

The Prosecution Is Weakening

Trump is gaining the trust of the people. His critics, not so much.

by Conrad Black



Donald Trump's critics never imagined that more than a year into his presidency, his approval rating would be rising and just under 50 percent, the economy would be cranking up to a 4 percent growth rate, North Korea would have quieted down temporarily, U.S. oil production would be rising sharply and imports steadily declining, ISIS dispersed, over \$6 trillion added to Dow-Jones Industrial stock values (despite this week's correction), and the Clintons as well as Trump's official investigators facing far more serious legal questions than he is. It was about a year ago that Daniel Henninger of the *Wall Street Journal*, a very rational commentator, suggested that the White House leaks could be Trump's Watergate. When the president and his family departed for the Middle East, Rome, and the NATO meetings in May, one of ABC's commentators, Nate Silver, said his chances of impeachment

were 25 to 50 percent. A month later, knowledgeable former Reagan and Clinton adviser David Gergen said, "We are moving into impeachment territory." It is generally assumed by even quite fair-minded commentators that if the Democrats get just a bare majority in the House of Representatives in November, Trump will be impeached, though no one now seems to predict that he will be removed, which requires a two-thirds vote in the Senate.

This is the level of routine that the criminalization of political differences has reached: If the Democrats regain control of the House, even by a paper-thin margin, they will vote articles of impeachment no matter how spurious, as if it were a no-confidence motion in a parliamentary country without fixed-date elections, like Britain and Canada and Germany. But it is an accusation of "high crimes and misdemeanors." Although the Democrats showed the level of ethical and intellectual bankruptcy they have fallen to by having the egregious Representative Maxine Waters (Calif.) give one of their replies to the State of the Union message last week, I doubt they have so completely lost their minds as to vote impeachment with no color of legal right at all, which is what is widely predicted. (Ms. Waters, like the Red Queen, would specify the reasons for the impeachment after the fact – but that is not how the system works. I don't think they will get control of the House any time soon either.)

This telltale assumption that Trump isn't legitimate, which really derives from the fact that he was a complete outsider to the political class and he attacked the Bushes and Clintons and Obama in equal voice, is the tiny detritus of the original horror and disbelief and professed fear that he would plunge into foreign war while the country burst into flames and all social progress since FDR's time would be rolled back. While the hatred of Trump in some circles has not much abated, the extent of alarm and hostility he originally generated (partly from his own insouciance and partly from media hysteria, as he

had outspokenly denounced the biases and ignorance of the mainstream media and circumvented them by his domination of the social media and the talk-radio field) has declined. The Women's Day parade on January 20 was nothing like as large and overwrought as the 2017 version, and this time Trump humorously commended them on celebrating so generously his first anniversary as president.

As the Democrats' and their media lackeys' ability to whip up public terror about the man in the White House with horns and cloven feet declines, the smear campaign over the disembodied fiction of Trump-Kremlin collusion to rig the 2016 presidential election becomes ever more threadbare. Having ignored congressional subpoenas for many months, and gone to Homeric lengths to keep any information out of the public domain so as not to confuse the public (with the facts), Democrats warned hysterically that intelligence sources would be revealed (a total falsehood) and they are now reduced to accusing the Republican members of the House Intelligence Committee of "cherry-picking." This is what the dark and lamentable catalogue of Trump-Republican wrongdoing has shriveled down to: cherry picking among the allegations that could be made to reveal the fraudulence of the whole nonsensical Russian-collusion business. It is like reproaching the prosecutors of a presumed serial killer for only, so far, indicting him for a third of the murders in which he is the prime suspect.

In their desperation, like bank robbers who have fled on foot dodging down back alleys, the Democrats demand the publication of their reply, assuming Republican reticence. The Republicans, including the president, have evinced no objection to that and the Republicans on the Intelligence Committee have voted for it. They want everything that doesn't compromise intelligence personnel and techniques released at once. They want this spurious and sadistic game of endless investigations and tendentious leaks and media smears to be

ended in a grand opening of the kimono to allow the country to decide for itself what has happened. No one could possibly believe that the president and his supporters would be calling for this if they feared the outcome.

The Democrats are desperate for the president to fire someone so they can claim obstruction of justice, but he has shown no disposition to do that, and presumably for that reason. No one can claim with a straight face that he was wrong to fire Comey, now reduced to tweeting pictures of sunsets with quotes from Buddha and disconnected references to Senator Joseph R. McCarthy (the Democrats are the party that has been practicing McCarthyism). No one seems to blame Comey's replacement, Christopher Wray, for firing Comey's deputy, Andrew McCabe, and the Democrats cannot remember the names of the senior foot-soldiers in the transformation of the Justice Department into the dirty-tricks division of the Democratic National Committee: Peter Strzok and Bruce Ohr, who have been demoted. They issue dire warnings of a constitutional crisis if Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein or Special Counsel Mueller is fired, and both have been incompetent, but since Trump will not fire them, the Democrats will take the credit for saving them and the "integrity" of the process.

But it has no integrity. No Democrat denies the contents of the Republican Intelligence Committee memo: A fraudulent dossier commissioned and paid for by the Clinton campaign and the Democratic National Committee was the basis of an application for a FISA warrant for surveillance of a private citizen (Carter Page), and the author of the pastiche of lies known as the Steele dossier was cited via *Yahoo* magazine by the FBI as corroborative without identification of him as the author, in a sworn statement to the FISA court, with no mention of the funding or purpose of the supposedly corroborating information. This is illegal and every Democrat, elected and in the media, knows it, but none has said it, because it has been "cherry-picked" – presumably from a lush

tree of other malignant cherries. It will all come out.

Senator Mark Warner (D., Va.) is no longer inveighing, at least publicly, against the thousand Russian agents working in the swing states and delivering Wisconsin to Trump, or about the Steele dossier's being "taken seriously by the British, our ally." But Adam Schiff, the faithful voice of the Hollywood pustule of opinionated idiocy in his congressional district, was last week still fighting to expose "the flawed character" in the White House. If the Democrats do not bail out of this crashing plane soon, they are going to suffer a horrible electoral fate. The Russian-collusion fraud has been the dirtiest political trick in American history and Hillary Clinton, James Comey, and a number of lesser former and present officials are in serious danger of indictment. The Democrats are going to have to live with Trump and fight him on normal political ground.

And these lamentations about disrespect of the FBI and the intelligence services should stop. The FBI is a sacred cow that has been above the law for many decades. It is complicit in the 99 percent success rate of American prosecutions, 97 percent without trial, and in the fact that the United States, self-styled "home of the free," has five times as great a percentage of the world's incarcerated people as it does of its population. The demented partisan ravings of former intelligence chief James Clapper don't inspire much confidence that that branch of government has been in very capable hands either. It is likely that the Mueller investigation was implicitly largely based on the Steele dossier, but at least there are other matters – the Trump Tower meeting, the Papadopoulos–Downer drink-out in London – all nonsense unlikely to lead anywhere, but Rosenstein should try to make amends for a very unimpressive performance to date by telling Mueller to wrap it up as soon as he can, or at least make an updated interim statement that the president is not a suspect of serious wrongdoing. This whole episode has been a jolly-

hockey-sticks, Keystone Kops farce, and the president is entitled to be free from half-wit cable-news announcers who shall be nameless, such as Jake Tapper, Brian Stelter, and Joe Scarborough, regularly announcing that “the noose is tightening around the president’s neck.” It isn’t; he’s just reaching for the sick bag as he listens to these idiots.

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