

The Resistance Failed

The question now is whether House Democrats want to get something done or simply posture for another two years.

by Conrad Black



The Trump effort to drain the swamp is stalled, the Resistance attempt to defeat President Trump has failed, and the president has completed his takeover of the congressional Republicans. The more vocal Never Trumpers have gone, and those that remain, such as Senator Ben Sasse of Nebraska, will be lonely (and his regular threats to become an independent will have no weight, given the increased Republican majority in the Senate). Predictably, the president claimed victory on Election Night, and it was a partial victory. Speaker-semi-elect Nancy Pelosi spoke of national unity and will have a distinguished Indian summer if she means it. The two apparently had a cordial conversation on Election Night.

The sane Democrats know that simply continuing a scorched-earth, no-compromise strategy, and the orchestrated pretense that 2016 was an illegitimate fluke, will not work. They had

90 percent national media support, were immensely funded in a midterm election that cost over \$5 billion, and while they have a factionalized and rather narrow majority in the House, the president has turned the congressional Republicans, whose Senate leader (Mitch McConnell) was going to drop him like a hot rock less than three years ago, into lockstep loyalists of the White House. Trump has a free hand in judicial appointments and foreign policy. The country has forgotten the ludicrous Mueller inquiry, still silently festering and doubtless considering new names to take from the Moscow telephone directory for symbolic indictment. Mueller's existence facilitates the White House in ignoring whatever hyper-partisan nonsense incoming Trump-deranged House committee chairmen Jerry ("Impeach him") Nadler and Adam Schiff, not to dwell on the phantasmagorically absurd Maxine Waters, might do.

If the Democratic leadership cannot contain these drooling extremists, they will do more damage than the Clinton-obsessed impeachers of 1998–99 did to the Republicans. And the firing of Attorney General Sessions opens the way for the prosecution of all the Democrats who have lied under oath and committed other offenses, from Hillary Clinton, Loretta Lynch, and agency directors Clapper, Brennan, and Comey, down into the bowels of the Obama Administration and Clinton campaign. If Pelosi allows Nadler, Waters, and Schiff to run amok, no one should expect Trump to hold his fire. He may not anyway.

Another fact to be remembered is the complete failure of the Democratic stars. The Democrats have had their successes this week, but it was no thanks to Barack Obama, Joe Biden, Oprah Winfrey, or the Clintons, who are no longer welcome anywhere. Obama and Oprah struck out badly in Indiana and Georgia, and the ex-president looked particularly absurd, tie- and jacket-less, uttering staccato, Hemingway-like sentences about facts and claiming to have initiated the present economic boom. He is still fairly well liked as a personality, but practically

everyone recognizes that he was a complete failure in policy terms.

The discernible Democratic congressional leadership – Pelosi, Hoyer, Schumer, Durbin, a very tired and tedious quartet, but sane – could conceivably want to get something done and cannot possibly imagine that they are dealing with an insecure president or a feeble Republican party in the Congress. Infrastructure should be something that could be agreed on; a compromise on immigration may be possible if the Democrats can stop compulsively caressing the under-carriage of the illegal-migrant community. Slight gun-control reforms could be possible, as the president is not frightened of the National Rifle Association. It is going to be a supreme challenge to get comprehensive health-care reform across, given fragmented Democratic congressional leadership and the firing of the starting pistol, at about 3 a.m. on Election Night, of the marathon race of about 20 Democratic presidential candidates for 2020.

Trump is a moderate Republican (who changed parties seven times in the 13 years before his election), and he could certainly deal with the Democrats. If they have figured out that just orchestrating hate of Trump on CNN, the *New York Times*, and at the other national media puppet theaters will not bring them victory, perhaps something could be done. Trump is not a partisan. He wants to do a good job, be seen as doing a good job, and doesn't mind compromises – he is very good at negotiating them.

The American system has badly broken down, which is why Trump was elected in the first place. He has reversed foreign-policy appeasement of North Korea and Iran but avoided adventurism, has a roaring economy, has saved the nation from the climate-alarmists, and is ready to deal. All observers know, and the public is aware, that the American political system has not been able to deal with the country's principal problems: immigration, health care, gun control, abortion, deficits, and

unaffordable entitlements. Trump ran as hard against the Republican establishment as against the Democrats, and can patch things up with anyone, as Ted Cruz, Mitt Romney, and Kim Jong-un can attest. His party owes him a great deal for what he did these past months for its candidates, and the Democrats cannot accomplish anything without working with him.

The most likely scenario for the run-up to the next presidential election is gridlock, which the country has liked. But there is also a sense that the system is not working and that the principal problems are very dangerous. No intensification of pledges of allegiance to the Constitution will make the system work better. Perhaps there is just a chance that the leading personalities of both parties will see that working together to legislate solutions to grievous problems is a good thing, and that it may even be good politics. No such spirit has gripped Washington since the first two years of the presidency of Lyndon Johnson, but the impulse must be there, lurking and waiting to emerge. Another two years of mud-slinging and vituperative posturing won't achieve anything, and the Democrats don't have a combatant remotely as formidable as Trump. There were signs on Tuesday that the country has had enough of it. In a democracy, the people are always right.

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