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UK-Russia Report: the Integrity Initiative Strikes Again!

On October 17th, 2019, Britain's Intelligence and Security Committee sent the final draft of its report on Russia to the ruling Tory government. In accordance with the Justice and Security Act 2013, passed by the Tory-Liberal coalition government (2010-15), the incumbent could withhold the report in the name of national security. On 29th, British MPs voted for a general election. The report was suppressed for the duration of the campaign, and beyond.

Establishment smears against the Labour Party concentrated on allegations of anti-Semitism, but they also included a hefty dose of Cold War-era paranoia:

When he was a backbench MP, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn was a Soviet spy. (The scriptwriters never asked to which state secrets he was privy as a backbench MP.) The BBC photoshopped an image of Corbyn standing in front of the Kremlin, from which they diverted criticism by making the story about whether or not his hat had been doctored. Labour's possession of leaked, Brexit trade documents proving the sell-out of the National Health Service to US pharma giants was actually part of a Russian disinformation campaign.

This narrative was warmly repeated by the ruling Tory party: the establishment's political faction. It would have backfired, had the truth emerged: that the cross-party Intelligence and Security Committee implicated the Tories, for they had allowed London to act as the money-laundering capital for Russian "oligarchs" ("entrepreneurs" if they were Western). A close reading of the now-leaked, still-partly-redacted report suggests the fingerprints of an entity called the Integrity Initiative.

LIBERALS IN PANIC

Anything called “the Integrity Initiative” should immediately make readers cringe and prepare for the imminent deception. The very title is pure Orwell. Yet, a world of media and political “liberals” (read: right-wingers) who thrive on the imperial status quo, guaranteed by U.S. global hegemony, hates anyone or anything perceived to be a challenge to that hegemony, or Full Spectrum Dominance as the military calls it. The liberal class is unwilling to accept the fact that, though hurting their self-styled image as defensive-progressives, the Trump administration is serving their imperial agenda handsomely: boosting the Pentagon budget to record highs, establishing the Space Force that will enable Full Spectrum Dominance, occupying Syria, tightening sanctions on Iran and Venezuela, authorizing the CIA to use torture, etc., etc.

The “liberal class” can’t handle the fact that Trump occasionally says nice things about leaders of enemy states, while stabbing them in the back. For example, the Lawfare blog was set up by, among others, President George W. Bush’s Special Counsel to the Department of Defense, Jack Goldsmith. The blog expressed concern that in 2016, Trump said of U.S.-Russia relations: “this horrible cycle of hostility must end and ideally will end soon.” Dear, god! Was Trump threatening peace with Russia? That would undermine U.S. imperial posturing.

Actually, no. The Lawfare blog conveniently omits the rest of what Trump said: “The Russians and Chinese have rapidly expanded their military capability, but look at what’s happened to us.” He went on to claim that U.S. military capacity had shrunk. (Fact check: Russia and China are expanding their militaries in response to U.S. expansion. Obama (2009-2017) increased military spending to record levels.) Trump also said (and Lawfare omits it): “improved relations with Russia from a position of strength only is possible.”

But many “liberals” can’t accept that the Cold War is over. It was far too convenient a tool for those in power. Anytime they wished to crush progressive movements, they pleaded defense against Russia: the Red Scares, COINTELPRO, McCarthyism. Enter the Integrity Initiative.

INTEGRITY?

In 2006, NATO Special Advisor Chris Donnelly co-founded the Institute for Statecraft and Governance (IfS) with Daniel Lafayeedney, a man previously condemned as untrustworthy in business matters by a judge. The IfS was registered to a semi-derelict mill in Fife, Scotland. To the public, it authored and published articles on threats to

NATO imperialism, the biggest being Russia. In 2015, the IfS established the Integrity Initiative, an organization that also received Tory government money from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, initially to the tune of millions of GBPs. Later tens of millions were earmarked.

The Integrity Initiative is described by the British government as a counter-Russia-disinformation campaign, which, in typically Orwellian language, means that it is a U.S.-British disinformation campaign. Co-founder Donnelly's leaked contacts-list included Pablo Miller, a likely MI6 agent and certain recruiter and handler of Russian traitors. Miller joined Orbis Business Intelligence, an entity run by MI6's former Moscow-based agent and station chief Christopher Steele.

Steele was indirectly paid by the U.S. Democratic National Committee to compile the absurd dossier implying that Trump is a Kremlin puppet. Another individual on the Integrity Initiative list is Anne Applebaum: a columnist and author, who is reportedly listed in the Integrity Initiative's documents concerning an agenda to create "clusters" of sympathetic media figures. A third is the journalist and author, Edward Lucas, who implied that he was pleased to be associated with the organization.

THE UK REPORT

The UK Intelligence and Security Committee report begins by mourning the growth of post-Soviet Russia: "The dissolution of the USSR was a time of hope in the West," it says. "In the 1990s and early-2000s, Western thinking was, if not to integrate Russia fully, at least to ensure that it became a partner." "Partner" means acquiesce in U.S. demands. Omitting U.S. threats to Russia's existence in the form of Full Spectrum Dominance, the report reveals the kind of Orwellian doublethink in the minds of British strategists. Their analysis projects their cognitive dissonance in absurd ways: "Russia is simultaneously both very strong and very weak." The analysts then go on to claim that Russian policy "appears fundamentally nihilistic": like when it proposed a multilateral ban on space weapons (which the U.S. rejected) and a multilateral cyberwarfare charter (which the U.S. rejected).

Russia is also "fed by paranoia, believing that Western institutions such as NATO and the EU have a far more aggressive posture ... than ... in reality." It must be true after all, that the U.S. missile system in Eastern Europe on Russia's border, pointing at Russia, really is just there to deter Scuds from Iran. All those NATO training exercises with Russia's neighbors are just horseplay. The report later acknowledges that if Russia does target the

UK more than other countries it is because “the UK is seen as central to the Western anti-Russia lobby.”

The report was largely shaped by...drumroll...the Integrity Initiative. “We are grateful to those outside the Intelligence Community – in particular Anne Applebaum, William Browder, Christopher Donnelly, Edward Lucas and Christopher Steele – for volunteering their very substantial expertise on Russia.”

The rest of the report goes on to claim that Russia tries to hack UK government websites, uses trolls and bots on social media, and promotes “disinformation” via its UK-based news shows, RT and Sputnik, which are so egregious that the UK has not even banned them, unlike Kurdish TV and Iranian TV. What about Brexit? One needn’t be an intelligence expert to figure out that a weakened European Union would benefit Russia, just as a weakened EU would benefit the U.S.

CONCLUSION

Be it the MI6 Zinoviev Letter hoax that cost Labour the general election in 1924, the Ministry of Defence-Foreign Office Information Research Department which inflated the importance of Soviet operations in U.S.-UK target zones, or the more recent Integrity Initiative, the articulate class of journalists, pundits, and scholars typically serve state power and undermine the working people of their own countries.

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