



JUST STAND AGAINST THE WALL

Humanity Wrap by Roger Beaumont.

For the most part, MPs perceive the media as annoying glory-hunters who ask exasperating and impertinent questions. Journalists claim politicians are at fault because well, they behave like politicians.

As a totally objective and even-handed commentator let me tell you: the journalists are right. When the TRT took office they announced we were about to enter an era of open, honest government. What they meant, of course, was they thought they'd found a new way of lying.

If you've ever had dealings with politicians anywhere, you discover pretty fast that there are levels of despising you never knew you had. With notable exceptions, these are people who use rubber bands as rulers. Dishonesty is actually built into the system - but it's called collective responsibility: they'll all think exactly the same thing at precisely the same time.

The political theorist Hannah Arendt said that one of the great achievements of Stalinism was to replace all discussions involving arguments and evidence with the question of motive. This carries a disturbing resonance of the here, and of the now.

If a reporter asks about corruption concerning a particular tender involving a certain government department, politicians no longer blame others. Instead it's always, "Why is this person asking this, and why are they saying it in such and such a newspaper? It must be that this is part of a plan."

The first casualty is argument. It's doomed. Objective truth simply becomes something to jeer at, because obviously there's no such thing as objective truth - unless of course you're politically secure, in which case you can be objective about anything you damn well like.

A favourite weapon during interviews is to answer a question that hasn't been asked in place of the one that has. Then repeat the same answer.

The truth is, most political questions have many answers, some are credible, though none of them are perfect. The difference between political parties is like the difference between Ping Pong players: sometimes one is better than the other, but they're all playing the same game.

Politicians should remember, however, that it is neither they, nor the broadcasters nor the print media who are sovereign in the political system, but, surprising though it might sound, it's the people. They are well able to recognise when interrogators are exceeding their brief, and well-equipped to judge if a politician is not being as forthcoming as he might be, or more honest than he perhaps intended.

Ironically, children can see through lies far easier than many adults can.

If governments are wary of an honest, fearless account of what the politics of the day really are, then any censorship will ultimately prove futile. For a start it's now a technological impossibility. This has been proved many times and in many different ways.

Insulation is almost a thing of the past.

There is one thing from which the government can take heart. It has support for its anti-drug methods from the police. In Wales.

"I'd like to say to international drug dealers," said Terry Grange, chief constable of Dyfed Powys. "If you'd be so kind as to stand up against that wall for a minute, boyo." Then I'd shout: "Load, aim, fire."

Despite Purachai Piumsombun's botched approach to the right problem he still comes across as a clean living if somewhat prurient individual. Whatever his faults, one could hardly imagine him self-destructing in a haze of coke, babes, and scandal.

"...And over here, there's another deputy prime minister," said the guide like an uncle pointing out the sights in Bangkok to a provincial nephew.

We now seven deputy prime ministers, and counting. What do you suppose they actually do? It's rumoured they spend all day mooching around a requisitioned floor of Government House with numbers written on their backs waiting to be beeped into service.

According to the Interior Minister, a murder is a rather gruesome word to describe the way alleged drug dealers get slotted. People might fret. Preferring something more "subtle and merciful" he plumped for "expire", which sounds positively Nazi to me.

How about "fluffed" or "peekabooed" or "purified"?

But then, why not just tell it like it is. "We fizzled him, sir. He's hoovered."

That just leaves the burial rites. If expired has replaced murdered, then buried won't do either. It sounds so well, permanent.

May we suggest to the minister that drug dealers are no longer buried. They're planted.

If a tree falls in the forest, and no one is around to hear it, does it make a noise? And if so, when the Crime Suppression Division opens up the security box this week to confirm if the Giant Ruby is really there and find a fake Picasso instead, will we hear them scream? Let's hope so.



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