

The Absurd Collusion Delusion Goes up in Smoke at Last

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by Conrad Black



As the Trump-Kremlin conspiracy vanishes in a flash and puff of smoke, the colossal absurdity of it suddenly becomes clearer. Former senior CIA and FBI officials – John Brennan and Andrew McCabe – said in the last two weeks that the president of the U.S. may be “an asset” of the government of the detritus of the old Soviet Union, a country shorn of more than half of its population and with a GDP smaller than Canada’s. This was always an insane proposition. No U.S. major party presidential candidate would ever have considered colluding with a foreign government to rig an election, and no one who tried to would even get a security clearance. Yet practically the entire Democratic Party and 80 per cent of the American national media bought more or less fully into this

Brobdingnagian canard.

The Clinton campaign commissioned a pastiche of defamatory falsehoods collected by a retired British spy and created an echo chamber between the U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies, leaking parts of this spurious political assault document to the press and then citing the press references as evidence of its veracity. Even after it was fairly clear that this was what had probably happened, the collusion fable flourished imperishably. The majority of the U.S. national media constantly repeated the refrain for two years that the country's elected leader had probably committed more grave crimes of national betrayal than those for which Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed in 1953 (mere espionage).

Some of us who are published in the United States and appear on current affairs programs there sometimes warned that this was simply impossible and that the politicization of the intelligence agencies, including the FBI, was an extreme danger to constitutional government. Now the most comprehensive investigation in American history, surpassing even that of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, conducted by die-hard Trump haters and Democratic activists who desperately wanted to find some truth in this mad fantasy, found, reassuringly, no evidence that any American colluded in any way with any foreigners to intervene in the election. It was amply documented that the Russians meddled in the election (ineffectually), and that they made repeated efforts to associate their efforts with the Trump campaign, but that all such overtures were rebuffed. The more high-minded American commentators recognized that this verdict was heartening to the whole country.

The attempt by President Trump's enemies to cling to supposed ambiguity on the question of whether Trump obstructed justice is ridiculous. The attorney-general explained in his letter to the Congressional judiciary committee leaders on Sunday that to charge obstruction (which special counsel Mueller did not

recommend), it would be necessary to be confident beyond a reasonable doubt that the suspect had committed an obstructive act with corrupt intent in regard to a judicial proceeding, and that neither he nor the deputy attorney-general, Rod Rosenstein (who had recommended the firing of the FBI director, James Comey, and had appointed Mueller in the first place), nor the independent counsel of the Justice Department, considered that there was any evidence of any of the necessary ingredients for an obstruction charge, and they had been examining the issue for the 30 days since Mueller had forewarned the attorney-general of his findings. That turkey won't fly any better than the Russian collusion fable.

This astonishing state of affairs arose because Donald Trump successfully attacked the entire political establishment for 20 years of fruitless wars and humanitarian crises in the Middle East, the greatest financial crisis since the Great Depression, flat-lined living standards being the "new normal" and a foreign policy that oscillated between George W. Bush's trigger-happy foreign policy and Barack Obama's declinist passivity and evaporating "red lines." Such an election upset caused great stupefaction, especially because Trump had spent much of his career in shadowy, over-publicized, and often hucksterish activities that sometimes were outright flimflam. His career and public personality invited suspicion that he was ethically challenged. From these unique circumstances, the monster of the Russian collusion fraud was born and lurched about for over two years.

The imputation of base motives to Trump is not surprising, but the supreme defamation of treason is the most disgraceful character assassination in American political history. It was part of a largely uncoordinated scheme in which all of the men just named, and the former attorney-general and deputy attorney-general (Loretta Lynch and Sally Yates), as will be deduced from hearings and investigations that are in some cases already underway, politicized impartial national

security agencies and attempted to influence a presidential election, and then to undo the result of that election. All the agitation and histrionics of Democratic committee chairmen in the House of Representatives about new investigations is just hot air.

The unearthing of the anti-Trump conspiracy will produce shocking revelations of misconduct by high intelligence and federal police officials; this is the last stop before the outright intervention of the armed forces: tanks on the White House lawn and generals and admirals commandeering television stations to announce the overthrow of the government. It will all be sorted out in a way that discourages a repetition. This is the scandal and the menace, not this unutterable bunk about collusion with Russia. Trump countered the hostile 80 or 90 per cent of the national media with his dominance of the talk shows, local media, social media, and the powers of communication of his office. He is, in his way, a very effective communicator, and he maintained his army of supporters intact in a very hostile media climate. He is already rising in the polls now.

Canada is, of all foreign countries, the most generally informed about American affairs, and it was almost monochromatically credulous toward these nonsensical charges against the president. It need hardly be emphasized that Donald Trump is a singularly un-Canadian personality. He is many things that Canadians are not and don't generally admire. Nothing is wrong with that; he has no reason to care what Canadians think and Canadians have no obligation to like him. But we do have an obligation to ourselves to recognize and describe American political events accurately and even perceptively. No one seriously expects the Europeans to figure out American affairs. They generally stereotype Americans (along with Canadians) and even the British rarely have any concept of the U.S. apart from New York, Washington and Los Angeles, interesting cities which fortunately don't much

influence U.S. national elections.

The long-impressive magazine, the Economist, is utterly clueless and impenetrably condescending in its American political coverage. (Mercifully, my subscription of 60 years lapsed just after I read in the Economist that the president's future would be determined by Michael Cohen.) Almost all foreigners missed the greatest American political story in 150 years – the attempted manipulation of a presidential election by the country's intelligence and federal police forces.

There may have been other commentators than I in this country who warned what was really happening in these controversies, but I don't recall many. Every time I appeared with other people on television discussing this, there were always complacent assurances that "the noose is tightening on Trump" and "the walls are closing in" and so forth. Our media failed. Our correspondents in Washington just took the feed from the Trump-haters and did precisely nothing to explain what was really happening, or to prepare the Canadian public for the outcome, or even comment intelligently after the collusion bubble burst. Dislike of Trump, I repeat, is quite understandable, but an almost complete failure of our media that focuses on Washington to grasp, even after the revelation of it, what was really unfolding there, is inexcusable.

First published in the