

“We Love the CIA!”—or How the “Left” Lost Its Mind

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On July 22 this year, nearly two years after Trump’s election and the rise of “The Resistance,” I tuned in to KPFA-Berkeley’s [Sunday Show](#) and heard host Philip Maldari speaking to The Nation’s national affairs correspondent John Nichols:

“Philip Maldari: John, just last Monday we had this fabulous press conference in Helsinki, Finland, where these two heads of state [Trump and Putin] had a chance to speak to the world. Do you want to decode what happened there?”

John Nichols: Do I want to what?

PM: Decode—explain.

John Nichols: The press conference in Helsinki was so important that ultimately books will be written about it. And it is because this was the point at which we came to understand—without a question, and honestly most people didn’t have questions—that Donald Trump is in the throes of some sort of relationship with Vladimir Putin. And, y’know, people will define it differently depending on their partisanship, their ideology, their interest in psychology, their interest in statecraft, whatever, they’ll have all sorts of things they want to say about it. But there’s simply no question, at this point, that when Donald Trump gets around Vladimir Putin, he is trying to impress the Russian president. He is trying to be chummy about it. And he’s willing to do that at the expense of basic statecraft, of basic diplomacy, and also of basic sense of responsibility to the country that he leads. And this is a big deal.”

Nichols went on to say that it’s a big deal because Trump’s advisors had asked him to ask Putin a question—whether or not he had interfered in the 2016 presidential election—and that he did so, but decided to trust the Russian president when he said no. This, he said, made their perfidious relationship “crystal clear.”

How could body language, facial expression, and Trump’s decision to take Putin’s word possibly constitute “crystal clear” proof or, as a lawyer would say, “incontrovertible evidence”? None of this is hard evidence of anything except how unhinged the American left—or at least the Democrats—have become. It’s mere speculation about Trump’s psyche, and yet Philip Maldari responded with more of the same:

“Well, I have obviously attempted to understand what was going on there as well. And one conclusion, one suspicion that I have, is that he [Trump] so desperately wants to imagine that the election of 2016 was won by its own merits, by his merits, by his legitimate capturing of the enthusiasm of the populace in this country, and so that any suspicion that there was some kind of

corrupt activity that stole the election deflates his own public image and that is something he will not tolerate.”

It didn't get any better for the rest of the hour, most of which was devoted to struggles within the Democratic Party and hope for a more left-leaning Democratic resurgence in the mid-term elections. (Nothing like a Neo-McCarthyist epidemic to push Dems to the left.)

After a musical interlude—“Moscow Nights” with the Red Army Chorus—we heard from Karen Greenberg, Director of the Center on National Security at Fordham University. That excruciating hour was, as with John Nichols, devoted to Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election and the hope that a left-leaning Democratic Party will emerge in the midterms. Near the end of the hour a friend of mine called in to ask how the hell they could expect leftists and progressives to trust the FBI and the CIA. Greenberg responded:

“Yes, I think that’s an extremely important point. I think that the distrust—it’s not hate—you should always distrust the mechanisms of power. But, like it or not, the FBI and the CIA are important institutions that, if they are conducted lawfully and ethically, are there to keep us safe. And at this point in time in our history, we need them. We need Bob Mueller to be doing what he’s doing and we need to trust the CIA, but I agree on the point that blind trust is not good, that law enforcement and intelligence agencies need to always have the same scrutiny that they’ve had in the past and sometimes more than they’ve had in the past.”

So the FBI and the CIA are A-OK so long as they’re helping the Democrats take down Trump instead of infiltrating the US press as “mockingbirds” or engineering the assassination of foreign and domestic leaders? Or taking down the Black Panther Party, the anti-Vietnam War Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, the Young Lords, radical feminists, and other groups that made up the New Left of the 1960s and 70s, or more recently, Black Lives Matter, “Black Identity Extremists,” Wikileaks, Julian Assange, and other whistleblowers?

The left takes a hard right turn

That’s just one instance of “The Resistance” steering so much of the left, including even Pacifica’s KPFA Radio-Berkeley, into a hard-right turn. One Saturday I was still working on a [KPFA Evening News story about the Ethiopian uprising](#) when the newscast started, so I didn’t hear the first few reports, but later, when I listened to the audio archive, I was more than startled. The lead story was the first Mueller indictment of 13 Russians, and Anchor David Rosenberg had invited freelance journalist and blogger Richard Silverstein to share his opinion:

“We’ve had very damaging impact on countries like Guatemala, Iran, y’know Central American countries. We’ve gone through major adventures like this. I don’t think that we have ever succeeded, if we’ve ever tried, on this sort of a scale. It would be as if the CIA attempted to get its own chosen candidate elected as the president of Russia or the president of China. That’s kind of a breathtaking ambition to be able to have that happen. And we’ve meddled in countries, in individual countries, I think, on a smaller scale, although perhaps the number of countries we’ve meddled in may be greater than the Russians have. But what they’ve done is really breathtaking.”

Silverstein must have missed the July 15, 1996 Time Magazine with Yeltsin on the cover and the headline [“YANKS TO THE RESCUE, THE SECRET STORY OF HOW AMERICAN ADVISERS HELPED YELTSIN WIN.”](#)

It's not breathtaking that Russia elected Trump because it didn't happen. To be fair to anchor David Rosenberg, however, I should say that KPFA Radio news reports typically have a “he said, she said” format, and he introduced this report with a paraphrase of what the Russian government had said:

“Russian officials had disdainful words today for a US indictment that charged 13 Russians with interfering in the 2016 presidential election. Russian President Vladimir Putin and other officials have deflected the suspicion that Trump colluded with Moscow, and the evidence of Russians seeding social media platforms with pro-Trump content, with indignant cries of Russophobia, an argument that blames the election scandal on an outdated Cold War view of Russia as a land of devious plotters. One member of the Russian Parliament said the story is straight from a Hollywood crime comedy, probably with the title ‘Thirteen Friends of Vladimir Putin.’”

KPFA News reports not only tend toward the “he said, she said” format but are also dispassionate. The reporter is not supposed to opine, so the news anchor was simply following the format. The real trouble is that Richard Silverstein's viewpoint is not atypical of those stricken with “Trump Derangement Syndrome (TDS).”

And, sad to say, I've heard thoroughly unbalanced Trump derangement on KPFA, without counterpoint, and at much greater length. On [September 11, 2017](#), in morning drive time—the hours with the largest listening audience—host Brian Edwards-Tiekert featured an ideologue from the [Alliance for Securing Democracy](#), an offshoot of the German Marshall Fund, and referred listeners to their website to “do their own research.” The website's “Our Mission” statement says:

“Finding out what happened in the United States in 2016 and the impact it had is important. But that is not enough. The U.S. intelligence community assessed in January 2017 that ‘Moscow will apply lessons learned from its Putin-ordered campaign aimed at the U.S. presidential election to future influence efforts worldwide, including against U.S. allies and their election processes.’ Russia's efforts are also ongoing across Europe — and we also need to prepare for other state actors to replicate Putin's tactics. Moreover, Putin does not distinguish between political parties, but rather seeks to sow and exploit divisions. When our democratic institutions are weakened, every party and democratic nation is at risk.”

Indeed, although I think that they and all the rest of the New Cold War propagandists are the ones weakening democracy, insofar as democracy exists in the US, and what about all the sham democracies that the US has installed and/or defended? Nations like Rwanda, Uzbekistan, and Honduras? US propaganda weakens real democracy here and elsewhere, enriches weapons manufacturers, impoverishes the rest of us, and threatens the whole world with nuclear war. The website's “Hamilton 68 dashboard”—a hashtag and tweet tracker—says:

“Between January 14 and January 31, we examined 159 unique articles that

were among the top URLs shared by Kremlin-oriented accounts on Twitter. 'Deep state' narratives and attacks against the FBI, DOJ, and Mueller investigation accounted for 31% of the top URLs linked-to by the network."

[On September 11, 2017, between the 18:55 and 31:10 minute marks](#), Edwards-Tiekert said that Russia's US broadcast outlet RT should be required to register as a foreign agent and surrender its press credentials to get into Congress, as it has. He also said that the House Intelligence Committee had good reason to subpoena Randy Credico—left comedian, investigative journalist, and former host on KPFA sister station WBAI-New York City—because Roger Stone claimed that Credico had acted as an intermediary between himself and Julian Assange. The only "evidence" of this is that Credico had both Roger Stone and Julian Assange on his show on different dates—Assange far more often and at much greater length.

Edwards-Tiekert also referred to the "hacked" DNC and Podesta emails as though it were established fact that the emails were hacked, not leaked, though nothing could be further from the truth. Former NSA Technical Director [William Binney, a founding member of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity \(VIPS\), has said](#), after repeated tests, that the emails could not have been hacked and transmitted to Europe at the rate indicated by the data transmission time stamps. At that speed, he said, they could only have been downloaded onto a thumb drive and then passed on to Wikileaks. In addition, the Wikileaks Vault 7 release reveals that the CIA itself has cyber-tools that allow them to hack into computers and leave Russian or other "footprints."

In other words, it was a leak, not a hack, according to formidable mathematician and NSA programmer William Binney, but "hacked DNC and Podesta emails" has become standard parlance, even at KPFA. And even if it was a hack, as competing experts may insist, it could not be proven that Boris and Natasha did it.

I should add that Upfront co-host Mitch Jeseritch disagreed with Brian Edwards-Tiekert about Randy Credico and RT, although he didn't contest the "hacked DNC and Podesta emails" description.

Resist, Resist, Resist

Since Trump's election, there's been a poster listing warning signs of fascism just inside KPFA's front door. One of those warning signs—the absolute truth, the singular, unquestionable narrative—is ironically audible on the air. "The Russians" stole our election, Trump is the cause of all our woes, and our singular task is to discredit, impeach, or at least defeat Trump and the Republicans in the 2018 midterms and 2020 presidential election. Last year the station periodically aired a "Resist, resist, resist" jingle and now it's airing a fundraising promo that it's "banging the tribal drums" into the midterms. Democracy Now has covered the Russian interference story in all seriousness, seemingly without concern that it heightens tension with nuclear-armed Russia and makes a case for broadcast and internet censorship.

I'm not saying that the epidemic obsession with Trump and Russian hackers and meme bombers has consumed all of KPFA or the rest of the Pacifica Network. Neither KPFA's Flashpoints nor Project Censored suffers from TDS, and if Randy Credico were still hosting Live on the Fly on WBAI, that would be on my not-to-miss list too. I still watch Democracy Now several times a week despite disagreements. I'm reporting these instances of TDS

simply because so many of us have considered the Pacifica stations a lifeline for so long, and we're trying to hold on. Resist, resist, resist . . . resist what? Trump? He's just a manifestation of everything ugly about advanced capitalism—the arrogance of the oligarchy, the privatization of everything, the corporate bottom lines indifferent to catastrophic consequence, and a military-mad empire in decline. Resist Russia and Vladimir Putin? I've never felt the need. Shouldn't we on the left resist NATO, unbridled weapons manufacture, austerity, and endless war?

In one of Pacifica's finest hours, WBAI dispatched a reporter to North Vietnam to produce the first live broadcasts from Hanoi. The Pacifica Network—five metropolitan stations and affiliate stations—became the broadcast home of the anti-war and civil rights movements. It gave Paul Robeson, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and other historic figures a platform, and their voices are preserved in the Pacifica Radio Archives. So it has a proud history that makes it sad to see TDS take over KPFA's morning drive time and more. I don't know the other stations' program grids nearly so well as KPFA's, but I've heard the symptoms of TDS there too.

So as not to be unfair to KPFA or Pacifica, I should add that Trump Derangement Syndrome spread like a virus as soon as Trump was elected. It's been like Invasion of the Body Snatchers or Night of the Living Dead, movies in which friends, neighbors, and family are one by one turned into aliens or zombies. Even Laurence Tribe, the eminent Carl M. Loeb University Professor at Harvard Law School, developed TDS. As Glenn Greenwald wrote in The Intercept, "[Harvard's Laurence Tribe has become a deranged Russia conspiracist.](#)"

Another casualty is the National Lawyers Guild (NLG), which prides itself on having resisted Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee in the 1950s. Riva Enteen, longtime NLG member and former program director of the San Francisco Bay Area chapter writes:

"Last year the NLG refused to schedule a convention panel on Russiagate, with proposed speakers Cynthia McKinney and Ray McGovern. The Executive Committee also refused, 'because of our relations with Russia,' to issue a statement condemning the requirement that RT register as a foreign agent. This year it is still not addressing the legal or McCarthyist aspects of Russiagate at its upcoming convention."

KPFA, as one of the five metropolitan stations that make up the Pacifica Network, is simply a microcosm of what's happened because it's still considered a flagship of the American left.

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