

Discrediting Wikileaks is Overdue!
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On October 17, no doubt under US pressure, the Ecuador Embassy housing Julian Assange, founder of Wikileaks, cut off his Internet access. About time!

Wikileaks has many supporters in the left-wing of our country and, of course, among the salivating press. This organization began as a righteous outing of political misdeeds by giving whistle blowers an opportunity to condemn what they considered commercial or government secrets. Who doesn't admire a whistle blower, someone moved by conscience, to expose unlawful behavior of companies or governments? We especially admire whistle blowers who are willing to go to jail for their actions.

If ever Wikileaks once claimed such high ground, it certainly cannot do so any longer. Julian Assange, an Australian raised by an anarchist mother, has devoted his life to professing righteous indignation at any sort of authority that he can harm. He has greatly harmed the United States, which he sees as the ultimate villain in the world, by encouraging and publishing defense secrets. One of his informants, Bradley Manning (an army private who downloaded reams of secret material, is now in prison; a second, Edward Snowden, has been given assylum in Russia; and Assange is hiding out in the Ecuador's embassy in London.

Ecuador's president, Rafael Correa, has expanded state control over the media and civil society, using criminal defamation prosecutions and administrative sanctions against any opponents of his increasingly dictatorial rule. Ecuador is on our global list of human rights violators, not a friend, obviously.

How strange that a devout anarchist such as Assange could seek the help of a nasty dictatorship. How strange that the avowed patriot, Edward Snowden, is in refuge in another increasingly authoritarian country, Russia, which imprisons more journalists (and kills quite a few) than any country other than Turkey. Hypocrisy here?

Assange's organization has abandoned whistle blowers for a much more cynical target, hacking e-mails and government organizations and then disseminating and publishing his ill-gotten gains. The latest, of course, are the e-mails of the Democratic Party, a trove identified by the CIA as the work of Russian hackers with directions from the very top of their government. The motive for this is obviously an attempt to harm the Democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton, whom Vladimir Putin fears more than Donald Trump, an obvious incompetent. Russia is not hacking the Republicans. And lest we think this is a one-time action, it is not; Russia has recently used cyber war to try to destabilize other governments in Europe. The British, Germans, and Baltic states have all been targets of his terrible attentions.

Assange's poisonous enterprise could be dismantled if we journalists made an honorable decision not to print his stolen goods. We should not aid and abet this criminal act. I am horrified at the glee with which newspapers and political TV pundits pour over these cyber dumps without sufficient time to determine if any of this material is fabricated by Russian agitprop (agitation propaganda), a long time practice of theirs, even before e-mails.

The Russians, since the 1980s, have fed made-up data to reporters all over the world, some so outrageous (such as claiming that Korans were flushed down the toilet) that our embassy in Pakistan was attacked and burnt to the ground some years ago. They have also distributed false reports in Central America about Americans taking body parts of poor people for use in the US. People paid with their lives for this.

We were once a country in which "reading a gentleman's mail" was considered beneath us. Two world wars ended that gentlemanly reticence, but I am troubled by our willingness to receive stolen goods (hacked mail) and make money from it. Governments, all of them, spy. All try to ascertain the intentions of others, particularly their rivals around the world. However, spying is not the same as publishing the results of such intelligence and making money from it.

There is something very wrong with benefitting from stolen goods. If any readers of this column agree with my assessment, feel free to send this on to your government representatives or local press.

681 words

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