

On Being Contrarian. Don't be a Yes Man. Scott Ritter Under Investigation

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A guest on Judging Freedom, Dr Gilbert Doctorow, took a contrarian stance to Scott Ritter's journalism work on Russia, which seemingly aligns Doctorow's stance with the official government stance.

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Doctorow accused Ritter (starting about 21:30) of stomping across redlines that any person familiar with Russia should have been aware of. Doctorow didn't **specifically** state what any of these redlines might be.

He also accused Ritter of violating FARA (the Foreign Agents Registration Act), albeit he conceded that was not for him to judge.

Says Doctorow,

My concern is [that] two generations of Americans have not understood the Cold War and how you behave in circumstances when you are backing the cause or at least sympathetic to the cause or even understanding the cause of an [US] adversary. How do you avoid becoming Tokyo Rose [as English-speaking female radio propagandists for Japan were called]?

In other words, **Doctorow is accusing Ritter of being a (perhaps unwitting) propagandist for Russia** as well as not knowing how to behave in certain circumstances. In other words, Doctorow (who has his academic credentials highlighted as "Dr. Gilbert Doctorow, Ph.D.") comes across as questioning the intellectual rigor of Ritter.

An additional redline, according to Doctorow,

And, you do not accept payments of any kind, or of favors, like travel. That is air travel, hotels, and the rest of it. You do not touch that. If it is being offered to you by a country, by a foreign country, particularly a foreign country that is in such hostile relations with the United States. (23:50)

... Ritter has "exposed himself to [violating FARA] charges by admitting he received

money from RT and so forth.” (29:45)

Such an argument is problematic for many reasons. According to Doctorow, any journalistic work with a hostile country must be unpaid. Journalism, for many, is a paying job. It is a means to be reimbursed for one’s time, effort, training, and skill. Yet Doctorow proffers that in certain circumstances a journalist should forgo payment.

If US authorities do not explicitly decree that journalism relaying the situation or views of a certain foreign country is prohibited, then how is one to know?

Besides, do Americans not have an [inalienable right to know](#)? Or is knowledge/information/data to be solely the prerogative of the US government to determine what citizens can be exposed to? Is gaining insight to what the other side is saying to be prohibited?

Americans will just have to trust that their government knows best; for instance, that Viet Nam had fired missiles at US ships in the Gulf of Tonkin, that Iraq had weapons-of-mass-destruction, that Syrian government forces had carried out chemical weapon attacks, that there is no genocide in Palestine.

Does the First Amendment in the US not protect freedom of speech and the press? Because if one has to pay to fly to Russia, pay for hotels, transportation, and meals in Russia, then only those with the means to self-finance such an endeavor are likely to provide information — with potential for bias from the well-to-do perspective. If reporting on Russia has to be done out of the pocket of a journalist, this sounds like a good way to censor journalism. It is censorship that limits the rights of those who want to work as a journalist and also denies the rights of readers/viewers of such journalism.

If it wasn’t largely for Ritter then how many people would have known about Iraq having been “fundamentally disarmed”? More recently, if not for Ritter, how many people would have heard why the Bucha massacre of scores of civilians blamed on Russia and reported as such by the stenographers in western monopoly media was a fabrication for killings carried out by Ukrainians?

Powerful people and the interests behind them seek to control information. They want to prevent certain information from reaching an audience and they’d like a certain narrative, even disinformation, to reach that audience.

If knowledge is power (not a corrupting power, it is hoped), then it should not be controlled by the already powerful, it should be a liberatory force to empower the masses.

Don’t Be a Yes Man

There are different types of contrarians depending on whether those who we are talking to are in agreement or disagreement.

We are encouraged to be critical thinkers. We are taught to value leadership. However, there is a type of person called a Yes Man (or Yes Woman). This is a weak person who always supports whoever is in a position of power, rightly or wrongly. Yes Men are dangerous.

There are plenty of bad laws on the books. One aphorism holds that laws are meant to be

broken. This is too simplistic. But some bad laws should be broken and taken off the books.

Don't follow bad leaders or bad laws. Ritter is a contrarian to the fetid state. He has the courage to oppose censorship, bad thinking, and following bad laws.

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