

Oppose the right-wing campaign against Grenfell fire documentary *Failed by the State*

Robert Stevens
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A filthy attack has been mounted by the right-wing media against *Failed by the State: the Struggle in the Shadow of Grenfell*.

The three-part documentary film, available here on YouTube, tells the truth about an inferno that led to the loss of at least 71 lives due to cost-cutting by Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea council and its housing management organisation. It links this crime of social murder to the naked hostility of the rulers of Britain's wealthiest borough to its working class residents.

That is why it is being denounced by the corporate media, including the London *Times* and *Daily Mail*.

The attack on the documentary is part of a broader offensive by the ruling elite and the corporate media, who are attempting to portray all expressions of political and social dissent as “fake news,” bought and paid for by the Putin regime in Russia.

A review of *Failed by the State* published on the *World Socialist Web Site* noted, “Its essential strength is in its attempt to understand the social murder at Grenfell Tower in terms of the devastation being wrought by global capitalism.” We concluded, “It deserves to be watched and shared widely.”

The film is the project of director Daniel Renwick, who lives in west London, and Ish, who was born and lived in Grenfell Tower for 25 years and who is a resident of the Lancaster West estate where Grenfell Tower is located.

The film was financed by the production company Redfish, which is backed by Ruptly—part of the Russia-based RT network.

It is on this spurious basis that the attack on the documentary was launched on February 1 by the *Daily Beast*—a US news and opinion website—with an article headlined, “‘Grassroots’ Media Startup Redfish is

Supported by the Kremlin.”

The *Daily Beast* is owned by the US based conglomerate IAC/InterActiveCorp, which owns over 150 brands across 100 countries and posted revenues of \$3.14 billion in 2016. The *Daily Beast*'s editor-in-chief John Phillips Avlon was a chief speech writer for former Republican New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Yet this publication has the nerve to pronounce on journalistic “independence”!

The author of the *Daily Beast* article, Charles Davis, says nothing about the content of the film, managing to mention the word Grenfell only once. He stresses, “The documentary outlet [Redfish] styles itself as independent and community-based, but its work airs on a state-supported TV network and most of its employees are from state-backed media.”

Davis adds that most of Redfish's “in-house team of staff correspondents and producers... last worked for Russian government media.”

He concludes, “All money corrupts, but the degree to which it does, and to what end, *can only be assessed if there's some transparency. That shouldn't bother independent, grassroots media.*” [emphasis added]

What does this mean? Not only those involved in producing *Failed by the State* but anyone involved in social media must now prove (through “transparency”) that they are not funded by “the Kremlin.” And if they complain, then they must surely have something to hide!

This was the same argument used against those who opposed one of the gravest attacks on democratic rights in history—the mass surveillance of the online activity of the population by the government's spying machine, GCHQ: “Nothing to hide? Nothing to fear!”

Based on Davis's scurrilous piece, *Vice* magazine, which initially praised the film as a “fantastic example

of amateur community-produced media,” immediately disowned its review, adding a disclaimer that “Redfish may not be as independent as it seems, with strong links to Russian state media.”

The right-wing media in Britain have from the outset sought to bar any analysis of Grenfell that tells the truth about the origins of the fire in corporate greed and social cleansing. It leapt on the *Daily Beast* piece as a means not only of discrediting the film, but sending out a warning of the consequences of opposing the official narrative surrounding Grenfell.

The *Times* and the *Daily Mail* published almost identical articles on February 10, both citing “Kremlin” links to *Failed by the State*.

In December these same newspapers—along with the *Daily Express*—attacked various activists and groups for supposedly politically exploiting Grenfell. What this meant was summed up by the *Express* which wrote, “It is ridiculous to make out that the tragedy was the result of Tory ‘austerity.’”

The *Daily Mail* is above all concerned that *Failed by the State* “has been watched by over 116,000 people...” Their fear is that the lies of the corporate media over Grenfell are being countered by a film that is reaching a growing audience.

It complains that, “the documentary has been hailed by left-wing groups for its criticism of the authorities in power at the time of the west London [fire] that killed 70 people.”

No such criticism of the Conservative government can be allowed, nor the film’s blaming “the ‘cruelties of global capitalism’ for the inferno.”

It notes with evident concern, “Comments left on the documentary series praise its criticism of both Theresa May’s Conservative government and Tory-run Kensington and Chelsea Council.”

Redfish has never hidden its commercial affiliations, which hardly need an investigation to “expose.” The *Times* quotes the statement by Redfish that it is “100 percent editorially independent,” and its denial that it was “ever hiding its connection to RT and the Russian government... A spokeswoman said that Redfish’s origins should have been fairly obvious to outsiders, given that many of its staff are former RT employees.”

If anyone truly knows all about “fake news,” it is the corporate media. These are the same publications that rushed to disseminate lies about Iraq’s non-existent

“weapons of mass destruction,” resulting in the justification of a war that cost over a million lives and which have justified every war since then and every attack waged against the working class at home.

The *Times* is owned by billionaire oligarch Rupert Murdoch and is the sister paper of *The Sun*, the filthy right-wing rag widely reviled for its lies about the Hillsborough football disaster in which 96 people lost their lives. The *Sun* blamed Liverpool football supporters for the deaths—not the police and political authorities, who were the real criminals.

Failed by the State is a truthful film and an invaluable weapon for the residents of North Kensington and the working class everywhere in the fight to bring the political and corporate criminals responsible for the Grenfell fire to justice.

At its next meeting on Saturday February 17 at the Maxilla Social Club, the Grenfell Fire Forum will discuss these issues and show clips from the film.

Grenfell Fire Forum meeting

Saturday February 17, 2pm

Maxilla Hall Social Club

2 Maxilla Walk, London, W10 6SW

(nearest tube—Latimer Road)

For further information visit the Grenfell Fire Forum Facebook page



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