

87.

# PROPAGANDA

REVIEW

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**The Propaganda Environment**

Marcy Darnovsky

**Marketing Reagan**

Johan Carlisle

**The Propaganda System: Orwell's and Ours**

Noam Chomsky

**Photography and Propaganda**

David Levi Strauss

**Vox Populi**

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## Political Discourse in the Propaganda Environment

The problem with calling a magazine Propaganda Review is that "propaganda" is a slippery concept, difficult to define. Worse, its several meanings are mutually conflicting. In many countries and in many dictionaries, propaganda is a neutral term, akin to persuasion. To most Americans, it's an insult.

The advantage of our name, on the other hand, is that it so often hits a nerve—the nerve that produces a sneer when confronted with advertising claims, P.R. hacks, campaign promises, and the statements of government officials.

But even if such skepticism and cynicism were universal, they would not be adequate responses to the attempts at manipulating opinions and belief that pervade modern society. Propaganda is more than an inflated claim, more than a set of ideas that some cabal is trying to shove down the throats of an innocent population—though such ideas and such cabals exist. As we understand propaganda, it pervades culture and consciousness. It's a subtle yet frighteningly powerful means of social coercion.

For this reason, we tend to accept the negative connotations that American parlance has assigned to the word. Persuasion, on the other hand, we consider to be a different species entirely. We disapprove not of systematic attempts to win people's hearts and minds, but of manipulation that warps the heart and cripples the mind.

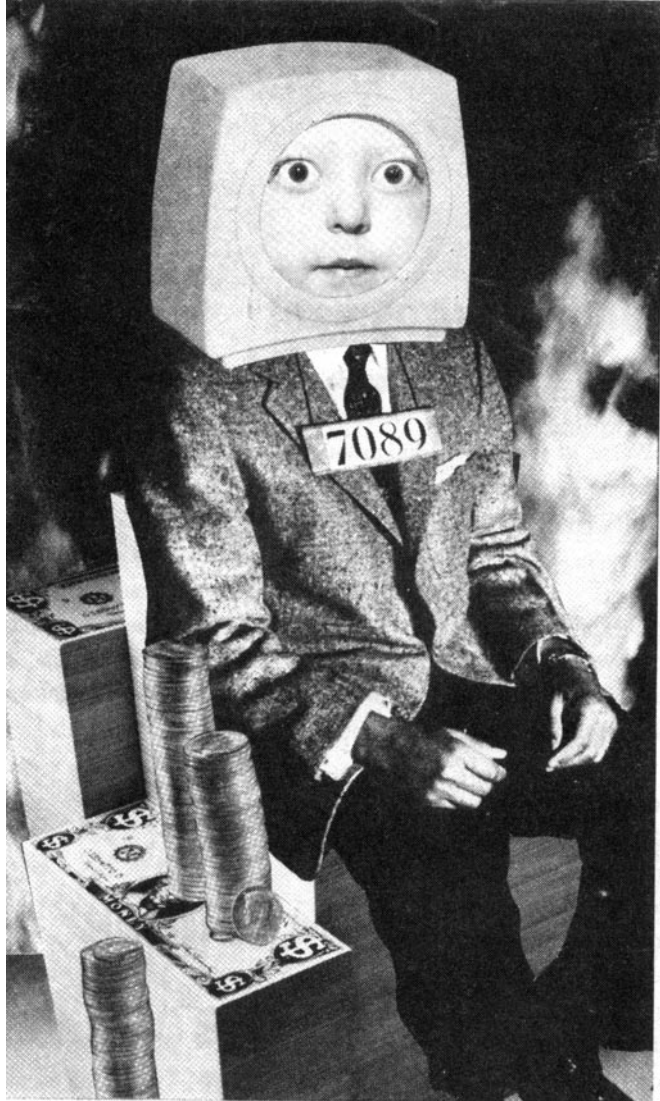
Our goal in launching Propaganda Review is to bring those kinds of manipulation out of the closet and to explore them under the rubric "propaganda." We want to develop the skeptical sneer elicited by isolated instances of propaganda into a deeper and more critical understanding. In short, we want to name propaganda as a political issue, to make it visible and recognizable so that it can be resisted.

Propaganda USA

In the American political arena, the Reagan Administration has put propaganda at center stage. While manipulation has always been a tool of governance, Reagan and Company have pioneered and refined a variety of new techniques. They are masters of what Edward Bernays, the father of public relations, called the "engineering of consent"—connoisseurs, in their own words, of "perception management," "spin control," and "plausible deniability."

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coercion.**

Though they are master propagandists, the Reagan crew can't take credit for the most important factor in their success: what we call "the propaganda environment." This pervasive cultural condition cannot be explained as the work of clever conspirators or public relations experts. It is the outcome of large-scale social and historical trends—mass society, mass media, mass production depending on compulsive consumerism. The propaganda environment is nurtured in every state—people's republic or capitalist democracy—that draws its legitimacy from the consent of the governed while it devotes vast resources to manufacturing that consent.



Joe Schwind / courtesy Processed World

In other eras and other societies, social consensus was achieved by different means, often as coercive as those of today. Some of these earlier constraints on belief and understanding have been loosened just during the past hundred years—religious dogma, for example, or rigid value systems imposed by family, ethnic group, and social class.

Today, what a person thinks and the way he or she lives are determined much less by neighborhood, ethnicity, or family ties. Suffocating though these communities of belief often were, they at least served as buffers against coercion by larger social forces. As they have crumbled, the individual has been left to the whims and requirements of state and marketplace.

Social consensus is now produced by means of social engineering. From

electing a president to selecting a wardrobe, we are bombarded with messages and images that are carefully crafted in specialized agencies and disseminated everywhere by sophisticated delivery systems. These masterpieces of manipulation help to mold not just an opinion here and a brand loyalty there, but the framework through which we see the world and our expectations about the way we live.

One aspect of the propaganda environment is commodity society. With instant and direct access to everyone, it “cultures”

the obsessiveness of consumerism—to the point where culture itself is nearly consumed. It trains people from birth to be manipulable, channeling their fears and desires to its needs. Consciousness and subconsciousness, attitude and emotion, become ever more vulnerable to fashion, trend, stereotype, and slogan.

The propaganda environment has also largely subverted political discourse. Government by propaganda has become an institution, and to a frightening degree, the population has been rendered incapable of the sustained critical thinking that is a prerequisite to democracy. Part symptom of this malaise and part cause, television has become chief arbiter of reality. It puts deodorant and death on equal footing, and transmutes both into entertainment. Other facets of the consciousness indus-

try—the education system, public relations, public opinion polling, market research—play significant supporting roles.

The managers of our society take seriously their jobs as captains of consciousness. They appreciate the centrality of propaganda to social control; they study it and talk to each other about it in journals, institutes, and think tanks. Propaganda should be at least as pressing an issue for those of us who see communication as inquisitive dialogue and as a means of developing the self and enriching others; for those who consider democracy a broadly participatory process rather than an intermittent rubber-stamping ritual.

Toward this end, Propaganda Review will cover both government disin-

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formation campaigns and commercial advertising campaigns, both intelligence agencies and public relations agencies. Our range will include the Cold War and soap operas, the techniques of the propagandists and the character structures of the propagandized.

Though we won't ignore traditional concerns about information and communication freedom of the press, media monopolization, censorship, government secrecy, the commercialization of infor-

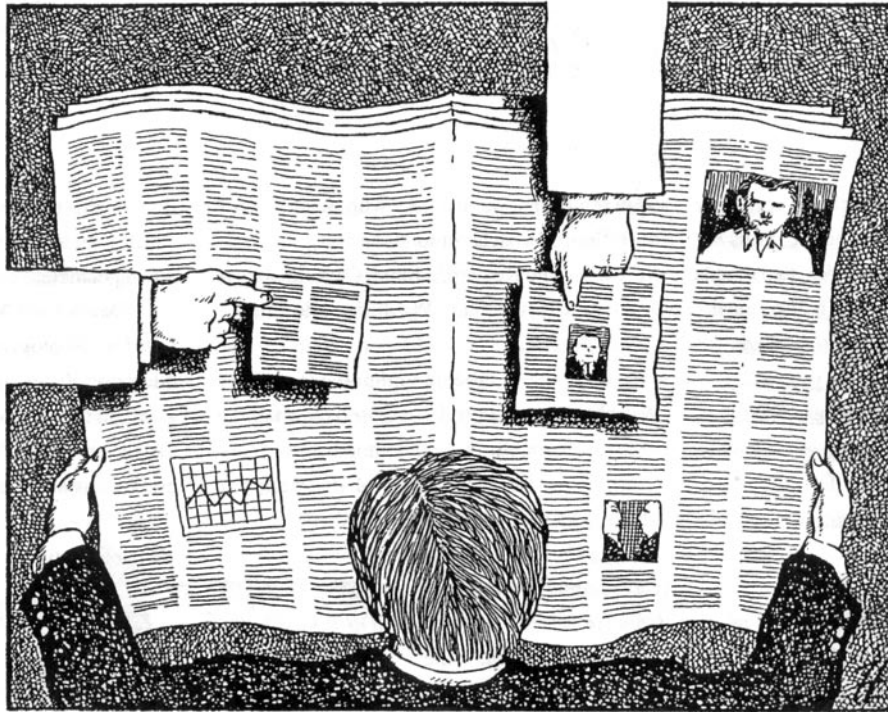
mation—we may approach them in untraditional ways. We are wary of thought control even in the absence of thought police; we decry surpluses of irrelevant information as much as we oppose censorship and cover-ups. We see the banning of books as less effective than the systematic development of a culture in which no one wants to read them.

These issues have seldom been considered together; for us they are threads of understanding waiting to be woven into a coherent pattern.

#### Who We Are

The Media Alliance members who founded the propaganda analysis project in 1985 conceived of propaganda as both a media issue and a larger political problem. That group and those who joined it in the ensuing year were driven to the extreme measure of undertaking a volunteer-based publication by a propaganda and ideological blitz from the White House and the new right. The editorial statement published in the first issue of Propaganda Analysis Review (the tabloid predecessor of Propaganda Rel'iew) spoke of a "new and shadowy threat" to "American press freedom and all the other freedoms of a democratic society."

The far right kept right on rising, claiming to be divinely blessed. Ronald Reagan had been reelected, teflon intact. The administration spewed out a seemingly unlimited supply and variety of disinformation campaigns—windows of vulnerability,



**Propaganda Review will cover both disinformation campaigns and advertising campaigns, both intelligence agencies and public relations agencies.**

supply-side economics, yellow rain and Star Wars as nuclear umbrella, Russian MIGs on their way to Nicaragua and Sandinistas on their way to Texas. It was prolific both with carefully arranged propaganda spectacles—the invasion of Grenada, the orgies of patriotism surrounding the Olympics and the Statue of Liberty celebration—and with impromptu psychodramas of manipulation, like the ones that followed the KAL 007 disaster and the nuclear accident at Chernobyl.

We watched as the Reaganites got away with it. In part they succeeded because the major media played along. The alternative press and an occasional columnist might point out that the Great Communicator contradicted

himself, fumbled his lines, made ridiculous claims, imagined entire incidents—but on the whole, the watchdogs lapped it up. The Washington press corps apparently found amusing a sign posted on presidential press secretary Larry Speakes' desk that read, "We don't tell you how to report the news. Don't tell us how to stage it."

We were not amused. We met, we talked, we put out five issues of Propaganda Analysis Rel'iew and sent it to the members of Media Alliance. The response was encouraging. Calling propaganda by name seemed to hit the nerve we were aiming for. Manuscripts and subscriptions started coming in.

As we moved toward the approach to propaganda that's evoked here, we drew new members and alienated others. Today, the Propaganda Rel'iew editorial group includes several species of writers-journalists, magazine editors, technical writers, book authors as well as university instructors, graduate students, psychologists, publicists, a private investigator, and an engineer. Our project also caught the interest of two talented graphic designers, whose work you hold in your hands.

We remain almost entirely a volunteer project, and like all struggling publications we need the support of our readers. Yes, that means subscriptions and donations. It also means contributions-articles, illustrations, leads for people who can supply same.

We hope *Propaganda Review* reflects our excitement about the new ground we're breaking, and our sense that this is fertile soil for social change.

#### About This Issue

It is fitting to feature in the premiere issue of *Propaganda Review* an article by Noam Chomsky, since the theme of propaganda runs so strongly through his substantial body of work. In the piece we

## Calling propaganda

by name has hit

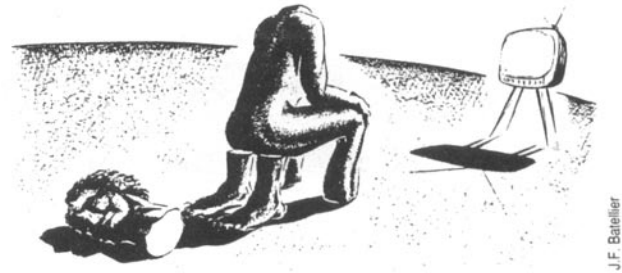
the nerve we're

aiming for.

publish here, Chomsky remarks on the differences between the coerced conformity of Orwell's *1984* and the subtle but highly effective system of indoctrination in which we live. Then he demonstrates his point by contrasting the basic facts of the Viet-

nam and Central American wars with their distorted coverage in the U.S. media. It is a straightforward exercise; Chomsky's use of it is eloquent.

