

The New York Times lionizes James Comey

Andre Damon
10 June 2017

Amid the deepening factional struggle within the American state, Thursday's testimony by former FBI director James Comey has been seized upon by the Democratic Party to advance its right-wing campaign centered on claims that the Russian government sought to subvert the 2016 election.

The *New York Times* responded to Thursday's congressional testimony by Comey with a series of articles and columns hailing the former FBI director as the heroic embodiment of democracy and justice.

Friday's lead editorial in the *Times*, titled "Mr. Comey and All the President's Lies," declares that the conflict between Comey and Trump is one between "the legal principles at the foundation of American democracy, and a venal, self-interested politician who does not recognize, let alone uphold, them."

It further rhapsodizes: "There is an aspect to public servants like Mr. Comey that Mr. Trump and his administration seem unable to comprehend, to their peril—a dedication to their roles that places service above any president's glory."

Other *Times* editorial page writers sing the same tune. "Comey, conscientious to a fault, is an American patriot who understands that the law and defense of the Constitution stand at the core of the nation's being," writes Roger Cohen.

The *Times'* fawning over Comey is particularly striking given the role he played in the 2016 election. On July 5, Comey declared that Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton and her aides had been "extremely careless in their handling of very sensitive, highly classified information" during her tenure as secretary of state, even as he closed the investigation with the recommendation that the Department of Justice file no criminal charges relating to the Clinton email controversy.

On October 28, Comey sent a letter to Congress informing it that the FBI was renewing its probe of

Clinton's handling of classified information because agents investigating former Congressman Anthony Weiner had discovered emails on Weiner's computer between his wife, Huma Abedin, a close Clinton aide, and Clinton. This sudden development cast further suspicion on Clinton just days before the election.

Just last month, Clinton accused Comey of costing her the election, declaring, "I was on the way to winning until the combination of Jim Comey's letter on October 28 and Russian WikiLeaks raised doubts in the minds of people who were inclined to vote for me but got scared off."

To the extent that there was interference by any intelligence agency in the 2016 election, it was carried out by the FBI. The *Times* published numerous statements denouncing Comey for having tipped the scales in favor of Trump.

* On October 31, 2016 *Times* columnist Paul Krugman wrote that Comey "violated longstanding rules about commenting on politically sensitive investigations close to an election; and he did so despite being warned by other officials that he was doing something terribly wrong."

* On November 2, *Times* writer Andrew Rosenthal declared, "Comey, the director of the FBI, set out to interfere in the campaign on behalf of the Republican Party, a shocking act that would render him unfit for his powerful office." He added, "We know his announcement went against policy and tradition, which call for the FBI to stay out of politics... Comey has always enjoyed flexing his power."

* On November 4, Krugman declared that Comey "broke with policy to lay a heavy thumb on the election scales," and "decided to politically weaponize his position on the eve of the election." Krugman called this an "abuse of power."

* On November 7, the *Times* published an editorial declaring: "The damage Mr. Comey's back-and-

forthcoming has done to the election, to his own reputation and to that of the FBI is profound.” The statement denounced Comey’s “harmful intrusions into the democratic process” and declared that he was “under the suspicion of partisanship.” It concluded: “The question for him now is whether he can identify a path to restoring the credibility of his leadership, and of the FBI.”

* On November 18, Krugman declared that “it’s quite reasonable to argue that James Comey, whether it was careerism, cowardice or something worse, tipped the scales” in favor of Trump.

What is to explain this extraordinary flip-flop by the *New York Times*? How is it capable of presenting an individual as a careerist and a coward one day, and a hero the next?

The *Times* functions as little more than a clearinghouse for powerful sections of the US intelligence apparatus engaged in a furious factional struggle. Its columnists are a bunch of hacks who write on command, adjusting their line to conform with whatever is required of them by the intelligence agencies for which the newspaper speaks.

This conclusion is reinforced by Comey’s own remarks about the *Times* in his testimony. Asked by Republican Senator James Risch to comment on a February 14 *New York Times* article titled “Trump Campaign Aides Had Repeated Contacts with Russian Intelligence,” Comey said of the report that “in the main, it was not true.”

In an article posted Thursday evening responding to Comey’s statement, the *Times* wrote: “One possible area of dispute is the description of the Russians involved. Some law enforcement officials took issue with the *Times* account in the days after it was published, saying that the intelligence was still murky, and that the Russians who were in contact with Mr. Trump’s advisers did not meet the FBI’s black-and-white standard of who can be considered an ‘intelligence officer.’”

The newspaper added in its defense: “But several former American intelligence and law enforcement officials have said that other American agencies have a broader definition, especially when it comes to Russia.”

In other words, the *Times* all but admits to lying for blatantly political purposes, i.e., to paint the US president as a Russian agent. This from a newspaper

that howls about “fake news” and “alternative facts.”

The right-wing, neo-McCarthyite campaign to paint Donald Trump as a Russian agent has nothing to do with the broadly felt opposition to Trump’s anti-working class policies. Rather, it is an expression of divisions within the state over the conduct of foreign policy—most directly what sections of the political establishment and the state see as Trump’s insufficiently aggressive stance toward Russia.

In the furious struggle that has erupted between the various factions within the American state, there does not exist anything resembling a “progressive” or “democratic” element. In order to oppose Trump, the working class must mobilize itself on an independent basis, fighting for its own social interests.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)