

The Disrespect for Truth has Brought a New Dark Age

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In her historical mystery, [The Daughter of Time](#), Josephine Tey (a pen name of Elizabeth MacKintosh) has Scotland Yard Inspector Alan Grant, while confined to his hospital bed, solve the 15th century murder of the two York princes in the Tower of London. The princes were murdered by Henry VII, and the crime was blamed on Richard III in order to justify the upstart Tudor's violent seizure of the English throne.

Tey makes the point that if a 20th century mystery writer can detect the truth about a 15th century murder, historians have no excuse to persist in writing in school textbooks that Richard murdered his nephews. British historians remained loyal to the Tudor propaganda long after the Tudors were no longer around to be feared or served.

At the beginning of the scientific era, men had the hope that the ability to discover truth would free mankind from superstition, dogma, and the service of power. The belief in truth was powerful. Truth would deliver justice and bring an end to status-based privileges and the falsehoods propagated by privilege. The faith in truth was short-lived. Today propaganda is everywhere in the ascendancy.

In the panoply of left-wing propaganda about Pinochet, it is nowhere mentioned that Allende was appointed president of Chile by the Chilean congress, which three years later called on Chile's military to oust Allende for his totalitarian ways. Instead, Allende is portrayed as a "popularly elected president who was overthrown by a tyrant."

Every week another apologist for President Bush compares "Bush's fight for Iraqi freedom" to Abraham Lincoln's "fight to free the slaves." The American civil war was not fought to "free the slaves," as [Thomas DiLorenzo](#) and other scholars have thoroughly documented, any more than the purpose of Bush's illegal invasion of Iraq was to "bring freedom to Iraqis." The freedom excuse was invented after it became impossible to maintain the fictions about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and Saddam Hussein's connections to Osama bin Laden. Bush has yet to tell the real reason he invaded Iraq.

In the US today, demonization and propaganda substitute for facts and analysis. Professors and journalists are quick to lend their names and voices to the untruths that rule our lives. Just as Hitler's foreign policy was based in propaganda, so is Bush's and Blair's.

The success of propaganda enhances government's illusion that it has a monopoly on truth. It is the monopoly on truth that gives the Bush regime the right to define the "Iran problem," the "Syria problem," the "Lebanon problem," and the "Korea problem" and to apply coercion in place of understanding and negotiation.

Secure in its possession of truth, the Bush administration refuses to talk to the enemies it has manufactured. It will only fight them.

When scholars, such as [John Walt and Stephen Mearsheimer](#), or [President Jimmy Carter](#), who has tried harder than anyone else to achieve Arab-Israeli peace, point out that Israel's mistreatment of Palestinians is a cause of Middle East turmoil, they are immediately denounced as anti-Semites. Columnists and academics who know nothing about the Middle East or its troubles nevertheless know what they are supposed to say whenever anyone mentions Israel in any critical context. And they have no compunction about saying it, the truth be damned.

Without commitment to truth, science, justice, and debate falter and disappear.

The belief in truth is fading from our society. It is unclear that scientists themselves any longer believe in truth or the ability to discover it.

The discovery of truth is no longer the purpose of our criminal justice system. Once prosecutors believed that it was better for ten guilty men to go free than for one innocent person to be wrongfully convicted. Today prosecutors believe in high conviction rates to justify their budgets and re-election.

In the past police solved crimes. Today they round up suspects and pressure them.

There was no debate in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, and none today in the US. Many Americans, who imagine themselves to be conservatives even though they have never read, nor could they identify, a conservative writer, equate truth-telling with hatred of America. They are of Bush's mindset: "you are with us or against us." Bush supporters respond to factual articles about Iraq and the rending of the US Constitution by suggesting that as the writer hates America so much, he should move to Cuba or China.

In America today each faction's "truths" are defined by the faction's dogma or ideology. Each faction bans factual analysis that it doesn't want to hear. This is as true within the universities as it is at political rallies. The old liberal notion that "we shall follow the truth wherever it may lead" has long departed from America. Think tanks reflect the views of the donors. Studies are no longer independent of their financing. In America, truth has become partisan.

All societies have elements of myth, untruths that nevertheless serve to unite a people. But many myths serve as camouflage for evil. One of the greatest myths is that "GIs have died for our freedom." GIs have died for American empire, for the American elite's commitment to England, and for the military-industrial complex's profits. Some may have died in Korea for the freedom of South Koreans, and some may have died trying to save South Vietnamese from the North Vietnamese communists. But it is hogwash that GIs died for our freedom.

There was no prospect of North Korea attacking America in the 1950s or Vietnam attacking America in the 1960s and none today. The Nazis were defeated by Russia before US troops landed in Europe. The US never faced any threat of invasion from Germany, Italy, or Japan.

America's wars have created hysteria that endangers our freedom. Abraham Lincoln shut down the freedom of the press and arrested editors and state legislators. Woodrow Wilson

arrested war critics. Franklin Roosevelt interred American citizens of Japanese descent. George W. Bush has destroyed most of the Bill of Rights. In 2006 Congress appropriated funds for building concentration camps in the US.

Recently, [Newt Gingrich, the former Speaker of the House](#), said that freedom of speech is inconsistent with “the war on terror.” If it takes a police state to fight terror, the country is lost even if Muslim terrorists are defeated. Americans have far more to fear from a homeland police state than from terrorists.

The vast majority of the world’s terrorists are the recent creations of Bush’s invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and of Israel’s invasion of Lebanon and brutality toward the Palestinians. Bush is simultaneously creating terrorists and a police state. It serves no one but the police to make their power unaccountable.

On December 26 [Jeff Cohen explained on Truthout](#) how war propaganda took over TV news and demonized everyone who spoke the truth about Iraq, while pushing war fever to a frenzy. Fox “News” was the worst with its ranks of generals and colonels who sold their integrity for dollars and TV exposure. One of Fox’s loudest voices for war was a retired general who sat on the board of a military contractor.

When the Clinton administration allowed the media concentration in the 1990s, the independence of the American media was destroyed. Today there are a few large conglomerates whose values depend on broadcast licenses from the government. The conglomerates are run by corporate executives who are not journalists and whose eyes are on advertising revenues. They publish and broadcast what is safe. These conglomerates will take no risks in behalf of free speech or truth.

The challenges that America faces are not terrorism and oil supply. The challenges that we face are the police state that Bush has created and the disrespect for truth that is endemic in government, the universities, and the media. The US has entered a dark age of dogmas and unaccountable power.

*Paul Craig Roberts [[send him mail](#)] wrote the Kemp-Roth bill and was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in the Reagan administration. He was Associate Editor of the Wall Street Journal editorial page and Contributing Editor of National Review. He is author or coauthor of eight books, including [The Supply-Side Revolution](#) (Harvard University Press). He has held numerous academic appointments, including the William E. Simon Chair in Political Economy, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University and Senior Research Fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford University. He has contributed to numerous scholar journals and testified before Congress on 30 occasions. He has been awarded the U.S. Treasury’s Meritorious Service Award and the French Legion of Honor. He was a reviewer for the Journal of Political Economy under editor Robert Mundell. He is the co-author of [The Tyranny of Good Intentions](#). He is also coauthor with Karen Araujo of Chile: *Dos Visiones - La Era Allende-Pinochet* (Santiago: Universidad Andres Bello, 2000).*

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