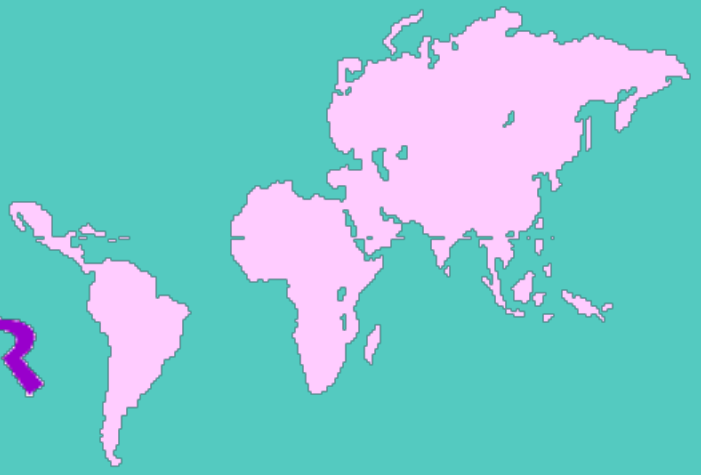
THIRD WORLD TRAVELER



Manufacturing Consent

A Propaganda Model

excerpted from the book

Manufacturing Consent

by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky

Pantheon Books, 1988

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The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behavior that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society. In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest, to fulfill this role requires systematic propaganda.

In countries where the levers of power are in the hands of a state bureaucracy, the monopolistic control over the media, often supplemented by official censorship, makes it clear that the media serve the ends of a dominant elite. It is much more difficult to see a propaganda system at work where the media are private and formal censorship is absent. This is especially true where the media actively compete, periodically attack and expose corporate and governmental malfeasance, and aggressively portray themselves as spokesmen for free speech and the general community interest. What is not evident (and remains undiscussed in the media) is the limited nature of such critiques, as well as the huge inequality in command of resources, and its effect both on access to a private media system and on its behavior and performance.

A propaganda model focuses on this inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects on mass-media interests and choices. It traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public. The essential ingredients of our propaganda model, or set of news "filters," fall under the following headings: (I) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; (~) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) "flak" as a means of disciplining the media; and (5) "anticommunism" as a national religion and control mechanism. These elements interact with and reinforce one another. The raw material of news must pass through successive filters, leaving only the cleansed residue fit to print. They fix the premises of discourse and interpretation, and

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the definition of what is newsworthy in the first place, and they explain the basis and operations of what amount to propaganda campaigns.

The elite domination of the media and marginalization of dissidents that results from the operation of these filters occurs so naturally that media news people, frequently operating with complete integrity and goodwill, are able to convince themselves that they choose and interpret the news "objectively" and on the basis of professional news values. Within the limits of the filter constraints they often are objective; the constraints are so powerful, and are built into the system in such a fundamental way, that alternative bases of news choices are hardly imaginable. In assessing the newsworthiness of the U.S. government's urgent claims of a shipment of MIGs to Nicaragua on November 5, l984, the media do not stop to ponder the bias that is inherent in the priority assigned to government-supplied raw material, or the possibility that the government might be manipulating the news, imposing its own agenda, and deliberately diverting attention from other material. It requires a macro, alongside a micro- (story-by-story), view of media operations, to see the pattern of manipulation and systematic bias.

SIZE, OWNERSHIP, AND PROFIT ORIENTATION OF THE MASS MEDIA: THE FIRST FILTER

In their analysis of the evolution of the media in Great Britain, James Curran and Jean Seaton describe how, in the first half of the nineteenth century, a radical press emerged that reached a national working-class audience. This alternative press was effective in reinforcing class consciousness: it unified the workers because it fostered an alternative value system and framework for looking at the world, and because it "promoted a greater collective confidence by repeatedly emphasizing the potential power of working people to effect social change through the force of 'combination' and organized action." This was deemed a major threat by the ruling elites. One MP asserted that the workingclass newspapers "inflame passions and awaken their selfishness, contrasting their current condition with what they contend to be their future condition-a condition incompatible with human nature, and those immutable laws which Providence has established for the regulation of civil society." The result was an attempt to squelch the working-class media by libel laws and prosecutions, by requiring an expensive security bond as a condition for publication, and by imposing various taxes designed to drive out radical media

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by raising their costs. These coercive efforts were not effective, and by mid-century they had been abandoned in favor of the liberal view that the market would enforce responsibility.

Curran and Seaton show that the market did successfully accomplish what state intervention failed to do. Following the repeal of the punitive taxes on newspapers between I853 and I869, a new daily local press came into existence, but not one new local working-class daily was established through the rest of the nineteenth century. Curran and Seaton note that

Indeed, the eclipse of the national radical press was so total that when the Labour Party developed out of the working-class movement in the first decade of the twentieth century, it did not obtain the exclusive backing of a single national daily or Sunday paper.

One important reason for this was the rise in scale of newspaper enterprise and the associated increase in capital costs from the mid-nineteenth century onward, which was based on technological improvements along with the owners' increased stress on reaching large audiences. The expansion of the free market was accompanied by an "industrialization of the press." The total cost of establishing a national weekly on a profitable basis in I837 was under a thousand pounds, with a break-even circulation of 6,200 copies. By I867, the estimated start-up cost of a new London daily was 50,000 pounds. The Sunday Express, launched in I9I8, spent over two million pounds before it broke even with a circulation of over 200,000.

Similar processes were at work in the United States, where the start-up cost of a new paper in New York City in I85I was $69,000; the public sale of the St. Louis Democrat in I872 yielded $456,000; and city newspapers were selling at from $6 to $I8 million in the I920s. The cost of machinery alone, of even very small newspapers, has for many decades run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars; in I945 it could be said that "Even small-newspaper publishing is big business . . . [and] is no longer a trade one takes up lightly even if he has substantial cash-or takes up at all if he doesn't."

Thus the first filter-the limitation on ownership of media with any substantial outreach by the requisite

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large size of investment-was applicable a century or more ago, and it has become increasingly effective over time. In I986 there were some I,500 daily newspapers, 11,000 magazines, 9,000 radio and I,500 TV stations, Z,400 book publishers, and seven movie studios in the United States-over 25,000 media entities in all. But a large proportion of those among this set who were news dispensers were very small and local, dependent on the large national companies and wire services for all but local news. Many more were subject to common ownership, sometimes extending through virtually the entire set of media variants.

Ben Bagdikian stresses the fact that despite the large media numbers, the twenty-nine largest media systems account for over half of the output of newspapers, and most of the sales and audiences in magazines, broadcasting, books, and movies. He contends that these "constitute a new Private Ministry of Information and Culture" that can set the national agenda.

Actually, while suggesting a media autonomy from corporate and government power that we believe to be incompatible with structural facts (as we describe below), Bagdikian also may be understating the degree of effective concentration in news manufacture. It has long been noted that the media are tiered, with the top tier-as measured by prestige, resources, and outreach-comprising somewhere between ten and twenty-four systems. It is this top tier, along with the government and wire services, that defines the news agenda and supplies much of

the national and international news to the lower tiers of the media, and thus for the general public. Centralization within the top tier was substantially increased by the post-World War II rise of television and the national networking of this important medium. Pre-television news markets were local, even if heavily dependent on the higher tiers and a narrow set of sources for national and international news; the networks provide national and international news from three national sources, and television is now the principal source of news for the public. The maturing of cable, however, has resulted in a fragmentation of television audiences and a slow erosion of the market share and power of the networks.

