

The World According to Goebbels

This is not the time to trust benign goodwill.

By Jameson Parker

“If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it.”

“The most brilliant propagandist technique will yield no success unless one fundamental principle is borne in mind constantly: it must confine itself to a few points and repeat them over and over.”

Those two quotes are the product of the evil genius of Joseph Goebbels, Adolf Hitler’s Reich minister of propaganda in Nazi Germany. Unfortunately, as Machiavellian and manipulative as they are, they seem to be the only truths certain people, including Michael Bloomberg and President Obama, have retained from all the learned experiences of World War Two.

I wrote about Michael Bloomberg and his merry band of billionaires attempting to buy the gun laws state by state in places where they don’t even live. (See “Laws For Sale, Prices Slashed,” *RANGE*, Spring 2015.) They have already been successful getting universal background-check laws passed in Washington and Oregon, and Nevada is next in their crosshairs (they should pardon the expression) with a ballot initiative being touted by Nevadans for Background Checks, an offshoot of Bloomberg’s Everytown [sic] for Gun Safety. The ultimate goal is to march their law across the land until it is the law of all the land.

Why? And does anybody really fall for it?

Unfortunately, the Pew Research Center recently released the results of a poll that show 70 percent of all Americans support “the creation of a federal database to track all gun sales.” That is a dramatic switch from just eight months prior, when the majority of Americans opposed such registration. So, yes, people do fall for it. What has caused the change?

Read Joseph Goebbels’ maxims again: “The most brilliant propagandist technique will yield no success unless one fundamental principle is borne in mind constantly: it must confine itself to a few points and repeat them over and over.”

Let me lay out Jameson’s rules for making a point. If I want to convince you of

something, I would be well-advised not to use data from a source that is sympathetic to my point of view. If I were to now quote data from the NRA, for example, you would be wise to question the objectivity of both my data and my fundamental position. Instead, I will quote from the notoriously anti-gun *Washington Post*, whose “Fact Checker” column awarded President Obama three Pinocchio’s for dishonesty after he made the following statement multiple times:

“The law already requires licensed gun

“The lie can be maintained only for as long as the State can shield the people from the political, economic, and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State.”

JOSEPH GOEBBELS, ADOLF HITLER’S REICH MINISTER OF PROPAGANDA IN NAZI GERMANY

dealers to run background checks, and over the past [20] years that’s kept millions of the wrong people from getting their hands on a gun. But it’s hard to enforce that law when as many as 40 percent of all gun purchases are conducted without a background check.”

That 40 percent statistic is a lie and has been known to be such for many years. It is a lie that has its genesis in a widely questioned and challenged study conducted by Philip Cook of Duke University and Jens

Ludwig of the University of Chicago. Cook and Ludwig’s study was initially conducted in 1994, the same year the Brady Law went into effect requiring background checks (the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, NICS). So, by definition, to quote the *Post*, “some, if not many, of the guns [cited in the study] were bought in a pre-Brady environment.”

That alone might give you cause to question the validity of this study and its frequent reiteration by the president and many other anti-gun entities, but now consider this: by Cook and Ludwig’s own admission, the study was based on a telephone survey of precisely 251 people. Given that in 1994 there were, depending on who did the calculating, approximately 50- to 80-million gun owners in the United States, 251 people seems, ah, shall we say, an unambitious stab at the truth. As the liberal and anti-gun *Washington Post* itself pointed out, with a sample size of 251 people, there will be a variance of plus or minus six percentage points, making the survey’s reliability even more questionable.

But it gets worse. Here’s the *Post* again, writing about the survey technique: “Moreover, when asked whether the respondent bought from a licensed firearms dealer, the possible answers included ‘probably was/think so’ and ‘probably not,’ leaving open the possibility the purchaser was mistaken. (The ‘probably not’ answers were counted as ‘no.’) When all of the ‘yes’ and ‘probably was’ answers were added together, that left 35.7 percent of respondents indicating they did not receive the gun from a licensed firearms dealer. Rounding up gets you to 40 percent, although, as we noted before, the survey sample is so small it could also be rounded down to 30 percent.”

At this point, you might well be asking yourself who could possibly be so stupid as to cite such a seriously flawed survey as calcified fact. Well, President Obama for one, and Nevadans for Background Checks for another. The president managed to take the lie one step further.

