

If Trump Returns to White House, Durham Report Gives Him a Mandate To Clean House Across the Federal Bureaucracy

The report confirms that the Russia collusion inquiry was a shabby and unjustified enterprise, motivated by partisanship and designed to neutralize or destroy the Trump administration.



by Conrad Black

It now seems to be quite clear that the Durham report was

intended by Attorney General Barr, who set it up, to accomplish pretty much what it has achieved. It confirmed that the Trump-Russia collusion inquiry was a shabby and unjustified enterprise, motivated by partisanship and designed to neutralize or destroy the Trump administration.

Mr. Barr's intention was evidently to disabuse the FBI and related sections of the Justice Department from engaging in such activity, but not to punish those responsible: a slap on the wrists for the enemies of Donald Trump, but of no political benefit to Mr. Trump himself.

The Durham report was in some important respects a whitewash: it arbitrarily began after the CIA and the United Kingdom's MI6 had handed the plan to attack Mr. Trump over to the FBI, and the FBI is treated as having played a passive rather than an active role. In the two footling prosecutions that John Durham initiated, the FBI was assumed to be benign at all times, which Mr. Durham knew better than anyone was false.

There is absolutely no professional excuse for this inquiry to have taken as long as it did and it can only be assumed that Mr. Barr's instructions were to drag it through the 2020 election. He evidently wished to leave the entire flagrant attempt of the FBI, parts of the Justice Department, and with the full collusion of the principal intelligence chiefs, to deliver the 2016 election to Senator Clinton to come to light only after Mr. Trump had been evicted from the White House following the 2020 election.

There is no conceivable reason for this relatively straightforward investigation to have taken remotely as long as it did. Mr. Barr apparently resolved and instructed Mr. Durham that Justice and the FBI were to be given a mild reproof against repetition of this kind of skulduggery, but that no serious prosecutions should be attempted.

Evidently, when Mr. Durham dragged his inquiry comfortably

through the 2020 election process, the incoming Biden administration and Attorney General Garland encouraged Mr. Durham to continue on his leisurely timetable to make the publication of his findings as far removed as possible from the events investigated. At least Mr. Garland, to his credit, did not edit it, as he could have.

It now seems probable that Mr. Trump is the victim of a sinister operation conducted by traditional Republicans masquerading as party loyalists and saluting the incoming leader after his upset 2016 election victory.

Since he had absolutely no background in assembling an administration, had very few useful contacts at Washington, and only a handful of the Republican Senate and House of Representatives delegations had supported him, his transition team was in the hands of people who were inexperienced at assembling senior officials for a new administration pledged to a sharp change in what had been broad bipartisan policy since the end of the Reagan era in 1989.

Traditionally the most important cabinet officials are the secretaries of state, defense, treasury, and the attorney general. In Mr. Trump's case, the Secretaries of state, Rex W. Tillerson, and defense, General James Mattis, soon demonstrated that they were not at all in lockstep with the president's views of the best policies for their departments.

Mr. Tillerson was an enthusiastic supporter of the insane Iran nuclear deal and his concept of foreign policy was to allow the so-called allies to freeload, to do nothing seriously to inconvenience America's enemies in the Middle East or to reduce the country's exposure to casualties and conflicts there.

General Mattis also disagreed with Mr. Trump's opinions and eventually resigned on the issue of maintaining aid to the Kurdish resistance movement that was with some reason regarded

as a terrorist organization by Turkey, an important if thoroughly unreliable NATO (nominal) ally.

The Treasury secretary, Stephen Mnuchin, was a faithful supporter of Trump and he deserves considerable credit for managing through many difficulties including the Covid crisis while keeping inflation tightly controlled.

Attorney General Sessions was probably a Trump loyalist, but he recused himself on all matters regarding Russia after only a couple of months into the new administration, thus enabling the Justice Department to be hijacked and devoted altogether to the destruction of the president that had appointed its principals.

Mr. Trump attempted a gesture of reconciliation by engaging Senator McConnell's wife, Elaine Chao, as transportation secretary. But Mr. McConnell and Speaker Ryan betrayed Trump on the repeal and replacement of Obamacare and Ms. Chao herself rather cravenly resigned only a few days before the inauguration of the succeeding administration, in protest over Mr. Trump's conduct on January 6, 2021. In this she was joined by the education secretary, Betsy DeVos, whose confirmation was only achieved by use of the tie-breaking vote of Vice President Pence.

The greatest culprit in this intense Republican effort to constrain Mr. Trump was Mr. Barr, in that he entered the administration under false colors of Trump loyalty after Mr. Trump got rid of Mr. Sessions, and in the end has done as much damage as he could to the president who did him the honor of asking him to return as attorney general.

All that Messrs. Trump and McConnell could really agree upon were tax cuts and Supreme Court nominees. Apart from that and the first impeachment case, Mr. McConnell was an enemy and not an ally.

If Mr. Trump is reelected, he will have both a mandate and a

complete justification for effecting the greatest dismemberment of the government since the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828 and the institution of the "spoils system," in which he fired much of the senior bureaucracy. The District of Columbia is now a 95 percent Democratic rotten borough dedicated above everything else to its own self-proliferation.

The education and energy departments in particular should be shut down; the entire upper reaches of the Pentagon and the Justice Department should be sacked, and the FBI and IRS should be put in trusteeship, massively repurposed, with substantial dismissals of personnel and headquarters relocated to the middle of the country. The intelligence agencies should be consolidated and severely dis-incentivized from ever engaging in partisan activity again.

Where the limitations have not expired, those responsible for the flagrant outrages in the 2016 and 2020 elections should be prosecuted, and where they have expired, the guilty parties should be severely publicly stigmatized for their righteous corruption. It is scandalous that they are now crowing that evading indictment by a hair's breadth is vindication. It was Mr. Barr's job to prevent that and he failed.

First published in the [*New York Sun*](#).