... the twenty-four media giants (or their controlling parent companies) that make up the top tier of media

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companies in the United States. This compilation includes: (I) the three television networks: ABC (through its parent, Capital Cities), CBS, and NBC (through its ultimate parent, General Electric [GE]); (2) the leading newspaper empires: New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times (Times-Mirror), Wall Street Journal (Dow Jones), Knight-Ridder, Gannett, Hearst, Scripps-Howard, Newhouse (Advance Publications), and the Tribune Company; (3) the major news and general-interest magazines: Time, Newsweek (subsumed under Washington Post), Reader's Digest, TV Guide (Triangle), and U.S. News ~ World Report; (4) a major book publisher (McGraw-Hill); and (5) other cable-TV systems of large and growing importance: those of Murdoch, Turner, Cox, General Corp., Taft, Storer, and Group W (Westinghouse). Many of these systems are prominent in more than one field and are only arbitrarily placed in a particular category (Time, Inc., is very important in cable as well as magazines; McGraw-Hill is a major publisher of magazines; the Tribune Company has become a large force in television as well as newspapers; Hearst is important in magazines as well as newspapers; and Murdoch has significant newspaper interests as well as television and movie holdings).

These twenty-four companies are large, profit-seeking corporations, owned and controlled by quite wealthy people. It can be seen in table I-I that all but one of the top companies for whom data are available have assets in excess of $I billion, and the median size (middle item by size) is $z.6 billion. It can also be seen in the table that approximately three-quarters of these media giants had after-tax profits in excess of $100 million, with the median at $I83 million.

Many of the large media companies are fully integrated into the market, and for the others, too, the pressures of stockholders, directors, and bankers to focus on the bottom line are powerful. These pressures have intensified in recent years as media stocks have become market favorites, and actual or prospective owners of newspapers and television properties have found it possible to capitalize increased audience size and advertising revenues into multiplied values of the media franchises-and great wealth. This has encouraged the entry of speculators and increased the pressure and temptation to focus more intensively on profitability. Family owners have been increasingly divided between those wanting to take advantage of the new opportunities and those desiring a continuation of family control, and their splits have often precipitated crises leading finally to the sale of the family interest.

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This trend toward greater integration of the media into the market system has been accelerated by the loosening of rules limiting media concentration, cross-ownership, and control by non-media companies. There has also been an abandonment of restrictions-previously quite feeble anyway-on radio-TV commercials, entertainment mayhem programming, and "fairness doctrine" threats, opening the door to the unrestrained commercial use of the airwaves.

The greater profitability of the media in a deregulated environment has also led to an increase in takeovers and takeover threats, with even giants like CBS and Time, Inc., directly attacked or threatened. This has forced the managements of the media giants to incur greater debt and to focus ever more aggressively and unequivocally on profitability, in order to placate owners and reduce the attractiveness of their properties to outsiders. They have lost some of their limited autonomy to bankers, institutional investors, and large individual investors whom they have had to solicit as potential "white knights."

While the stock of the great majority of large media firms is traded on the securities markets, approximately two-thirds of these companies are either closely held or still controlled by members of the originating family who retain large blocks of stock. This situation is changing as family ownership becomes diffused among larger numbers of heirs and the market opportunities for selling media properties continue to improve, but the persistence of family control is evident in the data shown in table I-Z. Also evident in the table is the enormous wealth possessed by the controlling families of the top media firms. For seven of the twenty-four, the market value of the media properties owned by the controlling families in the mid-l980s exceeded a billion dollars, and the median value was close to half a billion dollars. These control groups obviously have a special stake in the status quo by virtue of their wealth and their strategic position in one of the great institutions of society. And they exercise the power of this strategic position, if only by establishing the general aims of the company and choosing its top management.

The control groups of the media giants are also brought into close relationships with the mainstream of the corporate community through boards of directors and social links. In the cases of NBC and the Group W television and cable systems, their respective parents, GE and Westinghouse, are themselves

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mainstream corporate giants, with boards of directors that are dominated by corporate and banking executives. Many of the other large media firms have boards made up predominantly of insiders, a general characteristic of relatively small and owner-dominated companies. The larger the firm and the more widely distributed the stock, the larger the number and proportion of outside directors. The composition of the outside directors of the media giants is very similar to that of large non-media corporations. ... active corporate executives and bankers together account for a little over half the total of the outside directors of ten media giants; and the lawyers and corporate-banker retirees (who account for nine of the thirteen under "Retired") push the corporate total to about two-thirds of the outside-director aggregate. These 95 outside directors had directorships in an additional 36 banks and 255 other companies (aside from the media company and their own firm of primary affiliation).

In addition to these board linkages, the large media companies all do business with commercial and investment bankers, obtaining lines of credit and loans, and receiving advice and service in selling stock and bond issues and in dealing with acquisition opportunities and takeover threats. Banks and other institutional investors are also large owners of media stock. In the early I980s, such institutions held 44 percent of the stock of publicly owned newspapers and 35 percent of the stock of publicly owned broadcasting companies. These investors are also frequently among the largest stockholders of individual companies. For example, in I980-8I, the Capital Group, an investment company system, held 7.I percent of the stock of ABC, 6.6 percent of KnightRidder, 6 percent of Time, Inc., and z.8 percent of Westinghouse. These holdings, individually and collectively, do not convey control, but these large investors can make themselves heard, and their actions can affect the welfare of the companies and their managers. If the managers fail to pursue actions that favor shareholder returns, institutional investors will be inclined to sell the stock (depressing its price), or to listen sympathetically to outsiders contemplating takeovers. These investors are a force helping press media companies toward strictly market (profitability) objectives.

So is the diversification and geographic spread of the great media companies. Many of them have diversified out of particular media fields into others that seemed like growth areas. Many older newspaper-based media companies, fearful of the power of television and its effects on advertising

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revenue, moved as rapidly as they could into broadcasting and cable TV. Time, Inc., also, made a major diversification move into cable TV, which now accounts for more than half its profits. Only a small minority of the twenty-four largest media giants remain in a single media sector.

The large media companies have also diversified beyond the media field, and non-media companies have established a strong presence in the mass media. The most important cases of the latter are GE, owning RCA, which owns the NBC network, and Westinghouse, which owns major television-broadcasting stations, a cable network, and a radio station network. GE and Westinghouse are both huge, diversified multinational companies heavily involved in the controversial areas of weapons production and nuclear power. It may be recalled that from I965 to I967, an attempt by International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT) to acquire ABC was frustrated following a huge outcry that focused on the dangers of allowing a great multinational corporation with extensive foreign investments and business activities to control a major media outlet. The fear was that ITT control "could compromise the independence of ABC's news coverage of political events in countries where ITT has interests." The soundness of the decision disallowing the acquisition seemed to have been vindicated by the later revelations of ITT's political bribery and involvement in attempts to overthrow the government of Chile. RCA and Westinghouse, however, had been permitted to control media companies long before the ITT case, although some of the objections applicable to ITT would seem to apply to them as well. GE is a more powerful company than ITT, with an extensive international reach, deeply involved in the nuclear power business, and far more important than ITT in the arms industry. It is a highly centralized and quite secretive organization, but one with a vast stake in "political" decisions. GE has contributed to the funding of the American Enterprise Institute, a right-wing think tank that supports intellectuals who will get the business message across. With the acquisition of ABC, GE should be in a far better position to assure that sound views are given proper attention. The lack of outcry over its takeover of RCA and NBC resulted in part from the fact that RCA control over NBC had already breached the gate of separateness, but it also reflected the more pro-business and laissez-faire environment of the Reagan era.

