

When Truth is Mixed with Falsehoods: The Subtleties of Anti-Russia Leftist Rhetoric

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While the so-called liberal and conservative media – all stenographers for the intelligence agencies – pour forth the most blatant propaganda about Russia and Ukraine that is so conspicuous that it is comedic if it weren’t so dangerous, the self-depicted cognoscenti also ingest subtler messages, often from the alternative media.

A woman I know and who knows my sociological analyses of propaganda contacted me to tell me there was an excellent article about the war in Ukraine at [The Intercept](#), an on-line publication funded by billionaire [Pierre Omidyar](#). I have long considered a leading example of much deceptive reporting wherein truth is mixed with falsehoods to convey a “liberal” narrative that fundamentally supports the ruling elites while seeming to oppose them. This, of course, is nothing new since it’s been the modus operandi of all corporate media in their own ideological and disingenuous ways, such as *The New York Times*, *CBS*, *the Washington Post*, *the New York Daily News*, *Fox News*, *CNN*, *NBC*, etc. for a very long time.

Nevertheless, out of respect for her judgment and knowing how deeply she feels for all suffering people, I read the article. Written by Alice Speri, its title sounded ambiguous – “[The Left in Europe Confronts NATO’s Resurgence After Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine](#)” – until I saw the subtitle that begins with these words: “Russia’s brutal invasion complicates...” But I read on. By the fourth paragraph, it became clear where this article was going. Speri writes that “In Ukraine, by contrast [with Iraq], it was Russia that had staged an illegal, unprovoked invasion, and U.S.-led support to Ukraine was understood by many as crucial to stave off even worse atrocities than those the Russian military had already committed.” [my emphasis]

While ostensibly about European anti-war and anti-NATO activists caught on the horns of a dilemma, the piece goes on to assert that although US/NATO was guilty of wrongful expansion over many years, Russia has been an aggressor in Ukraine and Georgia and is guilty of terrible war crimes, etc.

There is not a word about the U.S. engineered coup in 2014, the CIA and Pentagon backed mercenaries in Ukraine, or its support for the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion and Ukraine's years of attacks on the Donbass where many thousands have been killed. It is assumed these actions are not criminal or provocations. And there is this:

The uncertain response of Europe's peace activists is both a reflection of a brutal, unprovoked invasion that stunned the world and of an anti-war movement that has grown smaller and more marginalized over the years. The left in both Europe and the U.S. have struggled to respond to a wave of support for Ukraine that is at cross purposes with a decades long effort to untangle Europe from a U.S.-led military alliance. [my emphasis]

In other words, the article, couched in anti-war rhetoric, was anti-Russia propaganda. When I told my friend my analysis, she refused to discuss it and got angry with me, as if I therefore were a proponent of war. I have found this is a common response.

This got me thinking again about why people so often miss the untruths lying within articles that are in many parts truthful and accurate. I notice this constantly. They are like little seeds slipped in as if no one will notice; they work their magic nearly unconsciously. Few do notice them, for they are often imperceptible. But they have their effects and are cumulative and are far more powerful over time than blatant statements that will turn people off, especially those who think propaganda doesn't work on them. This is the power of successful propaganda, whether purposeful or not. It particularly works well on "intellectual" and highly schooled people.

For example, in a recent printed [interview](#), Noam Chomsky, after being introduced as a modern day Galileo, Newton, and Descartes rolled into one, talks about propaganda, its history, Edward Bernays, Walter Lippman, etc. What he says is historically accurate and informative for anyone not knowing this history. He speaks wisely of U.S. media propaganda concerning its unprovoked war against Iraq and he accurately calls the war in Ukraine "provoked." And then, concerning the war in Ukraine, he drops this startling statement:

I don't think there are 'significant lies' in war reporting. The U.S. media are generally doing a highly creditable job in reporting Russian crimes in Ukraine. That's valuable, just as it's valuable that international investigations are underway in preparation for possible war crimes trials.

