

The Real Issue of the Mueller investigation.

I have just read a comment called "Russiagate: The Great Tragic Comedy of Modern Journalism." It makes two significant points: first, that, as President Trump rightly points out, contacts by Americans with non-Americans are *per se* value free, normal and in the world in which we live, increasing. The second, although not so pointedly put forth, is that all the brouhaha over the Mueller investigation was nearly pointless because the investigation itself was largely misdirected. They forced me to examine what the media is playing day by day on the significance of the report:

The significant *legal* issues the investigation should have brought forth were obstruction of justice and corruption in such matters as conflict of interest. The significant *political* issue, which was never the object of the inquiry, was what Mr. Trump was doing to America through his domestic and foreign policies. This was the proper question for Congress in the first instance and for the electorate in the long run.

Focusing attention on possible Russian meddling in the American elections was, in my judgment, naive, callow and distracting: that is because, as the record repeatedly and constantly shows, every major power throughout history has tried to shape the politics of its rivals.

What, after all, was the Monroe Doctrine? It aimed not just to keep the Europeans out of Latin America but to make it America's clone. And our relations with Mexican regimes? Even Woodrow Wilson tried to have the Mexican leader Pancho Villa murdered. And the Banana republics? We made them safe not for democracy but for our corporations. And what were our troops doing in Russia in 1919? On vacation? Of course not; they were trying to overthrow the Revolutionary Communist government. And Wilson's plan to make the world safe for democracy? And his fourteen points aimed at opening the seas to commerce and rearranging the European empires. The European powers, at least, regarded these as subversion.

In pushing for radical change, Americans were hardly johnnies-come-lately. But we got more serious in the aftermath of the Second World War. Since then overtly through the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, Point Four, the IMF, the World Bank and armed force and covertly through a variety of actions undertaken by the CIA, the Defense Department, Radio Free Europe, the Congress for Cultural Freedom etc., we have bought every politician (and his supporters or constituents) we could find. We bought or at least rented country after country — France, Britain, Germany, Italy, Greece, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, (Nationalist) China and all of Latin America.

Should we be astonished to learn that the Russians were doing the same? All their leaders from before Lenin were aiming to persuade the whole world to adopt their

recipe for world order. They told us all about their aims and methods. Did no one read their writings?

Who thinks that such machinations — both by them and by us — began in Trump's time? Does no one read history? One would think not to listen to the breast-beating Democrats or the uptight Republicans. Are they real-life manifestations of Tweedledum and Tweedledee? Or do we all live in the country of the blind?

For some of us, it is emotionally satisfying to scoff, but what is important is not that what we see is naive, ignorant and foolish, although that appears to be the case. What is important is that the comedy being played out in the media for our amusement is precisely what the word amusement originally meant, "diversion." The daily parade, the cat and mouse game, the speculation and now, finally, the unsatisfying conclusion have diverted attention from events that will shape our lives and the lives of our children for generations to come — to come, that is, if we last that long: What kind of a world are we creating? What are we doing to our little planet's ability to sustain life? Are we moving away from a nuclear Armageddon or toward it? Are we finding ways to live in affordable security in a multicultural world or trying to beat the wretched of the Earth into submission? Are we striving to create — or to preserve — the elements of mutual respect that is, as our early leader James Madison told us, is the only stable basis of freedom? Or, have we done so much to subvert it that one or two further pushes will send us reeling over the edge into irredeemable tyranny?

Mueller gave us a distraction. Now is the time to face the real issues. Can we face them, understand them and set out salvaging the good life many of us have enjoyed? That is the real question each and every one of us must address.

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