

United States: “No Collusion with Russia” - The Impact of the Mueller Report on Trump

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The most important finding of the long Mueller investigation of Trump, that there was no collusion with the Russians to fix the 2016 election so that Trump would win, came as a shock to most liberals, progressives and even many socialists.

I've seen only one figure in the mass media who faces even parts of the truth – an op-ed writer in the *New York Times* who said, “Mr. Trump’s win was not the illegitimate product of a treasonous conspiracy.... The president was not a Manchurian candidate....

“Indeed the truest horror in Mr. Mueller’s finding is that we didn’t need Mr. Putin to be pulling the strings. We know that under our shamolic democracy, a man as unfit as Mr. Trump really can legitimately acquire all the terrifying power of the presidency without being controlled by a foreign puppet master....

“Collusion was a seductive and convenient delusion. For many Americans, the simple truth that Mr. Trump really had won was too terrible to bear. The ease with which a racist, misogynist, serial con man had slipped past every gatekeeper in American life suggested something deeply sick at the core of our society.”

He concluded with: *“Mr. Trump was the corrupt, misbegotten choice of a citizenry mired in partisan mistrust, seething with racial grievance, informed by a beleaguered and fracturing news media, and laboring under an economic and political system that had long ceased functioning for all but the wealthiest of its citizens.”*

The Mueller report was a blow to the forces in mainstream capitalist politics that have sought to curb or even remove Trump by putting all their eggs into the Mueller investigation basket. These forces include the Democratic and some Republican politicians.

Trump emerges stronger, consolidating further his base and his hold over the Republican party. He has strengthened his boast that he is the “strongman who can set things right” by defeating this challenge.

We have seen how the Trump presidency has given cover for the expansion of the ultra-right, individuals and organizations grouped around the self-described “Alt-Right” white power movement. These fascist-minded forces will only be further encouraged.

Trump is increasingly testing the waters over how far he can go toward ruling by fiat. He declared a “national emergency” to give himself the authority to bypass Congress, which explicitly denied him all the funding he wanted to build a “wall” along the border with Mexico, and has set in motion taking federal funds Congress earmarked for other purposes and diverting them to his pet project.

Now he says that if Mexico doesn’t stop the asylum seekers at the border, he will shut down the

border. He may be making an empty threat, designed to appeal to his base, but we don't know if he will carry it out partially or all the way.

He also has cut off U.S. aid to Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. This aid is woefully inadequate to address the dire situation in those countries, but his cutting it off will make things worse.

It is useful to repeat that the poverty and violence in these countries which is impelling many to make the dangerous attempt the long journey to the U.S. border to seek asylum is a result of U.S. policies, that include imperialist economic exploitation, fomenting military coups (the latest in Honduras in 2009) and so forth going back for over a century.

In recent decades the U.S. fake "War of Drugs" has done nothing to stem the growing demand for them in the U.S. It criminalizes drug use instead of treating it as a health problem, similar to how the drugs alcohol and nicotine are treated. This creates a vast illegal criminal network to meet the demand, stretching from the U.S. across the border to Mexico and Central America.

Just as the making of alcohol illegal for some years in the U.S. in the early 20th century created a vast criminal network to meet the demand for alcohol, which resulted in massive violence and gang warfare, so the "War on Drugs" has done the same inside the U.S. and south of the border.

What is the "something deeply sick at the core of our society" that could result in a figure like Trump to rise to the top?

It is the economic and political evolution of U.S. capitalism. Since the 1970s, there has been increasing inter-imperialist competition economically, within the context of U.S. hegemony. Here as elsewhere, there has been a squeeze on the rate of profit. The response of the ruling class has been to pressure workers' wages. Since the 1970s, wages have risen anemically in the U.S.

Capitalists shut down many industries, shifting production to low wage countries. Social programs have been cut.

Unions were decimated. The labor bureaucracy made concession after concession to the owning class.

Then came the Great Recession of 2007-2009, and the sluggish recovery. Workers were hit hard by unemployment (official figures underestimate). There were foreclosures of many homes.

Workers saw the government bail out the big banks and other institutions, while their situation was ignored by government under the Democrat Obama. The lower sections of the middle class have also suffered, and many were pushed down into the proletariat.

There was some resistance. "Occupy Wall Street" targeted increasing wealth for the "1%" at the top while the large majority was suffering. It struck a chord in that majority.

The eruption of Black Lives Matter exposed the oppression and violence directed against African Americans. Young Latinos demanded rights for immigrants. There were other instances of resistance to the capitalist offensive.

Also since the 1970s there has been pushbacks against the social gains of the radicalization of the 1960s-early 1970s. The Republican Party led the charge, but the Democrats followed in their wake. The Republicans moved to the far right and became the chief party of white racism.

The “War on Drugs” championed by both parties became especially a war on people of color, and sharply accelerated the mass incarceration which has earned the U.S. the dubious distinction of jailer in chief of the world. The result has been the rise of the “New Jim Crow” that Michel Alexander has documented.

When the campaigns for the presidential elections of 2016 began, deep fissures emerged in both parties and between them. There was deadlock in Congress as the Republicans made gains playing the race card, especially in light of the election of the first Black president in 2008.

These differences included over how much to continue the austerity drive, or whether to let up and make concessions to the workers and middle class, and how to meet the challenge of a new world of increasing inter-imperialist competition – economic nationalism and protectionism or free trade.

With no mass workers’ party to present an alternative way forward, the stage was set for the emergence of an authoritarian strongman to rise above the fray.

Some 80 percent of the population said they were suffering polls showed. Sanders in the Democratic Party and Trump in the Republican recognized this fact, although from opposing poles.

Sanders proposed some positive pro-working class reforms, including national health insurance, free tuition in state colleges and universities, and more. He was defeated in the primaries by the Democratic establishment.

Trump from the beginning was openly racist, his first and ongoing theme being opposition to immigration of Latinos and Muslims. His rallies featured incitement against Blacks. He played into and amplified fears of white middle and working class racists who blamed non-whites for their situation, and promised that he was the strongman who knew how to defend them.

This message galvanized his base, white racists of all classes, and he demolished his Republican opponents and captured the Republican nomination. His Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton, countered his “Make America Great Again” with “America Is Already Great” which 80 percent of the population knew wasn’t true for them.

The undemocratic election procedures for president codified in the Constitution allowed him to capture the presidency, even though he lost the popular vote. He was aided in this in Republican-controlled states where various subterfuges were used to push Black and Latino voters off the rolls.

It is the attacks on workers, especially Blacks and Latinos, the intensification of racism in a country with a long history of institutionalized racism going back to when the first slaves were brought to the British colonies in the 17th century, the oppression of women, and all the other evil of U.S. capitalism I haven’t touched on, including war, that is the sickness at the core of U.S. society.

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