Although I’ve soured on him in recent years, for the first decade and more of Paul Krugman’s tenure at the New York Times I regarded him as about the only national columnist worth reading. Certainly many others felt the same way, and Krugman regularly ranked among the most influential liberal voices in the country, gaining that position by his uniquely strong stance against the Iraq War plans of President George W. Bush, while his prestige was capped by winning 2007 Nobel Prize in Economics.

But few probably remember that just a couple of years into his column there was a concerted effort to pressure the Times into firing him, a campaign spearheaded by blogger Andrew Sullivan[1], then an ardent Bush supporter. Given the steady drum-beat of harsh accusations and the climate of that period, I had feared that it would succeed. Now suppose that he had been purged from all media access in 2002, and also that Bush’s Iraq adventure had turned out to be a considerable success, rather than the utter disaster it actually became. A couple of decades hence, would anyone remember Krugman, except in some minor historical footnote recounting the misguided naysayers whom our heroic President “W” had fortunately overcome?

Perhaps by 2040 any mention of Krugman’s name would either draw a blank stare or evoke a vague sense that he had been some sort of disreputable radical activist, perhaps with pro-Islamicist leanings and even suspected by some of having had a hand in the 9/11 attacks. History has traditionally been written by the political winners, and this was especially true in the days before the growth of the Internet weakened the total monopoly of our establishment media.

These were some of the thoughts that gradually crossed my mind during the middle part of the 2000s as I discovered some remarkable anomalies while creating my content-archiving website[2], a system intended to provide convenient access to millions of articles from America’s most influential publications of the last 150 years. Since I had never really studied American history, my views were generally quite conventional ones, formed from a mixture of the History 101 classes I had taken and what I had casually absorbed over the years from all the newspapers and magazines that I read.
Many of the most frequent names I encountered in America’s prestigious and respectable periodicals of the past were reasonably well known to me, but others were not. It was a strange feeling to see the overwhelming presence of writers who were either completely obscure or else whom I had always regarded as denizens of the disreputable radical fringe, distributing their angry mimeographed tracts on street corners, rather than respected figures regularly gracing the pages of *The New Republic*, *Foreign Affairs*, and *The Nation*. My comprehension of the past was obviously mistaken.

Take the case of John T. Flynn[3], probably unknown today to all but one American in a hundred, if even that. Given my much broader ideological explorations, I had sometimes seen him hailed as an important figure in the Old Right, a founder of the America First Committee, and someone friendly to both Sen. Joseph McCarthy and the John Birch Society, though falsely smeared by his opponents as a proto-fascist or Nazi-sympathizer. This sort of description seemed to form a consistent if somewhat disputed picture in my mind.

So imagine my surprise at discovering that throughout the 1930s he had been one of the single most influential liberal voices in American society, a writer on economics and politics whose status may have roughly approximated that of Paul Krugman, though with a strong muck-raking tinge. His weekly column in *The New Republic* allowed him to serve as a lodestar for America’s progressive elites, while his regular appearances in *Colliers*, an illustrated mass circulation weekly reaching many millions of Americans, provided him a platform comparable to that of an major television personality in the later heyday of network TV.

To some extent, Flynn’s prominence may be objectively quantified. A few years ago, I happened to mention his name to a well-read and committed liberal born in the 1930s, and she unsurprisingly drew a complete blank, but wondered if he might have been a little like Walter Lippmann[4], the very famous columnist of that era. When I checked, I saw that across the hundreds of periodicals in my archiving system, there were just 23 articles by Lippmann from the 1930s but fully 489 by Flynn.

Much of Flynn’s early prominence came from his important role in the 1932 Senate Pecora Commission[5], which had pilloried the grandees of Wall Street for the 1929 stock market collapse, and whose recommendations ultimately led to the creation of the Securities and Exchange Commission and other important financial reforms. Following an impressive career in newspaper journalism, he had moved over to *The New Republic* as a weekly columnist in 1930. Although initially sympathetic to Franklin Roosevelt’s goals, he soon became skeptical about the effectiveness of his methods, noting the sluggish expansion of public works projects and wondering whether the vaunted NRA was actually more beneficial to big business owners than to ordinary workers.

