

The media and the Mueller report

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The report by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, exonerating Trump of collusion with Russia and obstruction of justice, is a political debacle for the Democratic Party and the corporate media. Day after day, the bulk of the establishment press, led by the *New York Times*, pumped out unsubstantiated claims and outright lies accusing Russia of subverting the 2016 election and branding Trump as an agent of Putin.

Mueller's report, after a sprawling investigation lasting nearly two years, has exposed the entire anti-Russia narrative as a hoax, perpetrated on the American people in pursuit of reactionary political ends. Journalist Matt Taibbi published an article on Saturday headlined "It's official: Russiagate is this generation's WMD," in which he wrote: "The Iraq war faceplant damaged the reputation of the press. Russiagate just destroyed it... As a purely journalistic failure, however, WMD was a pimple compared to Russiagate."

Those responsible—from the editorial offices of the major media outlets to the decision-makers in the Democratic Party—knowingly lied, while serving as conduits for factions of the CIA, the NSA and the FBI, whose opposition to the fascistic Trump was of a thoroughly right-wing character. They opposed Trump and sought either to remove him or politically cripple him on the grounds that he was insufficiently belligerent toward Russia and too reluctant to escalate military action in Syria and elsewhere.

The anti-Russia campaign revived the witch-hunting methods of the McCarthyite red scare. Its aim was threefold: first, to create an atmosphere of hysteria to justify preparations for war against nuclear-armed Russia; second, to channel the mass popular opposition to Trump in a right-wing, pro-war direction; and, third, to create a pretext for internet censorship and other attacks on democratic rights.

It was part of a broader, international anti-Russia witch hunt, including the fabricated allegation that

Putin was behind the poisoning of Russian expatriate Sergei Skripal and his daughter in England.

The cast of characters instrumental in perpetrating this fraud includes Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee; his counterpart in the Senate, the billionaire tech mogul Mark Warner; the "liberal" MSNBC pundit Rachael Maddow; late-night TV hosts such as Stephen Colbert and Seth Meyers; and James Bennet, editorial page editor of the *Times*, whose father, Douglas Bennet, ran the CIA-backed US Agency for International Development under President Carter.

The director of national intelligence under Obama, James Clapper, who lied to Congress about NSA domestic spying, and Obama's CIA director, John Brennan, who defended CIA torture programs and lied to Congress about CIA hacking of Senate Intelligence Committee computers, have been omnipresent on the airwaves denouncing Trump as a Russian stooge.

These people were engaged in a massive political conspiracy. The Democrats made a decision from the outset—beginning with the election campaign of the favored candidate of Wall Street and the CIA, Hillary Clinton—that they would not oppose Trump on his anti-working-class social policy or his authoritarian hostility to democratic rights and promotion of anti-immigrant racism, but on issues of imperialist foreign policy.

An indication of the priorities of the establishment media is given in a survey by the Tyndall Report on stories covered by the broadcast network evening news programs in 2018. Between ABC, CBS and NBC, the "Russian election meddling probe" was reported nearly twice as many times as Trump's detention (and abuse) of migrant children, and more than three times as often as the 35-day federal government shutdown that led to Trump's assumption of emergency powers to build his US-Mexico wall.

Taken together, Russiagate at number two and the top

reported story, the #MeToo Justice Kavanaugh confirmation battle, were reported four times more frequently than the Gestapo-like treatment of immigrant children.

The mechanism by which the mainstream media promoted Russiagate was to publish “news” articles composed of assertions by national security officials and experts, unusually anonymous, without any factual substantiation of their claims. The same intelligence agencies that dragged the American people into the illegal invasion of Iraq, which cost hundreds of thousands of Iraqi lives and thousands of American ones, on the basis of the Big Lie of Iraqi “weapons of mass destruction,” were presented as unassailable sources of truth.

The Democratic Party based its opposition to Trump on this right-wing campaign, while at the same time collaborating with the White House in passing near-record military budgets and opposing any popular mobilization against tax cuts for the rich or the persecution and mass imprisonment of immigrants. It combined anti-Russia hysteria with the #MeToo witch hunt, aimed at promoting racial and gender politics to divide the working class, undermine core democratic principles such as the presumption of innocence and due process, and consolidate support for imperialist war within privileged layers of the upper-middle class.

The Mueller report has left the Democratic Party in shambles. Its effort to either remove Trump or force him to adopt a more belligerent policy toward Russia have resulted only in strengthening the Trump administration and the Republicans. The Democrats’ response, signaled by an editorial in Monday’s *New York Times* that recycles all the lies about Russian “meddling” and “sowing discord,” will be to double down on its anti-Russia campaign and lurch even further to the right.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has from the outset opposed and exposed the Russiagate fraud. It has explained repeatedly the necessity for the working class to reject both big-business parties and their politics of “palace coup” and conduct a struggle against Trump on the basis of an independent revolutionary mobilization against capitalism.

In the name of fighting Russian-inspired “fake news” and upholding “authoritative media” against those that oppose the policies of the government, the American

state has enlisted the internet and tech giants to marginalize and censor left-wing publications, first and foremost the WSWS. This has gone hand in hand with the ongoing persecution of Julian Assange and, just this month, the re-imprisonment of Chelsea Manning, the spearhead of a frontal attack on free speech.

The outcome of the Democrats’ debacle, however, has demonstrated that it was precisely the “authoritative” media that has been and continues to lie through its teeth, while the WSWS’s exposure of the reactionary character of every faction of the ruling class has been confirmed.

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