

How a Febrile Press Whipped Up Anger At Trump, for Nothing

by Conrad Black



The *New York Times*' list of questions that the special counsel wishes to put to the president is a farrago of psychometric inquiries into mood, motive, and opinion that has almost nothing to do with the original canard about Trump-campaign collusion with Russia. Unlike the cases of the Watergate, Iran-Contra, and Whitewater special prosecutors, there was no prior fact of a crime here.

Nor has any emerged in the year since Robert Mueller was nominated as special counsel in an already long-going investigation, except the very probable untruthfulness under oath of former FBI deputy director Andrew McCabe, former directors James Comey (FBI), James Clapper (NIA), and John Brennan (CIA), and probably Hillary Clinton and others. Mr.

Mueller gives no hint of pursuing anyone but Trump and his collaborators, and right to the last week has packed his investigative team with rabid anti-Trump partisans.

The press's febrile animosity to the President has caused them to try to whip up public anger over an astonishing sequence of nothing-burgers. The latest to be debunked are that nasty comments about Kim Jong-un would lead to war and that threatened tariff increases would generate a general trade war.

There were desperation lunges at the Logan Act (when Mr. Trump was president-elect, and forgotten now that John Kerry might be infringing it); obstruction, though no one has been obstructed; and punch-drunk Watergate myth-maker Carl Bernstein's "constitutional crisis" over Trump's "mental incapacity" and the use of the 25th Amendment.

During droughts of matters to lament or magnify, unattributable reports sprang up like green shoots that the president's advisers and cabinet thought him a (coarse adjective omitted) "moron" or "idiot." Now it is the unutterable foolishness about Stormy Daniels, an ingenuous woman whose charm is mitigated by her terribly obnoxious lawyer, whom the Democrats have turned into a press star.

The president encountered her one evening ten years before the election and no misconduct is alleged. He pays his counsel for the work they do and out-of-pocket expenses, and the effort to turn this into an illegal campaign contribution reaches a new depth in Trumpophobic improvisation.

Perspective is needed to judge the trends in this seething struggle between Mr. Trump and his bipartisan enemies and most of the national press. Mr. Trump is winning. Donald Trump declared war on the entire political class, "the swamp," and as all the world knows, he was nominated and elected, and after many months of complete indifference from the

Republicans in Congress, he has completely taken his party over and has the Republican members of Congress in lock-step behind him.

The Never Trumpers are retiring in dozens, led by Messrs. Ryan, Flake, Corker, and the ailing John McCain (who helped stoke up the Russian-collusion fraud and called Mr. Trump's Arizona supporters "crazies"). The president has risen fairly steadily in the polls to between 45% and 50%, and ahead of where President Obama was eight years ago, despite the most intensive press sandbag-job since that which overwhelmed Richard Nixon in 1973–74.

Support for the Mueller investigation is steadily declining. The president's approval rating is more than twice that of Congress and almost thrice the press's. The White House Correspondents Dinner last week was a self-destructively embarrassing disgrace.

Trump's main policies are succeeding: All economic indicators are favorable except possibly work-force participation. GDP per capita and real middle- and working-class income are rising with public confidence. Eighty-three percent of American individuals and families and 100% of profitable companies have lower tax rates, while the CBO reports record tax receipts in April.

North Korea is making serious gestures to avoid a confrontation, the Chinese have entered wide-ranging trade discussions to avoid tariff increases, and the NATO allies are raising their military contributions to the Alliance. Trillions of dollars of profits are being repatriated. Illegal immigration has been sharply reduced (Democrats will have open borders, sanctuary cities, and objections to citizenship questions by census-takers hanging around their necks like a toilet seat).

The anti-Trump coalition is cracking: Jeff Greenfield, David

Brooks, and the editors of *National Review* and *Commentary* are all inching toward retention of their disapproval of Mr. Trump morally and culturally while acknowledging that he is at least partially successful.

The Mueller special-counsel investigation is a fiasco. Attorney General Sessions having recused himself (he should now be able to come back), the deputy attorney general, Rod Rosenstein, appointed Mueller after the president fired James Comey as director of the FBI, on Mr. Rosenstein's recommendation; Mr. Comey leaked to the *New York Times* memos he had written to himself, whose accuracy is contested, which were government property, and some of which were classified, in order to provoke appointment of a special counsel into Russian interference in the 2016 elections, although Mr. Comey acknowledged that Mr. Trump was not suspected of wrongdoing and had not hampered the investigation.

Mr. Mueller had many conflicts, including his relations with Messrs. Rosenstein and Comey. Mr. Rosenstein has allowed an egregious departure from the special counsel's mandate, as was severely criticized by federal judge T. S. Ellis III in Virginia in the Paul Manafort case on Friday (about matters that occurred long before Mr. Manafort knew Mr. Trump). In order to give cover for Mr. Mueller's pre-dawn raid into Mr. Manafort's home with agents with drawn guns, snapping handcuffs on Mrs. Manafort, Mr. Rosenstein expanded the mandate retroactively but has tried to conceal the new terms.

Having indicted a bunch of Russians in the certain knowledge that they could not be brought to justice, Mr. Mueller has been completely outmaneuvered by one of the Russian corporate defendants, Concord Management and Consulting, that wishes to go to trial and demands the production of Mr. Mueller's evidence. Mr. Mueller is now backpedaling and trying to delay matters with the ludicrous claim that the company had been improperly served.

Messrs. Sessions, Rosenstein, and Mueller all deserve to be fired, and Mr. Mueller appears to wish that, as the last chance to embarrass Mr. Trump politically. The president is wise to leave them, as they are sinking anyway, and unless Mr. Mueller backs down, the last battle will probably be over a subpoena of the president – before the Supreme Court, where the evidence of the unprofessional and unconstitutional conduct of Trump's enemies will be unanswerably adduced.

(The spotlight may come on Mr. Mueller finally, especially over the Deegan and Anthrax scandals, where men known to be innocent were imprisoned and a man who was probably innocent was driven to suicide; and over his and Mr. Rosenstein's curious conduct in the Uranium One affair, in which the Clintons were involved but not seriously pursued.)

The most surrealistic element of all is James Comey's book tour. Proud of having assured the president that he (Mr. Comey) was not a leaker or liar and did not make "weasel moves," he explains endlessly on television that he withheld from Mr. Trump the fact that the Clinton campaign paid for the Steele dossier. He is in public disagreement with his own former deputy and some agents, and many of them are implicated in false Foreign Intelligence Surveillance warrants against a junior Trump-campaign worker.

Yet Mr. Comey still expected and asked to keep his job. He feels guilty about minor social untruths of his youth, but is blind to his complete ethical breakdown in a great office of national security: profound dishonesty tempered by what Victorians called obsessive scrupulosity. Inspector General Michael Horowitz, in his next report expected imminently, will probably send him down the road to the grand jury as he did his former deputy, McCabe.

It is shaming to be so self-interested, but my publisher, Regnery, has insisted I mention my book, *Donald J. Trump: A President Like No Other*, which will be out next Monday and

which the National Review online is graciously excerpting. (I apologize for my gaucherie; being an author imposes indignities.)

It is easy to find Donald Trump distasteful. Those who do, though, should not only recognize the emerging correlation of forces and the President's policy successes, but be aware also that before he was president, he accomplished more than any previous occupant of that office other than Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Grant, and Eisenhower. The longer his enemies try, in their snobbery and partisan spite, to criminalize policy differences, the more bone-crushing will be their defeat. They have sown, and they shall reap.

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