As the years went by, his criticism of Roosevelt Administration turned harsher on economic and eventually foreign policy grounds, and he incurred its enormous hostility as a consequence. Roosevelt began sending personal letters to leading editors demanding that Flynn be barred from any prominent American print outlet, and perhaps as a consequence he lost his longstanding *New Republic* column immediately following FDR’s 1940 reelection, and his name disappeared from mainstream periodicals. However, he still authored a number of best-selling books over the years sharply attacking Roosevelt, and after the war his byline occasionally surfaced in much less mainstream and influential publications. A decade ago the libertarian Ludwig von Mises Institute republished a couple of Flynn’s books, and a lengthy introduction[6] by Prof. Ralph Raico sketched in some of this background.

Supporters of my local Palo Alto library hold a monthly book sale at which donated items are sold for a pittance, and I usually drop by to browse the shelves out of curiosity for what I might find. A few years ago, I happened to notice one of Flynn’s FDR books, published in 1948, and bought it for a quarter. The material presented on the yellowing pages of *The Roosevelt Myth* were eye-opening to me.

Anyone can write a book saying anything, and if some obscure right-winger leveled astonishing charges against a liberal president, I might not pay much attention. But if Paul Krugman had spent years expressing growing doubts about Barack Obama’s policies and effectiveness, then finally turned against him and published a national best-seller denouncing his administration, surely those opinions would carry much more weight. And so it was with Flynn’s accusations against Roosevelt.

I am no expert on the New Deal Era, but Flynn’s work seemed soberly and persuasively written, although in a journalistic muck-raking style, and he makes all sorts of claims I had never previously encountered. My software system provides cross-referenced book reviews and I read a dozen of these. A few from around the time of the book’s publication were extremely critical, denouncing the contents as total nonsense written by a notoriously crazed “Roosevelt-hater.” But no specific rebuttals were provided and the general tone was much like that of the numerous *Wall Street Journal* op-eds from the mid-2000s which issued blanket denunciations of books written by “crazed Bush-haters.” Indeed, the sum-total of the one 1949 review consisted of the single sentence “Unadulterated venom from a professional F.D.R.-hater.” However, other, more recent reviews, admittedly drawn from the libertarian camp, were overwhelmingly favorable. Having no great expertise, I cannot effectively judge.

But Flynn’s claims were extremely precise, detailed, and specific, including numerous names, dates, and references. Most surprisingly, he accused the Roosevelts of exhibiting an extraordinarily degree of familial financial corruption, which he claimed may have been unprecedented in American history. Apparently, despite his wealthy and elite background FDR’s eldest son Elliott never attended college and had essentially no professional qualifications in anything. But soon after FDR became president, he began soliciting large personal payments and “investments” from wealthy businessmen who needed favors from the massively growing federal government, and seemingly did so with FDR’s full knowledge and approval. The situation sounded a little like Billy Carter’s notorious activities during the late 1970s, but the money involved totaled as much as $50 million in present-day dollars relative to the household income of that era. I had never heard a word about this.

Even more shocking was the case of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who also had never attended college and apparently had little formal education of any sort. Soon after FDR was inaugurated, she began a major round of very well-paid personal advertising for corporate consumer products such as soap and took all sorts of other large payments over the next few years from various businesses, especially those crucially dependent upon government regulatory decisions. Imagine if recent First Ladies such as Michelle Obama or Laura Bush were constantly seen in TV ads hawking cars and diapers and fast food. The payments Eleanor personally received over the course of the FDR’s dozen years in office allegedly came to an astonishing $150 million, again relative to current family incomes. This, too, was something that I had never suspected. And all this was occurring during the very depths of the Great Depression, when a huge fraction of the country was desperately poor. Perhaps Juan and Eva Peron just didn’t hire the right PR people or simply aimed too low.

