

# West Losing Propaganda War, Elite Scare REVEALED | Michel Collon

The West's narrative is full of cracks, and European elites know it. And they are scared. Scared of the change that will come once they can't dominate the journalistic space anymore. That's why they are cracking down on social and digital media, as well as foreign news outlets. To discuss this I'm talking today to Michel Collon, a Belgian writer and journalist who wrote a lot of fascinating anti-war books in French, including "The Left and the War: Analysis of an ideological capitulation", "Ukraine: War of Images" and "October Seventh: An Inquiry into Facts and Lies." These are the topics we want to discuss today.

## #M3

For years, I was finishing my conferences by saying, "Nous sommes tous des journalistes"—we are all journalists. And I really believe that. The media battle has to become a real citizen-based, broad movement—a popular movement. There will be no anti-war movement if you don't have an independent information movement based on citizens: men, women, all generations, all origins.

## #M2

Hello everybody, this is Pascal from Neutrality Studies, and today I'm talking to Michel Collon, a Belgian writer and journalist who has written a lot of fascinating anti-war books in French, including The Left and the War: Analysis of an Ideological Capitulation, Ukraine: War of Images, and recently, October 7th: An Inquiry into Facts and Lies. Those are the topics we want to discuss today, so Michel, welcome. Thank you for inviting me. Thank you for coming online. We just had a very short chat before, and you told me that you've been working on these topics for 35 years and that you've actually published a lot in terms of books on them, beyond what I just introduced. Can you maybe give me a rundown of all the things that you've been working on over these years?

## #M3

Yes, it started in '91 with the first war against Iraq, which was already "sold"—I really use the word "selling a war." I did not invent it. Experts like Bernays—very well-known—but also less known, like Lasswell and Frank Raymond Jr., explained how the CIA and these services need to use advertising techniques to sell a war just as if you were selling a car, soap, or anything else. So I started with the first Gulf War in 1991, paying attention to the media, being wary of the media, and analyzing the media lies already present in the first Gulf War. Because the issue of weapons of mass destruction

didn't start in 2003—there was a first, very successful, campaign before that. And another thing: it was more about the incubators, the famous incubators—that was also in the book. And then I continued with the same media lies about the war against Bosnia.

Also, the next one, *Monopoly: NATO Conquering the World*, was about the question of Kosovo. And there you find the same media lies. What is interesting is that when I published the first book, *Attention Media*, of course, the big newspapers here in France and Belgium—whose coverage we were analyzing and showing how they had really manipulated public opinion—were not happy and refused to invite me. Some journalists at the Belgian public radio and television did invite me for a very interesting discussion, and I was even invited to publish an article in the internal review of the RTBF, the French-speaking public service radio and television. So you see, the debate was open. And after the first Gulf War, it was known—with the famous incubators, media-boosted fake news—that the public had been manipulated. Then we saw a lot of journalists saying, "Oh, never again."

Well, just before, we had had *Timisoara*, where the paper I was working with announced from the beginning, "This is fake news." But then we heard, "Okay, never again." And then it happened again in Bosnia, in Kosovo. I won't give examples now. One of these books was translated into English—well, two actually. They were about Yugoslavia. And then I continued in 2011 with *Libya, NATO, and Media Lies: Handbook of Counterpropaganda*, showing indeed that this war had been sold the same way. A friend of mine was publishing a book about Syria. Then in 2015, I published *Am I or Not Charlie?* And the main topic was the USA behind the so-called jihadist terrorism, showing that actually using terrorists was a new and very brilliant strategy started with Brzezinski, actually initiated before by the British.

We show the consequences of this. Then we published, more recently, *Ukraine: The War of Images*. I have founded a collective, *Test Media International*, which analyzes the coverage of the war and shows, with a lot of images, how the public opinion has been manipulated. It's a bit difficult to show like this—I can send you images if you want—but we show the images that manipulate, and then we analyze what they didn't say, what they didn't show, the images they refused to publish, and also the manipulations behind, for example, Bucha and such things. And then, more recently, with the same team, we have published *7th October: Investigation About a Day That Changed the World*.

