

New York Times and Washington Post intensify Snowden smear campaign

Eric London
10 February 2014

In the face of ongoing revelations by whistleblower Edward Snowden, the political establishment is growing increasingly nervous about the popular opposition the leaks are engendering. In response, the organs of the political elite continue to mount a smear campaign against Snowden.

The most recent slanders were published on Saturday and Sunday in the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, respectively. Both articles attempt to paint Snowden as a shadowy figure who stole state secrets and has thereby threatened “national security.”

The *Times* piece, written by David Sanger and Eric Schmitt, attempts to undermine Snowden under the cover of making a “neutral” account of the methods by which he downloaded evidence of the NSA’s repeated violations of the US Constitution. The article, titled “Cheap Software Helped Snowden Plunder Secrets,” laments the fact that Snowden was able to evade detection and expose the acts of the government to the world.

“The findings are striking,” the *Times* complains, “because the NSA’s mission includes protecting the nation’s most sensitive military and intelligence computer systems from cyber attacks, especially the sophisticated attacks that emanate from Russia and China. Mr. Snowden’s ‘insider attack,’ by contrast, was hardly sophisticated and should have been easily detected, investigators found.”

The failure of the government to prevent the leak is “inexplicable,” the *Times* writes, citing security experts who have knowledge about “how the Snowden experience could have been avoided.”

The article concludes with a gratuitous nod to the security apparatus. “‘Everything that he touched, we assume that he took,’ said General [Michael] Flynn, including details of how the military tracks terrorists, of

enemies’ vulnerabilities and of American defenses against improvised explosive devices. He added, ‘We assume the worst case.’”

The *Washington Post* op-ed column holds no punches. Titled “Edward Snowden’s hypocrisy,” it can be found in same edition of the paper that included the story about the NSA’s seizure of “only” thirty percent of domestic phone calls.

The column was penned by Gabriel Schoenfeld, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, which has close ties to the American intelligence apparatus. (The Hudson Institute was founded by military strategist Herman Kahn, an advocate of “preventive” nuclear war against the Soviet Union.)

The column is a dark and thuggish attempt to provide a rationale for the prosecution or state assassination of the young whistleblower. It is filled with insinuations that Snowden is a Russian spy, a crime punishable by death under the Espionage Act of 1917.

The accusations made against Snowden are built on a series of hypocritical denunciations of the Russian government that eerily resemble an argument for the waging of war on Russia to defend “human rights.” On top of this, nearly every sentence of the article that doesn’t end in a suggestive question mark is either a deliberate lie or an intentional obfuscation.

“One must ask,” Schoenfeld writes, “Are Snowden’s actions in consonance with his words?”

The author goes on to list the ways in which the Russian government violates democratic rights, stating that “freedom’s parlous condition in Russia is not exactly a secret today, nor was it when Snowden chose to fly to Moscow last summer and ask for political asylum. If his objective is to give people a voice in how they are governed, and to expose the massive unbridled surveillance, he could speak out about practices of the

Russian government that, in their scope and lawless, go far beyond anything ever undertaken or even alleged to have been undertaken by the U.S. government.”

Schoenfeld denounces Snowden on the grounds that “he has been silent about the surveillance and other repressive state machinery surrounding him. Why? Is he being polite to his hosts? Does he have concerns about what the Federal Security Services might do in response to what he might say?”

A better question would be: why does Gabriel Schoenfeld taunt Edward Snowden with lies and salivate over the possibility that somebody might hurt or kill him?

“Whatever the answer,” Schoenfeld concludes, “Snowden’s silence about the quasi-dictatorship where he has taken sanctuary is telling. It is yet more evidence, *if evidence were needed*, that he is not a whistleblower at all. It suggests that, instead of being a brave speaker of truths, he fears American justice, and not only American justice. It also suggests he is a hypocrite, with principles that he applies selectively against the democracy he has betrayed.” [Emphasis added.]

This statement gives an indication of the hostility which the military-intelligence apparatus views basic democratic rights. Schoenfeld asserts not only that Snowden is a spy, but also that no evidence is needed to support this accusation. Moreover, Schoenfeld claims that “instead of being a brave speaker of truths,” Snowden “fears American justice,” as if the two are incompatible with one another. Taken to its logical conclusion, Schoenfeld believes Snowden’s justified fear of being killed by the US government is tantamount to proof of his guilt.

Such a dangerous rationale flies in the face of centuries-old democratic legal norms. To the layer of spies and generals for which Schoenfeld speaks, basic democratic rights—including the requirement that evidence be presented against a defendant in a criminal trial, and with it, the right to the presumption of innocence, are gone by the wayside. To this layer, the fear of violent reprisal is enough evidence to prove that the offender has “betrayed democracy” and must face up to “American justice.”

These are the legal foundations of criminal law in a police state, and they found expression on Saturday in the editorial pages of the *Washington Post*. Though the

Times and *Post* take different routes, the two leading newspapers of American liberalism reach the same conclusion: Edward Snowden is a criminal who has broken the law and must face punishment.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact