

Donald Trump vs. the Media

by Conrad Black



Mine America's Coal (Portrait of a Coal Miner), 1943

The CNN hype of the farrago of scatological nonsense about the president-elect and the Russian government ends the pre-inaugural interlude on an all-time triumph of media unprofessionalism, malice, and outright idiocy, by the most bigoted of all large American news outlets. The ne plus ultra in this steady, hand-over-hand climb to a summit of irresponsibility was achieved with the airing of a 35-page dossier of alleged Russian involvement with Trump and in

harassments of the Clinton campaign. In it, many Russian officials, from Vladimir Putin down, are named, but almost no Americans are, except for an alleged Trump executive, which quickly proved to have been a case of mistaken or invented identity.

The dossier contained a very lengthy recitation of meetings and vaguely outlined initiatives, running the gamut from leaks designed to smear Clinton, to claims of possession of material that could be used to blackmail Trump because of louche or perverted sexual activity. Mercifully, there was one specific incident that will render this hideous canard unforgettable, a scarlet letter to its promoters: that Donald Trump engaged a group of Russian prostitutes to urinate in a bed allegedly occupied in a Moscow luxury hotel some years before by Mr. and Mrs. Obama. This was the Golden Gate, the Golden Shower, the perfect symbol of the demented media assault on the president-elect.

For such a curtain call in Inauguration Week, it was appropriate to provide the most deserving players: perhaps the most famous Buffalonian since Grover Cleveland, CNN's Wolf Blitzer, who looks like he lives from paycheck to paycheck as a cameo visual impersonator of Victor Hugo, announced the "breaking news" of this inane file that had been bouncing around, beneath the notice of anyone except the scurrilous leftist "news" outlet *BuzzFeed*, for months. CNN's Washington bureau chief, Jake Tapper, joined Blitzer in crackling on about this "exclusive," supplemented by Michael Morell, a former CIA official who now works for a strategic advisory firm run by ex-Hillary Clinton aide Philippe Reines. Then came James Sciutto, "chief national-security correspondent" for CNN, who trumpeted "an enormous team effort by my colleagues . . . at CNN." Admittedly, slogging through the unsubstantiated, vaguely formulated filth and skulduggery the CNN team picked up with a few digital clicks from *BuzzFeed*, an act approximating a couple of rabid raccoons' scooping feces

out of a garbage can, could be described as “an immense team effort” for people with any taste or professional integrity.

But the pièce de résistance waited its turn in the wings, and Tapper unveiled “the legendary Carl Bernstein,” to bestow credence on this malignant asininity. Still subsisting from the proceeds of the Nixon character-assassination, disbelieved even by his editor, Ben Bradlee (which did not prevent Bradlee from collecting his share of the journalism awards Watergate deluged on its perpetrators), Bernstein is a semi-extinct volcano. He led whomever watches CNN through a tangle of anonymous people: a former British intelligence agent, Washington research firms opposed to Trump, Russians who had dealt with Trump, and Russian sources for the report, all anonymous, but diligently uncovered, said Bernstein, rather than simply fabricated and published by *BuzzFeed*. *Plus ça change*. Let us take heart: Bernstein is forgotten, except at CNN, Richard Nixon (as I [National Review Online](#)).

– *Conrad Black is the author of [Richard M. Nixon: A Life in Full](#), and*