

Toppling the Left's Tower of Lies

by Bruce Bawer



During the past year, there's been more and more talk about the psychological impact of the COVID lockdown. Researchers have done studies, and among the more common ailments reported are depression, distress, PTSD, and suicidal ideation.

But I would submit that the lockdown isn't the only thing that's had a serious effect on our psyches of late. I'm talking about the fact that when Donald Trump rode down that escalator, Americans stepped, quite unwillingly, into another world – one in which politicians, the mainstream news media, and other major establishment players are continuously serving up a narrative, and reiterating a set of ideological propositions, that are squarely at odds with the truth.

These are, in other words, colossally dishonest – and increasingly woke – times. Every now and then I step back from it all, and the whole thing hardly seems believable. Could I have imagined, a decade or so ago, anything like the events of the last few years – and, especially, the last few months? In

a word, no.

To be sure, it was easy enough to imagine Democrats exhibiting irrational hostility toward a Republican president. I saw that happen with Reagan and George W. Bush. But the idea that a Republican president's Democratic predecessor would be involved in concocting a far-fetched tale of Russian conspiracy to try to bring down that president – and that the mainstream media would play along – was inconceivable to me, and, I think, to tens of millions of us.

Yes, I knew that JFK's vote counts in Illinois and Texas were massaged in 1960, winning him the White House. But I somehow thought malfeasance on such a scale was behind us, if only for technical reasons. Instead, we learned in 2020 that Democrats were capable of electoral shenanigans far more sweeping than anything the Kennedy campaign ever conceived.

There's more, of course. I never imagined that state and local officials around the U.S. would use a pandemic as an excuse to deny basic freedoms. I never imagined that American cities would be plagued for months by organized far-left rioting, that Democratic politicians would shower the perpetrators with praise, and that cable-news reporters, standing in front of burning buildings, would declare this mayhem "mostly peaceful." I never imagined that, after all this, Trump supporters would be charged with insurrection – and be imprisoned without trial for months – for foolishly entering the Capitol on Jan. 6.

I never imagined that the person installed in the Oval Office in 2020 would begin his term already in the throes of senility – and that while foreign media would comment on it, America's own mainstream media (being perfect in their perfidy) would [stick their heads in the sand](#).

Finally, it never occurred to me that this new president, along with other top Democrats, would knuckle under to a

bizarre new constellation of Marxist-based tenets plainly designed to undermine American society – and that even the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – sounding brainwashed – would chime in.

In my teens, I read with horror about life under the Soviet system. How saying the wrong thing could land you in the Gulag. How nothing in the newspapers could be trusted. The more I learned, the more grateful I was to live in America. Who knew that in my own lifetime, I'd see one of our two major political parties come to resemble the Soviet Communist Party? Who knew that the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* would be no more reliable than the Soviet-era *Pravda* or *Izvestia*?

Who knew that the daily prevarications of Jen Psaki would make one long for the days of Ron Ziegler?

This isn't to suggest that the U.S. government, the major political parties, and the American news media were ever close to perfect. There was always corruption. But what we're experiencing now is something new – and deeply alarming. And as each of us advances from day to day, consuming as much of the latest installment of the mainstream news media's duplicitous narrative as we can stomach, listening to politicians spew ever more outrageous lies (e.g., that it was the GOP that supported defunding the police) and being commanded by the lords of Facebook and Twitter not to challenge any of these falsehoods, we're being battered in mind and heart and soul in a way that we may not be fully aware of.

Let me quote from a 2012 [column](#) in *Psychology Today*:

when people in positions of power lie, you not only become disaffected with them but you become disaffected with the institutions they represent. Each time this happens, your identity and well-being take a new hit. Identification with our jobs and our government are crucial to our self-concepts.

As we lose faith in them, we lose faith in ourselves.

Yes, we may like to think that we're mentally and emotionally strong enough to stand entirely on our own and shrug off lies. Yet we're not just talking here about being oversensitive snowflakes or about the occasional fib. We're talking about standing naked and vulnerable at the mouth of a river of lies as wide as the Mississippi. We're talking about lies told by people we used to trust, by people we used to rely on for news of the world, by people we're accustomed to watching – perhaps since childhood – on a TV screen, their delivery as smooth as silk, their faces set in what we're accustomed to reading as a look of solemn conviction. These are people, in short, who feel almost like old friends or trusted neighbors.

Of course, most of us try to avoid the torrent of lies by tuning out the mainstream media as much as possible. But it's virtually impossible to tune them out entirely. When a major terrorist attack or other crisis occurs, it's hard not to flip to CNN or BBC for the live on-site reporting that might not be available elsewhere. And sometimes we'll just check out the *Times* or *Post* because we feel a civic obligation to know what these people are saying. And even if we do manage to keep away from the mainstream media, we'll hear and read about their flimflam at the online sites we trust. One way or another, they'll get at us.

It's even tougher dealing with these people's lies, moreover, when we consider that they're not just lying: they're lying in cruel and callous ways that harm the innocent and threaten to do untold long-term damage to the fabric of society. They're even lying about lying – insisting on their role as bold and noble truth-tellers when in fact they're mischievous merchants of mendacity.

