

Imperial Maneuvers

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History is a powerful weapon, perhaps that's why they don't teach it at school in the UK (except for the UK's bizarre obsession with WWII, but then again it makes sense if you want to impart a sense of the Britain's former 'greatness' and what better propaganda weapon than our victorious struggle against the evil 'Hun').

When I cast my mind back to my high school daze, I remember that the 'history' books we used all ended with another infamous date in British history- 1914, anything after that date was not considered history; too close for comfort?

Ah but ignorance is bliss or so they say. Far better to be immersed in a fictionalised account of days of empire when the sun never set, gin slings on the veranda, mem sahibs and bwanas all over the fucking place. Even the name - Commonwealth - that replaced the British Empire is a lie, where is the common wealth that it alludes to?

The more I study British history, the more I realise that the entire edifice is a complete fiction, a carefully crafted script, built layer upon layer, extending back as they never tire of reminding us, one thousand years. It's a script that has been very skillfully manipulated by the Blair propagandists and the state's media outlet, the BBC, who have, with the aid of a slew of academics, been engaged in a complete rewrite of Britain's colonial/imperial past.

No one can say that the British ruling class aren't the most cunning and devious of all ruling classes, they have managed, through thick and thin to preserve an illusion that is based on things like 'fair play', 'modesty', 'understatement', 'restraint' and so on. It's powerful medicine as it effectively masks a truly vicious reality of a double-dealing, back-stabbing and hypocritical society. Hyperbole rules okay!

It is perhaps the ability to coopt people through the use of such subtle propaganda that has enabled the British state to rule so effectively even as it crumbles and rots from within.

Nothing illustrates this process better than the post-war Labour government of Clement Atlee when faced with a bankrupt capitalism, in debt up to its ears to the new empire, the US, that appropriated all the trappings of socialism, the 'Welfare State', nationalisation, 'free' public health, the whole ball of wax, that on the one hand satisfied the desires of a nation actually heartily sick of capitalism but without actually removing a single, central pillar of the capitalist state.

In fact, nationalisation rescued bankrupt capitalist enterprises adding insult to injury by getting the public to pay for it and at the same time, assuaged a nation still living with rationing and abject poverty, a nation that for the most part, still lived in a very good imitation of 19th century, Victorian capitalism.

And the 'Left' actually went along with it, even as successive Labour governments blacklisted and red-baited the Left! Part of the 'deal' the Labour government struck with US imperialism was to back its Cold-War programme up to the hilt in return for allowing the Labour government to brand itself as socialist without incurring the wrath of the Washington cold-warriors. Thus successive 'Labour' governments did the dirty work for capitalism, presenting themselves as anti-Establishment, when in reality they were no more than puppets on a string, controlled by the same gang of imperialists who had ruled Britain for centuries – the so-called Establishment.

An entire generation of progressives were thus swallowed up in the biggest con of all, a con which is now revealed for what it is with the arrival of Blair and 'New' Labour. In the meantime, we have been emasculated of what passed for our socialism and something tells me that we got what we paid for.

The question that has to be asked, especially of the Left given that we are supposed to have such a good grasp of history, is the degree to which we have been suborned by the propaganda?

The degree to which the propaganda has been successful can be gaged by the kind of exchanges that take place between those who consider themselves to be on the Left, and especially when they interact (or try to) with those who work within the 'system'.

With some exceptions it consists mainly of polite conversation, essentially between people who consider themselves to be equals and carefully tailored not to cross any lines, tread on any sensitive toes or to transgress any unspoken 'rules' of engagement. Nothing must be done that would upset the arrangement or you will be cast out, made into a political leper, patronised and made out to be uncivilised. And it happens to people with far more impressive credentials than yours truly.

To challenge the 'rules' is to incur the wrath of those who would arbitrate the 'discourse' and to place one's self beyond the Pale. If one can point to one single success of this process, it has been to marginalise all and any views that don't fall within the narrow confines of some mythical middle.

Of course it's all bullshit, a game that has nothing to do with reality, at least not the reality 'out there'. You gotta maintain the fiction, sticking to the script is the objective. The upshot of this has been a shift in the goalposts, with what passes for the 'middle' moving steadily right, a process not confined to the UK but one perfected here.

As an example of just how insidious this process really is, I have elsewhere, been accused of being "angry" and of "misleading" people, even leading them up the garden path, a view that credits me with influence that I do not possess,

Promoting anger in readers also ensures a brief commitment to activism and then a rapid falling away into apathy. Anger is extremely painful and destructive, most people cannot bear it for long. Over the years, we have received intense bursts of copied emails from angry readers – they almost always fall silent after a few months. People who are more restrained continue struggling year after year without becoming exhausted – it's very noticeable. There are many more arguments – these are just a sample. – Email from the editors of Medialens

I reject the accusation that I promote anger, I merely state my opinions and interpretations of events, readers must surely use their own critical abilities to come to their own conclusions about what's going on and what, if anything, they do about things. Above all, it's a patronising view that assumes that people are too stupid to make their own judgements about events without being 'guided' by those 'who know best', surely the very thing we accuse the BBC of doing!

It is a sad reflection however on the state of affairs that opinions that differ are dissed with so much venom and personal vindictiveness. But the gist of the Medialens argument is as follows:

To sample at random, one result was that lead Lancet author, Les Roberts, was invited to appear on Newsnight on our recommendation. That wouldn't have happened if we'd been abusive to the editor. It's a tiny achievement, but it's one of many. By contrast, abuse gives journalists the perfect justification they need to hit the delete button and ignore all criticism.

Yes, once. I asked Medialens to cite other examples of where being 'polite' had had positive results with the state-run media. I await a response. Surely it is pissing in the wind to expect the state to cave in on such a fundamental issue even if makes token gestures such as the one Medialens cites. If anything, such token gestures merely reinforce the illusion of representing a variety of views. Can a leopard change its spots? Does it want to?

Far more effective, and borne out by the rise of the independent media, is to supply our own version of reality and to encourage the development of critical reasoning. Engaging in polite discourse with those who have already been bought and paid for is fine, it has a role to play, not so much by changing the minds of corporate journalists (a vain objective; any journalist who had such a changer of heart is not going last for too long being employed by the BBC), but of bringing to peoples' attentions the kinds of lies they tell and encouraging them to look elsewhere for analysis and interpretation.

I think my argument is further reinforced by the fact that increasing numbers of people are NOT watching the state-sponsored news media or reading the corporate press. It reflects a more general rejection of the state, a trend that has the ruling elite seriously worried. Trust, belief and 'faith' in the powers that be is the only thing that preserves their power and control short of brute force or the use of repressive laws such as those that have already been passed.

Why do I take time to do deal with this you may ask? Surely I could spend my time far more effectively attempting to expose the nature of the system that commits such crimes. The answer is simple, without fully appreciating the central role of the media (amongst other means such as education) in maintaining the status quo, we face an even greater uphill struggle. Thus disabusing ourselves of the notion that there is such a thing as objective reporting or what the real role of institutions such as the BBC really are, is central to the struggle for autonomy and liberation. There are many avenues that can be followed, thus unlike the state media, InI continues to publish Medialens pieces believing that they perform a valuable service in exposing the nature of the way the capitalist media operates and, for what it's worth, I encourage readers to write letters to the state-run and corporate media that articulate an alternate view of reality, whether out of anger or polite discourse or some combination of the two. Unlike some, I think people can be left to come to their own

conclusions without being led by the nose by yet more 'experts'.

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