

THE BIG ELECTION LIE BUILT ON THE LAST BIG ELECTION LIE

Welcome to Byron York's readers! Since you're here, you may be interested that Byron didn't tell you in his error-riddled piece that I was years ahead of the Right Wing in debunking the dossier, and have even noted how Byron ran interference for Oleg Deripaska, thereby hiding the way Deripaska was really fucking over Paul Manafort. And not only did I not attribute Hillary's loss to Russia, I even challenged the easy claims it was all Comey's fault. You might ask yourself why Byron didn't reveal any of that to you (to say nothing of misrepresenting what this post says).

NPR did a good piece last week on Trump's Big Lie about winning the election.

Call it an insurrection or a coup attempt, it was fueled by what's known as the "Big Lie": the verifiably false assertion that Trump won. Joe Biden won 306 votes in the Electoral College, while Trump received 232. In the popular vote, Biden won by more than 7 million votes.

Many are warning that over the past year, that "big lie" of a stolen election has grown more entrenched and more dangerous.

It quoted Tim Snyder, an expert on authoritarians, on how the tactic of telling lies to turn a powerful person into a victim comes right out of *Mein Kampf*.

A couple of weeks later, he repeated the fiction at a rally in Iowa. "We didn't lose," he insisted to a crowd that rewarded him with chants of "Trump won!"

By inverting the narrative, attempting

to slough off the “big lie” and pin it instead on his opponents, Trump exploited an age-old tactic, says Yale University history professor Timothy Snyder.

“Part of the character of the ‘big lie’ is that it turns the powerful person into the victim,” he says. “And then that allows the powerful person to actually exact revenge, like it’s a promise for the future.”

Snyder, author of the books *The Road to Unfreedom* and *On Tyranny*, has spent years studying the ways tyrants skewer truth. Snyder points to Hitler’s original definition of the “big lie” in his manifesto, *Mein Kampf* and the ways he used it to blame Jews for all of Germany’s woes.

“The lie is so big that it reorders the world,” Snyder says. “And so part of telling the big lie is that you immediately say it’s the other side that tells the big lie. Sadly, but it’s just a matter of record, all of that is in *Mein Kampf*.”

That’s all true. As someone who has read virtually all of the statements of offense for those who have pled guilty for January 6, many credibly claim they really believed this Big Lie. Some still believe it. Their lives will be forever changed – some ruined – because they believed Trump was a victim and acted to avenge him.

But there’s something missing from all the worthwhile discussions of the Big Lie. It’s the lie those who helped tell this most recent Big Lie tell.

Consider this interview Chris Hayes did with Dustin Stockton and Jennifer Lynn Lawrence, who’ve been doing a media tour to claim they were betrayed when Trump launched his mobsters

on the Capitol.

When Hayes asked them whether they now admit that the election wasn't stolen, Stockton instead attempted to turn the question around:

Do you now admit that the "Russia memes" that you guys ran 24-hours a day in the early days of the Trump that got maybe several million impressions which our pages often do. [cross chatter] There were tons of ridiculous stuff.

[snip]

Democrats and Republicans, every four years, whoever loses, right, then goes on to say, "oh, it was broken this way, it was broken this way." It's not that there aren't things that aren't broken and should be done better with mail-in balloting, with the way we verify people, the way we, make sure everybody has access to voting. There is common ground here. The problem is partisanly the Left fights, when they lose, the Right fights, when they lose.

[snip]

Or widespread Russian interference.

Stockton did, ultimately, concede that Biden is President and that there were tons of ridiculous claims about the election. But he excused his own contributions to sowing The Big Lie by equating lies about Trump's loss with reporting about Russia's attempt to interfere in the 2016 election, and claimed that reporting arose out of Democratic excuses to explain Hillary's loss.

That is, a key purveyor of the The Big Lie excuses his actions because MSNBC reported on a Russian investigation that was based off real facts, an investigation that led to the prosecution of Trump's National Security Advisor, Trump's Coffee Boy, Trump's personal lawyer, Trump's Campaign Manager, and Trump's

rat-fucker, all of whom covered up aspects of the Trump camp's outreach to Russia in advance of becoming President (Paul Manafort wasn't prosecuted for his lies, but Amy Berman Jackson agreed with the Mueller team that he lied to cover up, among other things, why he traded campaign strategy for \$19 million in debt relief). Stockton equates reporting on all that – plus the dossier and Alfa Bank and the failson's meeting to trade campaign dirt for sanctions relief, as well as details of the disinformation campaign that had as a primary goal sowing division – Stockton equates all that with a deliberate attempt, over the course of months, to completely dismantle the credibility of our electoral system.

The equation is all the crazier given that, while Hillary herself did put some of the blame for her loss on Russia's interference, most Democrats blame Jim Comey, the guy whom Trump fired in an attempt to undermine the Russian investigation. Those of us who live(d) in states that Hillary neglected were perfectly happy to blame Hillary's own mistakes. More importantly, Hillary ceded power with no contest of the results even in closely fought states like Michigan.

This is just one example where Trumpsters excuse their own participation in The Big Lie by turning a bunch of different prongs of reporting on Russia in 2017 – some undoubtedly overblown but much based on real facts about real actions that Trump and his aides really took – into the equivalent of wild hoaxes about efforts to steal the 2020 election.

And it's not just those who fostered The Big Lie. As I've noted, a viral thread earlier this year went further still, blaming January 6 on the Steele dossier (which most Republicans agree was larded with Russian disinformation).

This use of the Russian investigation, the Democratic-paid dossier, and the legitimate reporting on both to rationalize Trump's actions post-2020 is no accident. That's one reason I

persist in reporting on the dossier: because Paul Manafort came back from a meeting with an Oleg Deripaska associate and encouraged everyone to discredit the Russian investigation by focusing on the dossier. Because it was so full of garbage (some of it placed there at the behest of Russian intelligence, if you believe all the Republican members of Congress to focus on it), it was an easy way to make the real Russian investigation look corrupt to people like Dustin Stockton, to say nothing of the real cover-up disclosed by the investigation.

Before Trump claimed to be the victim of vote fraud, Trump claimed to be the victim of an investigation into the many documented ways in which Trump tried to optimize Russian help to get elected. That claim – that he was the real victim of the Russian investigation – is how Trump trained so many Republicans to put his fate over the fate of the country.

And so as the traditional press turns its attention to the lies that Trump tells to claim he's a victim, that first lie cannot be forgotten.