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## Fear and Loathing in the City of Westminster

Our descent into City Airport was like the drop-ship scene in the movie *Aliens*. The BA CityFlyer Embraer 190, a narrow-body twin-engine airliner, rolled over into a 40-degree bank and started bucking like a mechanical bull. Simulated “chimes” began chiming

frantically. Flight attendants bolted for their seats. The German businessman in the seat beside me, obviously a nervous flyer, immediately adopted the “brace” position. I gripped his shoulder reassuringly and shouted into his ear like a drunken redneck, **“WE’RE ON AN EXPRESS ELEVATOR TO HELL! GOING DOWN!”**

And so began my latest trip to London. This time, I wasn’t there to **talk to “the Left”** or to hunt down endoparasitoid xenomorphs. I was there on Serious Conspiracy Theorist Business, which I explained to the chirpy MI6 operative posing as a “survey taker” that followed me out of Border Control asking questions about my “nation of residence” and my “experience with the passport scanners,” and so on. She was wearing one of those rubber “*Mission Impossible*” masks that made her look like a middle-aged British woman. I waited for an opportunity, head faked, juked right, and lost her in the crowd. As I entered the “Arrivals” lobby, I turned and shouted in her general direction, **“NOT MY FIRST RODEO, MR. PHELPS!”**

I don’t know what was up with all the shouting. I’ve been experimenting with different types of medication for this sinus condition I’ve had for months. My Sinus Specialist diagnosed me with “long” or possibly “permanent Covid,” or some yet-to-be-named debilitating syndrome caused by some other bio-weapon that produces cold-and-flu-like symptoms and has a survival rate of 99.8 percent. So, maybe it was bad reaction to my meds. Whatever it was, I was feeling jumpy.

And the climate-change apocalypse didn’t help. Emerging from the Tube in Westminster was like walking into an enormous open-air sauna. Bodies were lying all around on the sidewalks. AFP photographers in hazmat suits were taking **pictures of the carnage**. Herds of corpulent American tourists staggered through the streets in semi-fugue states sweating profusely and thumbing

their phones like an invasion of alien albino hippos trying to call up to their **UAPs** and arrange for immediate emergency extraction. I pushed and shoved and elbowed my way down Tothill Street to my pod hotel, checked in, and proceeded to get hopelessly lost in the maze of identical Kubrickian hallways that eventually led me to my luxury pod, and cleaned myself up for the night's festivities.

What was I doing back in London in the middle of a heat wave? Well ... OK, I'm allowed to tell you about it now. As you are probably aware, Michael Shellenberger, Matt Taibbi, and Russell Brand were doing this public event last Thursday ...



... but that's not what I was really there for.

Not that the Thursday event wasn't fun. It was. Despite the rather pricey tickets, there was a good size house and spirits were high. Russell Brand was in top form, pouring out torrents of intellectual free-association like an English Neal Cassady and nailing the punchlines of all the jokes. Michael was also firing on all cylinders. He worked the house like a seasoned politician, whipping the crowd into a veritable frenzy of anti-totalitarian fervor. Stella Assange took the stage at one point and briefed us on the official crucifixion of her husband, which, sadly, now looks like a fait

accompli. Matt, who had just made it to London that morning, and so was jet-lagged and deliriously sleep-deprived, dispensed with the speech he had rewritten on the plane, and just winged it, and somehow pulled it off ... because that, as they say, is show biz.

Here's the money part of Matt's speech, which he paraphrased in London (emphasis mine):

*“What Michael and I were looking at was something new, an Internet-age approach to political control that uses brute digital force to alter reality itself. We certainly saw plenty of examples of censorship and de-platforming and government collaboration in those efforts. However, it's clear that the idea behind the sweeping system of digital surveillance combined with thousands or even millions of subtle rewards and punishments built into the online experience, is to condition people to censor themselves.”*

Early the next morning, Michael, Matt, and a secret cabal of international journalists, editors, organizers, political satirists, academics, and other Very Serious People whose names I am not at liberty to mention gathered in an undisclosed location and spent the better part of the day sharing harmful misinformation and strategizing about how to defeat (or marginally disrupt) the network of governments, Intelligence agencies, global corporations, NGOs, and so-called disinformation experts known as the **Censorship Industrial Complex**. There were delegates from the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, Italy, Spain, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, and other nominally sovereign countries.

