

They're Coming to Take You Away

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Woe to the freedom-haters when the lion they think they have tamed turns its fury on the liberal society that soothsayers like Zelikow and Lipstadt still imagine they are defending!”



by [Michael Lesher](#), [Brownstone Institute](#)

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Suppose I tell you in advance that the essay you are reading is meant to startle you. And suppose I suggest, by way of demonstration, that two people as loosely connected as the leader of the “COVID Crisis Group” and Joe Biden’s “Special Envoy To Monitor and Combat Antisemitism” – both of whom have recently offered recommendations for improving political life in the United States – are in fact determined to unravel American freedoms.

Would you be surprised?

Well, if so, that is exactly the startling fact I am trying to bring to your attention. True, you may not have heard that the [34 COVID-19 “experts”](#) headed by one Philip Zelikow (last seen [justifying the concealment of information](#) about the 9/11 attacks) and anti-Semitism “ambassador” Deborah Lipstadt – perhaps best known for [slandering](#) scads of Jewish survivors of the Nazis as “soft-core” Holocaust deniers because they objected to the [massacre](#) of 1,462 of Gaza’s civilians nine years ago – are both out to dismantle the Bill of Rights. But if you haven’t, it isn’t because they’ve been coy about their objectives.

Take the Zelikow panel. Its [new book](#) on “the lessons learned from COVID-19” openly conflates the federal government’s management of a respiratory virus with “wartime” – thus rationalizing the executive branch’s preemption of democratic government. Not only that, Zelikow and his band of “experts” explicitly call for the consolidation of power in the hands of an unelected “health security enterprise” that would control, among other things, a “systematic biomedical surveillance network.” And in case you can’t guess who is likely to benefit from the snooping, the panel goes on to praise the coercive experimental drug program that gave us the COVID-19 “vaccines” – “a bargain at \$30 billion,” [according to the editors of the Washington Post](#) – signaling at one stroke the experts’ contempt for [the Nuremberg Code](#) and their subservience to Big Pharma.

As for Lipstadt, she has launched her attack on the First Amendment by redefining “anti-Semitism” so as to include an extraordinary range of political speech. Her first step in that transformation is the familiar trick of [confusing criticism of the Israeli government with anti-Jewish bigotry](#). But her second step is newer and, arguably, even more disturbing: she tars all denigration of Jews with the hot-button label “conspiracy theory.”

Let's be clear: however noble the pretext of opposing Jew-hatred, it should be obvious that once you characterize anti-Semitism as a "conspiracy theory" you have made a case for censorship. As Lipstadt herself explained to Jane Eisner of Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism (in an interview printed in the latest *AARP Magazine* but not available online): "[I]t's a conspiracy theory that Jews control the media, the banks, the election process, etc. *If you believe that there is a group controlling these things, then essentially you're saying that you don't believe in democracy.*"

And there's the trouble. After all, an overt attack on democracy isn't a viewpoint; it isn't even an expression of run-of-the-mill bigotry. It's a threat to the state. And it follows, if you accept Lipstadt's formulation, that anyone the government can label an "anti-Semite" may now be punished in the same way the Biden administration is [already punishing people](#) who protested the presidential election results of November 2020. Note, too, the selective parameters of the offense: blaming Donald Trump's election on the Russians is [presumably "legitimate" speech](#); but accusing a "group" of controlling "the election process" can land you in jail – that is, when the "group" is not an official enemy but a favored minority, and when that "process" has reached results endorsed by those in power.

So the Zelikow panel and Ambassador Lipstadt can't be accused of hiding their illiberal goals. Like the [Democratic lynch mob](#) that denounced Matt Taibbi and Michael Shellenberger on the floor of Congress last March for revealing the extent of government censorship of Twitter, these propagandists quite openly assert that surveillance is good for us, while free speech is entirely too dangerous to be entrusted to mere citizens.

"Ordinary folks and national security agencies responsible for our security," [Congressman Colin Allred lectured Taibbi](#), "are

trying their best to find a way to make sure that our online discourse doesn't get people hurt, or see our democracy undermined." It's pretty breathtaking to watch an African-American liberal solemnly declare that the CIA and the FBI are the true guardians of democracy – not to mention his defense of the security state's behind-the-scenes censorship of political speech. But what's even more ominous is that not a single prominent Democratic politician nor a single pundit in mainstream liberal media has repudiated anything the congressman said.