In the blink of an eye, Chomsky says something so incredibly untrue that unless one thinks of him as a modern day Galileo, which many do, it may pass as true and you will smoothly move on to the next paragraph. Yet it is a statement so false as to be laughable. The media propaganda concerning events in Ukraine has been so blatantly false and ridiculous that a careful reader will stop suddenly and think: Did he just say that?

So now Chomsky views the media, such as *The New York Times* and its ilk, that he has correctly castigated for propagandizing for the U.S. in Iraq and East Timor, to use two examples, is doing "a highly creditable job in reporting Russian crimes in Ukraine," as if suddenly they were no longer spokespeople for the CIA and U.S. disinformation. And he says this when we are in the midst of the greatest propaganda blitz since WW I, with its censorship, Disinformation Governance Board, de-platforming of dissidents, etc., that border on a parody of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Even slicker is his casual assertion that the media are doing a good job reporting Russia's war crimes after he earlier has said this about propaganda:

So it continues. Particularly in the more free societies, where means of state violence have been constrained by popular activism, it is of great importance to devise methods of manufacturing consent, and to ensure that they are internalized, becoming as invisible as the air we breathe, particularly in articulate educated circles. Imposing war-myths is a regular feature of these enterprises.

This is simply masterful. Explain what propaganda is at its best and how you oppose it and then drop a soupçon of it into your analysis. And while he is at it, Chomsky makes sure to praise Chris Hedges, one of his followers, who has himself recently wrote an article – [The Age of Self-Delusion](#) – that also contains valid points appealing to those sick of wars, but which also contains the following words:

Putin's revanchism is matched by our own.

The disorganization, ineptitude, and low morale of the Russian army conscripts, along with the repeated intelligence failures by the Russian high command, apparently convinced Russia would roll over Ukraine in a few days, exposes the lie that Russia is a global menace.

'The Russian bear has effectively defanged itself,' historian Andrew Bacevich writes.

But this is not a truth the war makers impart to the public. Russia must be inflated to become a global menace, despite nine weeks of humiliating military failures. [my emphasis]

Russia's revanchism? Where? Revanchism? What lost territory has the U.S. ever waged war to recover? Iraq, Syria, Cuba, Vietnam, Yugoslavia, etc.? The U.S.'s history is a history not of revanchism but of imperial conquest, of seizing or controlling territory, while Russia's war in Ukraine is clearly an act of self-defense after years of U.S./NATO/Ukraine provocations and threats, which Hedges recognizes. "Nine weeks of humiliating military failures"? – when they control a large section of eastern and southern Ukraine, including the Donbass. But his false message is subtly woven, like Chomsky's, into sentences that are true.

"But this is not a truth the war makers impart to the public." No, it is exactly what the media spokespeople for the war makers – i.e. *The New York Times* (Hedges former employer, which he never fails to mention and for whom he covered the Clinton administration's savage destruction of Yugoslavia), *CNN*, *Fox News*, *The Washington Post*, the *New York Post*, etc. impart to the public every day for their masters. Headlines that read how Russia, while allegedly committing daily war crimes, is failing in its war aims and that the mythic hero Zelensky is leading Ukrainians to victory. Words to the effect that "The Russian bear has effectively defanged itself" presented as fact.

Yes, they do inflate the Russian monster myth, only to then puncture it with the myth of David defeating Goliath.

But being in the business of mind games (too much consistency leads to clarity and gives the game away), one can expect them to scramble their messages on an ongoing basis to serve the U.S. agenda in Ukraine and further NATO expansion in the undeclared war with Russia, for which the Ukrainian people will be sacrificed. Orwell called it "doublethink":

Doublethink lies at the very heart of Ingsoc, since the essential act of the Party is to use conscious deception while retaining the firmness of purpose that goes with complete honesty. To tell deliberate lies while genuinely believing in them, to forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just so long as it is needed, to deny the existence of objective reality and all the while to take account of the reality one denies – all this is indispensably necessary....with the lie always one step ahead of the truth.

