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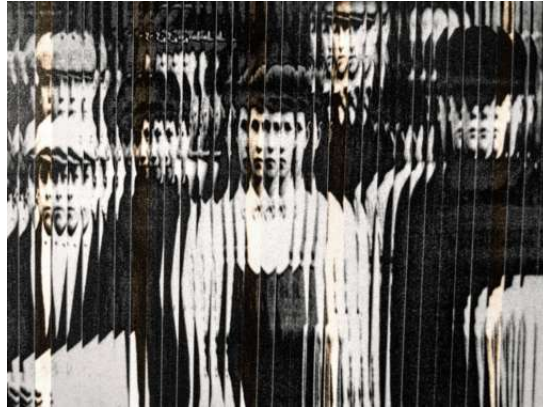
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The United States of Cognitive Dissonance

By CJ Hopkins
March 23, 2017



It's always extremely sad and confusing when a massive propaganda campaign, like the one we've been subjected to for about the last year, comes to a sudden and ignominious end. You wake up one morning, and the billionaire asshat that more or less every "respected" organ of the corporatist media has been telling you was Hitler, or a Russian agent (and possibly both), as it turns out, is, well, just a billionaire asshat. An extremely repulsive billionaire asshat, but nonetheless just a billionaire asshat. This is extremely disorienting ... because here you were, prepped for the End of Everything, or at least for the death camps, the Riefenstahlian rallies, and

the Russian invasion of Martha's Vineyard, and then all that stuff gets abruptly canceled like Season 4 of David Milch's *Deadwood*.

We haven't quite reached that stage of things yet, but it feels like we are inching up to it (as Glenn Greenwald pointed out in his recent piece). I know this sounds a little nuts, given the amount of Russia hysteria the media is pumping out this week as the KremlinGate hearings get underway, but this latest round of official propaganda distinctly reeks of desperation. The simple fact of the matter is, despite whatever got "hacked" by whom, Donald Trump, asshat that he is, is not a Russian sleeper agent or otherwise collaborating with Vladimir Putin, and anyone with half a brain knows this. Thus, it is going to be impossible to prove the blatantly ridiculous accusations the ruling classes and their media stooges have been making in order to delegitimize him. This is going to present a problem, because the way it works, when you accuse the President of treason (which is a capital offense), is that you kind of have to prove it at some point. The ruling classes cannot do this, and thus they need to adjust expectations, which is what they appear to be doing at the moment.

As Greenwald noted in his Intercept piece, deep state disinformation specialists like Michael Morrell and James R. Clapper are making the rounds of the talk shows and forums, preparing us for the official narrative changeover. (You remember Michael Morrell ... the ex-CIA chief who in August of last year wrote that op-ed in *The New York Times* declaring that "Putin had recruited Trump as an unwitting agent of the Russian Federation.") And it is not only spooks like Morrell and Clapper. Suddenly, the oracles we've to come rely on for the latest evidence that Putin Nazis have taken over the executive branch are adopting a distinctly less hysterical tone. Although they haven't kicked the Russia paranoia cold turkey (as that might cause mass seizures or something), they have obviously begun to wean their followers off the groundless neo-McCarthyite nonsense they've been peddling straight-faced for over a year.

Paul "It's the 1930s Again" Krugman has turned his attention back to budgets and taxes and has toned down both the "Return of Fascism" and the "We're Being Governed by Moscow" schtick. *The Washington Post*, the paper that brought us not only the Putin Hacks Vermont story, but the Anyone who Criticizes Hillary Clinton is a Russian Propagandist story, is also going lighter on the blatant smear jobs, and focusing on stuff like how much former Hitler's vacations are costing the taxpayer. Even a shameless tabloid like *The Guardian* is doing its part to dampen expectations. With notable exceptions (like Rachel Maddow, Louise Mensch, and other bull goose loonies), the Arbiters of Reality seem to be settling in for a protracted battle, as opposed to the impeachment proceedings or deep state coup they've been openly pining for. The overriding message is ... "Don't expect any proof of Trump's collusion with Russia, but that doesn't mean he didn't do it, and it doesn't really matter if we can't prove it, because even if we can't officially impeach him, he's still a fascist, Putin-loving traitor, and since we're stuck with him for the next four years, we're going to move on to other things."