The original study was intended to track “gun acquisitions” and “transactions,” but

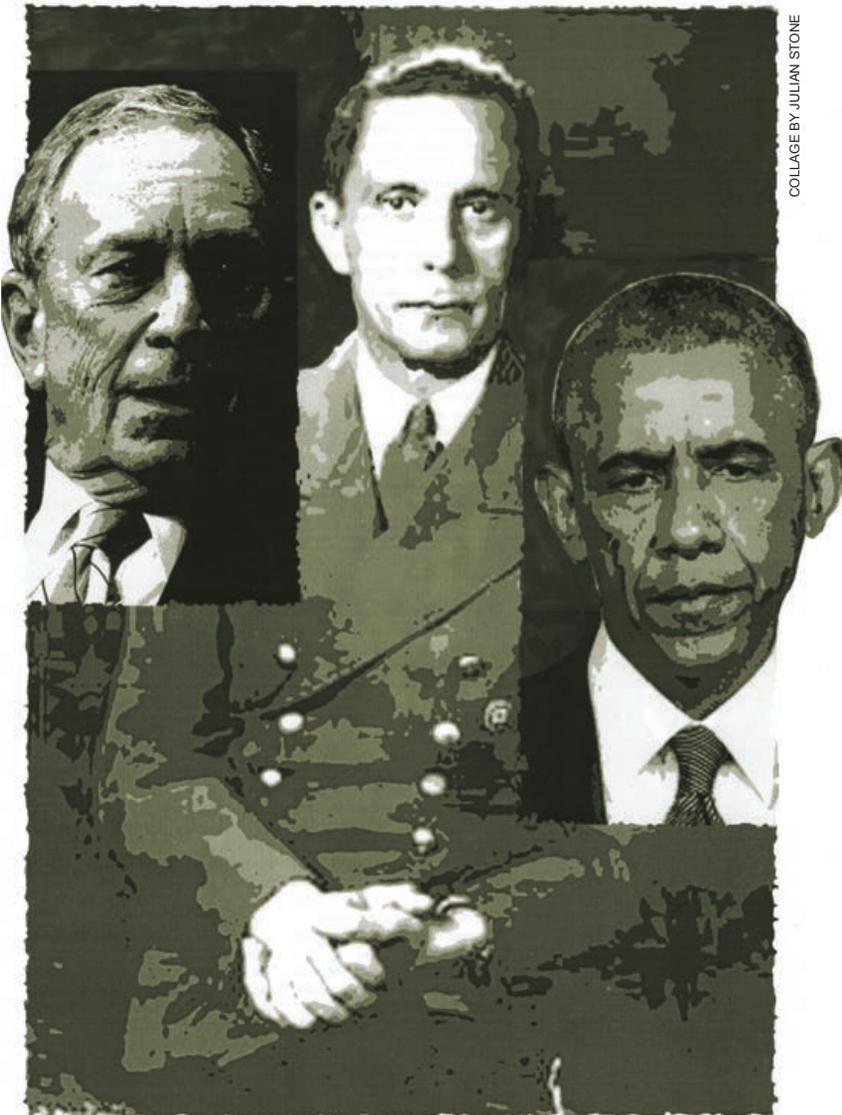
President Obama's statement, one that he keeps repeating ("If you tell a lie often enough"), uses the phrases "gun purchases" and "gun sales."

Words are important and precise things. If I were lucky enough to have a wealthy uncle who died and left me his rare Colt Peacemaker, that would qualify as a transaction where I would have acquired a handgun. If my wife gave me a vintage M1911 as a Christmas present, that too would be a transaction where I acquired a handgun. The study includes that kind of transfer of ownership in its data, even though federal law makes specific exemptions for "a bona fide gift between immediate family members, including spouses, parents, children [and] siblings," and also for "the death of another person for whom the unlicensed transferor is an executor or administrator of an estate or trustee of an estate created in a will." Yet President Obama still quotes the figures using already flawed numbers that include transfers he knows are exempt under federal law, and refers to them as sales.

But even if the 40 percent figure is nowhere near accurate, what's the harm in Nevada's making the law a little tighter? It'll only affect bad guys, right?

Under the terms of the Brady Law, the National Instant Criminal Background Check System contains the following provision: "The NICS is not to be used to establish a federal firearm registry; information about an inquiry resulting in an allowed transfer is destroyed in accordance with NICS regulations." (That is a quote

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COLLAGE BY JULIAN STONE

Joseph Goebbels, center, invented lies then repeated them over and over. True believers like Michael Bloomberg, left, and Barack Obama repeat dubious statistics until they sound real. Bloomberg's group has already been successful at getting universal background-check laws passed in Washington and Oregon, and Nevada is next.

from the FBI summary of the law.)

