

Forgetting the 'Dirty Dossier' on Trump

Exclusive: The new Russia-gate furor is over Donald Trump Jr. meeting a Russian who claimed to have dirt on Hillary Clinton, but the Clinton team's Russian cash-for-trash search against Trump Sr. is all but forgotten, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Yes, I realize that the editors of The New York Times long ago cast aside any journalistic professionalism to become charter members of the #Resistance against Donald Trump. But the latest frenzy over a meeting between Donald Trump Jr. and a Russian lawyer who was dangling the possibility of information about the Democrats receiving money from Russians represents one of the more remarkable moments of the entire Russia-gate hysteria.

Essentially, Trump's oldest son is being accused of taking a meeting with a foreign national who claimed to have knowledge of potentially illegal activities by Trump's Democratic rivals, although the promised information apparently turned out to be a dud.

Yet, on Monday, the Times led its newspaper with a story about this meeting – and commentators on MSNBC and elsewhere are labeling Trump Jr. a criminal if not a traitor for hearing out this lawyer.

Yet, no one seems to remember that Hillary Clinton supporters paid large sums of money, reportedly about \$1 million, to have ex-British spy Christopher Steele use his Russian connections to dig up dirt on Trump inside Russia, resulting in a salacious dossier that Clinton backers eagerly hawked to the news media.

Also, the two events – Trump Jr.'s meeting with the Russian lawyer and the Clinton camp's commissioning of Steele's Russia dossier – both occurred in June 2016, so you might have thought it would be a journalistic imperative to incorporate a reference or two to the dossier.

But the closest the Times came to that was noting: "Political campaigns collect opposition research from many quarters but rarely from sources linked to foreign governments." That would have been an opportune point to slide in a paragraph about the Steele dossier, but nothing.

The Times doesn't seem to have much historical memory either. There actually have been a number of cases in which American presidential campaigns have ventured overseas to seek out "opposition research" about rivals.

For instance, in 1992, President George H.W. Bush took a personal role in trying to obtain derogatory information about Bill Clinton's 1970 student trip to Eastern Europe, including to Moscow.

That effort started out by having senior State Department officials rifle through the passport files of Clinton and his mother, looking for a purported letter in which some Republican operatives thought Clinton might have renounced his U.S. citizenship.

Bush and his team were called out on that caper, which became known as "Passport-gate." During the Oct. 11, 1992 debate, Clinton even compared Bush's tactics to Joe McCarthy's during the 1950s Red Scare. But the Bush campaign didn't let the issue entirely go.

Czech-ing on Bill

In the days after the debate, phone records revealed a flurry of calls from Bush's campaign headquarters to Czechoslovakia, another stop on Clinton's student tour. There were also fax transmissions on Oct. 14 and 15, 1992, according to a later official investigation.

On Oct. 16, what appears to have been a return call was placed from the U.S. Embassy in Prague to the office of ad man Sig Rogich, who was handling anti-Clinton themes for the Bush campaign.

Following those exchanges, stories about Clinton's Prague trip began popping up in Czech newspapers. On Oct. 24, 1992, three Czech newspapers ran similar stories about Clinton's Czech hosts. The *Cesky Denik* story had an especially nasty headline: "Bill Was With Communists."

The Czech articles soon blew back to the United States. Reuters distributed a summary, and *The Washington Times*, over three consecutive days, ran articles about Clinton's Czech trip. The Clinton campaign responded that Clinton had entered Czechoslovakia under normal procedures for a student and stayed with the family of an Oxford friend.

Despite those last-minute efforts to revive Clinton's loyalty issue, the Democrat held on to defeat Bush in a three-way race (with Ross Perot).

You also could go back to Republican contacts with South Vietnamese officials to sabotage President Lyndon Johnson's Vietnam peace talks in 1968 and similar meetings with Iranian emissaries to frustrate President Jimmy Carter's Iran hostage negotiations in 1980, including a curious meeting involving senior Ronald Reagan campaign aides at the L'Enfant Plaza Hotel in Washington, D.C.

But the Steele dossier is a more immediate and direct example of close Hillary Clinton supporters going outside the United States for dirt on Trump and collaborating with foreign nationals to dig it up – allegedly from Kremlin insiders. Although it is still not clear exactly who footed the bill for the Steele dossier and how much money was spread around to the Russian contacts, it is clear that Clinton supporters paid for the opposition research and then flacked the material to American journalists.

The Mystery Dossier

As I wrote on March 29, “An irony of the escalating hysteria about the Trump camp’s contacts with Russians is that one presidential campaign in 2016 did exploit political dirt that supposedly came from the Kremlin and other Russian sources. Friends of that political campaign paid for this anonymous hearsay material, shared it with American journalists and urged them to publish it to gain an electoral advantage. But this campaign was not Donald Trump’s; it was Hillary Clinton’s.

“And, awareness of this activity doesn’t require you to spin conspiracy theories about what may or may not have been said during some seemingly innocuous conversation. In this case, you have open admissions about how these Russian/Kremlin claims were used.

“Indeed, you have the words of Rep. Adam Schiff, the ranking Democratic member of the House Intelligence Committee, in his opening statement at [a] public hearing on so-called ‘Russia-gate.’ Schiff’s seamless 15-minute narrative of the Trump campaign’s alleged collaboration with Russia followed the script prepared by former British intelligence officer Christopher Steele who was hired as an opposition researcher last June [2016] to dig up derogatory information on Donald Trump.