This heretofore clandestine meeting was conducted in what appeared to be a WWII-era air-raid shelter that had been converted into a private BDSM club under military-level OPSEC protocols (i.e., the meeting was conducted according to the protocols, not the

architectural conversion). I'm not entirely sure why that was. We weren't doing anything even remotely illegal. However, given that I'm under criminal investigation here in Germany for tweeting the cover art of my book, and the IRS's sudden interest in Matt, and Kit Klarenberg's recent experience in Luton, perhaps the abundance of caution was warranted. The last thing we needed was the UK Thoughtpolice goose-stepping in like Basil Fawlty and dragging everyone off to Room 101.

Anyway, that's what I was actually there for. I had never met most of the people in attendance, except online on the double-encrypted Russian-backed dark-web conspiracy-theorist channels where we hatch our right-wing-extremist plots to defend people's rights to freedom-of-speech and engage in other harmful anti-Democracy behaviors. I'm still not sure who I actually met in London, as we were all wearing identical Mickey-Mouse masks and speaking through portable voice modifiers. (In any secret meeting like this, you have to assume you've been infiltrated!)

After the obligatory arguing about the agenda, we settled in and shared our country reports, which, unsurprisingly, were all variations on a theme. I won't go into all the details. Michael Shellenberger's non-profit has been tracking those developments. Matt Taibbi and Racket News are reporting it. Other alternative media outlets are reporting it. Millions of people all around the world are talking about it, writing about it, and arguing with each other about it. Your Twitter feed is probably full of it. Alex Gutentag just published a huge article about it.

So, what is it, exactly, that is going on?

The thing that was horrifying about listening to my colleagues reporting on the state of things in their countries — or, rather, the thing that should be horrifying but is becoming a mundane fact of life — is that more or less the same totalitarian program is being

rolled out in countries throughout the world. The censorship. The official propaganda. The criminalization of dissent. The pathologization of dissent. The manipulation of our perception of reality. The coordinated transformation of the world into a smiley-faced neo-Orwellian police state in which politics no longer matters because society has been divided into two basic classes, i.e., “the normals,” who are prepared to mindlessly follow orders and parrot whatever official propaganda they are fed, and “the deviants,” or “extremists,” who are not.

Seriously, all satire aside, think about the implications of that.

As you sit there in whichever nominally sovereign country you’re sitting there reading this in, ask yourself, “how and why is this happening?” Then ask yourself, “why is it happening now?”

If you do not have answers to those questions, it might behoove you to attempt to come up with some. That is basically what I’ve been trying to do — in a satirical and sometimes not so satirical manner — in these [Consent Factory essays](#) for the last seven years. I’m not going to summarize it all again here. I’ve done that, repeatedly, in my essays and books. I did it the last time I visited London to give [a talk at the Real Left Conference](#).

I did it again at this gathering in London. It did not go over all that well.

The thing is, most of us are so laser-focused on the trees that we cannot see the forest. But our adversaries see the forest. They see the forest like fucking eagles. They own the fucking forest and everything in it. While we hop like squirrels from tree to tree, distracted from distraction by distraction, from limited hangout by limited hangout, they are building a big fucking fence around it and deploying the Forest-Ranger *Sturmabteilung*.

I'm reminded of that infamous Karl Rove quote. He was referring to the USA, of course, but it was GloboCap (i.e., the Corporatocracy) that he was really speaking for whether he knew it or not ...

“That’s not the way the world really works anymore ... we’re an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you’re studying that reality — judiciously, as you will — we’ll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that’s how things will sort out. We’re history’s actors, and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.” [*The New York Times Magazine*]

If we do not want to end up “studying that reality,” the global, pathologized-totalitarian reality that is being subtly and not so subtly implemented simultaneously in countries throughout the world, at some point we had better come up with some actual answers to those questions above.

The supranational, globally-hegemonic, post-ideological system of power that runs our world — whatever you need to call it — has answers to those questions. It has a story. It is a story about a beneficent global empire governed by authoritative scientific experts who are trying to save the world from Whatever and protect everyone from “disinformation” and “harmful” speech, ideas, and so on. Like every good story, it has an antagonist. Us. We are the official enemy. Right, Left, libertarian, anarchist, Islamic fundamentalist, Christian fundamentalist ... it does not make one iota of difference. There is only the Empire, and those who oppose it. The Empire does not give a shit why. It is conducting a global “Clear-and-Hold” operation, wiping out internal resistance and establishing ideological uniformity. It could not care less what you think you believe in. All it wants is mindless obedience and rote repetition of its propaganda. That’s how totalitarianism works.

And there I go with my story again. If anyone has a different story that makes sense of the last seven years — and arguably the last 30 years — honestly, I would love to hear it. My story fills me with fear and loathing, but the only other coherent story I’m hearing at the moment is the Empire’s story, and I think we all know how that one ends.

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CJ Hopkins  
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