

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نښاد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

Antiwar.com

What's Behind the War on WikiLeaks

Posted By [Ray McGovern](#)

December 8, 2010

WikiLeaks has teased the genie of transparency out of a very opaque bottle, and powerful forces in America, who thrive on secrecy, are trying desperately to stuff the genie back in.

How far down the U.S. has slid can be seen, ironically enough, in a recent commentary in *Pravda* (that's right, Russia's *Pravda*):

"What WikiLeaks has done is make people understand why so many Americans are politically apathetic... After all, the evils committed by those in power can be suffocating, and the sense of powerlessness that erupts can be paralyzing, especially when ... government evildoers almost always get away with their crimes. ...

"So shame on Barack Obama, Eric Holder and all those who spew platitudes about integrity, justice and accountability while allowing war criminals and torturers to walk freely upon the earth. ... The American people should be outraged that [their] government has transformed a nation with a reputation for freedom, justice, tolerance and respect for human rights into a backwater that revels in its criminality, cover-ups, injustices and hypocrisies."

Odd, isn't it, that it takes a *Pravda* commentator to drive home the point that the Obama administration is on the wrong side of history.

Some bloodthirsty U.S. politicians even are calling for the murder of WikiLeaks leader Julian Assange, while some in the U.S. news media favor only prosecuting him and his leakers, while insisting that "responsible" journalists should be protected.

In this view, severe punishment should be reserved for people with access to the government's dark secrets who out of conscience decide to share that information with the people, a prospect that some pundits find objectionable.

"The government has to get better at keeping secrets," wrote the *Washington Post's* Richard Cohen. "Muzzle the leakers – but not the press."

The corporate-and-government-dominated media appears apprehensive over the challenge that WikiLeaks presents. Perhaps deep down they know, as Dickens put it, "There is nothing so strong ... as the simple truth."

As part of the attempt to discredit WikiLeaks and Assange, much of the media commentary over the weekend portrayed Assange's exposure of classified materials as very different from – and far less laudable than – what Daniel Ellsberg did in releasing the Pentagon Papers in 1971.

As a chapter of distant history – and a point of some First Amendment pride for U.S. journalists – the Pentagon Papers case and Ellsberg can now be safely defended. Not the same for WikiLeaks and Assange who today are facing a relentless assault, organized by the U.S. government and its many powerful allies.

But Ellsberg for one strongly rejects the mantra "Pentagon Papers good; WikiLeaks material bad." He continues:

"That's just a cover for people who don't want to admit that they oppose any and all exposure of even the most misguided, secretive foreign policy. The truth is that EVERY attack now made on WikiLeaks and Julian Assange was made against me and the release of the Pentagon Papers at the time."

As often is the case amid the pressures of the moment, it is easier for pundits and politicians to go with the flow rather than swim against the current. So they find it convenient to treat the motivations behind the WikiLeaks disclosures as reckless or self-interested. But that's not what the evidence shows.

WikiLeaks's reported source, Army Pvt. Bradley Manning, having watched Iraqi police abuses and having read of similar and worse incidents in official messages, reportedly concluded, "I was actively involved in something that I was completely against."

Rather than simply look the other way, Manning wrote: "I want people to see the truth ... because without information you cannot make informed decisions as a public," adding that he hoped to provoke worldwide discussion, debates and reform.

There is nothing to suggest that WikiLeaks/Assange's motives were any different.

Though mothers are not the most impartial observers, what Assange's mother told an Australian newspaper had the ring of truth. "Living by what you believe in and standing up for something is a good thing," she said. "He sees what he is doing as a good thing in the world, fighting baddies, if you like."

That may sound a bit quixotic, but Assange and his associates appear the opposite of benighted. Still, with the Pentagon PR man Geoff Morrell and even Attorney General Eric Holder making thinly disguised threats of extrajudicial steps, it is not totally farfetched to worry about Assange's personal safety.

Again, the media is the key. No one said it better than Monseñor Oscar Romero of El Salvador, who just before he was assassinated 25 years ago, warned, "The corruption of the press is part of our sad reality, and it reveals the complicity of the oligarchy."

Sadly, that is also true of the media situation in America today.

The big question is not whether Americans can "handle the truth." We believe they can. The challenge is to make the truth available to them in a straightforward way so they can draw their own conclusions — an uphill battle given the dominance of the mainstream media, much of which has joined in the hateful campaign to discredit Assange and WikiLeaks.

So far, the question of whether an informed American public could put the country back on an honorable course has been an academic one rather than experience-based, because Americans have had very little access to the truth.

Now, however, with the WikiLeaks disclosures, they do. Indeed, the classified messages from the Army and the State Department released by WikiLeaks are, quite literally, "ground truth."

How to inform American citizens? As a step in that direction, on Oct. 23, we "Sam Adams Associates for Integrity in Intelligence" (see below) presented our annual award for integrity to Julian Assange.

In contrast to Richard Cohen's disdain for people inside government who are driven by conscience to reveal crucial information to the public, Assange accepted the honor "on behalf of our sources, without which WikiLeaks' contributions are of no significance."

In presenting the award, we noted that many around the world are deeply indebted to truth-tellers like WikiLeaks and its sources.