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Special Counsel Mueller: Star Chamber Laud

Both Mueller and Laud began as servants of government who in a time of great political conflict became executives of a predatory state. Each during a long experiment in increasingly authoritarian bureaucracy. Intrusion, rules and expenses, seemingly without limit. The “No” as recorded in the 2016 election indicates mounting dissatisfaction amongst ordinary people. The establishment has been shocked to discover opposition, and has become desperate to protect its authority and privilege. Unconstitutionally desperate.

Previous such experiments turned Rome into a murderous police state and the next one corrupted the Church in the 1500s, the latter inspiring a great reformation. In discussing the possibility of another great reform, this is an optimistic essay.

The popular uprising that took down the Berlin Wall and Communism in 1989 was a profound step towards a modern reformation. Such uprisings date back to Ancient Egypt when they accomplished dynastic changes, which meant a change in the pharaoh as well as in the controlling priesthood.

Europe’s experiment in authoritarian government during the 1500s ran to destruction. Which became even more vicious, when states were confronted by popular dissatisfaction. Questioning or worse denying bureaucratic ambition shocked the powers that be. As represented by two outrageous massacres, brutality became policy.

Within France, the new and productive economic movement was conducted by the Protestant business community, known as Huguenot. While ostensibly about theological differences, Europe’s religious wars were essentially between authoritarians and those that had enough of expensive intrusion. The movement’s issue was the “sovereignty of the people”. In fear of an uprising in 1572, the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre was ordered by the king. Scholars estimate as many as 30,000 victims, essentially, the heart of France’s business classes. Accounts include stories about someone owing a banker money and the best way to settle the debt was the accusation of “Huguenot”. It seems that bloodthirsty troops could be selective in their mayhem. Many of the oppressed moved to Antwerp or England, taking their skills with them.

Antwerp was the commercial and financial center of the world. This could only be accomplished through sound government, which means economic and political freedom. Indeed, a merchant from Paris writes that the moment he arrived his serfs become free men. Young businessmen in becoming successful get involved in charities and take up golf. An Italian, with some astonishment, noted that Dutch husbands are faithful to their wives. Most appreciated that the government could be criticized. Visitors were relieved that when they left the city they could take all their money with them.

What is there to dislike about this civic heaven for all classes?

Everything, as freedom is highly offensive to authoritarians of any stripe and in any century. Particularly when Antwerp's indifference to the political correctness of the Spanish Netherlands became intolerable. History called it the "Spanish Fury", when the government being out of funds, allowed their troops to sack Antwerp. In three bloody days in November 1576 some 7000 civilians, men, women and children were murdered. Some 1,000 buildings destroyed.

As has been seen, authoritarian movements have been the feature since the early 1900s, as each country, each in its own way, suffered intrusive government.

A similar compulsion prevailed into the early 1600s. Essentially, due to a remarkable rise in middle-class prosperity the reformation was more successful in England than in Europe.

However, in the early stages the reaction to reform was formidable and the Court of Star Chamber as headed by Archbishop Laud was the agency of authority. Supported by king's prerogative and not bound by common law, the Chamber had considerable advantage over ordinary courts. Indeed, it was a travesty of justice. Its punishments, which were arbitrary, included fines, the pillory, face-branding, whipping, imprisonment and ear-lobbing.

Historian, Durant, described William Laud as "severely strict, and resolute to the point of irascible inflexibility." Which combined with the lawlessness of the Court of Star Chamber provided an agency of brutal implementation of the will of an absolutist king. A dreadful combination of church and state that banned publication of politically incorrect views. In effect, the government, with the pulpits of its state religion, was trying for a monopoly on information.

With rising prosperity and growing independence, the middle classes had their pamphlets printed in Holland and distributed them in England. Eventually, bypassing government media. It should also be understood that in time London merchants had more wealth than the government could command. In the meantime, as with foolish attempts made in Rome and then again in the 1970s, bureaucrats tried to regulate wages and prices. Other "economic" policies included granting itself monopolies in soap, salt, starch, beer and wine. In charging above-market prices raked in the money and then accused businessmen of "grinding the faces of the poor".

Laud's fall from power was sudden and the list of reasons for his impeachment included: "That he hath endeavoured to subvert the fundamental laws of this kingdom".

The point to be made is that policymakers cannot suppress commonsense forever. Veteran merchants in London condemned the schemes as "Tyrannical Duncery". Parliament and the sovereignty of the people eventually prevailed. But it took a civil war in the 1640s as well as the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 to end the last absolutist government. One hopes that the ending of today's authoritarian experiment is not as violent.

Perhaps the new term for tyrannical duncery is "in-your-face and in-your-wallet" government. And in its drive for government without limits the "Deep State" has assumed god-like powers in its ploy to control the temperature of the nearest planet. The putative remedy of unrelenting increases in taxes and regulations says what it is all about.

The Obama administration was the most authoritarian in American history and any opposition to the Deep State has been met with unrelenting and undeserved criticism. Reagan was polite and the media hit him with everything in their armory. Little of it stuck, thus the “Teflon President”. In Canada, Prime Minister Harper’s attempt to reintroduce the concept of limited government was vilified by the media. And he was polite. Much the same would be hurled at Trump – even if he was polite.

It should be understood that Donald Trump did not create political change. From ancient times to the Berlin Wall to now, an uprising is a natural response to inordinate predation by ambitious government. However, Trump was early to see it and played to it. And through the election, the uprising selected a leader who has become the executive for political reform.

This has been such a threat to the establishment that senior people in the FBI, DOJ and the DOS illegally began to work against Trump’s campaign and to assist Clinton’s. But the Deep State, so convinced of its mission, could not see any risk. With a Clinton win, the long trend of the ends justifying any means would have continued. But the shock to the establishment is that the uprising won. The shock to the history of civics is that the same people in high places shifted over to conspiring to depose a sitting president.

Reactionaries are unable to support the concept of limited government and can’t directly argue against reform. Instead they have demonized President Trump. Leadership against Trump has passed from Clinton to Robert Mueller, who is Special Counsel for the Department of Justice, charged with investigating the Trump campaign’s supposed links to Russian operators. This was not found and Mueller is on an open-ended mission to find any crime, in order to remove Trump from office. As unaccountable as Laud in full fury.

Quite likely this is the establishment’s last hope of deposing the president and it is finally being criticized as beyond the original mandate. Mueller stacked his committee with card-carrying, dues-paying Clinton/Obama Democrats.

Highly-regarded legal scholar Alan Dershowitz at Harvard wrote on April 24th: “I am a liberal who voted against Trump but who insists that his civil liberties must be respected for all of our sake.” It is appropriate to dwell upon “for all our sake”. Dershowitz also noted that Mueller had presided over the “most scandalous miscarriage of justice in the modern history of the FBI.”

Mueller was a zealot on that case, and his passions now have carried his zealotry beyond the original mandate.

Last week, Judge T.S. Ellis responded to a request by the Special Counsel with: “What we don’t want in this country is anyone with unfettered power”.

Archbishop Laud’s abuse of legal traditions went on until he, himself, was impeached. Historical encouragement for ending the whole coup d’etat attempt against the presidency and constitution.