



Greenslade Media

Roy Greenslade
Fri 12 Aug 2016 11.51 CEST

Share 287

Prefer the Guardian on Google

This article is more than 9 years old

What is Mail Online doing in partnership with the People's Daily of China?

Capitalist media organisation's digital link with the official organ of the Chinese communist party 'does not compromise Mail's independence'



Updated at 1pm with new material:

Mail Online has gone into partnership with The People's Daily, the official organ of the Chinese communist party.

An article about an embarrassing Chinese hospital mistake was published on the Mail group's Australian website with the tag, "This story was produced in partnership with The People's Daily - [people.cn](#)."

The point of the story was obvious from the lengthy headline, "[Father-to-be waiting in hospital accidentally undergoes a haemorrhoid operation while his wife gives birth after mix-up by Chinese doctors](#)".

It concerned an incident at Shenyang Hunnan Xinqu hospital, which was originally reported on The People's Daily website, "[Man was mistaken for patient and 'accidentally' had hemorrhoid surgery while waiting outside for his newborn baby](#)".

Evidently, although no-one seems to have previously noticed, the partnership goes back more than a year. Mail Online's editorial chief, [Martin Clarke](#), explained:

"It's basically a copy-swap. We take about 40 stories a week from The People's Daily and they can take a similar number from us. There is no cash involved."

So how did the partnership between a capitalist media group renowned for its advocacy of press freedom and a newspaper in a communist country renowned for censorship come about?

Advertisement



€ 159,95



€ 159,95

GISSWEIN Leichte Schuhe für Frühling
Giesswein

Is the Mail is embarrassed by having forged a link that would seems to be something of a propaganda coup for [China](#)? Does it not compromise the Mail's integrity?

Clarke said: "As the most populous nation on earth, and one of its most dynamic economies, China is an increasing source of stories for outward-looking global publishers like Mail Online.

"We believe this relationship broadens our coverage there and also helps us better understand the country's social and political structures."

I noted that the partnership was selective. A Mail Online story about [a Chinese swimmer being tested positive for drugs](#), also using a Daily Mail Australia byline, did not carry the reference to The People's Daily. It is just the kind of story that would fall foul of Chinese censors.

Clarke said: "We are not limited to using The People's Daily as a source for Chinese coverage, nor does it compromise Mail Online's independence (nor that of our papers).

"When we do use People's Daily copy, it is clearly marked. The stories are selected and translated by a Mandarin-speaking MOL staffer working to our foreign desk.

"We have always found The People's Daily staff to be extremely good partners and look forward to continuing this relationship in the longer term."

He argues that the partnership should be seen "in the context of the British (and every other western) government's official policy to foster closer cultural and trade ties with China."

He said: "This modest arrangement does not seem remotely odd, merely sensible."