

Trump and the 'Pivot' to Democrats

The Democrats are losing hope of impeaching him, so he can now work with them and the congressional GOP.

by Conrad Black



As usual with President Trump's more imaginative moves, the arrangement with the Democratic congressional leaders to defer the debt-ceiling issue for three months and pass hurricane relief at once was a more important step than it appears. The key element of it is that he has moved to higher and more defensible political ground. Since his inauguration, the president has been slugging it out with the Democratic congressional leadership, who promised and have delivered "scorched earth" and mindless obstructionism, while the House Republican leadership pompously imagined that it held the balance of power and would determine whether to drop the president like Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell's famous "hot rock" or play along with him. Apparently oblivious to the total immersion they were giving themselves in public disrepute by failing to do anything while the country is screaming for action in every policy area, the Republican congressional majorities conducted what looked like a

fractious work-to-rule. They collected their pay and their perquisites with clockwork precision, but they didn't do anything. They held the balance between their president and the other side of their branch of government, they thought.

A degree of attrition was necessary to bring the Democratic leadership in the Congress around to any cooperation with the president. For five or six months, there was a great deal of buzz from the Never Trump media and scuttlebutt in Washington that impeachment could loom at any moment. The Democrats were so traumatized by their presidential defeat that there was the well-known process of denial to go through. Shrieking in an enclosed echo chamber with Trump-hating Washington and especially the self-caricaturing national media, going through primal-scream therapy together, they stumbled from one infantile, fabricated crisis a week to the next. Chuck Schumer was engaged in synchronized weeping, he said, with the Statue of Liberty over visitors from terrorist-infested Muslim countries. There were huge demonstrations and interruptions of normal traffic at airports, and a little judge-shopping on the loopy-left Pacific Coast bench produced several judges prepared to announce they could determine immigration policy for the country. Of course, it is a presidential matter, and with a full Supreme Court is almost certain to be found so. It was intended to provoke Trump to ignore the judge's rulings so his enemies could scream more loudly about impeachment, but he abided by them, the fatuous issue has faded, and he will undoubtedly be upheld in his constitutional prerogatives by the Supreme Court.

Even now, as she pads around the country explaining that everyone else in the United States except her is responsible for her electoral defeat, Hillary Clinton still sounds the "tinkling cymbal" of Russian interference in the election and collusion with the Trump campaign. This has been under feverish investigation for over a year, with all the zeal the Obama Justice Department could bring to the persecution of the

regime's opponents. Partisan investigators who regularly dump U-Hauls of leaked information in the press to embarrass the president have not been able to scrape together anything to substantiate the Russian-collusion canard. It has been a long, bedraggled parade of hopeless Democratic legislators saying conviction is just around the corner, and the next corner, and the next. Senator Chris Coons of Delaware told us in March that Russian collusion would emerge from Trump's tax returns. It hasn't. Just last month, Virginia senator Mark Warner referred respectfully to the Steele Dossier, about Trump's synchronizing prostitutes urinating in a bed in Moscow because the Obamas once slept there. The senator assured us that "the British, our ally, take this seriously." No, senator, nobody does.

Less than three months ago, Capitol publicity hounds were scurrying in front of cameras to promise special legislation to protect Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Special Counsel Robert Mueller in their positions, though Trump made no move to dismiss them and has a perfect right to fire anyone employed by the executive branch of the federal government, whatever the Congress thinks of it. The impeachment applause meter spiked up again when Trump fired the director of the FBI, James Comey. One of the breathless brigade of CNN Trump-haters said ominously, "They came for Comey . . . ," as if reading from Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* about Stalin. Comey acknowledged in a congressional-committee appearance that he had leaked a memo he had written to himself about a conversation with President Trump to the *New York Times* in order to provoke the appointment of a special counsel to take charge of the Russian-collusion investigation. Trump's enemies leapt like gazelles to the conclusion that the president was running scared from the Russian facts and any serious examination of them.

Then came the insane furor over Charlottesville. Because the president associated Antifa and Black Lives Matter, who

arrived for a fight with the neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan, and in much greater numbers, and said they too were hooligans, the cry went up that he was a Nazi sympathizer. It is now clear that the FBI warned the Virginia governor and Charlottesville mayor three days before the violent events of what was coming, and they facilitated the riots. The scare that Trump would mishandle North Korea has faded as the Chinese and Russians have joined in the imposition of draconian sanctions and as the U.S. and its local allies gently turn up the military heat.

Again and again Trump's enemies have made blank, hopeless fools of themselves with unfounded accusations. It is now clear that James Comey wrote his exoneration of Mrs. Clinton before the investigation, such as it was, got seriously underway. It is clear that the Steele dossier was commissioned by Trump's enemies and the FBI might have had a hand in it. It is almost certain that Comey misled the Congress under oath, and he might have committed a crime in leaking his memo (whose accuracy is contested and unprovable and in any case not inculpatory of the president), which was government property, to the media. It is very likely that Mrs. Clinton, by any normal criteria, has given plenty of cause for indictment. There are a great many unanswered questions in the "unmasking" and public identification of Trump supporters by officials of the Obama administration, and the comical debacle of former Democratic National Committee chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz and her now indicted IT adviser could lead to a new treasure trove of skullduggery.

All of these instant Trump crises have evaporated; the questionable activities of prominent Democrats are slowly surfacing. As this majestic trajectory is followed, General Kelly has imposed order in the White House, the new press secretary is furnishing no howlers for *Saturday Night Live*, the president hasn't sent out a dodgy tweet in weeks, he is edging slowly up in the polls, he has handled the hurricanes

well, and he is deescalating the war with the Democrats, now that they have shot their bolt against his perceived vulnerabilities and theirs are escaping the partisan shroud the Never Trump press put over them.

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Sessions has not responded to a House committee's request for a special counsel to look into the Clintons' activities, including the imaginative activities of the Clinton Foundation. The Justice Department has declined to prosecute Lois Lerner, the ferocious Obama Torquemada who harassed conservative political-action committees. These are conciliatory gestures from the administration, and this week, Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi, who empurpled the Capitol air for months with frightful epithets against the president, sat on the Oval Office sofa purring like tabbies.

Doesn't anyone get it? McConnell and Ryan don't hold the balance of power between the administration and the Democrats, and it isn't a matter of a durable and late "pivot" by the president. His accusers have fallen on their faces and he is prepared to go easy on the Democrats if they will work with him in policy areas, especially tax reform, which he is bringing on now. He couldn't have pivoted earlier, when the Democrats thought they could impeach him and were listening to the lunatics in Hollywood and the media. As the mood deescalates and the system finally starts to work, he will hold the balance of power between the congressional parties and factions, and he will use it.

First published in