Obviously, the unprecedented growth in the spending and regulatory power of the federal government during the New Deal years increased opportunities for this sort of personal graft by an enormous amount. But Flynn notes how odd the situation seemed since FDR’s inherited fortune meant that he
had already come into office as one of the wealthiest presidents of modern times. And as far as I’ve heard, his successor Harry S. Truman left the White House about as poor as he had entered it.

Some of Flynn’s other shocking claims were easier to verify. He argues that the New Deal was largely a failure and in support of that contention notes that when FDR entered office in 1933 there were 11 million unemployed and in 1938 after six years of enormous government spending and deficits and the creation of an alphabet soup of New Deal programs there were...11 million unemployed. That claim appears to be factually correct.

Indeed, Flynn alleges that by late 1937, FDR had turned towards an aggressive foreign policy aimed at involving the country in a major foreign war, primarily because he believed that this was the only route out of his desperate economic and political box, a stratagem not unknown among national leaders throughout history. In his January 5, 1938 New Republic column[10], he alerted his disbelieving readers to the looming prospect of a large naval military build-up and warfare on the horizon after a top Roosevelt adviser had privately boasted to him that a large bout of “military Keynesianism” and a major war would cure the country’s seemingly insurmountable economic problems. At that time, war with Japan, possibly over Latin American interests, seemed the intended goal, but developing events in Europe soon persuaded FDR that fomenting a general war against Germany was the best course of action. Memoirs and other historical documents obtained by later researchers seem to generally support Flynn’s accusations by indicating that Roosevelt ordered his diplomats to exert enormous pressure upon both the British and Polish governments to avoid any negotiated settlement with Germany, thereby leading to the outbreak of World War II in 1939.

Such an interventionist foreign policy may have represented a remarkable reversal of Roosevelt’s promises. All my introductory history books had always indicated that an Isolationist-leaning Congress had passed the various Neutrality Acts of the mid-1930s over FDR’s strong opposition and that these were intended to handcuff him. But according to Flynn, FDR had not only initially proposed that very legislation to his close Congressional allies, but actually made his personal advocacy and support for the Neutrality laws ones of the most popular centerpieces of his successful 1936 reelection campaign, thereby helping him carry the Mid West against Kansas Gov. Alf Landon. Once gain, Flynn provides a very specific and detailed description of that history. Unsurprisingly, Wikipedia provides the opposite, totally conventional account.

Leaving aside the extraordinary level of family financial corruption alleged by Flynn, his portrayal of FDR reminds me more of “W” than any other recent president. We must remember that “W” had run for office promising a “humble” foreign policy and the removal of various kinds of anti-Muslim government profiling, but quickly reversed himself when the 9/11 attacks gave him the opportunity to enter the history books as a “war president.”

The background of the book’s publication provides an indication of the publication obstacles faced by critics of government policy. Notwithstanding Flynn’s outsize reputation and his previous string of best-sellers, his manuscript was rejected by virtually every major publisher, and in desperation, he finally turned to an obscure Irish-American house. Yet despite such an inauspicious launch and his near-complete exclusion from mainstream media outlets, his book quickly rose to the #2 spot on The New York Times list. Merely a decade earlier, he had been at the pinnacle of American influence, and the ongoing blacklisting by the mainstream media had apparently not yet fully managed to smother his memory.
Although Flynn was perhaps the most prominent public figure to disappear from public visibility around that time, he was hardly alone. As I began to explore the aggregate contents of so many of the publications that had influenced our ideas since the 19th century, I detected a significant discontinuity centered around a particular period. Quite a number of individuals—Left, Right, and Center—who had been so prominently featured until that point suddenly disappeared, in many cases permanently, near the start of the Great American Purge of the 1940s.

I sometimes imagined myself a little like an earnest young Soviet researcher of the 1970s who began digging into the musty files of long-forgotten Kremlin archives and made some stunning discoveries. Trotsky was apparently not the notorious Nazi spy and traitor portrayed in all the textbooks, but instead had been the right-hand man of the sainted Lenin himself during the glorious days of great Bolshevik Revolution, and for some years afterward had remained in the topmost ranks of the Party elite. And who were these other figures—Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Rykov—who also spent those early years at the very top of the Communist hierarchy? In history courses, they had barely rated a few mentions, as minor Capitalist agents who were quickly unmasked and paid for their treachery with their lives. How could the great Lenin, father of the Revolution, have been such an idiot to have surrounded himself almost exclusively with traitors and spies?

