

Veteran investigative reporter Robert Parry dies at 68

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Robert Parry, a veteran investigative reporter who won journalistic awards in the 1980s for exposing CIA crimes in Central America, died January 27 at the age of 68 in Arlington, Virginia.

After more than two decades working for the Associated Press, *Newsweek* and the PBS TV news series “Frontline,” Parry in 1995 founded the Consortium for Independent Journalism and its website, Consortiumnews, because of the impediments thrown up by the corporate media to uncovering the lies and crimes of the US government.

In December, he had written a column apologizing to his readers for a reduction in his considerable journalistic output on the website, explaining that he had suffered a stroke. It was subsequently discovered that it had been brought on by undiagnosed pancreatic cancer.

Parry began his career as a journalist after graduating from Colby College in Maine in 1971. He went to work briefly at a newspaper published by his father in Framingham, Massachusetts, before being hired by the Associated Press in 1974.

While he never defined himself as a radical or a socialist, his commitment to the truth led him to write stories that exposed the inner workings of the capitalist state and its criminal activities. It also earned him an extensive file with the US Central Intelligence Agency, which closely followed his work.

In 1984, he won the George Polk Award and was a finalist for the 1985 Pulitzer Prize, for his reporting exposing the CIA’s distribution of an assassination manual to the so-called contras carrying out a US-backed terror war against Nicaragua.

He went on to carry out extensive exposures on what became known as the Iran-Contra affair, with a secret network in the White House organizing the sale of arms

to Iran—then labeled by Washington as a terrorist nation—to fight against Iraq and, most crucially, to obtain money to covertly and illegally finance and arm the contras in the CIA-orchestrated terrorist war against Nicaragua.

Parry complained that his first report for AP on Iran-Contra was withheld for weeks, heavily edited and then killed, until it was accidentally transmitted over the AP’s Spanish-language wire. The edited English-language version was then released, omitting any mention of CIA involvement in cocaine trafficking by the Contras. Parry later discovered that the AP’s Washington Bureau chief was having regular meetings with Lt. Col. Oliver North, who was directing the illegal operation from the White House.

He left AP to work at *Newsweek* in 1987 and went on to do investigative reporting for the PBS series “Frontline,” including a 1991 broadcast exposing the intervention by then-Republican presidential candidate Ronald Reagan and his aides in 1980 to prevent the release of the US Embassy hostages in Iran in order to undermine his opponent, incumbent Democratic President Jimmy Carter. He went on to publish a book in 1993, “Trick or Treason,” which further substantiated this conspiracy.

Over the recent period, Parry had dedicated much of his work on *Consortiumnews* to exposing the hysterical campaign waged by the Democratic Party and the major media over alleged “Russian meddling” in the 2016 presidential election.

He brought to his reporting the wealth of historical experience he had gained in investigating real conspiracies between presidential candidates and foreign governments to swing American elections, including Reagan’s intervention in the Iran hostage crisis in 1980 and Richard Nixon’s intercession with

South Vietnam to scuttle the Paris Peace talks in 1968.

In its obituary for Parry, the *New York Times* wrote: “After decades of enraging conservatives, Mr. Parry began angering liberals in 2016 by suggesting that Russian meddling had had little influence on the election of Donald J. Trump, though he was critical of President Trump for what he called his ‘contempt for facts and his crass personal behavior.’”

It is not that Parry’s politics had changed, but rather the “liberals” of the *New York Times* ilk who turned sharply to the right over a whole period, embarking on a neo-McCarthyite campaign to demonize Russia as the supposed source of all hostility to the ruling establishment in the US, and opposing Trump on the basis of his supposed failure to pursue a sufficiently hard line against Moscow.

The “newspaper of record” might well have added that “contempt for facts” was precisely the indictment Parry made of the corporate media, and the *New York Times* in particular, when it came to the propaganda campaign over “Russian meddling.”

“When it comes to Russia these days—as with the Vietcong in the 1960s or Iraq in 2002-03—you can pretty much write whatever you want. All journalistic standards are gone,” Parry wrote in an article posted on *Consortiumnews* last September.

In what could serve as a definition for the careers of the editors, leading columnists and senior correspondents of the *Times*, Parry declared in a 1993 speech to a conference of the media watchdog group Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting: “The people who succeeded and did well [in the news media] were those who didn’t stand up, who didn’t write the big stories, who looked the other way when history was happening in front of them, and went along either consciously or just by cowardice with the deception of the American people.”

In a column titled “The Dawn of an Orwellian Future,” posted by *Consortiumnews* on July 28, 2017, Parry drew the connection between the reactionary campaign against so-called Russian meddling and “plans to deploy Internet algorithms to hunt down and marginalize what they deem ‘fake news,’ including articles that challenge the mainstream media’s power to control the dominant news narrative.”

He called attention to a report published the day before by the *World Socialist Web Site* exposing how

the Internet monopoly Google was censoring left-wing, anti-war and progressive websites by systematically excluding them from search results, resulting in a dramatic fall in search traffic, not only for the WSWS, but for a number of sites, including *Consortiumnews*.

“This creation of a modern-day Ministry of Truth occurred under the cover of a mainstream-driven hysteria about ‘fake news’ and ‘Russian propaganda’ in the wake of Donald Trump’s election,” Parry wrote.

He concluded: “Truth should be subjected to rigorous testing against alternative viewpoints and contradictory arguments. That has been a core principle since the days of the Enlightenment ...

“Overturning that age-old truth—by today unleashing algorithms to enforce the Official Narrative—is a much greater threat to an informed electorate and to the health of democracy” than any alleged “fake news.”

Parry’s commitment to such principles, once espoused by American liberalism, marked him out from today’s so-called liberals of the Democratic Party and the corporate media, who are aggressively supporting the suppression of free expression. They do so out of fear, not of “Russian meddling,” but of the Internet’s role in exposing information suppressed by the media, fostering political discussion and serving as an instrument for the political organization of the worldwide struggle against capitalist exploitation and imperialist wars.



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