



Whatever the truth, one thing is certain. Ms. Palin, who laughingly told the prankster that she could be president “maybe in eight years,” was the catalyst for a civil war between her campaign and Mr. McCain’s that raged from mid-September up until moments before Mr. McCain’s concession speech on Tuesday night. By then, Ms. Palin was in only infrequent contact with Mr. McCain, top advisers said.

“I think it was a difficult relationship,” said one top McCain campaign official, who, like almost all others interviewed, asked to remain anonymous. “McCain talked to her occasionally.”

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