

Obama Aide Sunstein Outlines Plan To Suppress Opposition

by Tony Papert

May 7—A paper written in 2008 by Cass Sunstein, currently Barack Obama’s Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, provides crucial confirmation of his central role in promoting the fascist measures currently being used by the Obama Administration against its political enemies, including one of Obama’s leading opponents, Lyndon LaRouche, and his associates.

Sunstein, a Harvard and University of Chicago law professor, who served as one of Obama’s mentors, is part of a husband-wife team within the Obama Administration, which promotes anti-Constitutional policies on both national and international matters. Sunstein’s wife is Samantha Power, a Special Assistant to the President, who is taking the lead in prosecuting “humanitarian interventions,” such as the one which led to the assassination of Muammar Qaddafi.

The paper co-written by Constitutional lawyer Sunstein is entitled “[Conspiracy Theories](#),” and it does outline a true conspiracy—to silence those who would dare to attack the policies of the Administration.

How To Suppress Dissent

Legal columnist Glenn Greenwald, who has been among the most forthright commentators in exposing the Obama Administration’s multiple violations of the Constitution, summed up the drift of Sunstein’s paper in a posting on Salon.com in 2010. Greenwald called it “a truly pernicious paper proposing that the U.S. Government employ teams of covert agents and pseudo-independent advocates to ‘cognitively infiltrate’ online groups and websites as well as other activist groups which advocate views that Sunstein deems ‘false conspiracy theories’ about the Government. This would be designed to increase citizens’ faith in government officials and undermine the credibility of conspiracists.

“Sunstein advocates that the Government’s stealth infiltration should be accomplished by sending covert agents into ‘chat rooms, online social networks, or even

real-space groups.’ He also proposes that the Government make secret payments to so-called ‘independent’ credible voices to bolster the Government’s messaging (on the ground that those who don’t believe government sources will be more inclined to listen to those who appear independent while secretly acting on behalf of the Government). This program would target those advocating false ‘conspiracy theories,’ which they define to mean: ‘an attempt to explain an event or practice by reference to the machinations of powerful people, who have also managed to conceal their role.’”

Greenwald continued: “Just to get a sense for what an extremist Cass Sunstein is (which itself is ironic, given that his paper calls for ‘cognitive infiltration of extremist groups,’ as the Abstract puts it), marvel at this paragraph:

“‘What can government do about conspiracy theories? Among the things it can do, what should it do? We can readily imagine a series of possible responses.



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Cass Sunstein

(1) Government might ban conspiracy theorizing. (2) Government might impose some kind of tax, financial or otherwise, on those who disseminate such theories. (3) Government might itself engage in counterspeech, marshaling arguments to discredit conspiracy theories. (4) Government might formally hire credible private parties to engage in counterspeech. (5) Government might engage in informal communication with such parties, encouraging them to help. Each instrument has a distinctive set of potential effects, or costs and benefits, and each will have a place under imaginable conditions. However, our main policy idea is that government should engage in cognitive infiltration of the groups that produce conspiracy theories, which involves a mix of (3), (4) and (5).”

Back to Greenwald: “So Sunstein isn’t calling right now for proposals (1) and (2)—having Government ban conspiracy theorizing or impose some kind of tax on those who do it—but he says each will have a place under imaginable conditions. I’d love to know the conditions under which the government-enforced banning of conspiracy theories or the imposition of taxes on those who advocate them will have a place. That would require, at

a bare minimum, a repeal of the First Amendment. Anyone who believes this should, for that reason alone, be barred from any meaningful government position.”

How To Silence Dissent

In his paper, Sunstein gives more than a hint of how far he conceives of the government going in its attempt to suppress dissent.

“In 2004,” Sunstein writes, “the U.S. administrator for Iraq, L. Paul Bremer, ordered troops to shut down a weekly newspaper in Baghdad that had propounded false conspiracy theories damaging to the U.S., such as a story that ‘an American missile, not a terrorist car bomb, had caused an explosion that killed more than 50 Iraqi police recruits.’ Whether this sort of action does more harm than good, in similar environments, is a complicated question, depending on difficult judgments about the etiology of conspiracy theories, the consequences of censorship, and the efficacy of U.S. counterspeech.”

(One is reminded of the fact that Lyndon LaRouche’s *New Solidarity* weekly was the first U.S. newspaper shut down by the U.S. government (under George H.W. Bush) since the Civil War. Could the Obama Administration be thinking of a similar action to suppress the voice of its opponents today?)

Now read what Sunstein plans for those whom he calls the “conspiracy entrepreneurs,” giving as an example the prominent French Internet activist Thierry Meyssan, who has sharply challenged the official cover-up of the authorship of the 9/11 atrocity, as an example, but undoubtedly also thinking about the Administration’s leading domestic critic Lyndon LaRouche.

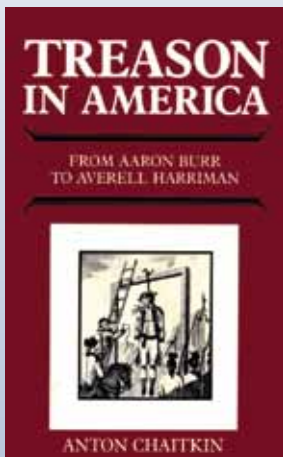
“Imagine a government facing a population in which a particular conspiracy theory is becoming widespread. We will identify two basic dilemmas that recur, and consider how government should respond. The first dilemma is whether to ignore or rebut the theory; the second is whether to address the supply side of conspiracy theorizing by attempting to debias or disable its purveyors, to address the demand side by attempting to immunize third-party audiences from the theory’s effects, or to do both (if resource constraints permit). In both cases, the underlying structure of the problem is that conspiracy theorizing is a multi-party game. Government is faced with suppliers of conspiracy theories, and might aim at least in part to *persuade, debias, or silence those suppliers*” (emphasis added).

“Persuade, debias, disable or silence.” Take your pick. But you can no longer pretend you didn’t know.

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