

New York Times editor James Bennet resigns over fascist op-ed

By Patrick Martin
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New York Times editorial page director James Bennet resigned Sunday, four days after the newspaper published an op-ed by Republican Senator Tom Cotton of Arkansas, calling for the use of Army troops to crush the mass protests against police violence that are sweeping the United States.

Bennet told a staff meeting Friday that he had not read the column before it was published by the opinion pages he edits. His deputy editorial page editor, James Dao, who is responsible for the op-ed columns and edited Cotton's fascist screed, has been removed from the editorial pages and reassigned to the *Times* newsroom.

The Cotton op-ed, headlined, "Send in the Troops," was an unambiguous call for massive military violence against the American people. Making an amalgam of the relatively small number of rioters and looters and the huge popular demonstrations against the police murder of George Floyd, Cotton declared: "One thing above all else will restore order to our streets: an overwhelming show of force to disperse, detain and ultimately deter lawbreakers."

Earlier in the week, Cotton issued a notorious statement calling on President Trump to send in the military, claiming that the (largely nonexistent) Antifa would be put to flight by the 101st Airborne Division and other heavily armed commando forces. "No quarter for insurrectionists, anarchists, rioters, and looters," he declared. Such an appeal to kill without mercy is a war crime under international law. But it was just this bloodthirstiness that attracted notice from the *Times* editors, who invited Cotton to submit a column and then published it in the newspaper's print edition Thursday.

The column provoked a rebellion among the newspaper's staff, with more than 800 signing a letter of opposition. Bennet and publisher A. G. Sulzberger initially defended the decision on the grounds that, as Sulzberger put it, "I believe in the principle of openness

to a range of opinions, even those we may disagree with, and this piece was published in that spirit." Within hours, however, the ground had shifted, Sulzberger and Bennet declared that the op-ed column did not meet the standards set by the *Times*. Two days more, and Bennet was gone.

After 15 years as a *Times* correspondent, including roles as White House correspondent and Jerusalem bureau chief, Bennet became editor-in-chief at *The Atlantic*, before returning to the *Times* in May 2016 as editorial page editor. The Bennet family is fully "plugged-in" to the national security establishment. Bennet's father Douglas was a top State Department official, head of the Agency for International Development—a notorious front for the CIA—and later head of National Public Radio. His brother Michael is a US senator from Colorado, serving on the Finance Committee and the Select Committee on Intelligence.

From the beginning, Bennet's role at the *Times* was to push those causes that were of greatest concern to the military-intelligence apparatus. The *Times* editorial page was the first to raise the charge that then Republican nominee Donald Trump was a Russian agent, in the op-ed column by Paul Krugman given the headline, "The Siberian candidate." This set the tone for the role of the *Times* as the spearhead of the bogus anti-Russia campaign.

It would be tedious, and now unnecessary, to retrace every step of Bennet's work as one of the key opinion-setters for Wall Street and the CIA. It is possible to find that exposed in detail, and on almost a daily basis, in the articles posted on the *World Socialist Web Site* over the past four years. But it must be said that Bennet was a particularly unskilled manipulator of public opinion, a characteristic that was displayed in some of his personnel choices. A few highlights will suffice.

The New York Times, the state and the making of an amalgam: Who is James Bennet?

On July 26, 2016, the WSWS first took note of the role of the new editorial page editor in promoting the anti-Russia campaign.

The New York Times indicts Trump for questioning the CIA's moral superiority

On February 9, 2017, we replied to an editorial in which Bennet & Co. defended the moral principles of the CIA, a byword for conspiracy, assassination and torture.

Why did the New York Times hire neoconservative columnist Bret Stephens?

On May 31, 2017, we discussed the hiring of Bret Stephens, deputy editor of the ultra-right *Wall Street Journal*, as an op-ed columnist. Stephens had been editor of the right-wing *Jerusalem Post* from 2002 to 2004, overlapping with Bennet's tenure as *Times* bureau chief in the Israeli capital.

The New York Times and the strange case of Quinn Norton

On February 22, 2018, we analyzed the hiring and near-instantaneous firing of blogger Quinn Norton as the editorial page's "lead opinion writer on the power, culture and consequences of technology." Twitter users quickly circulated blog posts describing a neo-Nazi contributor to the fascist *Daily Stormer* as a personal friend, as well as messages containing homophobic slurs.

Why did New York Times publisher A.G. Sulzberger meet with Trump?

On August 6, 2018, we took note of a tweet in which Trump revealed a meeting with Sulzberger and Bennet at the White House, which all had agreed was to be off the record. Embarrassed by the disclosure, Sulzberger claimed he attended the meeting to "raise concerns about the president's deeply troubling anti-press rhetoric," but he gave no explanation of why his visit to the White House had to be carried out in secret.

New York Times op-ed by anonymous Trump official gives implicit support to palace coup

On September 6, 2018, we commented on the decision of the *Times* editorial page to publish an anonymous opinion piece by a supposed "senior official" in the Trump administration, claiming to be part of the anti-Trump resistance. This was a further effort to foster a palace coup in which Trump would be removed, or his administration's policies shifted towards a more direct intervention against Syria and Russia.

New York Times laments stalled Venezuelan coup

On April 5, 2019, we commented on the *Times*' editorial bemoaning the evident failure of the Venezuelan military to overthrow the elected president, Nicolas Maduro, and

install in his place

Juan Guaidó, a US-selected puppet largely unknown to the Venezuelan population, but immediately recognized by Washington as the "legitimate" head of government. The editorial board, headed by Bennet, "offered a lament over the failure of the CIA and its Venezuelan assets to swiftly topple the Venezuelan government," we wrote.

New York Times publishes anti-Semitic caricature of Harvey Weinstein

No sketch of Bennet's four years at the helm would be complete without reference to the publication of an editorial cartoon, which, as we wrote on February 26, 2020, was "a caricature of Harvey Weinstein, the film producer convicted Monday of felony sex crimes, with overtly antisemitic overtones. Weinstein is Jewish." The use of an image clearly modeled on those of the Third Reich was all the more despicable given that Bennet's mother is a Holocaust survivor.

Another deputy editorial page editor, Kathleen Kingsbury, former editorial page editor of the *Boston Globe*, becomes acting editorial page editor through the November election, according to a statement issued on behalf of Sulzberger. The five-month interim period might appear odd but is easily explained: editing the editorial page of the *New York Times* is a position of enormous importance to the US ruling elite, much like being CIA director or secretary of state, and requiring the same vetting by the military-intelligence apparatus. It is logical, therefore, that a new, permanent editor will be selected in step with the formation of the new administration in Washington.

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