“Steele, who had worked for Britain’s MI-6 in Russia, said he tapped into ex-colleagues and unnamed sources inside Russia, including leadership figures in the Kremlin, to piece together a series of sensational reports that became the basis of the current congressional and FBI investigations into Trump’s alleged ties to Moscow.

“Since he was not able to go to Russia himself, Steele based his reports mostly on multiple hearsay from anonymous Russians who claim to have heard some information from their government contacts before passing it on to Steele’s associates who then gave it to Steele who compiled this mix of rumors and alleged inside dope into ‘raw’ intelligence reports.

“Besides the anonymous sourcing and the sources’ financial incentives to dig up

dirt, Steele's reports had numerous other problems, including the inability of a variety of investigators to confirm key elements, such as the salacious claim that several years ago Russian intelligence operatives secretly videotaped Trump having prostitutes urinate on him while he lay in the same bed in Moscow's Ritz-Carlton used by President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama.

"That tantalizing tidbit was included in Steele's opening report to his new clients, dated June 20, 2016. Apparently, it proved irresistible in whetting the appetite of Clinton's mysterious benefactors who were financing Steele's dirt digging and who have kept their identities (and the amounts paid) hidden. Also in that first report were the basic outlines of what has become the scandal that is now threatening the survival of Trump's embattled presidency."

The Trump Jr. Meeting

So, compare that with what we know about the June 9, 2016 meeting at Trump Tower in New York City, which Donald J. Trump Jr. says he agreed to because someone was claiming knowledge about Russian payments helping Hillary Clinton.

Trump Jr. said Russian lawyer Natalie Veselnitskaya "stated that she had information that individuals connected to Russia were funding the Democratic National Committee and supporting Mrs. Clinton. Her statements were vague, ambiguous and made no sense. No details or supporting information was provided or even offered. It quickly became clear that she had no meaningful information."

According to Trump Jr.'s account, Veselnitskaya then turned the conversation to President Vladimir Putin's cancellation of an adoption program which had sent Russian children to American parents, a move he took in reaction to the so-called Magnitsky Act, a 2012 punitive law passed by the U.S. Congress in retaliation for the 2009 death of Sergei Magnitsky in a Russian jail.

The death became a Western cause célèbre with Magnitsky, the accountant for hedge-fund executive William Browder, hailed as a martyr in the cause of whistleblowing against a profoundly corrupt Russian government. After Magnitsky's death from a heart attack, Browder claimed that his "lawyer" Magnitsky had been tortured and murdered to cover up official complicity in a \$230 million tax-fraud scheme involving companies ostensibly under Browder's control.

Because of Browder's wealth and political influence, he succeeded in getting the European Parliament and the U.S. Congress to buy into his narrative and move to punish the presumed villains in the tax fraud and in Magnitsky's death. The U.S.-enacted Magnitsky Act in 2012 was an opening salvo in what has become a new

Cold War between Washington and Moscow.

Only One Side Heard

The Magnitsky narrative has now become so engrained in Western geopolitical mythology that the storyline apparently can no longer be questioned or challenged. The New York Times reports Browder's narrative as flat fact, and The Washington Post took pleasure in denouncing a 2016 documentary that turned Browder's version of events on its head.

The documentary, entitled "The Magnitsky Act. Behind the Scenes," was essentially blocked for distribution in the West, with the European Parliament pulling the plug on its planned premiere in Brussels shortly before it was scheduled for showing.

When the documentary got a single showing at the Newseum in Washington, a Washington Post editorial branded the documentary Russian "agit-prop."

The Post sought to discredit the filmmaker, Andrei Nekrasov, without addressing his avalanche of documented examples of Browder's misrepresenting both big and small facts in the case. Instead, the Post accused Nekrasov of using "facts highly selectively" and insinuated that he was merely a pawn in the Kremlin's "campaign to discredit Mr. Browder and the Magnitsky Act."

The Post concluded smugly: "The film won't grab a wide audience, but it offers yet another example of the Kremlin's increasingly sophisticated efforts to spread its illiberal values and mind-set abroad. In the European Parliament and on French and German television networks, showings were put off recently after questions were raised about the accuracy of the film, including by Magnitsky's family.

"We don't worry that Mr. Nekrasov's film was screened here, in an open society. But it is important that such slick spin be fully exposed for its twisted story and sly deceptions."

Given the fact that virtually no one in the West was allowed to see the film, the Post's gleeful editorial had the feel of something you might read in a totalitarian society where the public only hears about dissent when the Official Organs of the State denounce some almost unknown person for saying something that almost no one heard.

What the Post didn't want you to know was that Nekrasov started off his project with the goal of producing a docu-drama that accepted Browder's self-serving narrative. However, during the research, Nekrasov uncovered evidence that revealed that Magnitsky was neither a "lawyer" nor a whistleblower; that the

scam involving Browder's companies had been exposed by a woman employee; and that Magnitsky, an accountant for Browder, was arrested as a conspirator in the fraud.

As the documentary unfolds, you see Nekrasov struggling with his dilemma as Browder grows increasingly abusive toward his erstwhile ally. Nekrasov painfully concludes that Browder had deceived him.

But, don't worry, as a citizen in the Free World, you probably will never have to worry about viewing this documentary, since it has been effectively flushed down the memory hole. Official references to Magnitsky are back in the proper form, treating him as a Martyr for Truth and a victim of the Evil Russians.

Plus, if you rely on The New York Times, The Washington Post, MSNBC, CNN and the rest of the U.S. mainstream media for your news, you won't have to think about the far more substantive case of the Steele Dossier in which Hillary Clinton's allies spent gobs of money seeking out sources in Russia to serve up dirt on Donald Trump.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).
