

DEMOCRATS AND THE MEDIA STILL LICKING THEIR COLLUSION WOUNDS

by

Carl Golden, April 1, 2019



It will likely be many months before the dust settles from the “no collusion” bomb dropped by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, but one inescapable truth emerged immediately: Never have so many been so wrong about so much for so long.

From members of Congress to a broad segment of the media to assorted academics, intelligence experts and lawyers, Mueller’s finding that no evidence existed to prove collusion or coordination between the Trump campaign and Russian operatives demolished their narrative that somehow American voters were duped by a foreign power into supporting a presidential candidate.

Mueller and dozens of seasoned attorneys and investigators spent more than two years and upwards of \$30 million to reach a conclusion that Donald Trump's election in 2016 was a legitimate and fairly reached decision, that his campaign did not enter into a surreptitious arrangement with Russian agents to influence the outcome.

In those two years, the American people were bombarded by media reports that Trump's election was tainted by a nefarious plot with a longtime and bitter enemy.

Major television networks joined leading national newspapers in a barrage of "bombshell" revelations purporting to prove that highly placed Trump campaign officials eagerly sought the help of Russian operatives to swing the election. That several of the "bombshells" turned out to have all the power of a wet firecracker was no deterrent and the relentless pursuit of even greater and often poorly-sourced erroneous reports merely provided Trump opportunities to gleefully ridicule "fake news."

Members of Congress tripped over one another in their quest for facetime on cable and network shows, sharing their views with political and media figures of the same mindset – Trump was an illegitimate president whose election was fraudulent and, as a result, should be impeached.

Words like treason, betrayal and Putin's puppet were tossed around recklessly along with predictions of indictments and prison terms.

With the release of the Mueller report, the house of collusion collapsed.

Prominent media figures defended the coverage, insisting they had nothing to apologize for and their reporting was in the noblest tradition of journalism and the First Amendment.

It sounded like a collective guilty conscience or an effort to disguise embarrassment, but it was in keeping with the principle that being in the media means never having to say you're sorry.

For those members of Congress who pursued the collusion narrative with Inspector Javert-like intensity, the Mueller report was a deep disappointment, but they recovered quickly and reacted as if the findings meant little.

California Rep. Adam Schiff, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, continued to insist he had uncovered indisputable evidence of collusion, although he said he accepts Mueller's conclusion there was insufficient evidence to prove a conspiracy.

His California colleague, Rep. Eric Swalwell, seems intent on reaching new heights of foolishness by insisting that regardless of Mueller's findings, he knows Trump is guilty, but – like Schiff – offers no rationale for his view.

The Democratic Congressional leadership quickly understood the devastating blow the Muller report had dealt to their party and – more importantly – the enormous public relations victory it handed Trump.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi quickly announced it was time to move on, change the subject and put the collusion issue behind them. Democrats, she said, would concentrate on more important issues, starting with health care and protecting the Affordable Care Act from the Trump Administration's efforts to dismantle it.

It would be in her best interest to rein in Schiff and Swalwell, who continue to use their media access to promote the collusion theory. She understands the risk of a damaging overreach that will lead inevitably to a public backlash.

Trump remains highly unpopular across much of the country, but, for many, the Mueller report

If Schiff and Swalwell continue to roam free, the Democratic Party will appear as a bunch of vindictive, revenge-filled partisans refusing to accept the findings of an individual they spent two years praising as scrupulously fair and the embodiment of integrity simply because his conclusions aren't what they wanted them to be.

For the media, it was not its finest hour.

Too often, basic rules were ignored or bent. That bright line separating speculation from reality, opinion from fact, was extinguished. Personal or partisan agendas were presented as legitimate news.

There were instances of solid news reporting and insightful commentary, but it was too often drowned out by raucous arguments over reporting that was neither solid nor insightful.

Unfortunately, the principle of "often wrong, but never in doubt" took over. Lesson learned... hopefully.

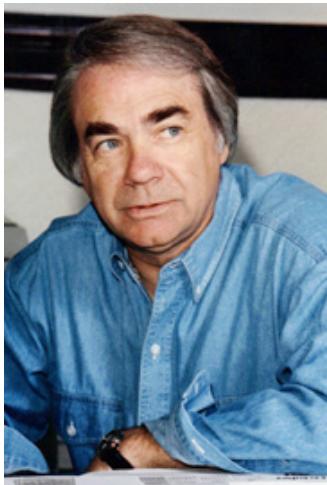
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