The non-media interests of most of the media giants are not large, and, excluding the GE and Westinghouse systems, they account for only a small fraction of their total revenue. Their multinational

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outreach, however, is more significant. The television networks, television syndicators, major news magazines, and motion-picture studios all do extensive business abroad, and they derive a substantial fraction of their revenues from foreign sales and the operation of foreign affiliates. Reader's Digest is printed in seventeen languages and is available in over I60 countries. The Murdoch empire was originally based in Australia, and the controlling parent company is still an Australian corporation; its expansion in the United States is funded by profits from Australian and British affiliates.

Another structural relationship of importance is the media companies' dependence on and ties with government. The radio-TV companies and networks all require government licenses and franchises and are thus potentially subject to government control or harassment. This technical legal dependency has been used as a club to discipline the media, and media policies that stray too often from an establishment orientation could activate this threat. The media protect themselves from this contingency by lobbying and other political expenditures, the cultivation of political relationships, and care in policy. The political ties of the media have been impressive. ... fifteen of ninety-five outside directors of ten of the media giants are former government officials, and Peter Dreier gives a similar proportion in his study of large newspapers. In television, the revolving-door flow of personnel between regulators and the regulated firms was massive during the years when the oligopolistic structure of the media and networks was being established.

The great media also depend on the government for more general policy support. All business firms are interested in business taxes, interest rates, labor policies, and enforcement and nonenforcement of the antitrust laws. GE and Westinghouse depend on the government to subsidize their nuclear power and military research and development, and to create a favorable climate for their overseas sales. The Reader's Digest, Time, Newsweek, and movie- and television-syndication sellers also depend on diplomatic support for their rights to penetrate foreign cultures with U.S. commercial and value messages and interpretations of current affairs. The media giants, advertising agencies, and great multinational corporations have a joint and close interest in a favorable climate of investment in the Third World, and their interconnections and relationships with the government in these policies are symbiotic. In sum, the dominant media firms are quite large businesses; they are controlled by very wealthy people or by

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managers who are subject to sharp constraints by owners and other market-profit-oriented forces; and they are closely interlocked, and have important common interests, with other major corporations, banks, and government. This is the first powerful filter that will affect news choices.

THE ADVERTISING LICENSE TO DO BUSINESS: THE SECOND FILTER

In arguing for the benefits of the free market as a means of controlling dissident opinion in the mid-nineteenth century, the Liberal chancellor of the British exchequer, Sir George Lewis, noted that the market would promote those papers "enjoying the preference of the advertising public." Advertising did, in fact, serve as a powerful mechanism weakening the working-class press. Curran and Seaton give the growth of advertising a status comparable with the increase in capital costs as a factor allowing the market to accomplish what state taxes and harassment failed to do, noting that these "advertisers thus acquired a de facto licensing authority since, without their support, newspapers ceased to be economically viable."

Before advertising became prominent, the price of a newspaper had to cover the costs of doing business. With the growth of advertising, papers that attracted ads could afford a copy price well below production costs. This put papers lacking in advertising at a serious disadvantage: their prices would tend to be higher, curtailing sales, and they would have less surplus to invest in improving the salability of the paper (features, attractive format, promotion, etc.). For this reason, an advertising-based system will tend to drive out of existence or into marginality the media companies and types that depend on revenue from sales alone. With advertising, the free market does not yield a neutral system in which final buyer choice decides. The advertisers' choices influence media prosperity and survival The ad-based media receive an advertising subsidy that gives them a price-marketing-quality edge, which allows them to encroach on and further weaken their ad-free (or ad-disadvantaged) rivals. Even if ad-based media cater to an affluent ("upscale") audience, they easily pick up a large part of the "downscale" audience, and their rivals lose market share and are eventually driven out or marginalized.

In fact, advertising has played a potent role in increasing concentration even among rivals that focus with

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equal energy on seeking advertising revenue. A market share and advertising edge on the part of one paper or television station will give it additional revenue to compete more effectively-promote more aggressively, buy more salable features and programs-and the disadvantaged rival must add expenses it cannot afford to try to stem the cumulative process of dwindling market (and revenue) share. The crunch is often fatal, and it helps explain the death of many large-circulation papers and magazines and the attrition in the number of newspapers.

From the time of the introduction of press advertising, therefore, working-class and radical papers have been at a serious disadvantage. Their readers have tended to be of modest means, a factor that has always affected advertiser interest. One advertising executive stated in I856 that some journals are poor vehicles because "their readers are not purchasers, and any money thrown upon them is so much thrown away." The same force took a heavy toll of the post-World War II social-democratic press in Great Britain, with the Daily Herald, News Chronicle, and Sunday Citizen failing or absorbed into establishment systems between I960 and I967, despite a collective average daily readership of 9.3 million. As James Curran points out, with 4.7 million readers in its last year, "the Daily Herald actually had almost double the readership of The Times, the Financial Times and the Guardian combined." What is more, surveys showed that its readers "thought more highly of their paper than the regular readers of any other popular newspaper," and "they also read more in their paper than the readers of other popular papers despite being overwhelmingly working class...." The death of the Herald, as well as of the News Chronicle and Sunday Citizen, was in large measure a result of progressive strangulation by lack of advertising support. The Herald, with 8.I percent of national daily circulation, got 3.5 percent of net advertising revenue; the Sunday Citizen got one-tenth of the net advertising revenue of the Sunday Times and one-seventh that of the Observer (on a per-thousand-copies basis). Curran argues persuasively that the loss of these three papers was an important contribution to the declining fortunes of the Labor party, in the case of the Herald specifically removing a mass-circulation institution that provided "an alternative framework of analysis and understanding that contested the dominant systems of representation in both broadcasting and the mainstream press." A mass movement without any major media support, and subject to a great deal of active press hostility, suffers a serious disability, and struggles against grave odds.

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The successful media today are fully attuned to the crucial importance of audience "quality": CBS proudly tells its shareholders that while it "continuously seeks to maximize audience delivery," it has developed a new "sales tool" with which it approaches advertisers: "Client Audience Profile, or CAP, will help advertisers optimize the effectiveness of their network television schedules by evaluating audience segments in proportion to usage levels of advertisers' products and services." In short, the mass media are interested in attracting audiences with buying power, not audiences per se; it is affluent audiences that spark advertiser interest today, as in the nineteenth century. The idea that the drive for large audiences makes the mass media "democratic" thus suffers from the initial weakness that its political analogue is a voting system weighted by income!

The power of advertisers over television programming stems from the simple fact that they buy and pay for the programs-they are the "patrons" who provide the media subsidy. As such, the media compete for their patronage, developing specialized staff to solicit advertisers and necessarily having to explain how their programs serve advertisers' needs. The choices of these patrons greatly affect the welfare of the media, and the patrons become what William Evan calls "normative reference organizations," whose requirements and demands the media must accommodate if they are to succeed.

For a television network, an audience gain or loss of one percentage point in the Nielsen ratings translates into a change in advertising revenue of from $80 to $100 million a year, with some variation depending on measures of audience "quality." The stakes in audience size and affluence are thus extremely large, and in a market system there is a strong tendency for such considerations to affect policy profoundly. This is partly a matter of institutional pressures to focus on the bottom line, partly a matter of the continuous interaction of the media organization with patrons who supply the revenue dollars. As Grant Tinker, then head of NBC-TV, observed, television "is an advertising supported medium, and to the extent that support falls out, programming will change."

Working-class and radical media also suffer from the political discrimination of advertisers. Political discrimination is structured into advertising allocations by the stress on people with money to buy. But many firms will always refuse to patronize ideological enemies and those whom they perceive as

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damaging their interests, and cases of overt discrimination add to the force of the voting system weighted by income. Public-television station WNET lost its corporate funding from Gulf + Western in I985 after the station showed the documentary "Hungry for Profit," which contains material critical of multinational corporate activities in the Third World. Even before the program was shown, in anticipation of negative corporate reaction, station officials "did all we could to get the program sanitized" (according to one station source). The chief executive of Gulf + Western complained to the station that the program was "virulently anti-business if not anti-American," and that the station's carrying the program was not the behavior "of a friend" of the corporation. The London Economist says that "Most people believe that WNET would not make the same mistake again."

In addition to discrimination against unfriendly media institutions, advertisers also choose selectively among programs on the basis of their own principles. With rare exceptions these are culturally and politically conservative. Large corporate advertisers on television will rarely sponsor programs that engage in serious criticisms of corporate activities, such as the problem of environmental degradation, the workings of the military-industrial complex, or corporate support of and benefits from Third World tyrannies. Erik Barnouw recounts the history of a proposed documentary series on environmental problems by NBC at a time of great interest in these issues. Barnouw notes that although at that time a great many large companies were spending money on commercials and other publicity regarding environmental problems, the documentary series failed for want of sponsors. The problem was one of excessive objectivity in the series, which included suggestions of corporate or systemic failure, whereas the corporate message "was one of reassurance."

Television networks learn over time that such programs will not sell and would have to be carried at a financial sacrifice, and that, in addition, they may offend powerful advertisers.' With the rise in the price of advertising spots, the forgone revenue increases; and with increasing market pressure for financial performance and the diminishing constraints from regulation, an advertising-based media system will gradually increase advertising time and marginalize or eliminate altogether programming that has significant public-affairs content.

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Advertisers will want, more generally, to avoid programs with serious complexities and disturbing controversies that interfere with the "buying mood." They seek programs that will lightly entertain and thus fit in with the spirit of the primary purpose of program purchases-the dissemination of a selling message. Thus over time, instead of programs like "The Selling of the Pentagon," it is a natural evolution of a market seeking sponsor dollars to offer programs such as "A Bird's-Eye View of Scotland," "Barry Goldwater's Arizona," "An Essay on Hotels," and "Mr. Rooney Goes to Dinner"-a CBS program on "how Americans eat when they dine out, where they go and why." There are exceptional cases of companies willing to sponsor serious programs, sometimes a result of recent embarrassments that call for a public-relations offset. But even in these cases the companies will usually not want to sponsor close examination of sensitive and divisive issues-they prefer programs on Greek antiquities, the ballet, and items of cultural and national history and nostalgia. Barnouw points out an interesting contrast: commercial-television drama "deals almost wholly with the here and now, as processed via advertising budgets," but on public television, culture "has come to mean 'other cultures.' . . . American civilization, here and now, is excluded from consideration."

Television stations and networks are also concerned to maintain audience "flow" levels, i.e., to keep people watching from program to program, in order to sustain advertising ratings and revenue. Airing program interludes of documentary-cultural matter that cause station switching is costly, and over time a "free" (i.e., ad-based) commercial system will tend to excise it. Such documentary-cultural-critical materials will be driven out of secondary media vehicles as well, as these companies strive to qualify for advertiser interest, although there will always be some cultural-political programming trying to come into being or surviving on the periphery of the mainstream media.

SOURCING MASS-MEDIA NEWS: THE THIRD FILTER

The mass media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest. The media need a steady, reliable flow of the raw material of news. They have daily news demands and imperative news schedules that they must meet. They cannot afford to have reporters and cameras at all places where important stories may break. Economics

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dictates that they concentrate their resources where significant news often occurs, where important rumors and leaks abound, and where regular press conferences are held. The White House, the Pentagon, and the State Department, in Washington, D.C., are central nodes of such news activity. On a local basis, city hall and the police department are the subject of regular news "beats" for reporters. Business corporations and trade groups are also regular and credible purveyors of stories deemed newsworthy. These bureaucracies turn out a large volume of material that meets the demands of news organizations for reliable, scheduled flows. Mark Fishman calls this "the principle of bureaucratic affinity: only other bureaucracies can satisfy the input needs of a news bureaucracy."

Government and corporate sources also have the great merit of being recognizable and credible by their status and prestige. This is important to the mass media. As Fishman notes,

Newsworkers are predisposed to treat bureaucratic accounts as factual because news personnel participate in upholding a normative order of authorized knowers in the society. Reporters operate with the attitude that officials ought to know what it is their job to know.... In particular, a newsworker will recognize an official's claim to knowledge not merely as a claim, but as a credible, competent piece of knowledge. This amounts to a moral division of labor: officials have and give the facts; reporters merely get them.

Another reason for the heavy weight given to official sources is that the mass media claim to be "objective" dispensers of the news. Partly to maintain the image of objectivity, but also to protect themselves from criticisms of bias and the threat of libel suits, they need material that can be portrayed as presumptively accurate. This is also partly a matter of cost: taking information from sources that may be presumed credible reduces investigative expense, whereas material from sources that are not prima facie credible, or that will elicit criticism and threats, requires careful checking and costly research.

The magnitude of the public-information operations of large government and corporate bureaucracies that constitute the primary news sources is vast and ensures special access to the media. The Pentagon, for example, has a public-information service that involves many thousands of employees, spending

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hundreds of millions of dollars every year and dwarfing not only the public-information resources of any dissenting individual or group but the aggregate of such groups. In I979 and 1980, during a brief interlude of relative openness (since closed down), the U.S. Air Force revealed that its public-information outreach included the following:

I40 newspapers, 690,000 copies per week Airman magazine, monthly circulation I25,000 34 radio and I7 TV stations, primarily overseas 45,000 headquarters and unit news releases 6I5,000 hometown news releases 6,600 interviews with news media 3,200 news conferences 500 news media orientation flights 50 meetings with editorial boards 11,000 speeches

This excludes vast areas of the air force's public-information effort. Writing back in I970, Senator J. W. Fulbright had found that the air force public-relations effort in I968 involved I,305 full-time employees, exclusive of additional thousands that "have public functions collateral to other duties." The air force at that time offered a weekly film-clip service for TV and a taped features program for use three times a week, sent to I,I39 radio stations; it also produced I48 motion pictures, of which 24 were released for public consumption. There is no reason to believe that the air force public-relations effort has diminished since the I960s.

Note that this is just the air force. There are three other branches with massive programs, and there is a separate, overall public-information program under an assistant secretary of defense for public affairs in the Pentagon. In I97I, an Armed Forces Journal survey revealed that the Pentagon was publishing a total of 37I magazines at an annual cost of some $57 million, an operation sixteen times larger than the nation's biggest publisher. In an update in I982, the Air Force Journal International indicated that the Pentagon was publishing I,203 periodicals. To put this into perspective, we may note the scope of public-information operations of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and the National Council of the Churches of Christ (NCC), two of the largest of the nonprofit organizations that offer a consistently challenging voice to the views of the Pentagon. The AFSC's main office information-services budget in I984-85 was under $500,000, with eleven staff people. Its institution-wide press releases run at about two hundred per year, its press conferences thirty a year, and it produces about one film and two or three

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slide shows a year. It does not offer film clips, photos, or taped radio programs to the media. The NCC Office of Information has an annual budget of some $350,000, issues about a hundred news releases per year, and holds four press conferences annually. The ratio of air force news releases and press conferences to those of the AFSC and NCC taken together are I50 to I (or 2,200 to 1, if we count hometown news releases of the air force), and 94 to I respectively. Aggregating the other services would increase the differential by a large factor.

Only the corporate sector has the resources to produce public information and propaganda on the scale of the Pentagon and other government bodies. The AFSC and NCC cannot duplicate the Mobil Oil company's multimillion-dollar purchase of newspaper space and other corporate investments to get its viewpoint across. The number of individual corporations with budgets for public information and lobbying in excess of those of the AFSC and NCC runs into the hundreds, perhaps even the thousands. A corporate collective like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce had a I983 budget for research, communications, and political activities of $65 million. By I980, the chamber was publishing a business magazine (Nation's Business) with a circulation of I.3 million and a weekly newspaper with 740,000 subscribers, and it was producing a weekly panel show distributed to 400 radio stations, as well as its own weekly panel-discussion programs carried by I28 commercial television stations.

Besides the U.S. Chamber, there are thousands of state and local chambers of commerce and trade associations also engaged in public relations and lobbying activities. The corporate and trade-association lobbying network community is "a network of well over I50,000 professionals," and its resources are related to corporate income, profits, and the protective value of public-relations and lobbying outlays. Corporate profits before taxes in I985 were $295.5 billion. When the corporate community gets agitated about the political environment, as it did in the I970s, it obviously has the wherewithal to meet the perceived threat. Corporate and trade-association image and issues advertising increased from $305 million in I975 to $650 million in I980. So did direct-mail campaigns through dividend and other mail stuffers, the distribution of educational films, booklets and pamphlets, and outlays on initiatives and referendums, lobbying, and political and think-tank contributions. Aggregate corporate and trade-association political advertising and grass-roots outlays were estimated to have reached the billion-

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dollar-a-year level by l978, and to have grown to $l.6 billion by l984.

To consolidate their preeminent position as sources, government and business-news promoters go to great pains to make things easy for news organizations. They provide the media organizations with facilities in which to gather; they give journalists advance copies of speeches and forthcoming reports; they schedule press conferences at hours well-geared to news deadlines; they write press releases in usable language; and they carefully organize their press conferences and "photo opportunity" sessions. It is the job of news officers "to meet the journalist's scheduled needs with material that their beat agency has generated at its own pace."

In effect, the large bureaucracies of the powerful subsidize the mass media, and gain special access by their contribution to reducing the media's costs of acquiring the raw materials of, and producing, news. The large entities that provide this subsidy become "routine" news sources and have privileged access to the gates. Non-routine sources must struggle for access, and may be ignored by the arbitrary decision of the gatekeepers. It should also be noted that in the case of the largesse of the Pentagon and the State Department's Office of Public Diplomacy, the subsidy is at the taxpayers' expense, so that, in effect, the citizenry pays to be propagandized in the interest of powerful groups such as military contractors and other sponsors of state terrorism.

Because of their services, continuous contact on the beat, and mutual dependency, the powerful can use personal relationships, threats, and rewards to further influence and coerce the media. The media may feel obligated to carry extremely dubious stories and mute criticism in order not to offend their sources and disturb a close relationship. It is very difficult to call authorities on whom one depends for daily news liars, even if they tell whoppers. Critical sources may be avoided not only because of their lesser availability and higher cost of establishing credibility, but also because the primary sources may be offended and may even threaten the media using them.

Powerful sources may also use their prestige and importance to the media as a lever to deny critics access to the media: the Defense Department, for example, refused to participate in National Public Radio

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discussions of defense issues if experts from the Center for Defense Information were on the program; Elliott Abrams refused to appear on a program on human rights in Central America at the Kennedy School of Government, at Harvard University, unless the former ambassador, Robert White, was excluded as a participant; Claire Sterling refused to participate in television-network shows on the Bulgarian Connection where her critics would appear. In the last two of these cases, the authorities and brand-name experts were successful in monopolizing access by coercive threats.

Perhaps more important, powerful sources regularly take advantage of media routines and dependency to "manage" the media, to manipulate them into following a special agenda and framework (as we will show in detail in the chapters that follow). Part of this management process consists of inundating the media with stories, which serve sometimes to foist a particular line and frame on the media (e.g., Nicaragua as illicitly supplying arms to the Salvadoran rebels), and at other times to help chase unwanted stories off the front page or out of the media altogether (the alleged delivery of MIGs to Nicaragua during the week of the l984 Nicaraguan election). This strategy can be traced back at least as far as the Committee on Public Information, established to coordinate propaganda during World War I, which "discovered in l9l7-l8 that one of the best means of controlling news was flooding news channels with 'facts,' or what amounted to official information."

The relation between power and sourcing extends beyond official and corporate provision of day-to-day news to shaping the supply of "experts." The dominance of official sources is weakened by the existence of highly respectable unofficial sources that give dissident views with great authority. This problem is alleviated by "co-opting the experts"-i.e., putting them on the payroll as consultants, funding their research, and organizing think tanks that will hire them directly and help disseminate their messages. In this way bias may be structured, and the supply of experts may be skewed in the direction desired by the government and "the market." As Henry Kissinger has pointed out, in this "age of the expert," the "constituency" of the expert is "those who have a vested interest in commonly held opinions; elaborating and defining its consensus at a high level has, after all, made him an expert." It is therefore appropriate that this restructuring has taken place to allow the commonly held opinions (meaning those that are functional for elite interests) to continue to prevail.

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This process of creating the needed body of experts has been carried out on a deliberate basis and a massive scale. Back in I972, Judge Lewis Powell (later elevated to the Supreme Court) wrote a memo to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce urging business "to buy the top academic reputations in the country to add credibility to corporate studies and give business a stronger voice on the campuses." One buys them, and assures that-in the words of Dr. Edwin Feulner, of the Heritage Foundation-the public-policy area "is awash with in-depth academic studies" that have the proper conclusions. Using the analogy of Procter & Gamble selling toothpaste, Feulner explained that "They sell it and resell it every day by keeping the product fresh in the consumer's mind." By the sales effort, including the dissemination of the correct ideas to "thousands of newspapers," it is possible to keep debate "within its proper perspective."

In accordance with this formula, during the I970s and early I980s a string of institutions was created and old ones were activated to the end of propagandizing the corporate viewpoint. Many hundreds of intellectuals were brought to these institutions, where their work was funded and their outputs were disseminated to the media by a sophisticated propaganda effort. The corporate funding and clear ideological purpose in the overall effort had no discernible effect on the credibility of the intellectuals so mobilized; on the contrary, the funding and pushing of their ideas catapulted them into the press.

As an illustration of how the funded experts preempt space in the media, table I-4 describes the "experts" on terrorism and defense issues who appeared on the "McNeil-Lehrer News Hour" in the course of a year in the mid-I980s. We can see that, excluding journalists, a majority of the participants (54 percent) were present or former government officials, and that the next highest category (I5.7 percent) was drawn from conservative think tanks. The largest number of appearances in the latter category was supplied by the Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), an organization funded by conservative foundations and corporations, and providing a revolving door between the State Department and CIA and a nominally private organization. On such issues as terrorism and the Bulgarian Connection, the CSIS has occupied space in the media that otherwise might have been filled by independent voices.

The mass media themselves also provide "experts" who regularly echo the official view. John Barron and

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Claire Sterling are household names as authorities on the KGB and terrorism because the Reader's Digest has funded, published, and publicized their work; the Soviet defector Arkady Shevchenko became an expert on Soviet arms and intelligence because Time, ABC-TV, and the New York Times chose to feature him (despite his badly tarnished credentials). By giving these purveyors of the preferred view a great deal of exposure, the media confer status and make them the obvious candidates for opinion and analysis.

Another class of experts whose prominence is largely a function of serviceability to power is former radicals who have come to "see the light." The motives that cause these individuals to switch gods, from Stalin (or Mao) to Reagan and free enterprise, is varied, but for the establishment media the reason for the change is simply that the ex-radicals have finally seen the error of their ways. In a country whose citizenry values acknowledgement of sin and repentance, the turncoats are an important class of repentant sinners. It is interesting to observe how the former sinners, whose previous work was of little interest or an object of ridicule to the mass media, are suddenly elevated to prominence and become authentic experts. We may recall how, during the McCarthy era, defectors and ex-Communists vied with one another in tales of the imminence of a Soviet invasion and other lurid stories. They found that news coverage was a function of their trimming their accounts to the prevailing demand. The steady flow of ex-radicals from marginality to media attention shows that we are witnessing a durable method of providing experts who will say what the establishment wants said.

FLAK AND THE ENFORCERS: THE FOURTH FILTER

"Flak" refers to negative responses to a media statement or program. It may take the form of letters, telegrams, phone calls, petitions, lawsuits, speeches and bills before Congress, and other modes of complaint, threat, and punitive action. It may be organized centrally or locally, or it may consist of the entirely independent actions of individuals.

If flak is produced on a large scale, or by individuals or groups with substantial resources, it can be both uncomfortable and costly to the media. Positions have to be defended within the organization and

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without, sometimes before legislatures and possibly even in courts. Advertisers may withdraw patronage. Television advertising is mainly of consumer goods that are readily subject to organized boycott. During the McCarthy years, many advertisers and radio and television stations were effectively coerced into quiescence and blacklisting of employees by the threats of determined Red hunters to boycott products. Advertisers are still concerned to avoid offending constituencies that might produce flak, and their demand for suitable programming is a continuing feature of the media environment. If certain kinds of fact, position, or program are thought likely to elicit flak, this prospect can be a deterrent.

The ability to produce flak, and especially flak that is costly and threatening, is related to power. Serious flak has increased in close parallel with business's growing resentment of media criticism and the corporate offensive of the I970s and I980s. Flak from the powerful can be either direct or indirect. The direct would include letters or phone calls from the White House to Dan Rather or William Paley, or from the FCC to the television networks asking for documents used in putting together a program, or from irate officials of ad agencies or corporate sponsors to media officials asking for reply time or threatening retaliation. The powerful can also work on the media indirectly by complaining to their own constituencies (stockholders, employees) about the media, by generating institutional advertising that does the same, and by funding right-wing monitoring or think-tank operations designed to attack the media. They may also fund political campaigns and help put into power conservative politicians who will more directly serve the interests of private power in curbing any deviationism in the media.

Along with its other political investments of the I970s and I980s, the corporate community sponsored the growth of institutions such as the American Legal Foundation, the Capital Legal Foundation, the Media Institute, the Center for Media and Public Affairs, and Accuracy in Media (AIM). These may be regarded as institutions organized for the specific purpose of producing flak. Another and older flak-producing machine with a broader design is Freedom House. The American Legal Foundation, organized in I980, has specialized in Fairness Doctrine complaints and libel suits to aid "media victims." The Capital Legal Foundation, incorporated in I977, was the Scaife vehicle for Westmoreland's $I20-million libel suit against CBS.

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The Media Institute, organized in I972 and funded by corporate-wealthy patrons, sponsors monitoring projects, conferences, and studies of the media. It has focused less heavily on media failings in foreign policy, concentrating more on media portrayals of economic issues and the business community, but its range of interests is broad. The main theme of its sponsored studies and conferences has been the failure of the media to portray business accurately and to give adequate weight to the business point of view, but it underwrites works such as John Corry's expose of the alleged left-wing bias of the mass media. The chairman of the board of trustees of the institute in I985 was Steven V. Seekins, the top public-relations officer of the American Medical Association; chairman of the National Advisory Council was Herbert Schmertz, of the Mobil Oil Corporation.

The Center for Media and Public Affairs, run by Linda and Robert Lichter, came into existence in the mid-I980s as a "non-profit, nonpartisan" research institute, with warm accolades from Patrick Buchanan, Faith Whittlesey, and Ronald Reagan himself, who recognized the need for an objective and fair press. Their Media Monitor and research studies continue their earlier efforts to demonstrate the liberal bias and anti-business propensities of the mass media.

AIM was formed in I969, and it grew spectacularly in the I970s. Its annual income rose from $5,000 in I97I to $I.5 million in the early I980s, with funding mainly from large corporations and the wealthy heirs and foundations of the corporate system. At least eight separate oil companies were contributors to AIM in the early I980s, but the wide representation in sponsors from the corporate community is impressive. The function of AIM is to harass the media and put pressure on them to follow the corporate agenda and a hard-line, right-wing foreign policy. It presses the media to join more enthusiastically in Red-scare bandwagons, and attacks them for alleged deficiencies whenever they fail to toe the line on foreign policy. It conditions the media to expect trouble (and cost increases) for violating right-wing standards of bias.

Freedom House, which dates back to the early I940s, has had interlocks with AIM, the World Anticommunist League, Resistance International, and U.S. government bodies such as Radio Free Europe and the CIA, and has long served as a virtual propaganda arm of the government and

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international right wing. It sent election monitors to the Rhodesian elections staged by Ian Smith in I979 and found them "fair," whereas the I980 elections won by Mugabe under British supervision it found dubious. Its election monitors also found the Salvadoran elections of I982 admirable. It has expended substantial resources in criticizing the media for insufficient sympathy with U.S. foreign-policy ventures and excessively harsh criticism of U.S. client states. Its most notable publication of this genre was Peter Braestrup's Big Story, which contended that the media's negative portrayal of the Tet offensive helped lose the war. The work is a travesty of scholarship, but more interesting is its premise: that the mass media not only should support any national venture abroad, but should do so with enthusiasm, such enterprises being by definition noble. In I982, when the Reagan administration was having trouble containing media reporting of the systematic killing of civilians by the Salvadoran army, Freedom House came through with a denunciation of the "imbalance" in media reporting from El Salvador.

Although the flak machines steadily attack the mass media, the media treat them well. They receive respectful attention, and their propagandistic role and links to a larger corporate program are rarely mentioned or analyzed. AIM head, Reed Irvine's diatribes are frequently published, and right-wing network flacks who regularly assail the "liberal media," such as Michael Ledeen, are given Op-Ed column space, sympathetic reviewers, and a regular place on talk shows as experts. This reflects the power of the sponsors, including the well-entrenched position of the right wing in the mass media themselves.

The producers of flak add to one another's strength and reinforce the command of political authority in its news-management activities. The government is a major producer of flak, regularly assailing, threatening, and "correcting" the media, trying to contain any deviations from the established line. News management itself is designed to produce flak. In the Reagan years, Mr. Reagan was put on television to exude charm to millions, many of whom berated the media when they dared to criticize the "Great Communicator."

ANTICOMMUNISM AS A CONTROL MECHANISM

A final filter is the ideology of anticommunism. Communism as the ultimate evil has always been the specter haunting property owners, as it threatens the very root of their class position and superior status.

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The Soviet, Chinese, and Cuban revolutions were traumas to Western elites, and the ongoing conflicts and the well-publicized abuses of Communist states have contributed to elevating opposition to communism to a first principle of Western ideology and politics. This ideology helps mobilize the populace against an enemy, and because the concept is fuzzy it can be used against anybody advocating policies that threaten property interests or support accommodation with Communist states and radicalism. It therefore helps fragment the left and labor movements and serves as a political-control mechanism. If the triumph of communism is the worst imaginable result, the support of fascism abroad is justified as a lesser evil. Opposition to social democrats who are too soft on Communists and "play into their hands" is rationalized in similar terms.

Liberals at home, often accused of being pro-Communist or insufficiently anti-Communist, are kept continuously on the defensive in a cultural milieu in which anticommunism is the dominant religion. If they allow communism, or something that can be labeled communism, to triumph in the provinces while they are in office, the political costs are heavy. Most of them have fully internalized the religion anyway, but they are all under great pressure to demonstrate their anti-Communist credentials. This causes them to behave very much like reactionaries. Their occasional support of social democrats often breaks down where the latter are insufficiently harsh on their own indigenous radicals or on popular groups that are organizing among generally marginalized sectors. In his brief tenure in the Dominican Republic, Juan Bosch attacked corruption in the armed forces and government, began a land-reform program, undertook a major project for mass education of the populace, and maintained a remarkably open government and system of effective civil liberties. These policies threatened powerful internal vested interests, and the United States resented his independence and the extension of civil liberties to Communists and radicals. This was carrying democracy and pluralism too far. Kennedy was "extremely disappointed" in Bosch's rule, and the State Department "quickly soured on the first democratically elected Dominican President in over thirty years." Bosch's overthrow by the military after nine months in office had at least the tacit support of the United States. Two years later, by contrast, the Johnson administration invaded the Dominican Republic to make sure that Bosch did not resume power. The Kennedy liberals were enthusiastic about the military coup and displacement of a populist government in Brazil in I964. A major spurt in the growth of neo-Fascist national-security states took place under

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Kennedy and Johnson. In the cases of the U.S. subversion of Guatemala, I947-54, and the military attacks on Nicaragua, I98I-87, allegations of Communist links and a Communist threat caused many liberals to support counterrevolutionary intervention, while others lapsed into silence, paralyzed by the fear of being tarred with charges of infidelity to the national religion.

It should be noted that when anti-Communist fervor is aroused, the demand for serious evidence in support of claims of "communist" abuses is suspended, and charlatans can thrive as evidential sources. Defectors, informers, and assorted other opportunists move to center stage as "experts," and they remain there even after exposure as highly unreliable, if not downright liars. Pascal Delwit and Jean-Michel Dewaele point out that in France, too, the ideologues of anticommunism "can do and say anything." Analyzing the new status of Annie Kriegel and Pierre Daix, two former passionate Stalinists now possessed of a large and uncritical audience in France, Delwit and Dewaele note:

If we analyze their writings, we find all the classic reactions of people who have been disappointed in love. But no one dreams of criticizing them for their past, even though it has marked them forever. They may well have been converted, but they have not changed.... no one notices the constants, even though they are glaringly obvious. Their best sellers prove, thanks to the support of the most indulgent and slothful critics anyone could hope for, that the public can be fooled. No one denounces or even notices the arrogance of both yesterday's eulogies and today's diatribes; no one cares that there is never any proof and that invective is used in place of analysis. Their inverted hyper-Stalinism-which takes the usual form of total manicheanism-is whitewashed simply because it is directed against Communism. The hysteria has not changed, but it gets a better welcome in its present guise.

The anti-Communist control mechanism reaches through the system to exercise a profound influence on the mass media. In normal times as well as in periods of Red scares, issues tend to be framed in terms of a dichotomized world of Communist and anti-Communist powers, with gains and losses allocated to contesting sides, and rooting for "our side" considered an entirely legitimate news practice. It is the mass media that identify, create, and push into the limelight a Joe McCarthy, Arkady Shevchenko, and Claire Sterling and Robert Leiken, or an Annie Kriegel and Pierre Daix. The ideology and religion of

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anticommunism is a potent filter.

DICHOTOMIZATION AND PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGNS

The five filters narrow the range of news that passes through the gates, and even more sharply limit what can become "big news," subject to sustained news campaigns. By definition, news from primary establishment sources meets one major filter requirement and is readily accommodated by the mass media. Messages from and about dissidents and weak, unorganized individuals and groups, domestic and foreign, are at an initial disadvantage in sourcing costs and credibility, and they often do not comport with the ideology or interests of the gatekeepers and other powerful parties that influence the filtering process.

Thus, for example, the torture of political prisoners and the attack on trade unions in Turkey will be pressed on the media only by human rights activists and groups that have little political leverage. The U.S. government supported the Turkish martial-law government from its inception in I980, and the U.S. business community has been warm toward regimes that profess fervent anticommunism, encourage foreign investment, repress unions, and loyally support U.S. foreign policy (a set of virtues that are frequently closely linked). Media that chose to feature Turkish violence against their own citizenry would have had to go to extra expense to find and check out information sources; they would elicit flak from government, business, and organized right-wing flak machines, and they might be looked upon with disfavor by the corporate community (including advertisers) for indulging in such a quixotic interest and crusade. They would tend to stand alone in focusing on victims that from the standpoint of dominant American interests were unworthy.

In marked contrast, protest over political prisoners and the violation of the rights of trade unions in Poland was seen by the Reagan administration and business elites in I98I as a noble cause, and, not coincidentally, as an opportunity to score political points. Many media leaders and syndicated columnists felt the same way. Thus information and strong opinions on human-rights violations in Poland could be obtained from official sources in Washington, and reliance on Polish dissidents would not elicit flak from

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the U.S. government or the flak machines. These victims would be generally acknowledged by the managers of the filters to be worthy. The mass media never explain why Andrei Sakharov is worthy and Jose Luis Massera, in Uruguay, is unworthy-the attention and general dichotomization occur "naturally" as a result of the working of the filters, but the result is the same as if a commissar had instructed the media: "Concentrate on the victims of enemy powers and forget about the victims of friends."

Reports of the abuses of worthy victims not only pass through the filters; they may also become the basis of sustained propaganda campaigns. If the government or corporate community and the media feel that a story is useful as well as dramatic, they focus on it intensively and use it to enlighten the public. This was true, for example, of the shooting down by the Soviets of the Korean airliner KAL 007 in early September I983, which permitted an extended campaign of denigration of an official enemy and greatly advanced Reagan administration arms plans. As Bernard Gwertzman noted complacently in the New York Times of August 3I, I984, U.S. officials "assert that worldwide criticism of the Soviet handling of the crisis has strengthened the United States in its relations with Moscow." In sharp contrast, the shooting down by Israel of a Libyan civilian airliner in February I973 led to no outcry in the West, no denunciations for "cold-blooded murder," and no boycott. This difference in treatment was explained by the New York Times precisely on the grounds of utility: "No useful purpose is served by an acrimonious debate over the assignment of blame for the downing of a Libyan airliner in the Sinai peninsula last week." There was a very "useful purpose" served by focusing on the Soviet act, and a massive propaganda campaign ensued.

Propaganda campaigns in general have been closely attuned to elite interests. The Red scare of I9I9-20 served well to abort the union organizing drive that followed World War I in the steel and other industries. The Truman-McCarthy Red scare helped inaugurate the Cold War and the permanent war economy, and it also served to weaken the progressive coalition of the New Deal years. The chronic focus on the plight of Soviet dissidents, on enemy killings in Cambodia, and on the Bulgarian Connection helped weaken the Vietnam syndrome, justify a huge arms buildup and a more aggressive foreign policy, and divert attention from the upward redistribution of income that was the heart of Reagan's domestic economic program. The recent propaganda-disinformation attacks on Nicaragua have been needed to avert eyes from the

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savagery of the war in E1 Salvador and to justify the escalating U.S. investment in counterrevolution in Central America.

Conversely, propaganda campaigns will not be mobilized where victimization, even though massive, sustained, and dramatic, fails to meet the test of utility to elite interests. Thus, while the focus on Cambodia in the Pol Pot era (and thereafter) was exceedingly serviceable, as Cambodia had fallen to the Communists and useful lessons could be drawn by attention to their victims, the numerous victims of the U.S. bombing before the Communist takeover were scrupulously ignored by the U.S. elite press. After Pol Pot's ouster by the Vietnamese, the United States quietly shifted support to this "worse than Hitler" villain, with little notice in the press, which adjusted once again to the national political agenda. Attention to the Indonesian massacres of I965-66, or the victims of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor from I975 onward, would also be distinctly unhelpful as bases of media campaigns, because Indonesia is a U.S. ally and client that maintains an open door to Western investment, and because, in the case of East Timor, the United States bears major responsibility for the slaughter. The same is true of the victims of state terror in Chile and Guatemala, U.S. clients whose basic institutional structures, including the state terror system, were put in place and maintained by, or with crucial assistance from, U.S. power, and who remain U.S. client states. Propaganda campaigns on behalf of these victims would conflict with government-business-military interests and, in our model, would not be able to pass through the filtering system.

Propaganda campaigns may be instituted either by the government or by one or more of the top media firms. The campaigns to discredit the government of Nicaragua, to support the Salvadoran elections as an exercise in legitimizing democracy, and to use the Soviet shooting down of the Korean airliner KAL 007 as a means of mobilizing public support for the arms buildup, were instituted and propelled by the government. The campaigns to publicize the crimes of Pol Pot and the alleged KGB plot to assassinate the pope were initiated by the Reader's Digest, with strong follow-up support from NBC-TV, the New York Times, and other major media companies. Some propaganda campaigns are jointly initiated by government and media; all of them require the collaboration of the mass media. The secret of the unidirectionality of the politics of media propaganda campaigns is the multiple filter system discussed above: the mass media will allow any stories that are hurtful to large interests to peter out quickly, if they

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surface at all.

For stories that are useful, the process will get under way with a series of government leaks, press conferences, white papers, etc., or with one or more of the mass media starting the ball rolling with such articles as Barron and Paul's "Murder of a Gentle Land" (Cambodia), or Claire Sterling's "The Plot to Kill the Pope," both in the Reader's Digest. If the other major media like the story, they will follow it up with their own versions, and the matter quickly becomes newsworthy by familiarity. If the articles are written in an assured and convincing style, are subject to no criticisms or alternative interpretations in the mass media, and command support by authority figures, the propaganda themes quickly become established as true even without real evidence. This tends to close out dissenting views even more comprehensively, as they would now conflict with an already established popular belief. This in turn opens up further opportunities for still more inflated claims, as these can be made without fear of serious repercussions. Similar wild assertions made in contradiction of official views would elicit powerful flak, so that such an inflation process would be controlled by the government and the market. No such protections exist with system-supportive claims; there, flak will tend to press the media to greater hysteria in the face of enemy evil. The media not only suspend critical judgment and investigative zeal, they compete to find ways of putting the newly established truth in a supportive light. Themes and facts-even careful and well-documented analyses-that are incompatible with the now institutionalized theme are suppressed or ignored. If the theme collapses of its own burden of fabrications, the mass media will quietly fold their tents and move on to another topic.

Using a propaganda model, we would not only anticipate definitions of worth based on utility, and dichotomous attention based on the same criterion, we would also expect the news stories about worthy and unworthy victims (or enemy and friendly states) to differ in quality. That is, we would expect official sources of the United States and its client regimes to be used heavily-and uncritically-in connection with one's own abuses and those of friendly governments, while refugees and other dissident sources will be used in dealing with enemies. We would anticipate the uncritical acceptance of certain premises in dealing with self and friends-such as that one's own state and leaders seek peace and democracy, oppose terrorism, and tell the truth-premises which will not be applied in treating enemy states. We would

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expect different criteria of evaluation to be employed, so that what is villainy in enemy states will be presented as an incidental background fact in the case of oneself and friends. What is on the agenda in treating one case will be off the agenda in discussing the other. We would also expect great investigatory zeal in the search for enemy villainy and the responsibility of high officials for abuses in enemy states, but diminished enterprise in examining such matters in connection with one's own and friendly states.

The quality of coverage should also be displayed more directly and crudely in placement, headlining, word usage, and other modes of mobilizing interest and outrage. In the opinion columns, we would anticipate sharp restraints on the range of opinion allowed expression. Our hypothesis is that worthy victims will be featured prominently and dramatically, that they will be humanized, and that their victimization will receive the detail and context in story construction that will generate reader interest and sympathetic emotion. In contrast, unworthy victims will merit only slight detail, minimal humanization, and little context that will excite and enrage.

Meanwhile, because of the power of establishment sources, the flak machines, and anti-Communist ideology, we would anticipate outcries that the worthy victims are being sorely neglected, that the unworthy are treated with excessive and uncritical generosity, that the media's liberal, adversarial (if not subversive) hostility to government explains our difficulties in mustering support for the latest national venture in counterrevolutionary intervention.

In sum, a propaganda approach to media coverage suggests a systematic and highly political dichotomization in news coverage based on serviceability to important domestic power interests. This should be observable in dichotomized choices of story and in the volume and quality of coverage... such dichotomization in the mass media is massive and systematic: not only are choices for publicity and suppression comprehensible in terms of system advantage, but the modes of handling favored and inconvenient materials (placement, tone, context, fullness of treatment) differ in ways that serve political ends.

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