The notion of Ronald Reagan as the "teflon president" has passed into common wisdom--so much so that no one asks who manufactures the teflon, or what techniques and tools they



use. In "Marketing Reagan," Johan Carlisle investigates pollster Richard Wirthlin, teflon-maker extraordinaire.

Like other modern opinion researchers, Wirthlin uses powerful computerized methods to measure public attitudes, hopes, and fears. Unlike the rest, he is a part of the team that makes and markets U.S. policy. Using Wirthlin's measurements as feedback for further "perception management," the Reaganites were able to do pretty much as they pleased until they got tangled in their Iran-contra affair.

Wirthlin and his ilk deploy vast resources and top-of-the-line technology to find out how people think about the world. Nina Eliasoph ventured out with a tape recorder and a microphone. While the media was proclaiming "Olliemania," she was conducting a hundred open-ended interviews about the Iran-Contra hearings, and uncovering very different sentiments.

Several months later came the reports of mountains of unsold Oliver North memorabilia, prompting laments about the fickle American heart. Eliasoph's interviews provide evidence that Olliemania was less a momentary delusion of the public than a hallucination on the part of the pollsters or their media interpreters. The remarks she gathered also help explain why people succumb to propaganda, and how they resist it.

In "That's Entertainment," Jay Rosen turns a critical eye on television, dissecting talk shows and glitter, production values and parody. His concern is the elevation of "watching" to a way of life, the transformation of the citizenry into spectators. After sketching an anatomy of this passivity, Rosen outlines an evolu-

I'm a couch potato and proud of my roots. Take the night a few weeks ago (September 1), when Michael Jackson's new video, *Bad*, directed by Martin Scorsese, written by Richard Price—the cream of the East Coast crop—premiered on network television. A 30-minute commercial for a coming record interspersed with commercials for other products—from Pepsi to jeans to other TV shows that will be interspersed with other ads—this was television at its purest.

There was an introductory segment couched in the ultrahype of corporate verbiage, positioning Jackson as “the world's most popular artist,” and “the biggest since the Beatles,” and featuring the ultimate accolade—our President on a dais at the White House with Jackson (during his military-gold-braid-and-white-glove phase), with Reagan anointing Jackson as a young man who by dint of 20 years of hard work had become successful (pause for a vision here of the struggling black child moving out of the ghetto by applying himself).

Jackson, asserted Reagan, had achieved the American dream (success, fame, money). Sure, there's the slight problem that Jackson has become an utter freak in the process, an obsessive compulsive who washes his hands as relentlessly as Lady Macbeth, who asked if he could perform his upcoming tour behind plexiglass so he wouldn't come into contact with his audience's germs (he was turned down), who hates to go out of the house without his surgical mask—but, hey, he has indeed lived out the American dream. Just as Reagan has, he's become a cartoon image imprinted on our collective consciousness. We all know who he is and that's what counts.

### Baby Love

The video was kind of a disappointment. The first shot of Jackson was as surreal as that of Malcolm MacDowell in *Clockwork Orange* the same pose (head down, eyes up), same horrifying impact (MacDowell as the child of the future, utterly amoral; Jackson as the child of today, utterly synthetic).

The plot presented Jackson as a boy who'd left the ghetto behind and was now trying to get back in touch with his roots, to be one of the homeboys, to impress via the force of his art and failing abysmally. In the last shot, Jackson is alienated from both his past and his future and absolutely alone. The irony's a bit thick. Crossing over was the whole intent of Jackson's campaign and market positioning and now with the help of this video—it's all being shot to hell anyhow.

By the sheer visual evidence of his face, Jackson's gone over the edge, and audiences don't like being confronted with such naked (neuroses. Go to any Diana Ross concert and you'll see sleek young men parading in precise detail as Ross clones. Now Jackson, “the world's most popular artist,” is revealed as the world's most consumed fan, remade in the image of his beloved, or, at the very least, of somebody who is clearly not him. (*Newsweek* suggested that Jackson now looks exactly like his sister Janet.)

Any way you look at it, this chiseled porcelain face with the inky eyes is alien. No amount of linking Jackson to nostalgic popular culture (the dance sequence in the video openly copies *West Side Story*), no attempt to counterbalance his genderlessness via costumes jangling with masculine buckles and the new addition to his dance steps of openly grabbing his own crotch, can cover up for him.

### You Won't Have Me to Kick-Start Anymore

My favorite TV ad of the last few months was Honda's ersatz '60s documentary-jumpy, fuzzy, amateurish-of city streets with *Who Do You Love?* growling on the soundtrack. Pure mood, what motorcycles are all about.

According to *Adweek* (May 25), Honda had asked Richard Nixon to appear in ads on behalf of its scooters (why stop with Grace Jones and Lou Reed?), but the ex-president declined without even reviewing a script. Too bad—one of the proposed ads had Nixon proclaiming that a Honda scooter was “easier to operate than a tape machine.”

### Meet the Future

The neatest part of *RoboCop* was its vision of TV news, with Leeza Gibbons of *Entertainment Tonight* as co-host. As it happens, Gannett chairman Al Neuharth actually wants to develop a TV version of *USA Today* that, according to *Advertising Age* (June 29) would be “a cross between *Entertainment Tonight* and the evening news” as we know it today.

The show, as yet unnamed, is slated to debut in the fall of 1988 and will likely be syndicated five days a week for half an hour; *E.T.* will be the program's chief competitor. Future advertisers would be wise to note that *E.T.*'s viewing audience is extremely loyal, according to *Advertising Age* (June 13). Even casual viewers are able to name the *E.T.* theme song after hearing less than three notes.

### Risk Factors

Colgate Palmolive's new TV ad for Irish Spring soap is a takeoff on *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, with a tribe of typical “savages” (loincloths, bones in frizzy hair, etc.) enthralled by the strange item dropped from the heavens into their midst—a bar of Irish Spring, sprouting rivulets of water (and presumably the bar's characteristically intense medicinal smell, which would certainly be enough to stop us in our tracks).

The ad deals with the sticky problem of racism that dogged the movie by a simple visual adjustment—the Hottentots are white. “Account-services people approach things from a bottom-line perspective—maximize profit and minimize risk,” Ariel Allen, Col-



gate-Palmolive vice president of creative services, told Adweek (August 3), in explaining the risk she'd taken in developing the ad. "Creative goals and financial goals are identical; we just have different approaches on how to reach those goals, and we have different definitions of risk." Approach and definition are all.

### Come On, Let's Go

Although Hispanics go out to the mo as much as 40% more than white peop Hispanic-oriented marketing campaign La Bamba was "an experiment," accor to Columbia (Adweek, July 13). "Thi the first time we've [created a fully i grated program] from a Hispanic mar ing viewpoint, and quite probably the time it has been done by a major ad tiser," said Richard Amundsen, direct Hispanic marketing for Coca Cola, ov of Columbia.

La Bamba (a shrill, white-b movie, unfortunately) did well, racking more than \$14 million in its first two we of release. So there you are. "Hisp media buys will be considered as a pai Columbia's marketing plans from now John Butkovich, senior vice president, dia, at Columbia Pictures, told Adverti Age (August 10).

### In Closing

- In its search for a slogan for san, advertising agency Chiat!Day con ered "the official car of the human ra and "the people's car." Fortunately the universal gag factor, C!D fastene "We've got a way to move you." (Adw August 10.)

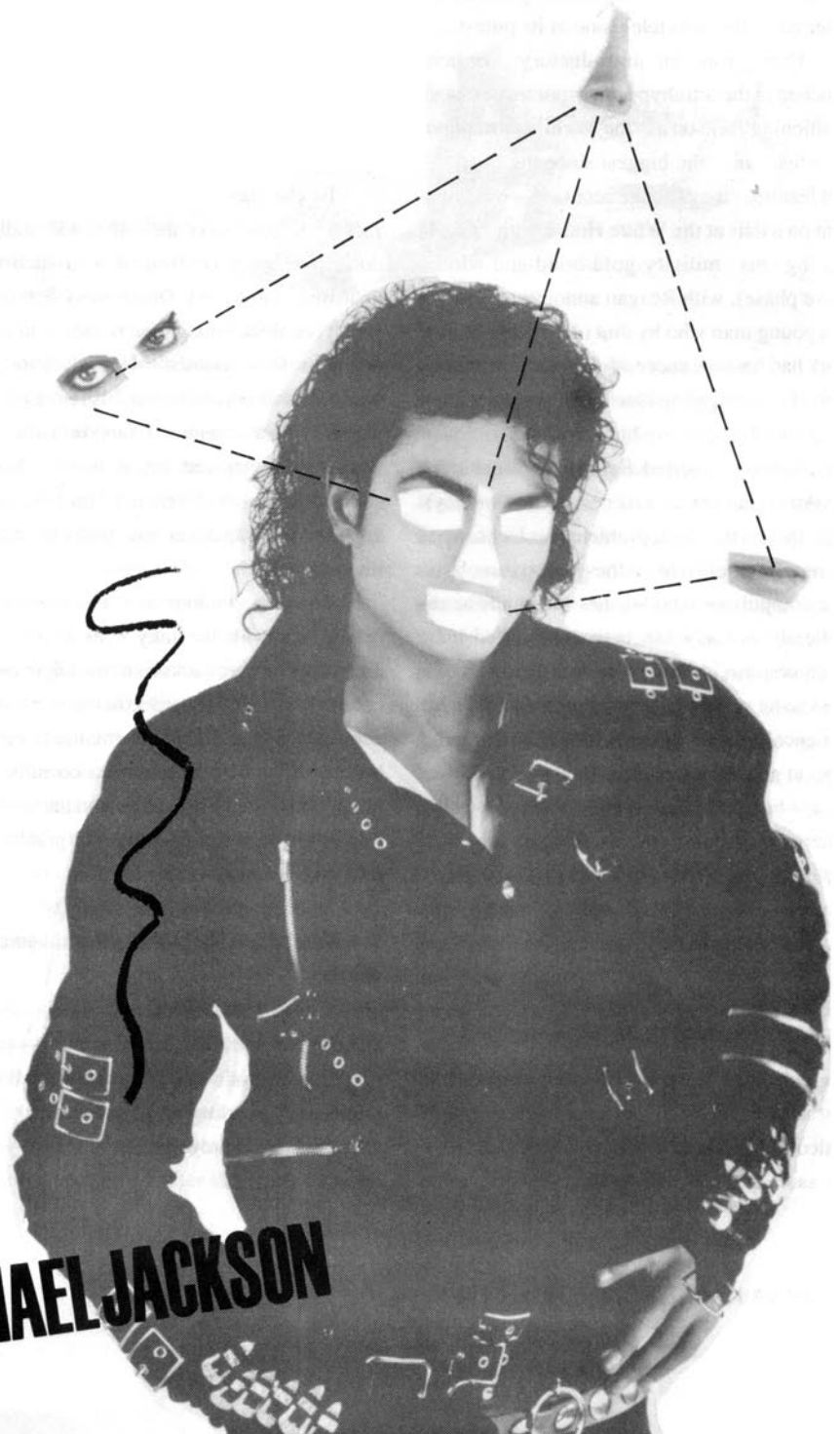
- In the July issue of Architect Digest, Rolls-Royce provided a one-ti only print ad with a scent strip smelli R-R leather upholstery. The ad requir year of creative work and three month sniffing sessions by Rolls-Royce corp executives and agency creatives. (Ad tising Age, August 10.)

- The top advertiser in the cou last year was Phillip Morris. "Lucra

cigarette business boosted profit margin to a healthy 6.8% in '86," noted Adweek approvingly (August 3).

Have a nice day. Thank you for your support. •

*Marina Hirsch is a contributing editor of Propaganda Review; she is also a market- ing communications writer, a former staff writer for the Sacramento Bee, and an avid reader of advertising trade journals.*





## Read No Further

In its Wednesday Briefing section on September 2, the *San Francisco Chronicle* chose this headline for a piece by Michael Parks (originally published in the *Los Angeles Times*): “The Man White South Africans Fear the Most: Architect of ANC’s Terrorism.”

At least three South African government propaganda themes are concealed in this headline:

- White South Africans, united in a monolithic bloc, are facing an onslaught of terrorism from the black majority.
- The African Nationalist Congress is a terrorist organization.
- The apartheid regime and white South Africans, not the black majority, are the main targets of violence and terrorism.

The body of Parks’ article directly contradicts the headline. But does that matter to anyone except the most thorough readers? How many people glance at the page and absorb the “subliminal” propaganda?