But unlike their Stalinist analogs from a couple of years earlier, the American victims who disappeared around 1940 were neither shot nor Gulaged, but merely excluded from the mainstream media that defines our reality, thereby being blotted out from our memory so that future generations gradually forgot that they had ever lived.

Sometimes echoes of their former existence remained in the most unlikely contemporary contexts. For example during the early 2000s when I occasionally browsed websites of the ultra-right fringe, I might sometimes see favorable references to some totally unknown individual named “Harry Elmer Barnes,” who apparently seemed to have been some long-forgotten homegrown Fascist ideologue of the 1930s. Imagine my shock at later discovering that Barnes had actually been one of the most frequent early contributors to Foreign Affairs, serving as a primary book reviewer for that venerable publication from its 1922 founding onward, while his stature as one of America’s premier liberal academics was indicated by his scores of appearances in The Nation and The New Republic throughout that decade. Indeed, he is credited with having played a central role in “revising” the history of the First World War so as to remove the cartoonish picture of unspeakable German wickedness left behind as a legacy of the dishonest wartime propaganda produced by the opposing British and American governments. And his professional stature was demonstrated by his thirty-five or more books, many of them influential academic volumes, along with his numerous articles in The American Historical Review, Political Science Quarterly, and other leading journals.

A few years ago I happened to mention Barnes to an eminent American academic scholar whose general focus in political science and foreign policy was quite similar, and yet the name meant nothing. By the end of the 1930s, Barnes had become a leading critic of America’s proposed involvement in World War II, and was permanently “disappeared” as a consequence, barred from all mainstream media outlets, while a major newspaper chain was heavily pressured into abruptly terminating his long-running syndicated national column in May 1940.

In many respects, Barnes’ situation typified those who fell in the purge. Although many powerful critics of FDR’s presidency seem to have suffered from a considerable amount of government investigation and IRS harassment throughout the 1930s, America’s movement towards involvement in
a new world war seems to have been the central factor behind a wider purge of public intellectuals and other political opponents. The combined influence of the pro-British Eastern Establishment together with powerful Jewish groups was deployed to clear the media of opposing figures, and after the Germans broke the Hitler-Stalin Pact by attacking the USSR in June 1941, Communists and other leftists also joined this effort. Polls seem to have shown that as much as 80% of the American public was opposed to such military involvement, so any prominent political or media figure giving voice to that popular super-majority needed to be silenced.

Over a dozen years after his disappearance from our national media, Barnes managed to publish *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*[12], a lengthy collection of essays by scholars and other experts discussing the circumstances surrounding America's entrance into World War II, and have it produced and distributed by a small printer in Idaho. His own contribution was a 30,000 word essay entitled “Revisionism and the Historical Blackout”[13] and discussed the tremendous obstacles faced by the dissident thinkers of that period.

The book itself was dedicated to the memory of his friend, historian Charles A. Beard[14]. Since the early years of the 20th century, Beard had ranked as an intellectual figure of the greatest stature and influence, co-founder of The New School in New York and serving terms as president of both The American Historical Association and The American Political Science Association. As a leading supporter of the New Deal economic policies, he was overwhelmingly lauded for his views.

Yet once he turned against Roosevelt’s bellicose foreign policy, publishers shut their doors to him, and only his personal friendship with the head of the Yale University Press allowed his critical 1948 volume *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941* to even appear in print. Beard’s stellar reputation seems to have begun a rapid decline from that point onward, so that by 1968 historian Richard Hofstadter could write: “Today Beard’s reputation stands like an imposing ruin in the landscape of American historiography. What was once the grandest house in the province is now a ravaged survival”. Indeed, Beard’s once-dominant “economic interpretation of history” might these days almost be dismissed as promoting “dangerous conspiracy theories,” and I suspect few non-historians have even heard of him.