You could say it's the book about the fake news: beheaded babies, raped women, people killed en masse because they were Jews, and things like that, and what has been hidden about the 7th of October. I'm doing this job because I think war is a tragedy, as we see now in Gaza and elsewhere. People in the world hate war. They hate that people are suffering, that women and children are killed because of war. And of course, if the elite wants ordinary people to accept war, they have to sell it for a good reason, a good purpose. I made a synthesis of my investigation in what I'm calling the five principles of war propaganda.

I mean, if you are the president of the USA or France, or people like that, you may not say, "I'm attacking this country because of oil, because of gas, because of uranium, because of resources,

because of strategic position, or because this government I don't like and I want to overthrow their government." You always have to give a good, noble reason. "We are fighting. We are the good ones. So we are fighting for democracy, for the rights of women, against terrorism"—that's a very, very good way of selling a war—or "weapons of mass destruction," and things like that. Always. So, first, hide the economic interests. Second, hide the history. In all these regions, you had colonial powers. They have plundered resources. They have brought poverty. And also, they organized the famous divide and rule.

The British were excellent at that, of course—divide and rule—but the French and the Belgians also did it in some areas. And you have to hide the history of how the colonial powers manipulated people to divide them in an area and push for wars and conflicts. In the USA, they are doing that now. They cannot send their troops directly. They have been defeated in Vietnam, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, so it's not a good idea to send troops. They have to find local troops and use the famous divide and rule. The third principle of war propaganda is to demonize. You may not say, "We are attacking a whole population." That would not be accepted. So we have to say, "We are attacking a leader, a dictator, or a group, because these people are very dangerous. They are monsters. They have terrible weapons. They are terrorists," and so on.

Demonize. And of course, for that, you need a story. Beheaded babies—very good example. Raped women—very good example. That you can sell. The fourth principle of war propaganda is to switch between the aggressor and the victim. You have to always present yourself as the victim or as defending the victim. And Israel is very good at that. Israel has been attacking for around eight years, and Israel is always the victim. It's always being aggressed, and you have a narrative presenting that. And the fifth and last principle of war propaganda is to monopolize. You know, in a war, you always have two or three versions. So the public should, like a good judge, hear one, hear the other, and then form an opinion.

But that is not allowed, because on television and so on, you may only hear the "good" side and never the other version. So there is no real debate on television. There are some debates about how this war should be led, or maybe whether we should stop this war, and so on, but never do we debate whether we have the right to make war in Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Ukraine, Gaza, and so on. That is never debated in the mainstream media. And I insist on that because, for 35 years, as you can imagine, every time we publish a book, we send it to the mainstream media. We send about 100 copies in France, Belgium, Switzerland, and so on. And the result is nothing.

There were two exceptions, in Belgium and in France. I was in some debates late at night on a famous show called *Ce Soir ou Jamais*—This Evening or Never. I was invited from 2008 to 2014, and then it was canceled. The president, François Hollande, said, "Finished." And after that, I was never on television with these books again. They don't dare to discuss. Of course, they put the label "conspiracyist," and that's it. But they don't dare to discuss this. I'm insisting on this because I

think the only force that is able to change this silence, this omerta, is the people themselves. The books are made to educate ordinary people to be aware of the propaganda war and to be active against it.

## **#M2**

I find that fascinating and highly important. The propaganda narrative is spun in order to, time and again, justify wars and actually drill it into the minds of people—that is supposed to be understood as frightening. I had a historian, a good historian, a colleague of mine at the University of Kyoto, throw away his drink and tell me that he would not listen to this stupidity when I told him that NATO's 1999 bombing of Serbia was an infringement of international law. And he yelled at me, "We must never allow Srebrenica, Srebrenica! We have a duty to prevent that." And he positioned that as such an emotional, important thing that I must say, how does the media manage to link the defense of victims, as you said, with this emotional obligation to intervene and to make war again? Did you figure out how that works on the individual level?