This is what is learned by actually reading the article:

- Joe Slovo, “the man white South Africans fear the most,” is himself a white South African, one of several who helped found the African National Congress.
- The ANC, far from being “a bunch of terrorists,” proposes “a negotiated resolution of the South African conflict...a peaceful transition to majority rule.”
- It is the ANC, not white South Africans, that has reason to fear terrorist violence. The article recounts, for example, how Ruth First, Joe Slovo’s wife, was killed by a parcel bomb mailed by the South African security services.

- Philip Paull

## School for Spies

“CIA Secretly Recruiting College Students.” That’s not how the headline in the September 2 *San Francisco Chronicle* read, but it should have.

Instead, the *Chronicle* chose to legitimize secret domestic operations that have been going on for as long as 26 years with the cute label, “Training Spies While They’re Young.” The flip headline and the article’s placement in the People section make the clandestine CIA training programs sound benign-something like summer camp or Project Headstart.

The CIA claims there is “nothing secret” going on here. But participants in the “workstudy” programs are required to sign a “secrecy agreement.” Whether or not they choose to go to work for the CIA when they graduate, the students return to campus having sworn not to reveal their relationship to the agency—a relationship that may include a government salary, academic credit, and up to \$2500 in tuition’ grants.

In the late ‘60s or ‘70s, this expose would have sparked a furor about the subversion of academic integrity and about the CIA meddling in domestic affairs, as did disclosures about the agency’s infiltration of the National Student Association in 1967. But after seven years of the Reagan ethos, the story has caused barely a ripple.

-Philip Paull

## Bungled Blackmail

Martha Honey and Tony Avirgan are U.S. journalists based in Costa Rica. For several years, they have been investigating covert U.S. operations, including cocaine smuggling, in Central America. (They are also, together with the Christic Institute, suing U.S. government officials and members of retired General Richard Secord’s “secret

team” who they claim are responsible for drug running and attempted assassinations.)

Back in April, Honey and Avirgan received notice of a package for them at the post office. When their secretary stopped by to get it, she was promptly arrested, since the package contained cocaine. Fortunately, the letter that accompanied the cocaine was rather silly, a ridiculously obvious attempt to frame Honey and Avirgan—if not in the Costa Rican courts, then in public opinion—and to besmirch John Kerry, the Massachusetts senator who has vociferously opposed contra aid and has been investigating contra drug connections for over a year.

The letter was sent from Managua and signed “Tomas” (presumably Tomas Borges, the Nicaraguan Minister of the Interior). It says, in part: “Recordado Amigos!...I am sending you a sampler of what we got from Colombia ... We are waiting for you to send us what your good friend J.K. [probably John Kerry] left for us with you in Costa Rica. Humberto [probably Ortega] spoke with him by phone and everything is going just as planned here with Daniel [probably Ortega].”

Hasta luego!

-Marcy Darnovsky

## Blittburgs, Silicon Valley Style

In the *Max Headroom* version, blittburgs are treacherous, subliminal TV messages encouraging you to watch a particular station. They are, to put it mildly, hazardous to your health. (In the first episode, a man blew up from sitting too close to his TV set.) In the real world, they’re subliminal messages that flash across your computer screen, urging you to work harder or to smile favorably upon your employer. They’re an incipient software industry.

“You aren’t reading this fast enough,” read the headline for an article written by Arnold Hamilton, buried midstream in the

September 25 San Jose Mercury News. The article tells the Blittburgian tale of software packages being sold here and there that give managers the ability to influence workers through subtle exhortations hidden in background music, or in rapid slogans that barely catch the eye as they flit across your screen.

If that strikes you as Orwellian, you're not alone. Debra Meyer, associate director of 9 to 5, the National Association of Working Women, thinks so, calling it "so un-American that it violates all our senses of right to privacy. It smacks of mind control and Grade B movies." California Assemblyman Tom Hayden would agree. He's proposed a law to ban using such messages without worker consent. Though his proposal won state legislative approval, it was recently vetoed by Gov. George Deukmejian. The Governor's reasoning? It would have been "difficult, if not impossible" to enforce.

In the meantime, according to the Mercury News, firms from New York to Louisiana to Silicon Valley can market software that contains such messages as "You're not working as fast as the person next to you," as one East Coast computer operator has complained. Hayden's proposal would have extended to the workplace a longstanding Federal Communications Commission ban on the broadcasting of subliminal messages and would have carried a \$1,000 fine for companies that used them without the consent of their employees. Hayden plans to reintroduce his measure next year.

In the interim, for the sake of their mental health, workers might not want to sit too close to oddly flickering terminals in their office.

-Michael Miley

### The Abu and Ollie Show

Oliver North's confession that he had accepted money generated from the Iran arms sales for a security fence around his home was a key sequence in the Contragate hear-

ings. The lieutenant colonel used the incident to expound upon Abu Nidal, who he said posed the threat against his family for which the security fence was needed.

Very few people in the United States know anything about Abu Nidal except that he is a Terrorist--the latest in a long line of American political demons. Like the Indian Savage, the Black Rapist, the Immigrant Alien, and the Communist Subversive before him, the Terrorist invades our lives and strikes at our families.

North drained Abu Nidal, the man, of any actual history, personality, or identity, and fused him with the concept of Terrorist. The image of Abu Nidal, Terrorist, was brought into the hearing room (and into the living rooms, bars, and offices of America) by means of a blow-up of a Newsweek photo mounted on poster board.

To emphasize his point, North tied Abu Nidal to the "Christmas massacres" in 1985, when 19 people were killed in a Rome airport. "The Abu Nidal terrorist in Rome, who blasted the II-year-old American Natasha Simpson to her knees, deliberately zeroed in and fired an extra burst at her head, just in case. Gentlemen," North said, "I have an II-year-old daughter, not perhaps a whole lot different than Natasha Simpson."

Just as North needs a security fence to keep the Terrorist at bay, Americans need the national security state--to protect themselves from demons who jump off poster board into the individual psyche.

-Mark Rabine

### Short Shorts

Still waiting ... for American newspapers to tell their readers that Israel is now a full-fledged nuclear power. A New York Times piece, reprinted in the July 30 San Francisco Chronicle, manages to talk about new Israeli ballistic missiles--capable of reaching oil fields and other strategic targets in the southern Soviet Union--without mentioning that Israel has developed

nuclear tips for these missiles. For more on the New York Times' silent treatment of recent revelations about Israel's nuclear and thermonuclear capabilities, see Propaganda Analysis Review numbers 4 and 5, available from PR.

**War Games...**Two U.S. mercenaries shoot their way through the jungle to penetrate an alien fortress in a new video game called ... CONTRA. A publicist for Konami, the Japanese company that markets the game, maintains it conveys neither a good nor a bad image of the contras. Some who frequent the video parlors apparently disagree: protests and chocolate quarters have forced the removal of several games. (Contra Watch, July 1987.)

**Infomercials...**The industry that produces television ads masquerading as news spots has reached the multimillion-dollar mark. Video news releases--hundreds of them--are designed by public relations agencies and sent to budget-conscious local news shows as ready-to-roll handouts. The product being pushed from Army Reserves to cold pills to cameras appears casually in the background, as did Reese's Pieces in E.T. Ralph Nader thinks it's "unethical." Freeman Miller, senior v.p. at the Burston-Marsteller public relations agency, explains that "to overcome the normal consumer suspicion, we have to tell the client's story within a realistic editorial context." (New York Times, April 21).

**And singing ads ...**Pop-up ads and scratchand-sniff are practically passe. The latest, according to the International Herald Tribune, is an ad implanted with a microchip that sings when you open to its page.

-Marcy Darnovsky

*Send us your propaganda favorites: examples of distortion, manipulation, disinformation, and deception in headlines, ads, or news stories. Rant and rave if you wish ... but remember, this is the short-and-sweet section.*

PROPAGANDA REVIEW Winter 87/88

# REAGAN

JOHAN CARLISLE

ored Richard Wirthlin as 1980's "Adman of the Year." (The year before it chose the president of Burger King.) Another lead is that Reagan and Wirthlin met to discuss politics and polls more than 25 times during the first 29 months of the Reagan Administration.<sup>1</sup>

Richard Wirthlin is more than the President's pollster. He is one of the few people Reagan has trusted to help shape his policies. More important, he may be the man most responsible for the teflon President's success in marketing those policies.

Wirthlin's secret is "strategic polling"--the art of using extensive opinion and attitudinal polls to develop strategies that control the political agenda and influence Congress and the public.

Strategic polling has been referred to as a "manipulation-persuasion loop."<sup>2</sup> The process begins with the decision to sell a policy. First, exhaustive polls are conducted to measure vulnerability to persuasion and demographic pockets of resistance--thus, which legislators to target for intensive lobbying. This complex data is then massaged and analyzed by the strategic pollster and presented to the rest of Reagan's marketing team, which uses it to develop and implement broad-based lobbying and advertising campaigns. More polls are taken, periodically, to fine-tune the marketing of the policy and ultimately to measure the precise reasons for success or failure. The data is then used to start the next cycle of the manipulation-persuasion loop.

Details of these marketing and strategic polling techniques unfortunately remain shrouded in secrecy. Some of the information is hidden in the wilderness of mirrors known as the national security establishment; much of the rest is protected under the rubric of proprietary privilege. Enough is known, however, to sketch a broad outline of how these new political propaganda techniques work.

You've probably read his name a hundred times. "Richard Wirthlin, the President's pollster, said today that 58% of all Americans approve of President Reagan's performance in office." That tag--"the President's pollster"--has been uncritically accepted since the beginning of the Reagan Administration. There has been very little discussion, however, about what the President's pollster actually does.

One clue is that Advertising Age, recognizing Reagan's election as the marketing coup that it was, unashamedly honored

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## The Permanent Campaign

Sidney Blumenthal, one of the few mainstream journalists to comment on Wirthlin's methods, wrote in the New York Times: "Ronald Reagan is governing America by a new strategic doctrine—the permanent campaign. He is applying in the White House the techniques he employed in getting there. Making more effective use of media and market research than any previous President, he has brought into the White House the most sophisticated team of pollsters, media masters and tacticians ever to work there ... Reagan's stunning success in shaping public opinion and transforming his ideas into law has derived to great extent from the new techniques."<sup>3</sup>

In past administrations, political analysts tried to understand the mood of the public through limited polling and research. Wirthlin's specialists have ushered in a new era in political marketing research. They have integrated sophisticated computer systems, exhaustive telephone polling, and marketing analysis in a way that allows them to lay a statistical foundation for the other members of the Reagan marketing team.

According to Sidney Blumenthal, "Just as the methods are new, the language is new. Unlike the old politicians who talked of party bosses delivering the goods and mobilizing the party faithful, Reagan's men converse about 'open windows' (the relative openness of public opinion to Presidential initiatives), 'targets of opportunity' (events or issues that can be quickly taken advantage of), 'sequencing' (the timing and order of a series of actions), 'resistance ratios' (the degree to which the public accepts Reagan and what he is doing) and the need to be 'proactive' rather than reactive."<sup>4</sup>

Benjamin Ginsberg, a political scientist at Cornell University, described the effect of sophisticated polling this way: "You used to find out what would sell through organizational connections in the precinct, and the precinct captains were responsible for knowing what the people wanted .... This mechanism of politics gave working-class organizations a real advantage .... Now, technological politics works to the advantage of those with the most money."<sup>5</sup>

In the 1980 campaign, the Republican National Committee spent \$1.4 million on strategic polling alone. In 1985, a nonelection year, the three major Republican com-

mittees spent more than \$8 million for outside polling and consulting, while the Democrats spent about one-tenth of that. Richard Wirthlin's company received about one-eighth of the total, \$1.2 million.<sup>6</sup> A former Wirthlin associate told Propaganda Review that the company prefers that the polling be paid for by the Republican committees rather than by the government, in order to eliminate any worry about such unpleasanties as the Freedom of Information Act. In fact, both parties pay for polling and consulting with privately raised funds—the Democrats just don't have the money to compete with Wirthlin.

## The Manipulation-Persuasion Loop

Most people think of polling as a way to understand public opinion. Strategic polling is used by the Reagan Administration to sell its policies in spite of public opinion, corrupting the process of policy debate and legislation.

Reagan's military adventures around the globe are a good example. Most Americans are against military intervention, yet time and again—in Grenada, Libya, the Persian Gulf—Reagan receives popular support for his gunboat diplomacy.

Strategic polling is one important key to this phenomenon. The technique was pioneered by Wirthlin's research company, then called Decision Making Information, Inc., in 1969. That was the year Reagan's political strategists, Stuart Spencer and Bill Roberts, hired Wirthlin, then a relatively unknown political scientist from Brigham Young University, to apply his expertise in political simulation to Reagan's upcoming gubernatorial reelection campaign.

Wirthlin had done some preliminary work in this area and was eager for funding to develop his dream of the ultimate strategic database, Political Information System (PINS). In fact, it was the early financial support of Reagan's Kitchen Cabinet that allowed Wirthlin to get a head start on other pollsters in adapting computer technology to political strategy.