Another major contributor to the Barnes volume was William Henry Chamberlin[15], who for decades had been ranked among America’s leading foreign policy journalists, with more than 15 books to his credit, most of them widely and favorably reviewed. Yet *America’s Second Crusade*[16], his critical 1950 analysis of America’s entry into World War II, failed to find a mainstream publisher, and when it did appear was widely ignored by reviewers. Prior to its publication, his byline had regularly run in our most influential national magazines such as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Harpers*. But afterward, his writing was almost entirely confined to small circulation newsletters and periodicals, appealing to narrow conservative or libertarian audiences.

In these days of the Internet, anyone can easily establish a website to publish his views, thus making them immediately available to everyone in the world. Social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter can bring interesting or controversial material to the attention of millions with just a couple of mouse-clicks, completely bypassing the need for the support of establishmentarian intermediaries. It is easy for us to forget just how extremely challenging the dissemination of dissenting ideas remained back in the days of print, paper, and ink, and recognize that an individual purged from his regular outlet might require many years to regain any significant foothold for the distribution of his work.
And this situation actually understates the tremendous obstacles faced by Flynn, Barnes, and similar writers, which they themselves probably did not fully recognize at the time. We must remember that by the early 1950s, television and films had only just begun to displace all other forms of media in their reach and influence, but soon the three networks and the handful of Hollywood studios began to enjoy an overwhelming stranglehold on the popular interpretation of historical events and all other types of information. So although many of the once-prominent individuals we have discussed sometimes retained a foothold in books, small-circulation magazines, and even some radio broadcasts, their total exclusion from TV and movies effectively transformed them into un-persons.

Given the remarkable prosperity and domestic tranquility of the 1950s, most ordinary Americans were reasonably content, and saw no great need to question the veracity of what they heard and saw on their magical screens, whether small or large. If once-prominent but now half-forgotten intellectuals sought to rehash the past political decisions of 15 or 20 years earlier, they inevitably attracted small audiences.

The year 1940 seemed to mark the point at which some of the most significant dissenting voices in the national media were either removed or intimidated into silence. Once that had been accomplished, the strategic landscape obviously shifted, facilitating political maneuvers that might have been far more difficult under a climate of robust press scrutiny.

Given the overwhelming popular opposition to war intervention, Roosevelt’s prospects for an unprecedented third term might have seemed difficult, since he would either be forced to strongly commit himself to that position or else risk defeat against his Republican opponent, drawn from a party that was overwhelmingly anti-interventionist. But in one of the most unlikely twists in all of American political history, the June 1940 Republican convention held in Chicago selected as its nominee the obscure Wendell Willkie, a strongly pro-interventionist individual who had never previously held any public office and until just a few months earlier had been a committed lifelong Democrat. Two decades ago, historian Thomas E. Mahl thoroughly documented[17] that British intelligence agents played a crucial role in that extremely unexpected turn of events, quite possibly even employing lethal means. The resulting Roosevelt-Willkie race thus provided voters virtually no choice on foreign policy matters, and FDR was reelected in a huge landslide, thereby largely freeing his hands to pursue a much more aggressive foreign policy.

Alarmed by their growing fear that America might be drawn into another world war without voters having had any say in the matter, a group of Yale Law students launched an anti-interventionist political organization that they named “The America First Committee,” and it quickly grew to 800,000 members, becoming the largest grass-roots political organization in our national history. Numerous prominent public figures joined or supported it, with the chairman of Sears, Roebuck serving as its head, and its youthful members included future presidents John F. Kennedy and Gerald Ford as well as other notables such as Gore Vidal, Potter Stewart, and Sargent Schriver. Flynn served as chairman of the New York City chapter, and the organization’s leading public spokesman was famed aviator Charles Lindbergh, who for decades had probably ranked as America’s greatest national hero.

Throughout 1941, enormous crowds across the country attended anti-war rallies addressed by Lindbergh and the other leaders, with many millions more listening to the radio broadcasts of the
events. Mahl shows that British agents and their American supporters meanwhile continued their covert operations to counter this effort by organizing various political front-groups advocating American military involvement, and employing fair means or foul to neutralize their political opponents. Jewish individuals and organizations seem to have played an enormously disproportionate role in that effort.