That clause is in there precisely to prevent any federal firearms registration. But certain states have opted to use their own much tougher background check system, making the steps and requirements for purchasing a firearm even more stringent than they are at the federal level. If you read nothing else, read what is written into California's version of the Brady Law (for purposes of brevity and clarity I am quoting from the

Joseph Goebbels' famous quote: "If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it." What is not as famous are the sentences that immediately follow that one: "The lie can be maintained only for as long as the State can shield the people from the political, economic, and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and

Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence summary):

"Registry of firearm transactions: California law requires the Attorney General to permanently maintain and keep a registry of all information [emphasis mine] pertaining to the sale or transfer of firearms reported to DOJ."

So what is forbidden by federal law may be allowed by the states, sort of like sanctuary cities and marijuana laws. If Nevadans for Background Checks gets its "expanded law" in place, that law will include permanent registration, perhaps immediately or perhaps later and in increments, as it was passed in California.

If you are an unabashed liberal who believes in the benign goodwill of the government, you may well think, "What's so bad about a federal registry of firearms?" What's wrong is that benign goodwill is a temporary and mutable thing that only lasts as long as a government believes itself securely in power. Take another look at

thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State.”

It is no coincidence that I am quoting Adolph Hitler’s minister of propaganda, because one of the first things Hitler did when he came to power was to confiscate firearms, and he used a national registry to do so. Ironically, Hitler and the Nazi Party had not created the registry. It was a preexisting system created under the Weimar Republic as a means of combating crime.

But that’s not the only thing wrong with the “expanded law” that Michael Bloomberg and his Nevadans for Background Checks hope to pass. Unlike President Obama, NFBC does not quote the “40 percent” lie directly (though it provides a link to the study on its website). Instead, it vaguely refers to the “millions of guns [that] change hands each year between unlicensed buyers and sellers, including strangers who meet online or at gun shows—no background check required, no questions asked.”

Take a closer look at the “millions” of guns sold without background checks. If you purchase a firearm from your neighbor, the assumption of Nevadans for Background

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Checks is that either or both of you might be criminals who would use the gun for illegal purposes. Such an assumption is, by definition, a violation of the presumption-of-innocence principle that has been a foundation of the law in all civilized nations at least since sixth-century Rome. But let’s put the presumption of innocence aside and assume NFBC is right and both you and your neighbor are career criminals prohibited from owning firearms. Assume the expanded background check has been signed into law. Does anyone really believe you and your neighbor are going to dutifully take the time to drive down to your local federally licensed dealer and submit to a background check that neither of you can possibly pass? Why bother passing a law no

criminal will pay attention to? The Nevada Legislature can pass a law forbidding the sun to rise tomorrow, but that won’t make it happen.

The 40-percent lie has been debunked, but that doesn’t stop Michael Bloomberg, or President Obama, or any of the hydra-like anti-gun organizations that Bloomberg is funding all over the country from repeating the lie over and over. The reason for that is because Bloomberg et al. intend to use the ballot initiative in those states that allow laws to be changed by popular referendum, and that only works when enough people are duped into believing a given proposition. Purportedly, Maine and Arizona will be the next two states on Hiz Honor’s wish list.

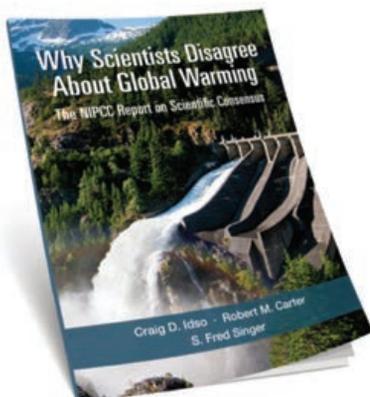
Sadly, most news outlets in this country either knowingly pass on misinformation—as the *Las Vegas Sun* did, fulsomely touting the 40 percent in its call for support of the proposed initiative, as well as its support for Nevadans for Background Checks, Moms Demand Action, and Michael Bloomberg’s parent organization, Everytown [sic] for Gun Safety—or are too lazy to track down accurate information.

There are exceptions, such as the Fact Checker column in the *Washington Post*, and Nevada’s own *Reno Gazette-Journal*, which reached the following conclusion: “The source links given by Nevadans for Background Checks do not lead to any independent research on gun background checks, but lead solely back to statements by a gun-control advocacy group that are unsupported and ignore conflicting evidence. That said, one of the claims—that ‘millions’ of guns were sold in 2012 without background checks—is likely true. Stricter gun background checks may be helpful in reducing gun violence. They may not. But using vague source citations and flawed evidence does not help make one’s case.”

Unfortunately, papers like the *Washington Post* and the *Reno Gazette-Journal* are rare exceptions, not the norm, and the result is the steady drumbeat of lies, which eventually hurt. As Joseph Goebbels also pointed out, “Think of the press as a great keyboard on which the government can play.” ■

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