

Robert Mueller Can't Recall

by Conrad Black



Even I, as someone who has been blue in the face shrieking that the Mueller inquiry would be an unutterable fiasco since the day it was announced, could not have imagined such a terrible shambles as the world watched, gape-mouthed (like the witness much of the time), when Robert Mueller appeared before the House Judiciary and Intelligence committees on Wednesday.

The Democratic line that began with the president being a traitor who would be removed from office and imprisoned, and descended to impeachment but clinging to the Oval Office furniture by the grace of Republican senators, to general odium for moral turpitude, is now reduced to hypocritical pieties about ethics and the robo-repetition that “No one is above the law.”

Wednesday marks the decisive turning from squeezing the last drop out of the lemon of the president's alleged crimes, to the long-delayed investigation of the investigators.

The revelation that the Steele dossier—cited in Hillary Clinton's election memoir as evidence of Trump's treason—was commissioned and paid for by the Clinton campaign was dismissed as a "talking point" by the *Washington Post* and the Democrats generally. The fact that it was the basis of false foreign intelligence surveillance applications was disputed and then allowed to pass and fade with full media silence.

The Strzok-Page text messages revealing a rabid partisanship on the part of some of Mueller's leading collaborators, the instant transition of Clinton's official whitewashers into Trump's defamers and tormentors was dismissed as improper aspersing of distinguished professionals. Mueller was portrayed as a virtual Superman of law enforcement integrity, a "Republican" war hero and peerless exemplar of faithful, selfless public and patriotic service, and the most knowledgeable and formidable of the country's experts on law enforcement and clean government. He would unmask and destroy the perfidious ogre who had swindled, flim-flammed, and sleazed his way into the White House.

Mueller may once have deserved some of that iconization, though [a number of episodes](#), including his handling of the FBI corruption case in Boston, the Atlanta Olympic bomber affair, and the Uranium One affair, leave room for some reservations. But it [became clear on Wednesday](#) that he did not remember much of anything about "his" report, could not even retrieve from memory the much bandied-about word "conspiracy," contradicted himself, and stonewalled the committees on many questions that appeared to be appropriate for him to answer, (though many questions he rightly declined to answer).

Still, it was a bit rich that Mueller criticized the president in his written answers for stating that he (Trump) did not remember the correct answer to some of the special counsel's (Mueller's) questions, given the porosity of his own memory. Never mind the invocation by his successor at the FBI, James Comey, 250 times under oath that he didn't recall recent

matters highly germane to his official duties and actions.

David Axelrod, current spiritual holder of the of the Saul Alinsky Prize for slippery political conjuration, tweeted after a couple of hours that the hearings were "[very painful](#)." They were, and not just for those who were hoping that the hearings would grease the skids for the Democratic presidential impeachment launch. Mueller was drawn, pallid, hesitant, and inarticulate, and very unfamiliar with much of what he had been asked to recall and answer. He appeared to be ill and in no condition to deal with such a challenging session, and implausible as the real guiding force behind this massive and completely redundant inquest.

By the end of the day, there was a general recognition that the page had been turned. The more rabid Democrats may continue to huff and puff and shake their fists at the sky like King Lear, and promise vigilance against the machinations of the Kremlin. But those responsible for this monstrous disgrace to the intelligence services and the FBI that merged parts of them with the dirty tricks division of the Democratic National Committee, cannot delay their day of reckoning much longer.

The Coming Backlash for Democrats

The real origins of this satanic sequence of outrages and the real authors of this ridiculous special counsel report will be unmasked. The Democratic impeachers will be overwhelmed by the gathering backlash.

Mueller has been a respectable front for a ghastly assault on the Constitution, and at the end, he was, understandably, a reluctant witness, but—brave old soldier and Bronze Star winner that he is—he took a bullet for the platoon rather than accept the attorney general's offer of assistance if he wanted to ignore the House subpoenas to appear. He wanted to retain his professional standing while fronting a horrible mutation of the political system. It was a little like Theresa May, the

British prime minister who left office the same day, trying to leave Europe and remain in it simultaneously.

As Washington Dinsdale said in the 1939 Marlene Dietrich-James Stewart film "[Destry Rides Again](#)," one "must choose between the bottle and the badge." Mueller tried to turn an inability to exonerate—a standard that he admitted has never been asked or expected of any kind of American prosecutor—into something the Democratic congressional allies of his investigative team could use to continue their malicious and illegal harassment of the president. He never should have published the second volume of his report, which is a pastiche of selective and spliced scraps scarcely more rigorously composed than the Steele dossier and apparently intended, with no more success, to serve the same partisan interests.

It is a great sadness, a great victory, and a great irony. The spectacle of a stooped and aged Robert Mueller, after he had (voluntarily) been so dishonestly used by the president's enemies, was an objectively sad one, a sorry swan-song to a substantial career. The victory of the Trump Republicans is seismic, and announces the imminent exposure and punishment of those who abused the system to attack the president and deform the political system.

The irony is two-fold. If Trump's enemies had not launched the Russian collusion nonsense, all their pre-electoral skullduggery would not have been unearthed—if they had given him the normal honeymoon for incoming presidents, a serene ambiance would have settled Washington down, at least for a year or so, and they would now be wallowing in their Washington lobbying and other sinecures.

The second irony is that there is plenty of room to attack this president in more traditional and acceptable ways. His policies have mainly been successful; but he is too bumptious, egocentric, and stylistically annoying for many people, and the Democrats could have made something of an issue out of his

personality.

Instead, they have struck out, will have no window through which to fire live ammunition at Trump, and will have to take the heat for their corrupt actions. They promised “scorched earth,” and are immolating themselves.

We are now between the lightning and the thunder.

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