At the same time, the Roosevelt Administration escalated its undeclared war against German submarines and other naval forces in the Atlantic, unsuccessfully seeking to provoke an incident that might stampede the country into war. FDR also promoted the most bizarre and ridiculous propaganda inventions aimed at terrifying naive Americans, such as claiming to have proof that the Germans—who possessed no large surface navy and were completely stymied by the English Channel—had formulated concrete plans to leap across two thousand miles of the Atlantic Ocean and seize control of Latin America. British agents supplied some of the crude forgeries he cited as evidence.

These facts, now firmly established by decades of scholarship, provide some necessary context to Lindbergh’s famously controversial speech at an America First rally in September 1941. At that event, he charged that three groups in particular were “pressing this country toward war[:] the British, the Jewish, and the Roosevelt Administration,” and thereby unleashed an enormous firestorm of media attacks and denunciations, including widespread accusations of anti-Semitism and Nazi sympathies. Given the realities of the political situation, Lindbergh’s statement constituted a perfect illustration of Michael Kinsley’s famous quip that “a gaffe is when a politician tells the truth – some obvious truth he isn’t supposed to say.” But as a consequence, Lindbergh’s once-heroic reputation suffered enormous and permanent damage, with the campaign of vilification echoing for the remaining three decades of his life, and even well beyond. Although he was not entirely purged from public life, his standing was certainly never even remotely the same.

Meanwhile, FDR’s drive to have America enter the war continued on various parallel tracks. Over the years, diplomatic historians have demonstrated that faced with such stubborn domestic opposition to direct military intervention in Europe, the Roosevelt Administration undertook a wide range of steps directly intended to provoke a Japanese attack and thereby achieve a “back door to war”[18] as Prof. Charles C. Tansill later entitled his important 1952 book on that history. These measures include a complete freeze on Japanese assets, an embargo on the oil absolutely vital to the Japanese military, and the summary rejection of the Japanese Prime Minister’s personal plea to hold top-level governmental negotiations aimed at maintaining peace. As early as May 1940, FDR had ordered the Pacific Fleet relocated from its San Diego home port to Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, a decision strongly opposed as unnecessarily provocative and dangerous by James Richardson, its commanding admiral, who was fired as a result.

Thus, the Japanese attack on December 7, 1941 actually marked the success of Roosevelt’s strategy by putting America into the war. Indeed, some scholars have even pointed to considerable evidence that the highest levels of the U.S. government were fully aware of the impending attack and allowed it to proceed in order to ensure that a sufficiently large number of American casualties would sweep away all popular obstacles to full-scale involvement in the world war.

There was also a very strange domestic incident that immediately followed the Pearl Harbor attack, one which seems to have attracted far too little interest. In that era, films were the most powerful popular media, and although Gentiles constituted 97% of the population, they controlled only one of the major studios; perhaps coincidentally, Walt Disney was also the only high-ranking Hollywood figure perched squarely within the anti-war camp. And the day after the surprise Japanese attack,
hundreds of U.S. troops seized control of Disney Studios[19], allegedly in order to help defend California from Japanese forces located thousands of miles away, with the military occupation continuing for the next eight months. Consider what suspicious minds might have thought if on September 12, 2001, President Bush had immediately ordered his military to seize the CBS network offices, claiming that such a step was necessary to help protect New York City against further Islamicist attacks.

Most of us live within a comfortable framework of what we have been taught and therefore believe to be true, and breaking out of that sheltering cocoon often entails considerable mental adjustments. This was certainly the case for me a dozen years ago as I increasingly noticed the sharp divergence between the claims and implications of my history books and the actual facts contained within the scanned pages of old publications.

The notion of a sweeping purge of media dissidents in the past seemed far easier for me to accept when I myself had witnessed something rather similar only a couple of years earlier, once again aimed at clearing away the obstacles to an American foreign war.