## **#M3**

The reaction of this professor is very typical and not a surprise to me. I hear that very often. And you are right to say he's motivated by emotion—he's not thinking anymore. Where are the facts? What does the other side say? And what do I need to check? Just check. What would we say, I repeat, about a judge who would say to one, "I am listening to you," and to the other, "Shut up"? That would not be a good judge. Even if he has his opinion, his emotion, he must check the facts. And it's very typical that—and I would say more the intellectuals than the working people—are reacting like that, also because they have been educated in this: "We are the good ones, the West is the good one, and the West is always fighting for democracy."

I was in Yugoslavia many times during the '90s. I made reports, I made a movie, and actually, the conclusion of those two books I published—and there are other investigators—is that it was a big, big lie. The question of the famous bombs on the market in Markale in Sarajevo: all the UN experts and the Western military said it was not the Serbs, it was the Muslims. Izetbegovic, the president of Bosnia, also recognized that. And he recognized that there were no concentration camps, that he invented it to get NATO intervention. And the question of Srebrenica—there is a contest about that.

There are some investigators, and I published books at that time in so-called test media showing that, first, the problem around Srebrenica started with a Muslim commander called Naser Orić, who devastated a lot of villages around Srebrenica. Then there was fighting—I will not deny that in this fighting, the Serbs won and probably some people were executed. It was revenge, but it was not a genocide, and all experts show that. So they agree on that. It is said in the Western media that Milošević was a new Hitler and that he was responsible for the atrocities that were committed on all three sides in Bosnia in 1991–1995. But you know, he was abducted to the tribunal in The Hague, and finally, after he died, the tribunal said he was innocent of that.

There were criminals on all three sides, and there were Serbian criminals indeed, but Milošević was against that, and he took sanctions against these people, which in the West is completely unknown. So, you see, what I'm saying is: don't believe me. Believe nobody just because I'm saying things like that—check and compare the different versions, and don't buy into wars that are really sold with lies, because there were a lot of consequences. Now there is more poverty in many of the ex-republics of former Yugoslavia, and most of the people say it was not a good idea to destroy Yugoslavia, and it's not good. These countries are very weak to resist Germany and NATO and so on.

## **#M2**

I just wonder—you said at the beginning that war is a tragedy, and the longer I study it, the more I come to the conclusion that it's not a tragedy so much as a system. It's a system that keeps alive the possibility of mass violence and is a self-perpetuating process. And the media lies, but systematic media lies and omissions are, of course, part of this. Because even if people like you then write these books, or we have now on Ukraine—for example, we have the book by Ivan Katchanovski on the 2014 Maidan, the "Revolution of Dignity," as it is euphemistically called.

And Ivan Katchanovski showed in a very thick book that the people who were shot were shot from the side of the protesters. This was an instigated moment by people who wanted to create bloodshed, who wanted people on both sides to die, and who wanted Western intervention and a change of hearts, leading to the overthrow of this government. And that is known. It's not even—I mean, it's not talked about, but it's known. And the facts that you mentioned are known, but not talked about. How is it possible that the media is so complicit in this?

## **#M3**

What you say is presented in this book. Actually, it's interesting because this had happened before in Caracas. In Caracas in 2002, you know, there was a coup against Chávez, Hugo Chávez, and he was replaced by the leader of the patronal elite. And the Western media immediately said Chávez ordered his forces to fight against the demonstrators who were coming to his palace, and then he was overthrown because of that. And I was there. A very good French investigator, Maurice Lemoine, conducted an investigation and showed that, actually, it was organized by snipers on the roofs of the seventh and eighth floors of a building. They shot from a long distance at both the pro-Chávez and anti-Chávez demonstrations.

And the idea was to provoke that. And this is the same in Maidan in 2014. And friends told me it was the same in Latvia also a few years before. So it's a classic by the CIA to provoke that. And it is shown in the book, *The Maidan*. And it's very interesting to listen to some US experts, for example, George Friedman, who is the leader of Stratfor, which is the most famous think tank in the USA, very official. And he said in 2015, "The Russians say Maidan was a coup, a U.S. coup, and they are right. It was a coup." And then he explains—it's a debate in Chicago concerning foreign relations—and he

explains it was a coup. We saw what the Russians were saying in Syria. That did not please us. It was very bad, what they were doing.

