

The Guardian and Edward Snowden

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Britain's *Guardian* newspaper has repeatedly declared its support for whistle-blower Edward Snowden to be put on trial in the United States.

Snowden, the former US National Security Agency (NSA) contractor, worked with the *Guardian* in revealing the existence of unprecedented, gigantic government spying networks in the United States, the UK and other countries. The newspaper describes itself as "The world's leading liberal voice" and is the acknowledged mouthpiece of liberalism in Britain, with generations of progressive-minded sections of the middle class looking to its pages for news and informed comment.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange also turned to the newspaper, which selectively published and edited cables released by WikiLeaks to release material documenting US war crimes and conspiracies against the world populations. However, shortly after publishing the revelations provided to it by WikiLeaks, the newspaper turned viciously on Julian Assange, and has led the attempts to blacken his name, demanding his return to Sweden to face trumped-up sexual misconduct allegations. (See "The Guardian's hatchet job on Julian Assange")

As with Assange, the *Guardian* is proving to be no friend of Snowden and has made clear its refusal to oppose his persecution. On June 25, for example, the *Guardian* editorialised on Snowden, "He is unlikely to be surprised at the clamour to have him locked up for life, or to have seen himself denounced as a traitor." It was "quite predictable that Snowden would be charged with criminal offences, even if there is something shocking in the use of the 1917 Espionage Act," it continued.

Under conditions in which the US had launched a global manhunt to seize Snowden, the *Guardian* played down the serious danger to the young man's life, blithely commenting, "President [Barack] Obama has

welcomed the debate about the uses, limits and oversight of surveillance—and there is now a vigorous discussion emerging in America and Europe, if not so much in a too-complacent Britain."

It concluded that, Daniel Ellsberg, the whistle-blower who leaked the Pentagon Papers in 1971, cataloguing the dirty and bloody history of US involvement in Vietnam from 1945 to 1967, "was smeared and denounced at the time. His trial in 1973 collapsed in 1973. History will be kinder to him—and, quite possibly, to Snowden."

The verdict of history is cited only because the *Guardian* will in the meantime support the verdict of the US legal authorities. Claims of a "welcome" debate supported by Obama are simply an additional and deliberate lie. The *Guardian* has nothing to say on the preparations to seize and charge Snowden as a spy under legislation it has elsewhere described as "so broadly worded it would leave the National Security Agency whistle-blower with little room for a defence."

A further *Guardian* editorial on July 2 smeared Snowden on the basis that he had fled to Russia from Hong Kong. It implied that Snowden was damaged goods due to his being in Russia—whose government has committed human rights abuses.

It stated, "As long as he remains in Vladimir Putin's Russia, however, the real issue remains clouded. This damages Mr Snowden's cause."

"He should therefore leave Russia as soon as he practically can," it added. This was a de facto demand for Snowden to give himself up to the US authorities. "Snowden has always accepted that he will have to face the music for what he has done. This is likely to happen sooner or later," it opined. "He is a whistle-blower. He has published government information. And it is as a whistle-blower that he will eventually have to answer to the law."

The *Guardian* concluded, "It must be for a civilian

jury to decide” what becomes of Snowden.

There followed a scurrilous article by Peter Beaumont, foreign affairs editor at the *Guardian's* sister newspaper, the *Observer*. Snowden was “providing a public relations coup for [Russian President Vladimir] Putin, and has “provided cover for a gross and serial human rights-violating state,” he asserted. “In appealing to the universality of human rights values, while appearing to apply his criticism of human rights abuse selectively, that justification, sadly, now rests on shaky ground.”

Snowden has not defended any human rights abuses carried out by Putin’s regime. He is in Russia because the US has waged a massive worldwide campaign to prevent Snowden seeking asylum in one of the many countries he expressed a desire to travel to. Russia, for its part, has made clear its hostility to the young man’s actions—demanding he cease releasing material that might damage its US “partner.”

The *Guardian's* campaign reveals the decay and death of anything that might have once been described as a liberal wing of the bourgeoisie. Not once has it called for an end to the vast spying operations of the US and UK. Defending as it does the social order these actions are designed to preserve, its only appeal is for a debate on the “uses, limits and oversight of surveillance.” Those who make up the *Guardian's* leading personnel are wholly incapable of disclosing the class interests and political forces underlying the spying because their own privileged existence depends upon denying a voice to the millions of people whose lives are being ruined by capitalism’s descent into crisis and the resulting embrace of naked criminality by its ruling elite.

The *Guardian* assertion that Snowden “has always accepted that he will have to face the music” is a lie. Snowden has steadfastly fought to assert his democratic rights and those of the world’s population, defying governments that have committed crimes on an unprecedented scale.

Of his own actions, Snowden stated that under the Nuremburg principle, codified in international law following the Second World War, “Individuals have international duties which transcend the national obligations of obedience. Therefore individual citizens have the duty to violate domestic laws to prevent crimes against peace and humanity from occurring.”

(See “Snowden denounces US campaign of threats and aggression”)

The *Guardian's* polite appeal that Snowden’s fate “must be for a civilian jury to decide ” is an insult to the intelligence of its readers. This is the America of 2013, whose government organises illegal detentions, including torture and waterboarding at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib. Washington plans either to kill Snowden, or treat him like US Army Private Bradley Manning, who helped leak thousands of classified documents to WikiLeaks in 2010. Following his arrest, Manning was incarcerated in a military prison for 1,100 days. During that time, he was tortured with solitary confinement, forced nakedness, and bullying by guards. He is now being court martialed before a judge who has almost unlimited powers. The government is seeking to give him a maximum prison sentence of 150 years, while the judge also has the power to impose a death sentence on the young man.

The Obama administration is not engaged in a “debate” regarding its illegal and constitutional spying programme. This is a government that kills American citizens without a warrant or a trial, has declared the right to indefinitely detain anyone without a warrant or a trial, organised a state of virtual military siege against the population of Boston, in violation of the fourth of the ten amendments that constitute the Bill of Rights, and has orchestrated the illegal international witch-hunt to prevent Snowden from seeking asylum. It wants only to silence Snowden by whatever means necessary. The *Guardian* wants him delivered over to his tormentors.



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