Here's how PINS works. Wirthlin employs about 300 survey operators who call targeted voters around the country. Approximately 1500 people are surveyed every month, day in and day out, during election campaigns and in between elections—unless there is a hot topic to research, in which case they contact about 400 people each day. A typical interview takes about forty minutes and covers a broad range of subjects, from religion to abortion, from Star Wars to the environment. The survey operator asks the questions as they appear on the screen of a computer terminal and then types in the answers.

One secret of Wirthlin's attitudinal polls is the subtlety and design of the questions. Most opinion polls ask simple, if sometimes loaded, questions. A typical Wirthlin poll measures feelings, images, attitudes, and values with carefully crafted ques-

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tions such as, “Are you committed to Christ? Is it important that the candidate for whom you plan to vote be committed to Christ? What is your faith? Do you believe in Darwin’s theory of evolution or in the Biblical version of the Creation? Are you optimistic about your future and that of your children? What kind of President do you prefer: someone authoritarian and religious or someone intellectual and flexible?”<sup>7</sup>

The answers to these questions and to more traditional queries about political opinions are linked with demographic data, some of it from the Census Bureau. All of this information is automatically made available to the analysts who, with the aid of software developed by Wirthlin, are able to tell Reagan, for example, that 56% of the born-again Christians in Ames, Iowa who are unemployed favor Star Wars and oppose Congressional hearings. Reagan’s marketing team then uses this type of analysis to shape long-range strategies for policy implementation in Congress and to develop media campaigns to sell the policies to the public.

Reagan’s speeches are built from the ground up with such detailed information. According to William Safire, speeches are read by the President to “50 demographically balanced human beings ... each person has in hand a small computer, called the Populus Speedpulse, which enables the panelist to register reactions to what the President is saying as he says each word.”<sup>8</sup>

At the beginning of the 1980 campaign, Wirthlin’s polls showed that a majority of Americans were afraid Reagan might lead the country into a war. Wirthlin advised the candidate to use the word “peace” at least five times in every speech. This worked so well that, by the end of the campaign, the strategic pollster was able to guarantee the safety of assuming a more militaristic position in the South without jeopardizing Reagan’s national image.”<sup>9</sup>

## North to McFarlane:

**“Results due on public opinion survey to see what turns Americans against Sandinistas.”**



## Selling Contra Aid

Aid to the contras is probably the best example of the Reagan Administration’s attempt to market unpopular policies. According to Harris polls, in 1983 only 24% favored sending military aid to the contras. In 1985, a CBS/New York Times poll showed the same 24% supporting aid. The public has consistently opposed the contra war. Congress, however, has been vulnerable to pressure from the White House.

According to Peter Kornbluh, author and researcher at The National Security Archive, “From the outset of the low-intensity war, the administration considered Congress the ultimate target of its propaganda campaign. On U.S. policy toward Nicaragua ... administration officials presented testimony at congressional briefings and hearings fraught with, in Representative Bill Alexander’s words, ‘evasion, misinformation, and subterfuge.’”<sup>10</sup>

A SECRET National Security Council memo from Oliver North to then-NSC Director Robert McFarlane, which surfaced in the Iran-contra hearings, illustrates the level of policy-marketing engaged in by Reagan’s team. The subject of the March 20, 1985, two-page memo is “Timing and the Nicaraguan Resistance Vote.” In it, North describes the massive effort to influence Congress. A CONFIDENTIAL 12-page chronology of propaganda events-most of them aimed at either legislators or their targeted constituents-is attached. [See sidebar.]

The memo mentions Wirthlin and the chronology contains three references to polling actions concerning the contra aid vote. The first is an instruction to “conduct public opinion poll of America (sic) attitudes toward Sandinistas, freedom fighters:

March 1-8.” The next week, “results due on public opinion survey to see what turns Americans against Sandinistas: March 16-22.” Finally, “review and restate themes based on results of public opinion poll: March 16-22.”

This sequence illustrates how strategic polling provides ammunition that makes the “manipulation-persuasion loop” work. One week the strategic pollsters find out what will turn Americans against the Sandinistas; the next week they’re revising their strategy to manipulate Americans to go along with their unpopular policies. North’s SECRET memo also shows that the Reagan propaganda machine is a coordinated effort of the CIA and intelligence agencies within the Departments of State and Justice, working closely with the NSC and the Wirthlin Group.



### The Toll of Manipulation

“These marketing techniques are used all the time by big business to sell soap and automobiles,” a former Wirthlin associate told Propaganda Review. “What’s wrong with using them to sell the President’s policies?”

What’s wrong is that turning the governing process into a sales campaign makes a mockery of democracy. Reagan and his controversial policies have been sold to Congress and the American public in such a sophisticated and clandestine fashion that it has been extremely difficult for opponents to mount effective challenges. Complex marketing systems based on the statistical certainty provided by strategic polling are so manipulative that they become essentially anti-democratic.

### According to Wirthlin,

**“There is a tendency to forget that American democracy is less a form of government than a romantic preference for a particular value structure.”**

Wirthlin himself seems to recognize this problem, and to dismiss it. In 1980 he wrote, “There is a tendency in our increasingly complex and highly technological society to forget that American democracy is less a form of government than a romantic preference for a particular value structure.”<sup>11</sup>

Bertram Gross observed in 1980 that “the truly scientific polls [will] become confidential aids to manipulation increasingly used in the managing of minds and the packaging of conscious-

ness. With TV and education as a new form of lockstep, the image as reality and monitoring as the message, the final touches could be added to the new realities of citizen, consumer, and employee serfdom.”<sup>12</sup> Wirthlin’s tenure in the White House has brought us closer to that day.

*Research assistance by Sheila O’Donnell.*

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- 1 Presidential Decision Making and Opinion Polls,” Richard S. Beal and Ronald H. Hinckley, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, March 1984, p. 72.
- 2 *Hidden Power: The Programming of the President*, Roland Perry, Beaufort Books, New York, 1984, p.167.
- 3 “Marketing the President,” Sidney Blumenthal, *New York Times*, September 13, 1981, section 6, p. 43.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 “How Polling Was Used to Placate Rioting Poles,” John Jacobs, *San Francisco Examiner*, August 26, 1987, p. A-12.
- 6 “Briefing: Money, Money, Money,” Wayne King and Warren Weaver Jr., *New York Times*, May 3, 1986, section I, p. 9.
- 7 *Op. cit.*, Perry, p.vi.
- 8 “On Language,” William Safire, *New York Times*, July 5, 1987, p. 8.
- 9 *Op. cit.*, Perry, p. 148.
- 10 *Nicaragua: The Price of Intervention*, Peter Kombluh, Institute for Policy Studies, Washington, D.C., 1987, pp. 190-1.
- 11 *Advertising Age*, December 15, 1980, p. 69.
- 12 *Friendly Fascism*, Bertram Gross, South End Press, Boston, 1980, p.267.

## White House Propaganda Activities: Excerpts from Oliver North's **SECRET** Memo and 12-page **CONFIDENTIAL** Chronology of March 20, 1985

*Editor's Note: As Propaganda Review goes to press, the New York Times reports that the Government Accounting Office has found the State Department engaged in an illegal, covert "white propaganda" effort to generate support for Reagan's Central American policies (October 5, 1987).*

*The head of this State Department propaganda operation was Otto Reich, an anti-Castro Cuban. Reich, now U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela, was partly responsible for 11 of the operations mentioned in Oliver North's **CONFIDENTIAL** chronology, excerpts of which are printed here.*

*North's **SECRET** memo, titled "Timing and the Nicaraguan Resistance Vote," shows a highly coordinated, covert propaganda operation designed to manufacture pressure on Congress. Comments enclosed in square brackets are ours; the rest is pure North. - J. C.*

### **March 1-8, 1985**

Supervise preparation and assignment of articles directed to special interest groups at rate of one per week beginning March 18 (examples: article on Nicaraguan educational system for NEA.) [National Education Association, probably.]

Assign agencies to draft one op-ed piece per week for signature by Administration officials ... retain final editorial rights.

Conduct public opinion poll of America [sic] attitudes toward Sandinistas, freedom fighters.

### **March 9-15, 1985**

State/LPD and WH [probably White House] Media Relations prepare a list of key media outlets interested in Central American issues, including newspapers, radio, and TV stations. Where possible identify specific editors, commentators, talk shows, and columnists.

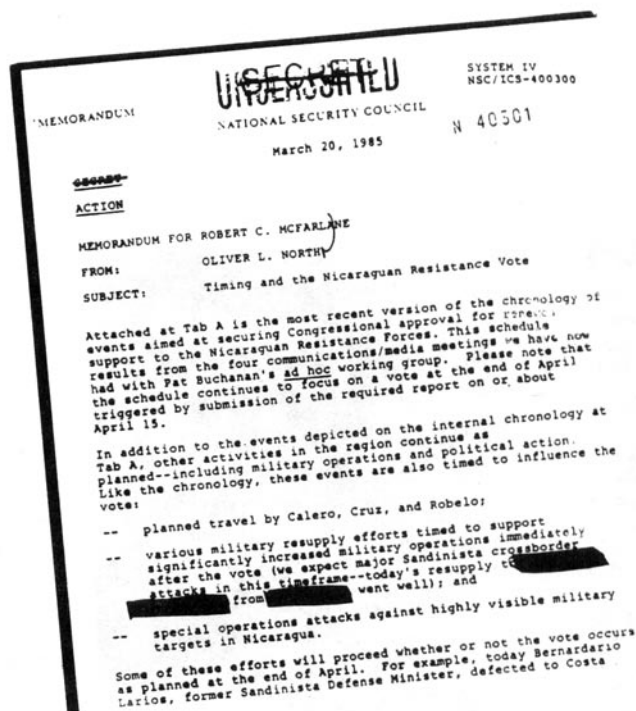
Call/visit newspaper editorial boards and give them background on the Nicaraguan freedom fighters.

Prepare a "Dear Colleagues" ltr for signature by a responsible Democrat which counsels against "negotiating" with the FSLN.

### **March 16-22, 1985**

Results due on public opinion survey to see what turns Americans against Sandinistas.

Review and restate themes based on results of public opinion poll.



Prepare document on Nicaraguan narcotics involvement. (Justice Dept.)

### **March 22-31, 1985**

Release paper on Nicaraguan media manipulation. Publish and distribute as State Department document Nicaragua's Development as Marxist-Leninist State by Linn Poulsen. (Clearance request w/Casey.)

### **April 1-7, 1985**

Administration and prominent non-USG spokesman on network shows regarding Soviet, Cuban, East German, and Libyan, Iranian connection with Sandinistas.

Distribute paper on geopolitical consequences of communist domination of Nicaragua.

Release paper on Nicaraguan drug involvement.

### **April 8-14, 1985**

Targeted telephone campaign begins in 120 Congressional districts. CITIZENS FOR AMERICA district activists organize phone-tree to targeted Congressional offices encouraging them to vote for aid to the freedom fighters in Nicaragua.

Nationally coordinated sermons about aid to the freedom fighters are conducted (April 14).

### **April 22-29, 1985**

Major rally in the Orange Bowl in Miami, Florida, attended by President Reagan and important Administration figures.

### **April 30, 1985**

Vote in the U.S. Congress on aid to the Nicaraguan freedom fighters. President leaves for Europe.

*Documents provided by Peter Kornbluh, The National Security Archive, Washington, D. C. A copy of the complete memo and chronology is available from Propaganda Review for \$2, postpaid.*



# Propaganda Systems: Orwell's and Ours



N O A M C H O M S K Y

Although we call our era the age of Orwell, the fact is that Orwell was a latecomer on the scene. In the 1920s, a sophisticated American public relations industry was already developing and writing about the tools Orwell described.

Even earlier, during the First World War, American historians offered themselves to President Woodrow Wilson to carry out a task they called "historical engineering," by which they meant designing the facts of history so that they would serve state policy. That's Orwell, long before Orwell was writing.

In 1921, the famous American journalist Walter Lippmann said that the art of democracy requires what he called the "manufacture of consent," what the public relations industry calls the "engineering of consent," another Orwellism meaning "thought control." The idea was that in a state in which the government can't control the people by force, it had better control what they think.

The Soviet Union is at the opposite end of the spectrum from us domestically.

It's essentially a country run by the bludgeon, a command state. There, it's very easy to determine what propaganda is: what the state produces is propaganda.

That's the kind of thing that Orwell described in 1984—not a very good book.

In my opinion, 1984 is so popular because it's trivial and because it's about our enemies. If Orwell had dealt with a different problem—ourselves—his book wouldn't have been popular. In fact, it probably wouldn't have been published.

In societies where there's a Ministry of Truth, propaganda doesn't really try to control your thoughts. It just gives you the party line. It says, "Here's the official doctrine; don't disobey and you won't get in trouble. What you think is not of great importance to anyone. If you get out of line we'll do something to you because we have force."

Democratic societies can't work like that, because the state is much more limited in its capacity to control behavior by force. If the voice of the people is heard, you'd better control what that voice says,

meaning you have to control what people think.

One of the ways to do that is to create a debate so that it looks like there are many opinions, but to make sure that the debate stays within very narrow margins. You have to make sure that both sides in

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the debate accept certain assumptions, and those assumptions turn out to be the propaganda system. As long as everyone accepts the propaganda system, then a debate is permissible.