Is it any wonder, then, that no one in mainstream media has mentioned the totalitarian tendencies implicit in the COVID Crisis Group's recommendations for "pandemic" regulation via dismantling democracy, or in Ambassador Lipstadt's appeals to the public to "discredit" anti-Semitism by recasting it as a criminal conspiracy?

Of course it isn't. And that is my point. That is my motive in writing in tandem about these two apparently disparate subjects, connected only by the facts that both of them involve recent public declarations and that both of them represent attacks on fundamental liberties.

Because the truth is that condemning freedom is now so entirely respectable that it's happening practically everywhere – under every possible pretext, almost any day, from just about any left-liberal institution that claims to care about the public good. Close your eyes, and you can hardly tell whether what you're hearing is coming from a Democratic Party stalwart or from an old-line Soviet apologist explaining why Andrei Sakharov or Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn or Yuri Orlov is really, notwithstanding the accuracy of what he's been saying, a threat to the state who deserves to be muzzled or jailed.

And the media's silence about it all is as ominous as the Orwellian nattering of the freedom-haters themselves.

Take another look at the Zelikow panel's assessment of the US government's performance during the "COVID crisis." Writing about what the "experts" praise or blame in their report, the *Washington Post* never once mentions the [crippling of the US working-class economy](#) due to arbitrary confinements and business shutdowns, the [educational damage](#) done to a whole generation of children through needless school closures, the reckless [suspension of representative democracy](#) in four-fifths of our states, the medically unjustifiable [trauma](#) caused by "mask mandates," or the [undermining of the national healthcare system](#) through an obsessive focus on one respiratory virus while more serious issues were sidelined for over a year. As far as the *Post* is concerned, the real outrages of the COVID coup never happened at all.

Even when the experts and the editors do manage to notice something sinister, they go out of their way to miss the point. The Zelikow panel [specifically notes](#) the "four pandemic planning exercises" staged by the US government barely a year before the announcement of the COVID-19 outbreak. And it offers a few technical criticisms of the proceedings.

But neither the panel nor the *Post* editors' congratulatory summary of its conclusions addresses the fact that the exercises – which omitted any suggestion for using repurposed drugs as early treatment for a novel virus, as in all previous influenza-like outbreaks – made a point of discussing the importance of [thought-policing social media](#). That prescription for censorship became [a grim reality](#) after March 2020. But you'd never know it from reading the Zelikow panel's assessment of the government's mistakes in addressing the "pandemic."

And Lipstadt? She claims to be a [passionate defender](#) of free speech. But that didn't stop her from [smearing](#) Senator Ron Johnson as a "white nationalist sympathizer" because of his politically incorrect comments about Black Lives Matter. And when that issue made it to the [op-ed page of the New York](#)

[Times](#), it was only to further demonize Johnson; Lipstadt's slander got a pass.

Why do I worry so much about this? Well, first of all because an attack on freedom is an attack on all of us.

But I think there is a special reason for alarm. It's not just that our ruling elites believe that we, the people, need to be stripped of our right to free expression. I'm afraid that the freedom-haters clustered around our figurehead President are not even aware just how thin the ice is onto which they're propelling us. Their position (taking the most charitable possible view of it) runs something like this: if the public isn't exposed to views of which the censors disapprove, *hoi polloi* will meekly accept whatever policies are imposed on them (for their own good, of course).

But the censors are wrong. The fabric of American political life has been strained to such tautness that a single acute crisis might rupture it altogether. And if that happens, people who have been deprived of reasonable dissent will not shrink from violent opposition; on the contrary, they will embrace it. When the monolithic narrative that is all they have been taught lies in ruins, they will replace it not with a rational, informed alternative – for they will know of none – but with whatever satisfies the rage of a population that realizes, too late, that it has been hoodwinked.

Woe to the freedom-haters when the lion they think they have tamed turns its fury on the liberal society that soothsayers like Zelikow and Lipstadt still imagine they are defending!

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