So we showed them that we could, and he says explicitly that we could organize instability in Ukraine. And it was all cool in Maidan—he says that. So he is completely destroying the official Western version that, in the beginning, it was a popular demonstration against corruption. And indeed, the president was corrupt, as is every oligarch in Ukraine, and this one was a little bit more corrupt. But the demonstration was very quickly transformed by the Nazi militias and so on, who organized to prepare a coup in accordance with Victoria Nuland, with the U.S., and the CIA. And this was shown also in some secret conferences by Victoria Nuland and another one with Catherine Ashton that were intercepted by the Russians. It was published. It was not denied that the conversations were real, but it was never in the Western media. You see? So that's always—I'm saying—the most important media lie is not what you say and what you manipulate, it's what you hide. They always hide the most important things in every war.

## **#M2**

You started this—you said in 1991. To your understanding, is the current way the media is spinning, twisting, and lying about political events in order to justify war and warfare a recent phenomenon to this extent, or is it just the latest version of what has been going on for 2,000 years?

## **#M3**

I think war propaganda is as old as war itself. It started with Julius Caesar, who was conquering France and Belgium and so on. And he was, at the same time, the journalist—I mean, he was writing a book about the war in France. He was explaining that his ambition was to become emperor in Rome. So he was making the war and sending his version of the war to Rome. So it started then. And you have a very good example: the First World War was actually, in my view, a war between several imperialisms that wanted to divide or re-divide the world. You had German imperialism, you had French and British imperialism, and Russian too.

And each side was saying, "We are the good ones," and the others were the evil, the monsters, and so on. In Great Britain, to sell the war to the population, they invented that the German army invading Belgium was killing babies—already babies—killing babies by plunging knives into their stomachs, and so on. Horrible stories. You have a very good Belgian historian, Anne Morelli, who published a book based on a British lord, Lord Ponsonby, who invented this concept of the principles of war propaganda. That book shows how the British—and there are a lot of images, not photos at the time, of course, but drawings—to show the atrocity of the Germans, so we had to make war.

The war was absolutely unjust; it was absolutely an imperialist war from both sides. The only good position was, "We don't want war, we don't want to participate." For that, Jean Jaurès was assassinated in France. A lot of soldiers who refused were executed because they rejected the reality

of the war. It's not new. You cannot make a war and get money for that and get soldiers to be killed if you don't lie. The question is, of course, with the techniques, with the marketing, the improved techniques, and now with artificial intelligence, we see that, but it's an old story. You have to study the new forms, but you also have to understand and educate people about the past, because now it's very sensitive.

And if you come and say, "Well, in Ukraine, it's not exactly as you are told," you will get the reaction of your teacher there—very emotional, furious. Actually, people are afraid. I analyze this reaction as fear: they are afraid to see that all they believe, the information they believe in, is not true. Maybe you have to change your mind about that. That's very scary. That's dangerous. And so I think it's very important that people study—and it should start at school—the examples of previous media lies, because there it's less in dispute and you can learn from the past.

## **#M2**

The thing is, we know them, right? I mean, one of the most famous examples of war lies, at least in the German-speaking part of Europe, is Hitler's claim that Germany was attacked by Poland in 1939. And, you know, "Since the morning hours, we are shooting back." That's a very, very famous line. And the Germans, or a large part of the German public, are most easily convinced that, you know, you have to fight against Russia. We even have to send Taurus missiles—very important support for Israel because the poor Jews are constantly under attack by evil Nazis, right? Middle Eastern Nazis, currently. That's the framing. Why is it that this knowledge of the past doesn't translate into criticism about ongoing lies that are coming in and being accepted?

## **#M3**

Well, you are right to mention that Hitler was, of course, applying these five principles of war propaganda. He was hiding that it was an imperialist economic war. He was paid by the big German businesses—Krupp, Thyssen, the steel, the chemistry, and so on—to have more space, more markets, more resources, and to plunder. And oil was already a big reason in that war. And, of course, he was also using what I'm calling the fourth principle: present yourself as a victim, as the attacked. And indeed, the German people were told they were attacked. So it was a sort of preventive war: "We attack because we are in danger." And, of course, this propaganda was very strong because Goebbels used, in a very intelligent manner, the new invention of the radio.