**Tweedle-dum, Tweedle-dee**

The Vietnam War is a classic example. In the official media—the New York Times, CBS, and so on—in fact, all across the spectrum except at the very periphery, there was a lively debate. It was between people called “doves” and people called “hawks.” The people called hawks said, “If we keep at it we can win.” The people called doves said, “Even if we keep at it we probably can’t win, and besides, it would probably be too costly for us, and besides maybe we’re killing too many people.”

Both sides, the doves and the hawks, agreed on something: we have a right to carry out aggression against South Vietnam. In fact, they didn’t even admit that aggression was taking place. They called the war the “defense” of South Vietnam, using “defense” for “aggression” in the standard Orwellian manner. We were in fact attacking South Vietnam just as much as the Russians are attacking Afghanistan.

Like the Russians in Afghanistan, we first had to establish a government in Vietnam that would invite us in, and until we found one we had to overturn government after government. Finally we got one that invited us in, after we’d been there attacking the countryside and the population for years. That’s aggression. Nobody thought that was wrong, or rather, anyone who thought it was wrong was not admitted to the discussion.

If this were a totalitarian state, the Ministry of Truth would simply have said, “It’s right for us to go into Vietnam. Don’t argue with it.” People would have recognized that as the propaganda system, and they would have thought what they wanted.



## Word Management

Many terms in political discourse are used in a technical sense that's very much divorced from their actual meaning, sometimes even the opposite of it.

Take the "national interest." The term is commonly used as if it's something good for all of us. If a political leader says, "I'm doing this in the national interest," you're supposed to feel good because that's for you.

But if you look closely, it turns out that the national interest is not defined as the interest of the entire population. It's really the interests of small, dominant elites who command the resources that enable them to control the state—basically, corporate-based elites. Correspondingly, the "special interests," of whom we're all supposed to be suspicious, really refer to the general population.

This became very clear during the last few presidential campaigns. President Reagan is largely a figment of the public relations industry, and the public relations aspects of it, including control over language, are very striking. Every choice of terms by the Reagan public relations machine was carefully crafted.

In both the 1980 and 1984 elections, Reagan and his handlers identified the Democrats as the "party of special interests." That's bad, because we're all against the special interests. But if you asked who the special interests were, they listed women, poor people, workers, young people, old people, ethnic minorities—in fact, the vast majority of the population.

One group was not listed among the special interests—the corporations. In the campaign rhetoric, that was never a special interest, and in their terms that's right because that's the national interest.

-Noam Chomsky

They could have seen that we were attacking Vietnam, just like we can see that the Russians are attacking Afghanistan.

In this country, you can't permit people to understand that level of reality. It's too dangerous. People are much freer, they can express themselves. Therefore it's necessary to try to control thought, to try to make it appear as if the only issue was a tactical one: can we get away with it? There was no issue of right or wrong.

## Down the Memory Hole

During the Vietnam War, the propaganda system worked partially but not entirely. Among educated people it worked very well. Many studies show that among the more educated parts of the population, the government's propaganda was accepted unquestioningly.

On the other hand, after a long period of spontaneous popular opposition, dissent, and organization, the general population got out of control. As recently as 1982, according to the latest polls I've seen, over 70% of Americans still thought the war was, quoting the Gallup poll, "fundamentally wrong and immoral, not a mistake." That is, the overwhelming majority of the population is neither hawks nor doves, but opposed to aggression.

One reason that propaganda often works better on the educated than on the uneducated is that educated people read more, so they receive more propaganda. Another is that they're the commissars. They have jobs as agents of propaganda, and they believe it. By and large, they're part of the privileged elite, and share their interests and perceptions.

The rest of the population is more marginalized. It doesn't participate in the democratic system, which is overwhelmingly an elite game. People learn from their own lives to be skeptical, and in fact most of them are. In this case there's even a name for the erosion of belief. It's called the "Vietnam Syndrome," a grave disease: people understand too much.

Yet if you pick up a book on American history and look at the Vietnam War, there is no such event as the American attack on South Vietnam. It's out of history, down Orwell's memory hole.

## Accuracy in Media

Let me give one more example—the major vote on contra aid in March 1986. For the three months prior to the vote, the Administration was heating up the atmosphere, trying to reverse the Congressional restrictions on aid to the terrorist army that's attacking Nicaragua.

(Publicly, the contras are called freedom fighters, but internal documents describe them as a proxy force based on terrorists. So I'll call them by the accurate internal terms.)

I was interested in how the media was going to respond to the Administration campaign for the contras. So I took the two national newspapers, the Washington Post and the New York Times. In January, February, and March, I went through every one of their editorials, opinion pieces, and the columns written by their own columnists. There were eighty-five pieces. Of the 85, 85 were antiSandinista. On that issue, no discussion was tolerable. 85 out of 85 followed the party line: Sandinistas are bad guys.

Now there are two very striking facts about the Sandinista government, as compared with our allies in Central America-Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. One is that the Sandinista government doesn't slaughter its population. That's not open to discussion. That's a fact.

Second, Nicaragua is the only one of those countries in which the government has tried to direct services to the poor, has in fact diverted resources to social reform. Again that's not a matter of debate; it is conceded on all sides to be true. You can read about it in the InterAmerican Development Bank reports or anywhere you like.

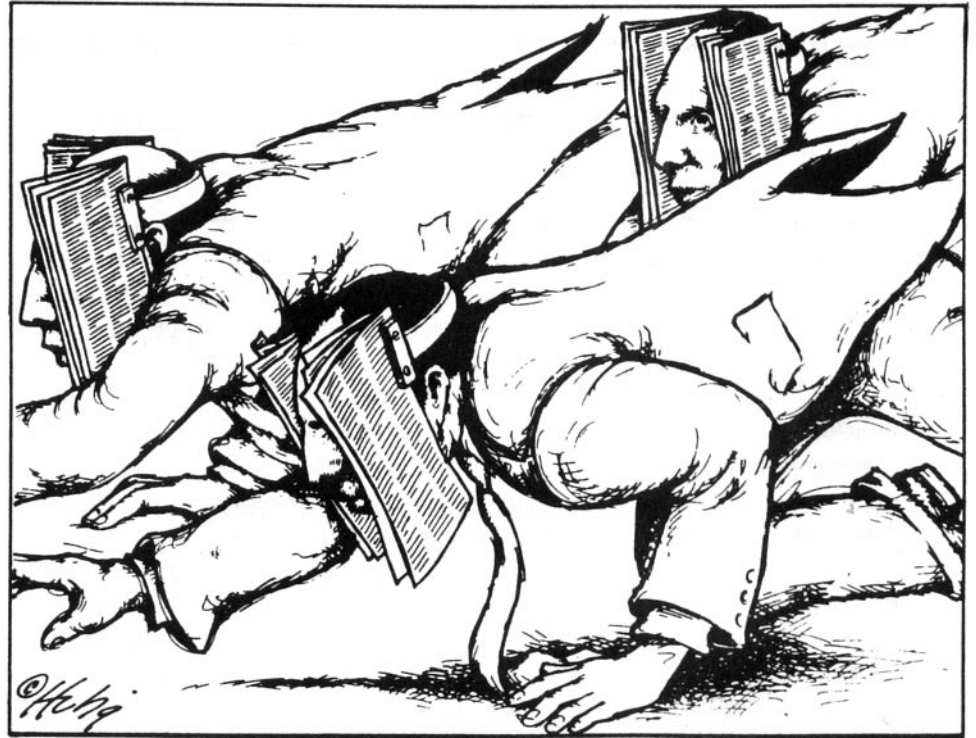
On the other hand, our allies Guatemala and El Salvador are among the world's worst terrorist states. So far in the 1980s they have slaughtered over 150,000 of their own citizens, with U.S. support and enthusiasm. They are simply violent terrorist states. They don't do anything for their population except kill them.

Honduras is a little different. In Honduras there's a government of the rich that robs the poor. It doesn't kill on the scale of its major allies, but a large part of the population is starving to death.

So in examining those 85 editorials, the next thing I looked for was how often those two facts about Nicaragua were mentioned. I discovered that the fact that the Sandinistas are radically different from our allies in that they don't slaughter their population was not mentioned once. The fact that they have carried out social reforms for the P90r was referred to in two phrases, both sort of buried. Two phrases in 85 columns on one crucial issue, zero phrases in 85 columns on another. That's really remarkable discipline.

### States of Siege

After that I went through all the editorials in the *New York Times* from 1980 to the present-just editorials---on El Salvador and Nicaragua. It's essentially the same story.



**The American attack on South Vietnam is out of history, down the memory hole.**



For example, in Nicaragua on October 15, 1985, the government instituted a state of siege. This is a country under attack by the regional superpower, and it did what we did in the Second World War in Hawaii: instituted a state of siege. Not too surprising. There was a huge uproar, editorials, denunciations, it shows that they're totalitarian Stalinist monsters, and so on.

Two days after that, on October 17, El Salvador renewed its state of siege. This is a state of siege that was instituted in March 1980 and had been renewed monthly since, and it's far more harsh than the Nicaraguan state of siege. It blocks freedom of expression, freedom of movement, virtually all civil rights. It's the framework within which the army we organized has carried out massive torture and slaughter. It's still doing it, in fact; all you have to do is look at the latest Amnesty International report.

The *New York Times* considered the Nicaraguan state of siege a great atrocity. The Salvadoran state of siege, far harsher in its measures and its application, literally was not mentioned. Furthermore, it has never been mentioned. There is not one word in about 160 editorials that mentions it, because that's our guys, so we can't talk about it. They're a budding democracy, so they can't be having a state of siege.

In fact, according to the editorial comment and the news reports on El Salvador, Duarte is heading a moderate centrist government under attack by terrorists of the left and terrorists of the right. This is complete nonsense. Every human rights investigation, the church in El Salvador, even the U.S. government in its own secret documents, concedes that the terrorism is being carried out by the Salvadoran government itself. The death squads are the security forces. Duarte is simply a front for terrorists. But you can't say that publicly. It gives the wrong image. -

Noam Chomsky is Professor of Linguistics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a long-time political activist and critic. His many books include *Towards a New Cold War*, *Language and Responsibility*, *Turning the Tide*, and with Edward S. Herman, *The Political Economy of Human Rights*. This article is excerpted from a transcript of an interview conducted in October 1986 by David Barsamian. For information about transcripts or cassette copies, write to David Barsamian, 1415 Dellwood, Boulder, CO 80302.

## Censoring Chomsky

Because Noam Chomsky ventures outside the boundaries of acceptable thought, his work suffers not only the automat-

ic neglect that he says characterizes our propaganda system, but also outright suppression. Though he is obviously a thorough researcher and an articulate writer, Chomsky has been forced to publish most of his works with small-circulation presses. They are then resoundingly ignored by mainstream reviewers.

This systematic silence was nearly broken and then forcibly reestablished in the early '70s. Warner Modular Publications, Inc., a subsidiary of Warner Communications, signed a contract with Chomsky and Edward S. Herman for a book called *Counter-Revolutionary Violence: Bloodbaths in Fact and in Propaganda*.

The manuscript was written and accepted, twenty thousand copies of the book were printed, an ad for it was placed in the *New York Review of Books*, and a promotion flyer listing it was prepared by the publisher. Then the parent company caught a whiff. Warner's William Sarnoff, offended by the book's criticism of the U.S. government, ordered that publication not take place.

The president of the Warner subsidiary, Claude McCaleb, resisted the edict from above, then tried to find a compromise. But Warner Communications was interested only in getting rid of the book. McCaleb and those on his staff who supported him were soon fired; the subsidiary itself was dissolved.

In France, the incident became a minor *cause celebre*. In the United States, *au contraire*. Despite efforts by Chomsky and Herman to bring this act of censorship and suppression to the attention of prominent journalists and columnists, it was never discussed in the mainstream press.

The book was finally published by South End Press under the title *The Political Economy of Human Rights*. For the sordid details of this incident, see the book's preface or the introduction to *The Thoreau Quarterly*, Winter/Spring 1984.

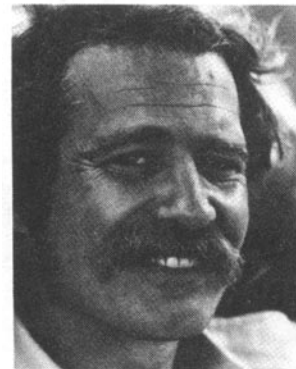
-Marcy Darnovsky

# PHOTOGRAPHY AND PROPAGANDA

DAVID LEVI STRAUSS

Richard Cross and John Hoagland were photojournalists who worked and died in Central America—Cross in 1983, at age 33, returning from a contra camp on the Honduran-Nicaraguan border; and Hoagland in 1984, at age 36, in a firefight just south of Suchitoto, El Salvador. Hoagland and Cross came of age and were politicized during the time when American news coverage of Vietnam mobilized people against the war. Both men were idealists: they believed that by showing the horror and desolation of war they could hasten its end; that by “photographing the truth” they could influence public opinion and public policy and change the world.

