

2014: The Year Propaganda Came Of Age

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From just about as early in my life as I can remember, growing up as a child in Holland, there were stories about World War II, and not just about Anne Frank and the huge amounts of people who, like her, had been dragged off to camps in eastern Europe never to come back, but also about the thousands who had risked their lives to hide Jewish and other refugees, and the scores who had been executed for doing so, often betrayed by their own neighbors.

And then there were those who had risked their lives in equally courageous ways to get news out to people, putting out newspapers and radio broadcasts just so there would be a version of events out there that was real, and not just what the Germans wanted one to believe. This happened in all Nazi – and Nazi friendly – occupied European nations. The courage of these people is hard to gauge for us today, and I'm convinced there's no way to say whom amongst us would show that kind of bravery if we were put to the test; I certainly wouldn't be sure about myself.

Still, without wanting to put myself anywhere near the level of those very very real heroes, please don't get me wrong about that, that's not what I mean, I was thinking about them with regards to what is happening in our media today. I've mentioned before that I don't think Joseph Goebbels had anything on US and European media today.

That propaganda as a strategic and political instrument has been refined to a huge extent over the past 70-odd years since Goebbels first picked up on Freud's lessons on how to influence the unconscious mind, and the 'mass-mind', as a way to 'steer' an entire people, not just as a means to make them buy detergent. These days, the media can make people believe just about anything, and they have the added benefit that they can pose as friends of the people, not the enemy.

But there is a reason why such a large 'industry' has developed on the web with people writing articles that don't say what the mass media say. That reason for is, obviously, first and foremost that not everybody believes whatever they are told. The problem is equally obvious: not nearly enough people are being reached to make a true difference, and to question the official narratives.

Me, I have no claim to fame outside of the appreciation I get from first, my readers and second, from my colleagues and peers. I get a lot of both, and I thank you for that, but this certainly is not about me. If anything, it's about trying to live up to the desire for truth in the face of odds squarely stacked against it, and against the people I try to reach out to. Trying to do just 0.1% of what the WWII underground press was about.

A few days ago, I wrote in [About That Interview](#) :

The FBI claims they are certain the hackers are North Korean, but they have provided no proof of that claim. We have to trust them on their beautiful blue eyes. I think if anything defines 2014 for me, it's the advent of incessant claims for which no proof – apparently – needs to be provided. Everything related to Ukraine over the past year carries that trait. The year of 'beautiful blue eyes', in other words. Never no proof, you just have to believe what your government says.

And that truly defines 2014 for me. A level of propaganda I don't recognize, and I don't think I've ever seen before. 2014 has for me been the year of utter nonsense. To wit, it just finished in fine form with a 5% US GDP growth number, just to name one example. Really, guys? 5%? Really? With all the numbers presented lately, the negative Thanksgiving sales data – minus 11% from what I remember –, the so-so at best Christmas store numbers to date, shrinking durable goods in November and all? Plus 5%?

It really doesn't matter what I say, does it? You have enough people believing ridiculous numbers like that to make it worth your while. After all, that's all that counts. It's a democracy, isn't it? If a majority believes something, it becomes true. If you can get more than 50% of people to believe whatever you say, that's case closed.

With well over 90 million working age Americans counted as being out of the labor force, and with 43 million on food stamps, you can still present a 5% GDP growth number, if only you can get a sufficiently large number of people to 'believe'. And you do, I'll give you that. As far as the media goes, we have achieved the change we can believe in. We may not have that change, but we sure do believe we have, don't we? And isn't that what counts? Are congratulations in order?

Well, not where I'm at, they're not. I should do a shout out to the likes of Zero Hedge, Yves Smith, David Stockman, Wolf Richter, Mish, Steve Keen, Jim Kunstler, and so many others, we're a solid crowd by now even if we're neglected, and please don't feel left out if you're not in that list, I know who you are. The problem is, we're all completely neglected by the mass media, even though there are a ton of very sharp minds in this 'finance blogosphere'. And perhaps we should make it a point to break through that ridiculous black-out in 2015.

2014, in my eyes, has been the year of propaganda outdoing even its own very purpose, and succeeding too. We are supposed to be living in a time of the best educated people in the history of mankind, and everyone thinks (s)he's mighty smart, but precious few have even an inkling of a clue of what transpires in the world they live in. Talk about a lost generation. Or two.

We really need to question the value of higher education, if all we get for it is a generation of people so easily duped by utter blubber. What do they teach people at our universities these days? Certainly not to think for themselves, that much is clear. And then what is the use? Why spend all that time raising an entire generation of highly educated pawns, sheep and robots? I can think of some people liking that, but for society as a whole, it's devastating if that's all higher education is.