The German population was suffering from poverty, from unemployment, from a lot of things. The Communist Party was very strong at that time. You almost had a socialist revolution in Germany in 1919. And then Hitler and the forces behind him had to find someone to blame. And indeed, they claimed that foreigners were attacking Germany, so they said, "We have to make a preventive war." What you mention is, why are the people around us not aware, with all these examples? I would

say, first, do not speak about "the people" as a whole, because you have several categories. Some people are well aware and conscious, and they try to explain that to those around them, and it's not easy.

When you go against war propaganda, it's not easy to talk about it, and we see how difficult the discussion around Israel is now. Well, it's less difficult than before, but it has always been a very difficult discussion, and I'm trying to help people understand better, explain better, convince better, and discuss better. Do not discuss with emotions—discuss with facts, and check facts together, and things like that. Then you have a majority of people who feel that they cannot trust the media. You can see in the polls that a lot of people say, "I don't trust the media." But at the same time, they fall into the trap regarding Ukraine and Syria and so on. So it's complex. And it's also normal—a lot of people don't have time to study these things.

A lot of people who are working—well, they have long journeys, because before, you were working in the factory or in the office, and when you got back home, it was finished and you had time for yourself and the family, and maybe to read, study, discuss, and so on. And now, with these telephones, you never stop working, because your boss can call you or can send you messages, and you have to work in the evening, on the weekend. A lot of people in my country—there are a lot of partners—because you work constantly. So people are tired. They come back from the office, they have to work, the children, and so on. So you are tired. What do you do? You look a little bit at the television, you see a good movie, and then that's... I don't blame them.

I think we need to look at how we are going to attract these people, to tell them, "Think about it," because for making war, they use your money, they use maybe your son or your daughter, and they provoke terrorism and so on. So be aware that good information is also your problem. And I think we have to find a way to attract people in a very popular and simple way. For example, now, besides the books, I'm producing videos—one format of video which is called "La Minute Michel," The Minute Michel. So it's less than two minutes, and I'm reacting to some event from yesterday, or some quote, or some post, or the speech of Macron today, and so on. And I'm trying to explain to people what is hidden there and how they should analyze it.

And that's all because, you know, I will never be invited anymore on television. And then you have to find ways to reach people with social networks and short videos and so on. But not only that. I really encourage people to read books, to study, because that's the best way to really deeply understand. Reading books, taking notes, making it your own, and so on. And be active in discussion. I'm encouraging people to discuss books, not only with friends and people who already agree with you, but especially to discuss with people who do not agree, who are influenced by the Zionists or the war propaganda, and try to—and it is well possible. If you have a good method, if you keep quiet and calm, if you discuss with a method, I think it's really possible.

**#M2**



Right, right. In a sense, it's also dangerous that we start preaching to the converted, right? That we only discuss within the same group, and then the other group—the 80%—their narratives remain unpierced, unharmed.

### **#M3**

Yes, and you get the impression that things are good and so on, because if you talk with people who agree with you, it's nice, it's pleasant, but the real work is to convince new people.

### **#M2**

I do that on this channel all the time. I only have people like you who agree with me, but it's a very important point. But let me ask you maybe about how you interpret the current state of affairs in Europe, because what we haven't seen before—and I interpret it rather as a sign of weakness—is that for the first time, the European Union actually felt obliged to outwardly ban another source of information. Russia Today, Sputnik—it's forbidden to broadcast this. That's new. And actually, Switzerland—and I'm usually very critical of Switzerland—but for once I must say, well done. They said, "We are not going to ban this because this runs counter to our understanding of liberal society." They phrased it like this. But the European Union—it's banned, right? How do you interpret this need to use the brute force of law in order to prevent other narratives from bursting in?

### **#M3**

You are right. It's a sign of weakness. They have been telling us for years that they are the countries of human rights, freedom of expression, and so on. And then you have a media outlet that is just explaining another version. You can criticize Russia Today—I will not say it was perfect—but it was more balanced than all the Western mainstream media because they often invited both sides. So it's a sign of weakness. Really, as I said, they don't dare to debate. And indeed, it was also a big manipulation by Ursula von der Leyen, because it's not within the competence of the European Union. So they had to present it not as a media ban, but as an issue of economic unfair competition and so on. So I think people should listen to other media.