Revealing while concealing and interjecting inoculating shots of untruths that will only get cursory attention from their readers, the writers mentioned here and others have great appeal for the left intelligentsia. For people who basically worship those they have imbued with infallibility and genius, it is very hard to read sentences carefully and smell a skunk. The subterfuge is often very adroit and appeals to readers' sense of outrage at what happened in the past – e.g. the George W. Bush administration's lies about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Chomsky, of course, is the leader of the pack, and his followers are legion, including Hedges. For decades they have been either avoiding or supporting the official versions of the assassinations of JFK and RFK, the attacks of September 11, 2001 that led directly to the war on terror and so many wars of aggression, and the recent Covid-19 propaganda with its devastating lockdowns and crackdowns on civil liberties. They are far from historical amnesiacs, of course, but obviously consider these foundational events of no importance, for otherwise they would have addressed them. If you expect them to explain, you will be waiting a long time.

In a recent article – [*How the organized Left got Covid wrong, learned to love lockdowns and lost its mind: an autopsy*](#) – Christian Parenti writes this about Chomsky:

Almost the entire left intelligentsia has remained psychically stuck in March 2020. Its members have applauded the new biosecurity repression and calumniated as liars, grifters, and fascists any and all who dissented. Typically, they did so without even engaging evidence and while shirking public debate. Among the most visible in this has been Noam Chomsky, the self-described anarcho-syndicalist who [*called*](#) for the unvaccinated to “remove themselves from society,” and suggested that they should be allowed to go hungry if they refuse to submit.

Parenti's critique of the left's response (not just Chomsky's and Hedges') to Covid also applies to those foundational events mentioned above, which raises deeper questions about the CIA's and NSA's penetration of the media in general, a subject beyond the scope of this analysis.

For those, like the liberal woman who referred me to *The Intercept* article, who would no doubt say of what I have written here: Why are you picking on leftists? my reply is quite simple.

The right-wing and the neocons are obvious in their pernicious agendas; nothing is really hidden; therefore they can and should be opposed. But many leftists serve two masters and are far subtler. Ostensibly on the side of regular people and opposed to imperialism and the predations of the elites at home and abroad, they are often tricksters of beguiling rhetoric that their followers miss. Rhetoric that indirectly fuels the wars they say they oppose.

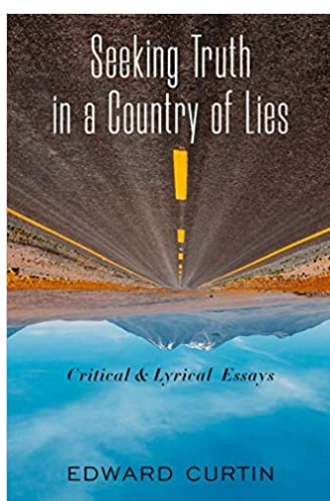
Smelling skunks is not as obvious as it might seem. Being nocturnal, they come forth when most are sleeping.

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He is the author of *Seeking the Truth in a Country of Lies*

To order his book [click the cover page](#).

"Seeking Truth in a Country of Lies is a dazzling journey into the heart of many issues — political, philosophical, and personal — that should concern us all. Ed Curtin has the touch of the poet and the eye of an eagle." Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

"Edward Curtin puts our propaganda-stuffed heads in a guillotine, then in a flash takes us on a redemptive walk in the woods — from inferno to paradiso. Walk with Ed and his friends — Daniel Berrigan, Albert Camus, George Orwell, and many others — through the darkest, most-firefly-filled woods on this earth." James W. Douglass, author, *JFK and the Unspeakable*

"A powerful exposé of the CIA and our secret state... Curtin is a passionate long-time reform advocate; his stories will rouse your heart." Oliver Stone, filmmaker, writer, and director

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