

The U.S. “Russia Did it!” Frenzy - “This whole thing is about America, not Russia.”

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Hardly a day goes by without much of the mainstream media concentrating on Russian meddling in the 2016 election, including any news about the various investigations into the question, much blowhard opinionating by talking heads, charges that Russia sought to collude with the Trump campaign, and on and on and on.

That Russia would try to influence U.S. politics is probably true. But to keep a sense of proportion, we should recall that the world’s foremost “meddler” in other people’s politics and elections is Washington itself. Since the Second World War, the CIA and other agencies have played all kinds of dirty tricks to undermine Communist parties throughout the world, especially in places where these were large, as in France and Italy. Revolutionary socialists, even if small, became victims, also.

Socialist parties were targets, too, if they took left wing positions as the Labour Party did in Britain after the war, and again under Corbyn today. Labor unions were also undermined or subverted by the CIA, often with the support of the anticommunist bureaucrats at the tops of the AFL and CIO, and then the AFL-CIO after they merged.

Sometimes if elections went the “wrong” way, the U.S. organized military coups. A case in point was the elections in Chile in the early 1970s, where Washington did everything it could to prevent the election of the Socialist Allende. When that failed, the State Department immediately began to organize for a military takeover, which was finally carried out on (another September 11) in 1973. This is documented by U.S. government files released much later.

How many military dictatorships did the U.S. impose on the countries of Latin America over many decades? Many, but I forget how many. Let us not forget other places, like Greece, Iran and so forth, and even against one of their allies in South Vietnam during that war.

We can take for granted that many nations try to influence politics in other nations. Israel, for example, promotes at present U.S. politicians who favor Netanyahu, against other pro-Israel politicians in Congress who would like to see a bit less bellicose Israeli government, to make Washington’s support seem more reasonable.

Trump publicly meddled in the British Brexit vote (he was in favor) while Obama even traveled to Britain to campaign for a “no” vote. When the U.S. meddles, that’s normal and accepted, but when other countries meddle in U.S. elections that is treated almost like an act of war.

The present campaign in the U.S. against Russian “meddling” has become a grotesque caricature.

It began as the charge that Russia hacked into the Democratic National Committee (DNC) during the election campaign, and funneled DNC documents to Wikileaks which published them. The charge is that the exposure of these DNC documents helped defeat Clinton and elect Trump.

What did these documents reveal? That the Clinton campaign and the DNC conspired to use dirty tricks to defeat Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primaries. The DNC admitted the documents were

in fact real. They actually were damning to Clinton, especially among Sanders' supporters.

The fact that Clinton's and the DNC's own actions were to blame for the negative publicity then gets twisted around to "the Russians helped Trump get elected" and the fact that the documents were true gets forgotten. (No proof has been forthcoming that the Russians were in fact Wikileaks' source, but for the sake of argument, let's assume they were.) Clinton didn't lose the election, you see, Russia won it.

Was the Trump campaign contacting Russian officials to see if business deals could be made for a quid-pro-quo of relaxing some U.S. sanctions)? Probably. Let's not forget that all U.S. sanctions against other countries are never made for the "humanitarian" reasons trumpeted, but solely to advance the imperialist economic and political interests of the U.S. ruling class.

The charge gets even more specific, with the substitution of "Putin" for "Russia". That is, Putin tipped the election in Trump's favor. He didn't do this by CIA-type dirty tricks, assassinations, etc. but by extremely clever propaganda.

Then the charge got even more unreal than just the DNC documents. Now much of the media regularly asserts that Putin's formidable propaganda machine used social media to inflame passions in the U.S. populace that has polarized the country. This is taken one step further, with the charge that social conflicts in the U.S. aren't actually real, but are constructs created by Putin. Black Lives Matter wasn't the result of cops killing Blacks and getting away with it, but of Putin's propaganda on Facebook. If the whole charge that Putin was able by clever propaganda to actually change the outcome of the election is itself preposterous, this extension takes the cake.

I saw articles that claimed that Putin not only stole the U.S. election, he also created the vote for Brexit and that the upcoming elections in Italy are likely to be another Putin victim.

What is the purpose of this campaign? One aim is to try to channel mass opposition to Trump's racist, misogynist and anti-worker policies into focusing on the alleged Russian meddling. Also to create the hope that the legal system will remove him. If it does not, then the answer will be to vote for the right wing Democratic establishment candidates in 2018 and 2020.

Out of the streets and into faith in the courts or Democrats!

Putin is portrayed as a powerful evil genius who can use Facebook to sway great masses, which is nutty. But it is having an effect in Russia. An article from Moscow in the *New York Times* notes:

"Some of Mr. Putin's biggest foes in Russia ... are now joining a chorus of protest over America's fixation with Moscow's meddling in its political affairs."

" 'Enough already!' Leonid M. Volkov, chief of staff for the anti-corruption campaigner and opposition leader Aleksei A. Navainy, wrote in a recent anguished post on Facebook. 'What is happening with the investigation into Russian interference, is not just a disgrace but a collective eclipse of the [U.S.] mind.'"

"What most disturbs Mr. Putin's critics about what they see as America's Russia fever is that it reinforces a narrative put forth tirelessly by the state-controlled Russian news media. On television, in newspapers and on web-sites, Mr. Putin is portrayed as an ever-victorious master strategist who has led Russia ... from triumph to triumph on the world stage."

Volkov adds, "The Kremlin is of course very proud of this whole Russian interference story. It shows they are not just a group of old KGB guys with no understanding of digital but an almighty force

from a James Bond saga. This image is very bad for us. Putin is not a master political genius.”

A professor of history and American specialist at the European University at St. Petersburg, is quoted, “American liberals are so upset about Trump that they cannot believe he is a real product of American life. They try to portray him as something created by Russia. This whole thing is about America, not Russia.”

Barry Sheppard