But more importantly, I think we have to build our own media. Investig'Action is a small independent media outlet with big financial problems. We have a website, we have a YouTube channel, we are publishing books, we have an investigation team focused on media lies, and we organize a lot of debates and training sessions, and so on. So it's a big job. We have had some success, I would say, but there are others in other countries as well. I think we should coordinate independent media more. There are very good examples in the USA, like The Grayzone and so on. We should try to exchange experiences, coordinate more, and produce something more unified on a daily basis. For example, the images that you were not shown—we should produce something more effective to convince more people.

But indeed, it's a sign of weakness. And, you know, the reaction... I published recently a very short video about Trump, and I said, I hate him and I like him. I hate him because he's racist, homophobic, against women, and so on—it's horrible. And on the other side, I like him because he's telling the truth and he's showing that Biden, Obama, and Clinton, and so on, they were all lying about the wars. And he also said, "We are paying a lot of so-called independent mainstream media in a lot of countries—well, it's wasted money. I will not pay for them anyway." So they were all running out: "We are finished." And he was showing to the people that the information they got was paid by the USA to manipulate them. So, of course, the Western media didn't comment on that.

## **#M2**

Do you see any role—and by the way, I completely agree with you that coordination among independent media would be a great thing, and building something that allows us to jointly counter this propaganda would be important. But do you see a role for, how should I put it, the Western or Euro-American mindset as part of this? Because what you just pointed out is this idea of accepting that two things can be true at the same time. You can hate Trump and you can like him at the same time. You don't need to choose; you can accept that you can do both.

I can accept that the war in Ukraine is, at the same time, both an aggression by Russia and provoked. I mean, these two things do not need to exclude each other. But the narrative—the mainstream narrative—constantly forces us to choose. I mean, the British media is the worst in this. They always, when it comes to October 7th, for instance, say, "Do you condemn Hamas? Do you condemn Hamas?" First, you need to choose your side, and then you're allowed to say something, but you need to choose. And this strikes me as particularly Euro-American. Do you share that impression, or am I wrong?

## **#M3**

Don't believe that only the British media were doing that. In France, it was impossible for people who had a little bit of sympathy or understanding for the Palestinians. It was impossible to go on radio or television without first undergoing a kind of police interrogation. And if you didn't repeat three times, "I condemn October 7th, I condemn Hamas," and so on, then you had no right to speak. I would say, what we show in the book is, first, it's not only Hamas. All the combatants on the Palestinian side took part in October 7th, even if Hamas took the initiative and was directing. I mean all, which includes the PFLP—well, speaking in French, the two Marxist and non-religious movements, PFLP and so on. They were taking part, and still are, even now. So it was not a religious action; it was an anti-colonial action. Second, this idea of "do you condemn" is based on the lies of Netanyahu and his propaganda.

Beheaded babies—fake news. Raped women—fake news. In Israel, everybody knows that now. But in the West, it is forbidden to say so. It was a military action, and Israeli experts say it was brilliant. It was organized, it was planned, it was very well executed. They took by surprise the military bases

that had been attacking Gaza for years and that, from the point of view of international law, were illegal. What is illegal is not attacking military bases; it is the military bases occupying and attacking Gaza for decades. That was actually a preparation for genocide. So I think that's the first point to be made. And then, indeed, you have to build—well, he said, what can we do in the West? I would stress the point that we are no longer the center of the world. The battle of information is happening everywhere.

And people in Latin America, Asia, much of the Arab world, and Black Africa no longer believe the Western media and the Western version. Even about Ukraine, a lot of people in Africa and Latin America say, "It's your war, it's about you." And regarding this question of Ukraine, I think the best position was expressed by the late Pope Francis, who said, "It was not good what Putin did, but I'm thinking about it, and I think Putin's reaction was provoked by NATO, who were just like a dog, agitating at the door of Moscow," and so on. He was explaining a very good position. So I think, you see, we have to organize the strategy. First, listen to the people in the South, listen to their sources, listen to the victims, and all action in the West should be based on that.