■ Both Hoagland and Cross were also highly shhhhgkilled, prize-winning professionals, regarded by many of their peers as two of the best in the business. They worked for the major wire services—Associated Press, United Press International, and the Gamma Liaison photo agency—and their photographs appeared regularly in news weeklies and in major publications around the world. ■ My interest in Hoagland and Cross began in late 1985, when the Eye Gallery in San Francisco mounted a show of their work. The exhibit included 50 photographs mounted under glass in the gallery, along with another room full of their work as it actually appeared in the national and international press. The contrast between these two contexts was a revelation. ■ We see news photographs every day. They are anonymously absorbed into our superficial reading of “the news.” Ubiquitous, unremarkable, they pass unquestioned into our sense of “the world.” And yet we are profoundly affected by these images and by the context in which they appear. There is a particular kind of “photographic education” going on all around us, every day, in the mass media. ■ The seeds for my subsequent inquiries are in a statement made by John Hoagland: “I don’t believe in objectivity. Everyone has a point of view. But what I say is I won’t be a *propagandist* for anyone.” The medium of photography has had to struggle with the question of objectivity since Messrs. Niepce and Daguerre first uncovered the process that, in the words of the time, “gives [Nature] the power to reproduce herself.” Hoagland knew that there is no objectivity in photography. There are only *choices* based on one’s point of view—and the deceptive *illusion* of objectivity. ■ As Bertolt Brecht wrote in 1931, “The tremendous development of photojournalism has contributed practically nothing to the revelation of the truth about the conditions in this world. On the contrary, photography, in the hands of the bourgeoisie, has become a terrible weapon against the truth. The vast amount of pictured material that is being disgorged daily by the press and that seems to have the character of the truth serves in reality only to obscure the facts. The camera is just as capable of lying as the typewriter.” Before 1880, illustrations in the popular press were limited to engravings. Since the first halftone was produced on March 4, 1880 (for an image entitled “Shantytown” in the *New York Daily Herald*), photographs have functioned in the news as evidence to support the contentions of the accompanying text: “a picture is worth a thousand words.”



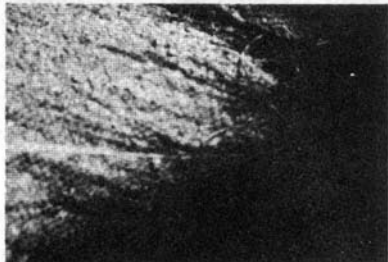
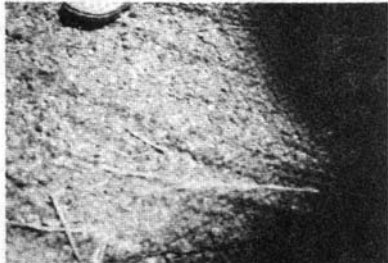
John Hoagland



Richard Cross

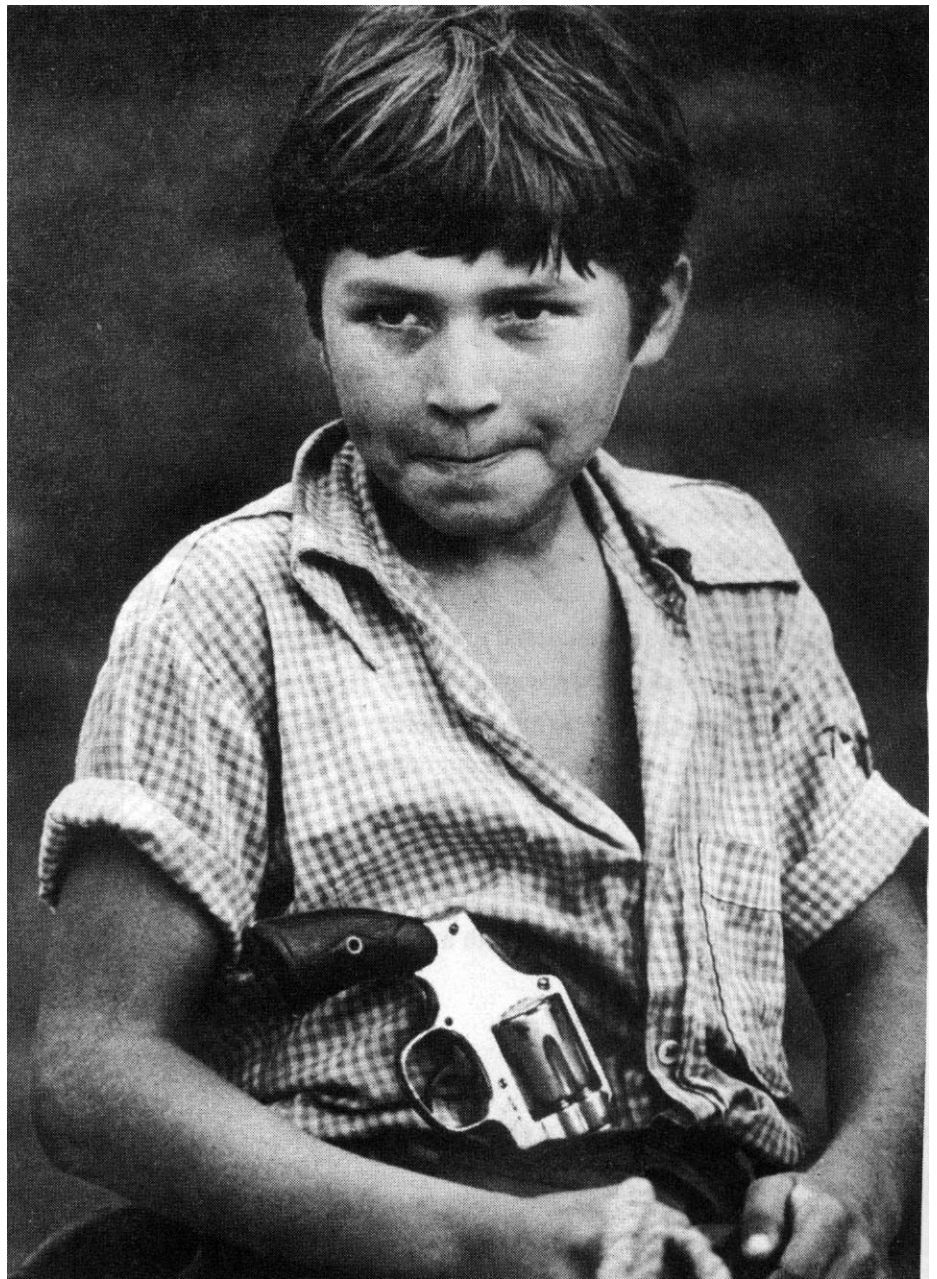


The last six frames shot by John Hoagland recovered from his camera after his death, March 16, 1984



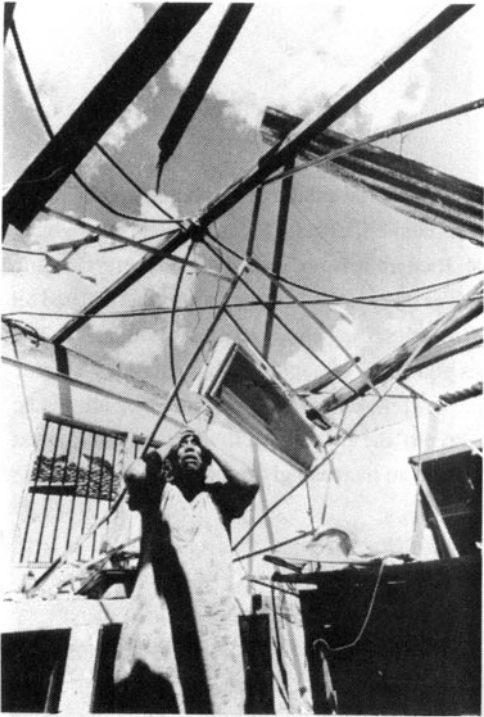
John Hoagland

A young Salvadoran boy, a member of the guerillas, carries a gun on horseback.

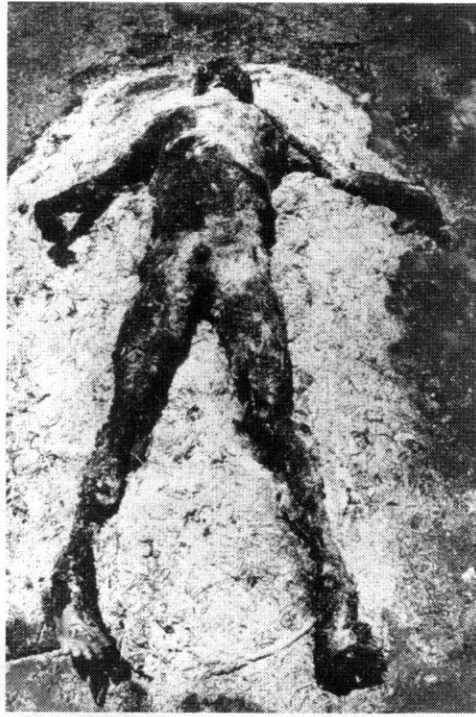


John Hoagland





Richard Cross



Richard Cross

Left;

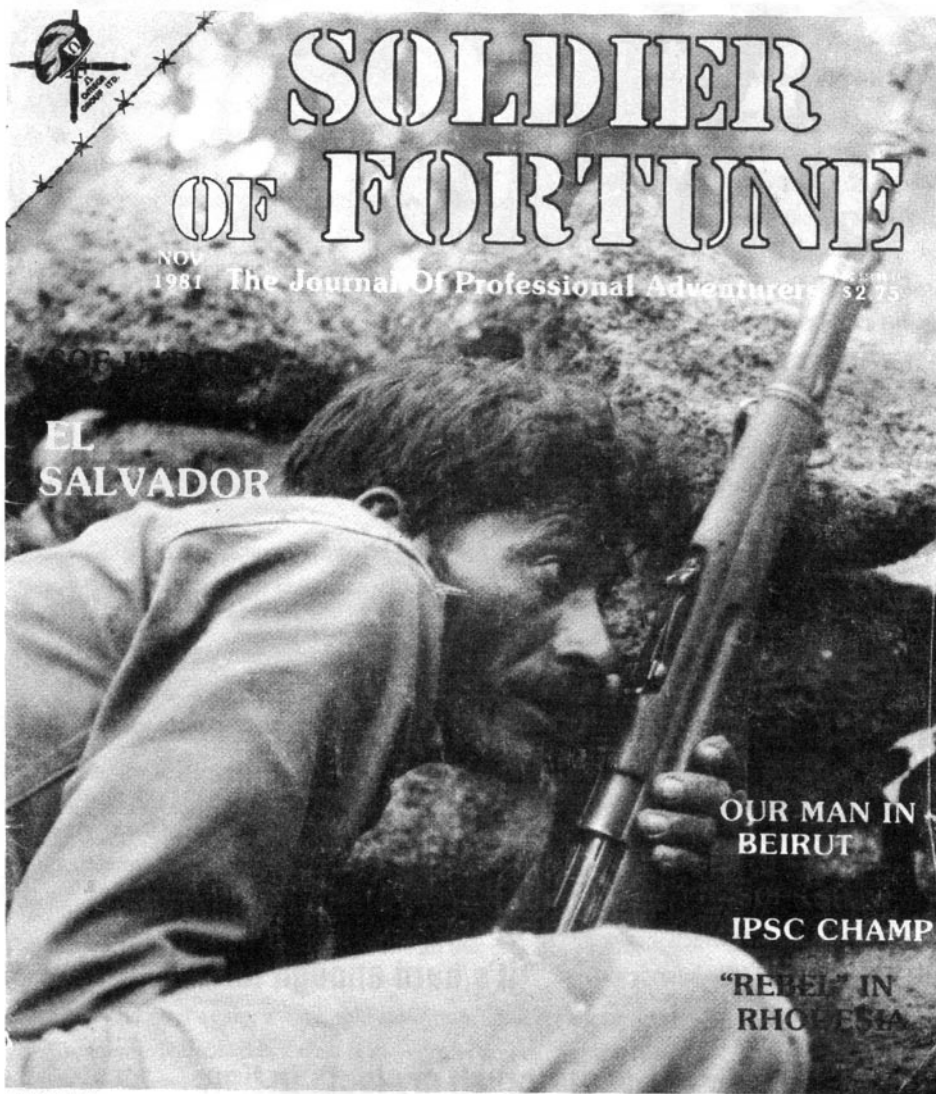
A woman whose house was hit by rocket fire from a government plane is overcome with grief.

Right:

A burned body left inside a cemetery in San Salvador.







