

Smear-Mongering: A Mea Culpa for the Age of McCarthyism 2.0

By [Chris Floyd](#)

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OK, I guess I'd better come clean. It seems that I must be a paid agent of the Kremlin. After all, I write for CounterPunch Magazine — for money! I used to write regularly for Truthout.org — for money! I've contributed articles to the Baltimore Gazette. I've often quoted and linked to stories from the Black Agenda Report. I've regularly quoted and linked to articles by prize-winning AP/Newsweek reporter Robert Parry for years. [According to the Washington Post](#), all of this makes me either a paid Kremlin propagandist or a Kremlin dupe. There is no other alternative.

And who says this? A collection of completely anonymous “experts” from a group no one has ever heard of until it materialized for the *Post* article. The group, PropOrNot, put out a list of publications and websites that are “outlets for Russian propaganda,” a list that included all the venues named above, as well as several others which have been long-time critics of various aspects of American foreign policy. These were all mixed in with obvious propaganda mills and clickbait factories (of whatever provenance).

The story is a smear piece just like Tailgunner Joe and Roy Cohn used to make. It makes a direct equation between dissent and treason, using the crudest, stupidest kind of cod-reasoning: if you have criticized a policy or action that Vladimir Putin has also criticized at some point (even if the reasons for your critique might differ wildly from his), then you are automatically a Russian agent or a “useful idiot.” That’s it. That’s the sole binary in our political world, according to new McCarthyism: either you must accept everything the US government says and does at face value, believe it implicitly and support it whole-heartedly, or else you’re a traitor acting on behalf of the Russkies — or you might as well be.

I remember this asinine stance from the old days, when anyone who opposed the Vietnam War was a commie, when Martin Luther King was obviously motivated solely by Kremlin gold to get the darkies all stirred up. You’d think that our modern progressives would be ashamed to push this ugly line — yet they seem to be its greatest enthusiasts. And so here we are again, in the 21st century — after COINTELPRO, the Church Commission, Iran-Contra, the Iraq War lies, etc. etc., etc.: if you dare question Washington’s line, you must be a traitor, or a fool who cannot possibly think for himself or herself without being spoon-fed by Moscow.

Oddly enough, there is only one kind of critic of US foreign policy that is *not* regarded as a Kremlin agent: those who criticize Washington for not being even *more* bloodthirsty and aggressive in its foreign policy. Those kind of outlets never land on our new McCarthyite lists. And here’s another odd fact: PropORNot’s list of those who peddle “fake

news" *doesn't* include Breitbart.com, which is one of the master bullshit purveyors of the age.

Oh well, I'm just glad the Washington Post was a bit more skeptical toward state power during the Watergate era. (Today it would be: "Where did you get this fake news crap about the President and a 'cover-up,' Bernstein? Russian agents? What are you, some kind of commie?") And I guess we can take comfort in the fact that in just a few weeks, it'll be OK for progressives to be critical of American policy again, once it's in the hands of Donald Trump.

But what's going to happen to commie traitor pinko nogoodniks like me? If I write just as scathingly of Trump's drone wars, deaths squads, covert ops, subversions and White House death squads as I have of Obama's (and Bush's), will my flow of Kremlin gold be cut off? I mean, it's not like ANYONE can ever have a consistent, considered opposition to certain policies and actions no matter who commits them, right? And OMG — what if Putin finds about my critiques of his own brutal policies and actions? Whose list will I end up on then? It's all so confusing! But fortunately, we have the Washington Post and its anonymous experts to guide us through the modern McCarthyite morass.

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