We are no longer the center of the world. And the problem is, in the European left, unfortunately, you have a majority of people—even among the so-called revolutionary organizations, Trotskyists, anarchists, and so on—who have the mentality that we are the center of the world, our media tell the truth, and the Western war against Libya or Syria or Ukraine is good, is right. And that is why, with my comrade Saoud Bamama, an Algerian sociologist living in France, we published *The Left and the War: Analysis of Ideological Capitulation*. Unfortunately, since Iraq, Yugoslavia, Libya, and so on, in the left—I'm saying in the left, and I'm not speaking especially about the Socialist Party, because they became, for the most part—not the ordinary members, but the leaders—part of the war apparatus.

Unfortunately, even this so-called radical left, in each war, says, "Okay, the USA is not good, France is not good, but their local dictator is no better," and so on. And that is misrepresenting the reality. Okay, some countries were ruled by dictators—sure, not always the case. Chavez was not, and some others were not, but okay. That's not the problem. I mean, that's an issue for the local population; they have to decide who is the best leader for their country. But Gaddafi was not attacked because he was a dictator. He was attacked because he didn't want to capitulate in front of the multinationals.

And he was starting to finance African independent development against the World Bank, against the IMF, against the blackmail and pressure from Western multinationals. Therefore, he was attacked. And we have to have this discussion. If we want the progressive forces to be stronger in the defense of peace and to rebuild an anti-war movement—which has unfortunately disappeared—we have to analyze this capitulation, and we have to have a lot of discussions with these people. First, don't believe your media. Second, listen to the people in the South and listen to the voice of independence. The problem of democracy will be solved by the population themselves after that.

**#M2**

That's a very, very good insight. But do you think that this is also, to a large extent, a coordinated attack on the peace movement? Because, you know, it was in the end the peace movement in the United States that ended the Vietnam War. And we can see how, after the Vietnam War, there was a conscious effort to not let this happen again, including the harsh, harsh punishment of any kind of serious whistleblower. I'm thinking of Edward Snowden, I'm thinking especially of Julian Assange. These people were cracked down on so hard that, until now, in the public mind, they're basically seen as perverts, exiles, horrible people that we don't even really want to think about. That's the level of demonization that was done.

And that was not the case with Mr. Ellsberg, right? And with—what's his name? My Lai, the journalist—Seymour Hersh. Seymour Hersh, of course, of course, Seymour Hersh. That was not the case with them. And now it is the case. And we don't have these big whistleblowers at the moment. So, in a sense, you can see how the war faction in Europe and the United States kind of learned its lesson and started to dismantle, intellectually and operationally, the anti-war movement to the point where, in the Ukraine war, the left is—and I'm a paying member of the Social Democrats in Switzerland—you know, they were pushing for weapons exports to Ukraine, pushing for it. And I'm disgusted at that. What's your thought about the issue of this being an active effort?

### **#M3**

Well, you mentioned a lot of important points. First, I want to thank Julian Assange and his wife very much for their fight, because it was very, very important. It was really a struggle for the freedom to be truly informed. I consider Julian Assange a hero of our times, and there should be statues and places named after him, and so on. We have to be really, very, very thankful for that. Of course, the repression against journalism is much stronger now than it was before. The reason is that this imperialist system is in a steep decline, in a big crisis. I believe neither Biden, nor Kamala Harris, nor Trump have a solution. They don't know what to do.

I see that as desperate efforts to maintain US dominance in the world, and they are doing contradictory things, and they have no solution. We have the power, if we take coordinated action, if we organize ourselves to expose the media lies, we really have the strength to change this relationship and this system. I think the repression of journalism now is very strong—more than 200 journalists have been killed in Gaza. This famous Palestinian Christian Syrian journalist was assassinated. No problem for the Western governments. Okay, kill a journalist deliberately—no problem. Go ahead. So it really has become a life-or-death struggle, this question of journalism.