And if you would like to raise doubts here, the very existence of finance blogosphere I mentioned before is proof that we indeed have raised a generation of sheep. If we had functioning media, there'd be no need for that blogosphere. We are the people who keep on pointing out where the mass media fail, let alone the politicians, simply by being there and

being supported to the extent we are by the few people who escape the sheep mentality.

But that's not nearly enough. Journalists, reporters, whatever they call themselves, working for Bloomberg, Reuters, CNBC etc. should at the very least quote Zero Hedge on a daily basis, and Mish, and Steve, and Yves, and perhaps even me – though it's fine if they continue to ignore me, as long as they give the rest their rightful place.

There are many people in the blogosphere who are many times smarter than the people who write for the mass media, and that's a very simple and hardly disputable fact that needs to be recognized. When you read something in your paper or at your online news provider, it should be second nature to ask yourself: but what would Tyler Durden say, or the Automatic Earth, or Naked Capitalism, or David Stockman?

But we're nowhere near that, are we? We've been fooled with economic stats for years, not just in the US, not even just in the west, but all over, they all grabbed on to the potential of providing people with numbers that have little to do with reality, but that simply feel good. Or even just look good.

Still, boy, have we been, and are we being, fooled. Then again, most of you wouldn't know, would you? We people tend to discount the future, to see today as more important than tomorrow, and in the same manner we find our children's future much less important than our own. Because that feels good too. If we are comfy right now, screw them. Not that we'd ever put it into those terms.

But you know, that's really all old hack by now. 2014 brought us a whole other class of nonsense. And we swallowed it all hook line and entire sinker.

2014 gave us Ukraine. And you just try and find anyone today who doesn't think Vladimir Putin is and was the evil genius mind behind the whole thing, including the 4500+ people who died there over the past 10 months. Why is it so hard to anyone who doubts that narrative? Because our media told us Putin is the bogeyman. And 'we' never asked for any proof. That is, except for those of us in that same blogosphere.

Meanwhile, round after round of sanctions against Russia have been set up and activated by EU and US, causing hardship for both Russian people and European businesses. But why, what exactly is Putin allegedly guilty of?

The US/EU installed a government in Kiev in February (yeah, yap about it), which is still in place, with a bunch of US citizens recently added for good measure – and for profit-. The chocolate prince president was indeed elected months later, but the prime minister – Yats – was handpicked by America, and is still -amazingly – in place. That's the same government that had it own army murder thousands of its own citizens, and not a thing has been resolved so far.

The whole thing came to a head when MH17 was shot down over the summer. That too was blamed on Putin. Or was it? Well, not directly, nobody said Putin ordered that plane to be shot. Nor did anyone say Russia shot it. There is the accusation that Russian speaking Ukrainian 'rebels' did it, but proof for that was never provided in the 6 months since the incident. And there must be a best before date in there somewhere.

Is it possible the 'rebels' did it? We can't exclude it, but that's for the same reason we can't exclude the option that little green Martians did it: we don't know. But even then, even if

they did, there's the question whether that would have been on purpose. Which seems really stretching it: nothing they want would be served by shooting down a plane full of European, Malaysian and Australian holiday goers.

But here we are: no proof and layer upon layer of sanctions. And nary a voice is raised in the west. If one is, it's to denounce the Russians as bloodthirsty barbarians. Even though there is no proof they did anything other than protecting what they see as their own people. Something we all would do too, no questions asked.

Ukraine defines 2014 as the year western propaganda came into its own. Not just fictional stories about an economic recovery anymore, no, we had our politico-media establishment ram an entire new cold war down our throats. And we swallowed it whole. We may have had a million more years of higher education than our parents and grandparents, but we sure don't seem to have gotten any smarter than them.

There is a lot of information out there, written by people inspired by things other than monetary incentives or job security or anything like that, people who simply want to get information out that your trusted media won't give you anymore than Goebbels' media did in occupied Europe in the 1940s. And you don't even have to risk your lives to access that information. All you have to do is to get off your couch.

The Automatic Earth is but a small part of a very valuable and fast growing resource that warrants a lot more attention than it's been receiving to date. A reported 5% US GDP growth print is one reason why, the entire Ukraine fantasy story is another. The blogosphere is full of functioning neurons, which is more than you can say for your papers and online MSM.

As far as media is concerned, 2014 has been downright scary in its distortion of reality. Let's try and move 2015 a little bit closer towards what's actually happening.

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