In the patriotic fervor following the 9/11 attacks, few national media figures dared challenge the plans and proposals of the Bush Administration, with Paul Krugman’s column at the Times being a very rare exception; expressing “unpatriotic sentiments” as very broadly defined could severely impact a career. This was especially true of the electronic media, with its vastly greater reach and therefore subject to more extreme pressure. During 2002 and 2003, it was very rare to find an Iraq War naysayer anywhere on network television or among the fledgling cable alternatives, and even MSNBC, the least popular and most liberal of the latter soon began a sharp ideological crackdown.

For decades, Phil Donahue had pioneered the daytime television talk show, and in 2002 he revived it to high ratings on MSNBC, but in early 2003 his show was canceled, with a leaked memo indicated that his opposition to the looming war was the cause[20]. Conservative Pat Buchanan and liberal Bill Press, both Iraq War critics, hosted a top-rated debate show on the same network, allowing them to spar with their more pro-Bush opponents, but it too was cancelled for similar reasons[21]. If the cable network’s most famous hosts and highest rated programs were subject to summary termination, lesser ranking personalities surely drew the appropriate conclusions about the risks of crossing particular ideological lines.

My old friend Bill Odom, the three-star general who ran the NSA for Ronald Reagan and possessed among the strongest national security credentials in DC was similarly blacklisted from the media for his opposition to the Iraq War[22]. Numerous other prominent media voices were “disappeared” around the same time, and even after Iraq became universally recognized as an enormous disaster, most of them never regained their perches.

By this time the early Internet had come into existence, so these media disappearances were often noted by angry commentators, and therefore less completely effective. Buchanan might no longer have a show on cable television, but his pungent print commentaries were still available on the web, and the same was true for others. However, the political impact of an audience of thousands of selected website readers was very different than that of a national audience of millions of mainstream viewers.
When we seek to understand the past, we must be careful to avoid drawing from a narrow selection of sources, especially if one side proved politically victorious in the end and completely dominated the later production of books and other commentary. Prior to the existence of the Internet, this was an especially difficult task, often requiring a considerable amount of scholarly effort, even if only to examine the bound volumes of once popular periodicals. Yet without such diligence, we can fall into very serious error.

The Iraq War and its aftermath was certainly one of the central events in American history during the 2000s. Yet suppose some readers in the distant future had only the collected archives of The Weekly Standard, National Review, the WSJ op-ed page, and FoxNews transcripts to furnish their understanding of that period, perhaps along with the books written by the contributors to those outlets. I doubt that more than a small fraction of what they would read could be categorized as outright lies. But the massively skewed coverage, the distortions, exaggerations, and especially the breathtaking omissions would surely provide them with an exceptionally unrealistic view of what had actually happened during that important period.

Over the last fifteen-odd years, I’ve gradually come to believe that exactly the same is probably true of much of the American history I had always assumed that I knew.

Related Reading:

- American Pravda: Alexander Cockburn and the British Spies[23]
- The Roosevelt Myth[7], by John T. Flynn
- Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace[12], edited by Harry Elmer Barnes
- America’s Second Crusade[16], by William Henry Chamberlin

Source References

[8] a dozen of these => http://www.unz.com/print/FlynnJohn-1948/

Barnes => http://www.unz.com/print/author/BarnesHarryElmer/

Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace =>

“Revisionism and the Historical Blackout” =>

Charles A. Beard => http://www.unz.com/print/author/BeardCharlesA/

William Henry Chamberlin =>
http://www.unz.com/print/author/ChamberlinWilliamHenry/

America’s Second Crusade =>


hundreds of U.S. troops seized control of Disney Studios =>
https://books.google.com/books?id=16q6PinOBcQC&pg=PA228&dq=disney+studios+pearl+harbor+watts+good+war&hl=er

his opposition to the looming war was the cause =>
http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/when-news-is-propaganda/

it too was cancelled for similar reasons =>
http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/when-news-is-propaganda/

was similarly blacklisted from the media for his opposition to the Iraq War =>

American Pravda: Alexander Cockburn and the British Spies =>