John Hoagland

*News photographs have two functions: to encourage feelings of distance and superiority in the spectator-buyer, and to provide vicarious thrills and chills for the spectator-buyer.*

*This photograph by John Hoagland was sold by the Gamma Liaison photo agency to Soldier of Fortune: The Journal of Professional Adventurers (November 1981). The same month, Hoagland's work also appeared in Mother Jones.*

*Soldier of Fortune functions mostly as a sort of pornography for the powerless. Instead of naked and abused women, there are lots of pictures of guns. The fantasies being promulgated here certainly overlap with those of Newsweek, and the effects of the imagery in propaganda terms are very similar. The motivations and intentions are less veiled in Soldier of Fortune, however, and the techniques less sophisticated.*

*David Levi Strauss is a photographer, poet, and critic. He writes regularly on film, photography, and art, and is the editor and publisher of ACTS: A Journal of New Writing. An essay version of this article was awarded the top prize in the competition for the Reva & David Logan Grants in Support of New Writing in Photography at Boston University.*

# VOX

P O P U L I

NINA ELIASOPH

While pollsters were celebrating America's love affair with Ollie North this summer, I was doing my own sampling of public opinion. I interviewed one hundred people about the Iran-contra hearings: shoppers at a working class suburban mall, secretaries waiting for a bus home or at lunch, tourists at cable car stops and at Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco, bored workers behind counters and at hot dog stands.

Many opinion researchers would disapprove of my methods. The feeling is mutual. I listened to what people had to say instead of feeding them multiple choice answers-

which often amounts to putting the words of the pollsters and politicians into their mouths.

One of the ways that polls distort is by isolating individuals, plumbing private opinion. But public opinion, like language itself, comes from interaction, from sharing common sense about what makes the world tick. So I usually interviewed people in groups.

My interviews ranged in length from ten minutes to an hour. I began by asking passersby what they thought about the Iran-contra affair. From there, my questions varied from group to group, person to person, depending on what they brought up. There were some questions I asked almost everybody: whether they thought the truth would come out in the hearings; why they were following the issue or not.

Because of these methods, my portrait of American public opinion is completely different from the patriotic caricature that emerged from the summer's polls-though the polls themselves showed that even at the height of his popularity, North was considered a hero by only 18% of Americans. It was the journalists who interpreted this as "Olliemania sweeping America."

Here, in order of the frequency in which they were voiced, are the main themes found in the interviews.

**"It's hard enough to**

**brush my teeth in time**

**for work. When am I**

**gonna think about**

**Oliver North?**

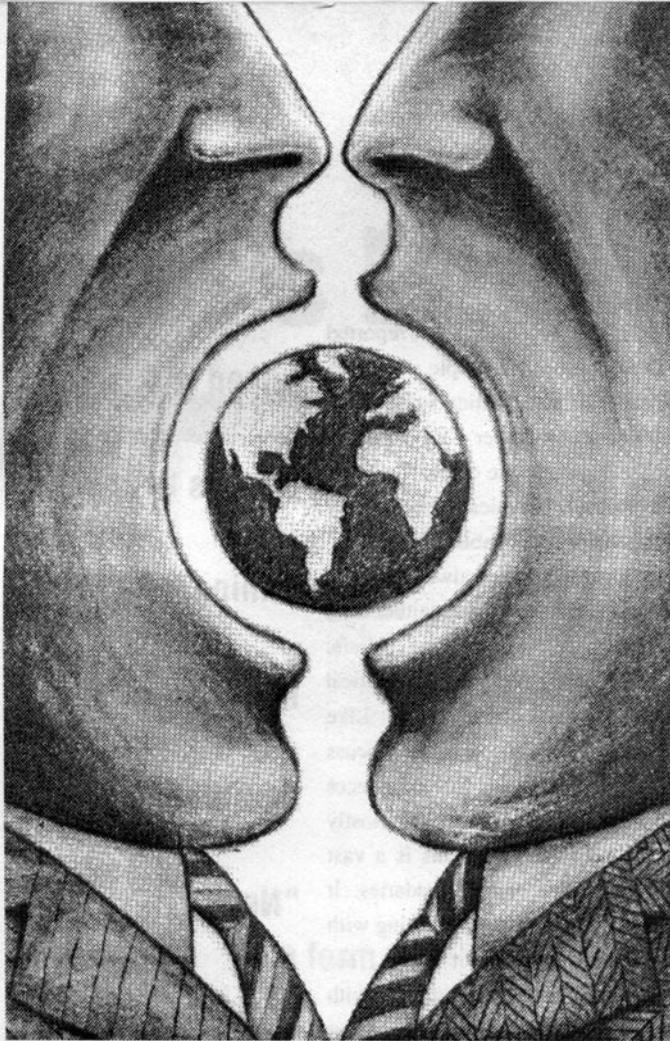
## **Disbelief and Disgust**

From Arizona Republican to Air Force recruit to retired Nebraskan nurse to secretary to student, almost no one thought the hearings would bring out the truth. In fact, only one woman answered this question affirmatively. for work.

The next most prevalent response was disgust with and distrust of "them," coupled with expressions of cynicism and powerlessness. One man put it this way: "I gonna think about live in a shack in South City-I don't think my opinion would go far."

Many considered the hearings "a big joke." Ac- Oliver North?" cording to one woman, "Everybody knows ... that it's just a big show." After sev-





Dan Hibig

eral such comments, I started asking why the hearings were being treated as such an important event. Most of the responses centered on the self-interest of politicians, press, and lawyers: "That's what they're paid for" and "They gotta do something with their time." One man talked about Congressmen strutting their stuff in anticipation of the coming election, "so concerned they got every hair in place and shaved and all that crap, they never get anything done."

Over and over again, I was told that "they" don't want or need "our" opinions; that all "they" want is money and power. Some explanations of the motives of politicians went far beyond benign neglect:

"We hear them contradicting so much we contradict ourselves, and that's just what they want-keep us confused and not really knowing about issues, right?"

A U.S. Navy man believed that the government is involved in drug smuggling; a few people offered the idea that Casey was "bumped off" by officials who needed a scapegoat who wouldn't talk back.

### Confusion and Ignorance

In many cases, disbelief and disgust were coupled with confessions of confusion. Asked what the investigation was about, a plasterer responded: "How they use all that money. It don't seem right, does it? I'm sorry. I'm confused. I don't know that much to make a deci-

sion. All I hear is what I see on the news. And I get confused."

A good number said that they have no time to spare for news: "It's hard enough for me to get out of bed and brush my teeth in time for work and take work serious. What are you gonna do, come home from work and think about Oliver North?"

Those who were willing to venture opinions were often wrong about basic facts. One construction worker, for example, told me that the contras are "a bunch of Commies." Two others thought the Iran-contra affair was related to the tanker war in the Persian Gulf. Another explained that the arms deal was a strategy to reduce the deficit: "We sell arms to them, make money, pass off a little debt."

Many people told me they try to avoid the news because it's too upsetting. Reagan's finger is on the button, one said, and "if he screws up, I could die tomorrow without ever knowing what having a baby feels like. So the best thing to do is live life day by day."

Over and over again, people volunteered the idea that however much or little else they knew, they believed that the government should spend money at home, not abroad: "The U.S. should leave all them countries and put money into domestic things like schools, because kids are getting dumber and dumber here."

For every person who spoke to me, two refused. More women than men declined to be interviewed. A few times, I found myself on the bus home with people who hadn't wanted to talk to me and asked why. They often answered that they were embarrassed about their ignorance.

### Audience Reaction

If the hearings were "just a big show," as several people told me, there was quite a bit of confusion about whether the actors should be primarily judged for their performances. A man from Cincinnati began by contradicting himself: "Oliver North is a hero. No, he's a good man on TV. He did a good job." Here's the rest of the dialogue:

**"It's a whole different type of world, not like we think, with right and wrong, today and tomorrow."**

Q: Which-a good man on TV, or a hero?

A: He comes across good on television.

Q: What does that mean--he's a good person or a good actor?

A: He's a good person. He's shielding someone higher than him.

As in any theater, measuring one's own reaction to public events against those of the rest



of the audience can be confusing. Most people defiantly asserted that North was not a hero, that either the polls or the people were wrong. A retired Nebraskan nurse puzzled, "If Mr. North himself said he lied, even if he is sort of a hero, he's become one by lying, so I'm a bit confused about it all."

When I questioned people explicitly about politics as theater, most assumed I was asking if the Iran-contra affair was interesting: was it a fourstar flick or a dud? About half the interviewees said that it was important to watch the news because "a good citizen should know about the workings of our government" (though many who voiced this political homily continued with a confession about their lack of understanding).

The other half wanted politics to be entertaining. Their attitude was summed up by the housewife from Scranton who said, "News isn't my favorite show."

#### Faith and Trust

Finally we get to the relatively small number who expressed sentiments like the ones the polls said were widespread: trust in government officials ("they know what they're doing, they're professionals, so let them keep secrets"), tolerance for secrecy ("we shouldn't be airing our dirty linen for the whole world to see"), sympathy for North ("they keep asking the poor guy questions over and over. ... it's turning into harassment").

After the Ollie North Show, more answers of these types appeared. The notion that government officials should be allowed to play by different rules was expressed by a real estate broker: "It's a whole different type of world, not like we think, with right and wrong, today and tomorrow ... they got people taking people as hostages, trying to be as secret as they can."

But even among this group, no one thought the truth would come out, and most expressed at least some of the distinctly disillusioned sentiments already mentioned.

#### Untidy Conclusions

It's not easy to fit the contradictory and self-contradictory statements that my free-form interviews elicited into a coherent picture. How can you tell what people "really" believe? Is the only coherent opinion the one that holds that I don't affect politics, politics doesn't affect me, and the news should focus on pleasant things?

Critics of traditional polls have pointed out that respondents give opinions even when they know nothing about a topic, in order to avoid admitting ignorance. Did the people I talked with do the same, grabbing at straws to answer a question they just hadn't thought much about? Were they mouthing platitudes?

In the '50s, researchers reported a larger portion of people willing to voice faith in our political system than I found this sum-

mer. Have people really become more cynical? Or are they sounding cynical because they think that's fashionable?

Language is not always a direct reflection of beliefs, but neither does it change without touching beliefs: language can't help but color political reasoning, and vice versa. Like dreams, the words used to discuss politics might sketch bits and pieces of a larger picture of the world, mostly unconsciously held. This is a vast terrain with uncertain boundaries. It can be explored only by talking with people on their own terms, not through polls that present them with lists of prepackaged questions about discrete political issues.

Nina Eliasoph is a radio producer and a graduate student in the Department of Sociology at the University of California at Berkeley, specializing in the analysis of popular culture. She is a contributing editor of Propaganda Review.

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# That's Entertainment

J A Y R O S E N

**As a form of  
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audience into  
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As a one-way communication device, television is an instrument of social control, a way to engage and influence many people without granting them the right to talk back. This familiar interpretation of broadcasting as a social form can be taken a step further: it is possible to view the entire enterprise of television as propagandistic.

The apparatus itself—large, centralized transmission facilities and sets in every home that can only receive signals—reinforces a pattern of passive dependence. From this most basic level on up to its daily content, television returns the message inherent in the very idea of broadcasting: watch, don't do.

Different forms of television programming can be seen as different ways to impress upon the population the rewards of spectatorship. Entertainment is merely the name we give to the most obvious case.

## **Where the Action Is**

As a form of propaganda, entertainment's strategy is to convert the passivity of the audience into the image of its opposite. Sometimes this is a simple naming trick. Take, for example, the "action show," a type of television drama named for the exchange of violence among criminals and cops. In an action show, action is what the characters do and what happens to their cars and helicopters. By glorifying these kinds of action, the passivity of the audience is reinforced and renamed as its opposite.

A true "action show" would be self-cancelling, as the crazed newscaster Howard Beale demonstrated in the film *Network*. Beale urges his viewers to rise out of their chairs, open the windows and scream out to each other his motto, "I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore!"

If the audience obeys, it is no longer an audience. To use television as Beale does is to abandon it for a recovered public realm, in which citizens are ready to act, listen, and talk to one another. So contrary is this to the logic of broadcasting that only an insane person would try it. That, of course, is the plot device in the film. Beale's assassination is a ritual purification of network thinking, a kind of witch-burning meant to dramatize the permissible limits of broadcasting as a social tool.

## **Donahue Does It**

Phil Donahue is fully within these limits. He hands television over to citizens only to take it back whenever he senses the momentum of the show weakening. The tick-tocking of Donahue's microphone, to and fro between host and housewife, is a teasing rhythm meant to defer its suggested climax: the takeover of television by the silent and the dispossessed.

Donahue imagines himself a populist, the talk show host who believes ordinary people have "something to say." But his loyalty cannot be to free speech, the imperfections of which drive a TV producer wild with impatience. In granting the audience its right to speak, Donahue is not sincere. There are no apologies when he jerks the microphone away and heads back down the steps.



As a piece of propaganda that presents broadcasting as a forum for free speech, the Donahue program is quite complex. With its call-in link to home viewers, it seems to offer another reversal of the audience's traditionally silent and inert role. But this too is symbolic and limited. The whole exercise has about it the air of a show trial, in which rights are granted only for their theatrical value.