All of which is understandably jarring for the neoliberals, neoconservatives, and just garden variety authoritarians who've been dutifully swallowing the preposterous swill the corporate media has been pouring down their throats (and who have been looking forward to Trump's removal from office). And more so, given that, in the course of a year, they have (a) had to pretend to believe that Donald Trump is a modern-day Hitler who is going to exterminate

millions of people and transform America into a new Fourth Reich, and then (b) once that tactic didn't work, immediately forget the Hitler hooey, and pretend to believe that Donald Trump is a secret agent working for Putin, who they (c) suddenly had to believe is an evil James Bond-villain-type menace intent on annihilating Western democracy ... all of which has been hard to swallow, given that, just before all this started, they (d) were just getting used to believing that the official enemy was not Putin, or fascists, but rather, those scary self-radicalized terrorists. Can you remember back to when they were the enemy? It was actually less than a year ago. The media was calling it "The Summer of Fear." Back then, Trump was just becoming Hitler — they had started with the Hitler stuff back in May — but Putin wasn't controlling him yet, as no one thought he had a chance of defeating Clinton in the general election, so the terrorists were still the reigning bogeymen, and George W. Bush was still a war criminal and not smooching it up with Ellen DeGeneres.

If all that sounds impossible to follow, and totally insane, that's because it is ... and is how Americans, and not just Americans, but mostly Americans, are being conditioned to think. Or, rather, to react to a disjunctive series of totally nonsensical emotional stimuli, like the subject of some sick psychological experiment. Let's take a moment and visualize this ...

Imagine the subject strapped in a chair like Alex was in *Clockwork Orange*, barraged with images of frightening terrorists until his mind accepts them as "the enemy," at which point "the enemy" is immediately switched, and now it's Hitler that is coming to get him, which, after a time, he comes to accept (and forgets the former terrorist "enemy"), at which point "the enemy" is switched once again, and now it's Putin and the Russians who are after him. And so on ... until his mind just snaps and surrenders to whatever official "reality" is being fed into it any given day. At which point you have rendered the subject a totally compliant, scramble-headed, functionally psychotic member of society, whose attention span is about twenty seconds, and whose brain you can fill full of fancy pharmaceuticals to keep it from completely melting down in response to the stress of the cognitive dissonance that it has to deal with on a daily basis.

Orwell captured this cognitive dissonance in the part of *1984* where the Party executes the sudden switch from war with Eurasia to war with Eastasia, and Party members adjust their thinking accordingly. Unfortunately, we are way past Orwell. The neoliberal ruling classes are not simply switching official enemies; they're switching the nature of the same official enemy. One day, Trump is a modern-day Hitler, the next day he's a Russian agent, the day after that he's something else. To achieve the fully psychotic effect, it's the same so-called "respectable journalists" who are one day assuring us he's literally Hitler, and the next day, no, he isn't Hitler, but he's absolutely a Russian agent, and the next, OK, maybe not, but at least he's a liar, or a tax cheat, or something.

In case you were wondering, this is also how, if you're running some sort of Manson-like cult, you twist the minds of fledgling cult members until they don't know what to believe anymore. It's pretty much Mind Control 101. You bombard folks with conflicting realities and contradictory information until they're rendered incapable of thinking critically. Then you fill their heads with whatever brand of psycho nonsense your cult is peddling. I'm not kidding ... check this out. There's all kind of literature that explains how this works. Or, if you don't have time to do that, just call someone at *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, or *The Washington*

Post, or CNN, or MSNBC. I'm sure they'll be more than happy to explain the whole antisemitic, staunchly Zionist, Wall Street-friendly, anti-Wall Street, moronically cunning, inarticulately mesmerizing, blackmailed by and profiting from Russia, Putin-Nazi puppet thing to you. But you may want to drop some acid first in order to get the full effect.