor cronies in the development of an anti-Corona medication. Democrats are rhetorically demanding that Barre resign, which can be nothing but a cry in the wilderness.”

 Barely a month later, the American political scene is in chaos: while the President called for the military to quell demonstrations against police brutality “His” Generals, as he likes to call them, are accusing him of inching toward fascism. The situation is so dire that the media has even evoked the possibility that if defeated in November, Trump could refuse to leave the White House, setting off a civil war. (In ‘normal’ times, the standing threat posed by his gun-carrying supporters is never mentioned.)

The deliberate death of an unarmed, peaceful black man at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer is probably the most significant event in the history of racism in America since the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968 and it was caught on several video cameras. After a week of protests across the country, the funeral of George Floyd was like nothing ever seen before on television. And the fact that so little has changed in America’s relationship with race transformed one too-many police crimes into a world-wide cause, alighting minority populations across the globe. The implication is that having fashioned the post-World War II world in its image, the land of Jefferson may at last be playing a progressive role. For it is still true that as the United States goes, so goes the world.

Deena Stryker is a US-born international expert, author and journalist that lived in Eastern and Western Europe and has been writing about the big picture for 50 years. Over the years she penned a number of
books, including Russia’s Americans. Her essays can also be found at Otherjones. Especially for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook”