

America is being mocked by the shallow bias of its free press

Anti-Trump mainstream media in the U.S., joined by their fatuously chirping Canadian counterparts, are failing the general public

by Conrad Black



We are living through an era when the Western democracies are generally reassessing a great deal of assumed conventional liberal wisdom, and have been conducted in this direction by political leadership that is often disparaged in our mainstream media as disreputable rabble-rousing. The most remarkable aspect of it is no longer that there have been sharp populist turns in the American, British, German, Italian, French, Hungarian, Polish, Czech, Austrian and other electorates (including, nascently, Brazil on the right and Mexico on the left). The larger issue in the United States and

the leading western European countries is that the media are at war with the governments, and as all the governments involved have been freely elected, with the people.

The American media, joined by the fatuous imitative chirping of the Canadian media (not that Americans would be aware of or have the slightest interest in what the media or anyone else in Canada thought of anything), regularly imply or state that the U.S. government is being run autocratically by a thuggish individual unfit for his great office. Robert De Niro wants to send the president to prison in a comedy skit; Kathy Griffin, whose opening gambit was a still photograph of the president's severed head, is now lampooning his entourage in predictable simulations. Desperately unoriginal and mouthy occupants of late-night purported comedy – Bill Maher, Stephen Colbert, Jimmy Kimmel, Chelsea Handler – imagine that shouting rehashed denigrations of the president and his family are amusing. It is a bore; it isn't working, and history moves on.

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Pew Research Center and Harvard Media Studies surveys both confirm that 90 per cent of the national media coverage of Donald Trump is hostile, but he is accomplishing his stated goals, slowly. The asinine Dodd-Frank financial strangulation law, which enacted the bipartisan dual-branch official American pretence that private greed rather than unspeakable governmental incompetence was responsible for the 2008 financial meltdown, is being repealed. The Secretary of State-designate has returned from a secret visit to North Korea that appears to presage the most ambitious American diplomatic activity since president Reagan's arms-reduction talks with president Gorbachev (1988), or even president Nixon's accord with Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai (1972).

The economy is flourishing, illegal immigration is sharply

curtailed. Assad has been smacked down and Putin faced down, and the gigantic canard of Trump collusion with Russia has collapsed. That investigation, generated by a fired FBI director illegally taking a doubtfully accurate memo and leaking it to the press, has now degenerated into an absurd handoff to New York prosecutors to see if the president's lawyer committed a campaign finance offence when he paid off a rather peppy porn star for silence about an alleged one-evening encounter with Trump when no abuse or even ungentlemanliness was alleged, 10 years before he ran for president. Truly is America, the greatest nation in history, with all its complexities and shortcomings, mocked by the shallow bias of its free press and the absurdity of public discourse.

The arrogant façade of the fascistic American criminal justice system that had been infiltrated by the Clinton-Obama Democratic party has been torn down and the director and deputy director of the FBI revealed as potential felons who will possibly have their own day in the kangaroo courts they so delighted in sending less deservedly accused to face. There are many vicissitudes but the American leviathan is, however awkwardly and inelegantly, reviving. But the most salient aspect of it is not the war on and travails of Trump, but the fact that the national media have shot their bolt every day for 34 months since he announced his candidacy for president. The media threw their obligation to retain some element of fairness and detachment aside, and gambled everything on poisoning the wells and polluting public opinion so badly (as they did with Richard Nixon, but he had no idea how to deal with it) that the people's choice (by the narrowest of margins and in a stunning surprise) would be overturned. They gambled and they have lost.

My point is not to promote Trump; it is the colossal failure of the press, and the widespread extent of this phenomenon. The British national press generally supported remaining in

the European Union. They failed and the opposition Labour Party has revealed itself, in its leader Jeremy Corbyn's support of the Russians in the matter of the poisoned former agent and his daughter and in his opposition to the British collaboration with the United States and France in recently attacking Assad's chlorine gas facility. The British media have taken commendable issue with Corbyn, but they have misjudged British opinion on Europe, scandalously misrepresented Trump as a violent and bigoted moron (exceeding even our local shrieking media parrots in that regard), and their credibility has plummeted.

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The public in the West has been backing away from globalist ideas that in practice enable unfriendly and less developed countries to pick our pockets, and in the name of progress to world brotherhood and government, wish to empower unaccountable forces as long as they march under a politically correct banner. The problem with the European Union is that those who run it, though nominated by their governments, are compromise choices from the little countries of little natural authority who are not answerable either to the dysfunctional European parliament or to the principal sovereign constituent states. The French and Italians and Spanish, who don't normally expect much from governments and don't necessarily pay much attention to their edicts, are not much affected. The Germans, who are accustomed to authority, don't mind, especially as they are the most powerful country in Europe. The British like to be law-abiding, but do not like and would not ultimately accept an endless deluge of authoritarian micro-regulations from an anonymous clique of Belgian and Dutch Euro-commissioners. The media largely missed the whole issue and scoffed at Brexit and similar sentiments throughout Europe.

The same problem has arisen in the central European elections. The international media have panned the Polish, Austrian, Czech and Hungarian governments as authoritarian and retrograde. The Hungarian elections two weeks ago, which incumbent Viktor Orban was expected to try to steal by fraud at the polls and intimidation and by muzzling the media, were won by him easily, with ample voice for his opponents. Orban has been the most articulate and courageous European leader in making the point that a wave of migrants that swept into Europe after the Iraqi-Syrian disintegrations wasn't orderly immigration of the kind celebrated by the Statue of Liberty – it was an oceanic movement of desperate people. Arriving literally by the millions, the migrants – many of whom were genuinely fleeing carnage, of course – overwhelmed the resources and goodwill of many of the European states, a situation that was not helped by outrageous crimes committed by some of the new arrivals. Orban objected to the omniscient in Brussels purporting to control Hungary's borders and to redistribute refugees throughout the EU's 27 countries. He ran a clean election with a completely free media and won a landslide. The media in the West bought the line that he was a corrupt neo-fascist. He isn't and never was.

Our problem is not so much our leaders in the West, who at least have the rod on their backs of free electorates; it is our purblind and now severely compromised media. Influence on public opinion is now profoundly fragmented across the internet; the traditional media have no real influence and don't deserve any. But the typecasting and stigmatizing by leftish journalists continues, like the singing of doomed people on sinking ships. Locally, Doug Ford, who will be premier of Ontario in less than two months unless the province has really been forsaken by God and man, is being demonized as a local Trump. (He performed a public service in not allowing the octogenarian "moonbeam" governor of California, Jerry Brown, to address the provincial legislature last week on the bunk about global warming, as we shivered without electricity

in an April winter storm). We could do worse than Doug Ford, and recently have.

But we will get the politicians we deserve. When will we get media we deserve? This is a burning question for the whole West. Until it is answered, a free press is undervalued and accordingly vulnerable. The recently exposed abuses of Facebook and other tech giants and the U.S. president's successful use of Twitter are symptoms of the problem.

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