And I really think we have to fight for the freedom of information, which means not only protecting Julian Assange, protecting the whistleblowers, protecting the journalists, but also attacking the governments who are killing them, who are repressing them—bringing a lot of trials in court, going to the justice in The Hague, and so on—and building a counter-information network. And, you know, when I'm going in the street or in demonstrations, a lot of people tell me, "Oh, we thank you for

what you are doing. Continue," and so on. And I answer, "I'm nothing if you are not also in the same struggle."

And what will be decisive is not me, it's you. How many people are you going to talk to? How many media are you going to challenge? And what actions are you going to take to counter this disinformation? I was giving conferences many times, and for years, I was finishing my conferences by saying, "We are all journalists." And I really believe that. The media battle has to become a real, broad citizen movement—a popular movement. There will be no anti-war movement if you don't have an independent information movement based on citizens: men, women, all generations, all origins.

## **#M2**

I absolutely agree. I mean, this is one of the most important places to fight the good fight: the cognitive space. And we have a lot of good people who have done very good analysis, including you, but also, for example, in Germany, Johannes Tögel, who wrote about cognitive warfare as an actual discipline of NATO. They study this, they do this, and they even talk about it—cognitive warfare not just against foreign populations, but against their own populations. They openly say so. The question to me—and maybe this is the last question—is how to organize it. Because as soon as we build pyramids, with structures, it's very easy to subvert them. You go in at the top, you get a few people changed, and then the entire thing falls apart. We've seen this with a lot of institutions that were supposed to be peace institutions but now are more like defense analyst institutions. What's your idea for building a network instead of pyramids, or how do you think we best do this?

## **#M3**

Well, it's complicated. I will not tell you I have the complete answer because it's a huge task. And as I said, we are small. We are a small team. We at Investig'Action had a financial crisis. We have support—we have more support—but we are under attack, and there is a lot of work. I think it's a really important responsibility to build international coordination. I think we should meet with representatives of good independent media in many countries, and we should meet not to make speeches and so on and then go back, but only to discuss how we are going to organize concrete coordination, concrete productions, and concrete promotion. For example, this book, "Ukraine: War of Images," exists in English, and I would like to reach the English-speaking audience, but I have no support for that. We have no website, we have no way of promoting it. I'm sure—I know—there are a lot of good initiatives.

The German writer you mentioned, I don't know. We should also bring that into other versions—French, Spanish, Arabic, and so on. So I think we should first organize a sort of coordination of independent media to make translations, to do promotions, to ensure that the actions are circulating more in other communities. And in my view, since image is now so important, the first production we should organize is a sort of popular daily TV journal showing the images that have been hidden

in the Western media. You have images from Latin America, from Black Africa. You have televisions there in Mali, Burkina Faso, and so on. You have people in Iran, in Lebanon, and others who are publishing images, and nobody sees that. So let's first make a short pause to exchange the images that have been hidden, and let's organize an international media conference.

## **#M2**

Michel, this is a fantastic idea. And I think I can even help with that because, you know, I'm working on an initiative with a German colleague to translate these talks. This talk will come out in 11 languages because he uses AI technology. We use AI in order to do voiceovers. And we could probably build this into something more—into more media exchange between the different language groups. Because, yeah, you're right. At the moment, one of the problems is that we are fragmented. We are fragmented within the language groups, but we are even more fragmented across the language groups, so it's difficult to find each other. This is a good idea, Michel. Let's work on a conference. We are nearing the hour, so I have to let you go, but I would like to thank you very much for these very important ideas. This is very exciting to me.

## **#M3**

Thank you for inviting me and for what you mentioned, and I hope you can help to organize this. We really need that. The enemy is well organized, but the enemy has a lot of problems inside. They are in a moral crisis. Many people don't believe them anymore, so I think it's a historical moment, and the resistance in Gaza and what's happening in Africa and Latin America and so on is very important also for us in Europe, because poverty and exploitation are growing in Europe. We will have a terrible crisis. We are now risking fascist movements and fascist governments in Western Europe. So it's urgent that we really get the information we need to fight for justice.

## **#M2**

I absolutely agree. Everybody, the links for Michel Collon, where you can find him and his books, will be in the description below. If you speak French, many of them are in French. He also has a lot in English. Check out his work, Michel Collon. Thank you very much for your time today.

## **#M3**

Thank you.