Indeed, the more whopping their whoppers, the more the word "truth" has become their mantra. Consider these excerpts from

recent books (which I'd never have cracked, I assure you, had I not been assigned them for review): in *The Enemy of the People: A Dangerous Time to Tell the Truth in America*, CNN's appalling Jim Acosta attested that because Trump "unleash[ed] a profound assault on the truth" during his presidency, Acosta and his colleagues were "in a fight for the truth," since their job is to "speak truth to power" and indeed "to tell the truth, even when it hurts." In *Hoax: Donald Trump, Fox News, and the Dangerous Distortion of Truth*, Acosta's CNN colleague Brian Stelter wrote that Trump "led a war on truth." In *True Crimes and Misdemeanors*, CNN's Jeffrey Toobin contended that "we [journalists] speak truth to this particular president." And in *Front Row at the Trump Show*, ABC's Jonathan Karl testified that while Trump was "waging a war on truth," the role of journalists was "to inform the public, seek the truth." And let's not forget former FBI Director James Comey, that master dissembler who also posed as a veritable vessel of verity, titling his 2018 book *A Higher Loyalty: Truth, Lies, and Leadership* and his 2021 book *Saving Justice: Truth, Transparency, and Trust*. This from the man who told the House Judiciary Committee "I can't recall" over 240 times.

Of a piece with these liars' brandishing of the word "truth," by the way, is the booming industry of brazenly bogus "fact checking," whereby facts inconsistent with the official narrative are labeled untrue. Then there's the increasingly popular practice of labeling statements of fact "conspiracy theories," a term that is now being used liberally by websites like Wikipedia. Then there's the now-familiar dodge of excusing literal acts of left-wing violence or vandalism as "understandable" while professing that the mere utterance of a truth inconvenient to the Left is capable of making people feel unsafe or of causing them pain.

"The idea of accountability to truth, and thus of a responsibility to correct the record," writes Jonathan Rauch in his new book *The Constitution of Knowledge: A Defense of*

Truth, “was a threshold idea in the establishment of mainstream journalism, and it remains foundational today.” To illustrate this accountability, Rauch recalls a CNN report linking a Trump intimate “to a dicey Russian hedge fund.” When the story proved incorrect, he notes, CNN retracted it, demonstrating, he asserts, CNN’s undying forthrightness – a forthrightness that, he adds, is also still evinced by the *Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the network news divisions. Never mind, apparently, these enterprises’ daily hammering away, during most of the Trump years, at the colossal lie of Russian collusion.

To see Rauch – an old friend – joining the con artists’ club is particularly dismaying. His readiness to link arms with the appalling likes of Acosta and Stelter (and Comey, who supplied him with a blurb) shows just how strong the internal impulse can be to fit in, even at the cost of a well-earned and decades-long reputation for integrity.

The bottom line here is that American society doesn’t suffer from systematic racism. It suffers from systematic dissimulation – dissimulation that’s extraordinarily well coordinated, occurs on a titanic scale, concerns matters of the first importance, and is carried out by people who occupy what used to be called positions of trust.

Sappy though it sounds – and, I guess, old-fashioned too – some of us actually do try to live “in the truth,” as Vaclav Havel put it. For us, the constant lying by our leftist elite can be a genuine psychological challenge. Some – for whom living in the truth is less desirable than living in harmony with their surroundings – eventually yield to the lies. For them, living in the truth is less desirable than living in harmony with their surroundings.

For just as not every human soul (contrary to romantic illusions) yearns above all for freedom, so not everyone has truth as his No. 1 priority. For many, it’s more important to

fit in, to get along, to say that, yes, two plus two equals five, and collect the reward of a pat on the head. And the smarter members of the fraternity of deceit know this: they hope that the more relentlessly they push their propaganda on us, the more our resistance will crumble.

Still, the truth has power, even in the most docile minds. Yes, the merchants of mendacity, for now, rule over vast herds of sheep; but as the mendacities multiply, they're bound to collide with the home truths of more and more members of the flock.

A radical feminist, for example, may finally realize that woke ideology obliges her to cheer male-to-female transsexuals who beat biological girls at sports; a far-left Jew may decide he has no place in a movement that's made idols of anti-Semites like Ilhan Omar; a suburban soccer mom whose grade-school son's teacher calls him a white racist patriarchal oppressor may grasp that, much as she hates Trump, it's time to bail; a black shopkeeper may balk at the readiness of his comrades on the left, who've sanctified the thug George Floyd, to applaud when Antifa torches *his* store.

Yes, it's a long game. But it's winnable. I don't believe that truth always wins in the end, but I do feel that today's rhetoric of rage is too hot not to cool down, and that the Left's ever-rising edifice of lies will eventually become too tall not to topple. Still, it's urgent that we do all we can as individuals to help hasten its toppling. To this end, the least we can do is to heed the wisdom of Havel, who in his 1978 essay "[The Power of the Powerless](#)" made it clear what we shouldn't do: we shouldn't be that greengrocer behind the Iron Curtain, who, terrified to speak his own mind, pusillanimously places a sign in his store window reading "Workers of the world, unite!," thereby becoming an accomplice in his own oppression.

In other words, *at least don't lie.*

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, writing in 1974, [made the same point](#): the simplest thing for each of us to do, if we wish to overcome a regime guided by guile, is to commit to “a *personal nonparticipation in lies*.” He writes, “Even if all is covered by lies, even if all is under their rule, let us resist in the smallest way: Let their rule hold *not through me!*” Even if we can’t bring ourselves “to step out onto the square and shout out the truth ... let us at least refuse to say what we *do not* think!... Our way must be: *Never knowingly support lies!*”

Amen.

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