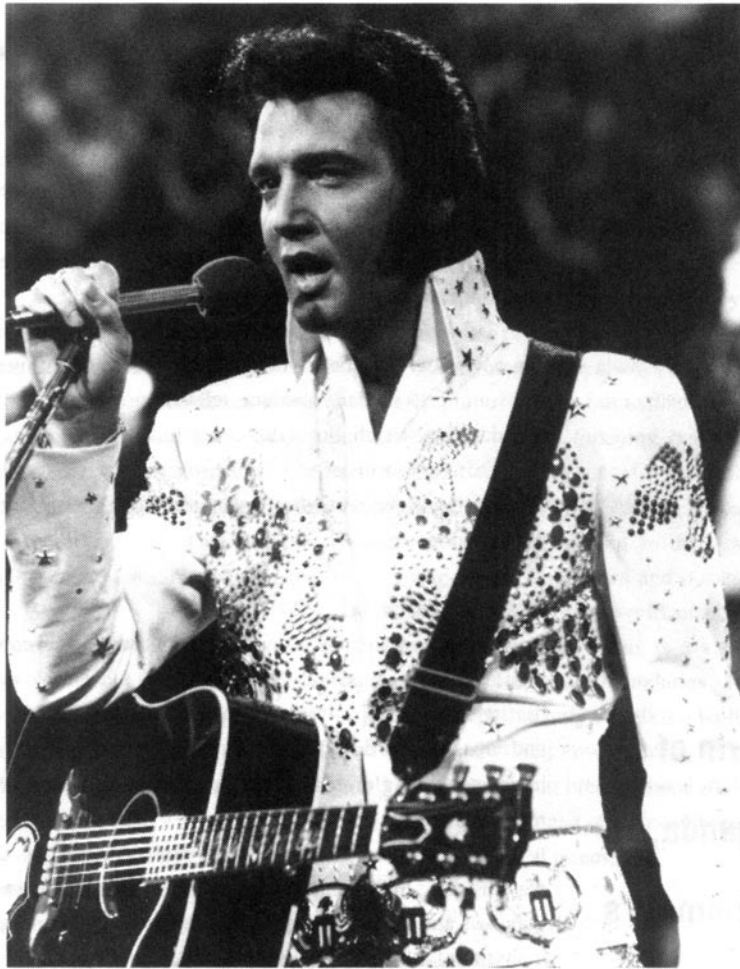
In the end, Donahue's function is to cut people off and enforce for television a higher imperative than free speech: to keep things moving. It is his movement from speaker to speaker that ultimately keeps the audience still-and therefore still an audience. Donahue moves to make sure you don't.

### Sight and Sound

The baser forms of entertainment use movement to enforce passivity in much cruder ways. The language is instructive: "a sight and sound spectacular," "an entertainment extravaganza," "a cavalcade of stars." The effort is to leave the recipient dumbstruck by the force of the superlative as it rushes toward exhaustion. Where language falters in conveying the essence of the spectacular, the visuals take over. A big production number in, say, the Miss America pageant or the Academy Awards show will attempt to overwhelm the audience with movement-legs, sets, costumes, and especially the movement of light.

Most of the visual shorthands for entertainment involve the play of light: the blinking lights of the theater marquee, the criss-crossing spotlights of a Hollywood opening, the neon lights of Broadway and Las Vegas. The symbol of Elvis Presley's decay into a mere entertainer is the glittery costume he wore at his Vegas stage shows.

Glitter "reads" entertainment because its purpose is merely



to stun the audience with the sparkle of light-at the deepest level, to blind the spectator into submission. Thus Presley was called "the King" by his fans. By dressing in glitter, Elvis signaled a sad kinship with Liberace, a self-declared entertainer whose act was gradually refined into pure spectacle.

In all spectacle, the effort is to leave the audience awestruck and, in a way, helpless. Liberace would stand before his fans and let them adore the sight of his diamondspangled outfits. The energy evoked by such a display is disabling for the audience. The light reflecting off the diamonds is intended to blind; the fury of the big production number encourages its passive consumption as "sight and sound." These very terms, now an entertainment cliché,

are quite accurate ways of describing the goals of the entertainer as spectacle-maker: to get the audience to watch This is as close to pure consumption as and listen to sights and sounds. culture can get.

Television graphics present the spectacular in its most concentrated form. Using computer animation, image-makers are creating a world of pure movement unbound by the laws of physics. Logos twist and zoom in abstract space; layers of language curve toward the viewer, only to separate and reform as some new term; animated cities spring magically from maps and lure the spectator in as if on a guided missile.

It is significant that some of the heaviest uses of the new graphics are promotions for the networks themselves-in effect, ads for television watching as a way of life. ("Come Home to NBC" was the theme of one such campaign last season.) In an effort to present television as worth watching, and watching as something worth doing, the networks create little mini-spectacles, light shows in which the company name is coronated. In these ten-second fantasies, television attempts to re-enchant itself by a display of im-

age-wealth. So rich am [ in visual delights, says television, that, here, I'll waste a few just to entertain my subjects.

### **The Function of Slick**

Visual sophistication is ordinarily employed toward more practical ends, like instant replays in sporting events and lead-ins to news-casts. These techniques create the atmosphere of slick professionalism we are accustomed to seeing on TV, an atmosphere that itself has propaganda value. It suggests a reason for the concentration of television in a few hands: that those hands are expert at producing good, or what is sometimes called "broadcast quality," television.

Never a neutral practice, professionalism in broadcasting has the effect of intimidating any lay person who picks up a video camera. More important, it systematically spoils the audience for anything other than the current level of slickness. This is one of the most pervasive effects of the mass media: the consigning of whole fields of expression to the art houses, or, worse, to a psycho-social territory that, for lack of a fit name, can be called "the boring."

The manufacture of boredom is an important segment of what Hans Enzensberger termed the "consciousness industry," the mass producers of entertainment. The strategy is by now familiar. By pushing the frontiers of image and sound outward for no other purpose than to gain an audience, the biggest firms defoliate the field for less powerful producers, forcing them either to adopt the production values of the big boys or aim for a smaller audience that is reacting against the aesthetics of the marketplace.

Independent film, video, and recording companies all face this pressure; the space in which they might offer an alternative to entertainment is continually being squeezed by the majors.

This power to narrow the field of reception is exercised directly on individuals: it comes to bear on the body itself through changes in what the ear regards as a pleasant sound, what the eye considers an interesting sight. By turning the bodies of the audience against the independents, the consciousness industry heads off one threat but creates another—the possibility that some limit will be reached in the audience's sensitivity to change.

### **Ultimate Entertainment**

Among audiophiles, some people are known to have "golden ears," meaning that they can hear the differences in sound quality that separates components at the upper end of the price scale. For those with less sensitive ears, the extra \$600 spent on a better model can be enjoyed only as a technical fact—better numbers on a page.

The implications in the visual realm are interesting to contemplate. Image-makers may one day seek out the "golden eyes" that can see the advantages the highest quality imagery affords. So far the consciousness industry has not realized that it is exhausting

the resource on which it depends—the audience's capacity to respond to stunning sights and slicker sounds.

The consumption of consumers themselves is too troubling a prospect for the consciousness industry to face. And yet that is the logical end of the entertainment project: a population stripped of its will to muster the awe, or even the interest, the spectacle seems to demand.

### **Last Laughs**

So strained are the various attempts to prop up the spectacle that they create a second industry out of parody. Thus the live comedy boom throughout the 1980s and the rise of David Letterman as a resident wise guy in the entertainment household.

Parody is a kind of negative empowerment of the audience. It empowers because it gives back to things their right names. The ridiculously inflated is presented as ridiculously inflated. The laughs that result are the sound of the audience rediscovering its collective wits in the shared recognition of how stupid the thing being parodied really is.

But the joke may still be on us. When the balloon has been popped and the conceit exposed, the functions of parody are over. No political program can be made of parody.

The limits of parody and its target-hype are the same. Neither can provide the good will that makes communication possible in the first place. Both share features with Reaganomics, in that they light up the present by consuming the future. Like so much of the present order, the situation is inherently unstable.

A population of spectators is expensive to maintain because it believes less and less in the reality from which it is encouraged to escape, making the spectacle seem not so special, its puncture by parody not as sharp. But there is unlikely to be a change in direction. To lower the intensity level of the consciousness industry and thus preserve its future would require massive coordination and a completely different way of thinking.

Jay Rosen is an assistant professor of journalism at New York University and all associate of the Center for War, Peace, and the News Media.

**The manufacture of boredom is an important part of the consciousness industry.**

## What Reagan Reads

***Terrorism: How the West Can Win***, edited by Benjamin Netanyahu, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 1986, 254 pages, \$18.95.

By all accounts, Ronald Reagan has a limited number of waking hours available to him. He reads very little, preferring movies, television, and three-by-five index cards. But in a memo released by the Iran-contra committee, former National Security Advisor Admiral John Poindexter notes that in May 1986, the President had spoken of reading a book.

The work thus privileged is called *Terrorism: How the West Can Win*. It is edited by Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations and a recognized expert on the subject. At the time of the presidential perusal, Poindexter said, Reagan was extremely frustrated by Congressional refusal to approve contra aid and was searching for "a way to take action unilaterally to provide assistance." According to the Poindexter memo, one of the book's essays, written by neoconservative legal scholar Walter Berns, was of special interest to Reagan.

Having actually read Berns' contribution, I can report that the essay is to historical analysis as the impenetrable missile shield of Star Wars is to the laws of physics. But that's beside the point. The important thing is Berns' comment that Lincoln fought a war that was not declared and "without congressional authorization."

To Reagan, this seems to have been *carte blanche*. Leaping over logic in a single bound, he compared Lincoln's Civil War with his sordid covert operation to overthrow the Nicaraguan government, and according to the Poindexter memo--concluded that he too could bypass Congress and "take action unilaterally to provide assistance [to the contras]."

Benjamin Netanyahu, not your ordinary editor, was no doubt pleased with Rea-

gan's conclusions. In fact, as I discovered in the course of my research, Netanyahu's book and Netanyahu himself are intimately connected with the Reagan presidency and with its dependence on the Israeli government for ideological direction, particularly on the issue of terrorism.

I first came across Benjamin Netanyahu's name in 1981, as I was trying to discover how "international terrorism" had become overnight--literally with Reagan's inauguration--a main concern of U.S. foreign policy. With barely a whimper of protest from the mainstream media, this vague spectre pushed Carter's focus on "human rights" completely offstage. ~

My search led me to a report from the July 1979 Jerusalem Conference on International Terrorism. The conference was organized by Netanyahu, who was then executive director of a "private" foundation called the Jonathan Institute."

As I read the conference proceedings, I discovered that the "independent research and educational foundation" behind the Jonathan Institute was a thinly disguised front for the Israeli government. The Institute's main project, which succeeded beyond all expectations, was the instigation of a deliberate, well-financed, worldwide media campaign to elevate "international terrorism" to the status of a "Red Scare."

The Jonathan Institute conference brought together top Israeli government and intelligence officials with many of the leading lights in the New Right and neo-conservative movements that were sweeping America--government officials, politicians soon to occupy top posts in the Reagan Administration, high-ranking former U.S. intelligence officers, prominent intellectuals, and influential journalists. (See sidebar.)

The cast of characters also included a small group of neo-fascist West Europeans, and dis informationists who were to play a key role in shaping the Reagan presidency's propaganda campaigns: Claire

Sterling, Michael Ledeen, and Arnaud de Borchgrave. All of them have close ties to American, West European, and Israeli intelligence agencies. To maintain a small semblance of balance, a few liberal politicians and journalists were invited to attend.

In his opening remarks to the conference, Israeli President Yitzhak Navon called terrorism an "infectious disease." No country was immune; it could strike anywhere at any time and was capable of reaching epidemic proportions. In the book jacket blurb of *Terrorism: How the West Can Win*, the *Wall Street Journal* put it like this: "The first political task at hand ... is to cut the idea of terrorism loose from the connection it now has in many Western liberal minds with notions of national liberation and social justice; only then can terror be viewed plainly as a crime and a threat. But [the] second task is to establish another kind of connection and make people see terrorism not as just a random occurrence but as a tactic in the Soviet war against the West."

Having ruptured the social chain of cause and effect, having removed the subject of terrorism from the realm of rational discourse, all sorts of manipulation became possible. An important item on the agenda of the Israeli propaganda experts at the Jonathan Institute conference was to equate "terrorist" with "Palestinian," an effort that prepared world opinion for the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the massacres at Sabra and Chatilla--events that guaranteed that terrorism will continue in the Middle East for at least another generation.

Within days of the close of the 1979 conference, a global media explosion on "international terrorism" began. The Jonathan Institute publication *World Press Coverage* boasted that "the major themes of the Conference were echoed in newspapers, magazines, radio, and television in many parts of the world .. the Conference's

message penetrated into many of the leading newspapers and journals in the United States, Western Europe, South America, and elsewhere." Eighteen months later, no one was unduly surprised when "international terrorism" became a centerpiece of the Reagan Administration's foreign policy. In June 1984, a second Jonathan Institute conference was held in Washington, D.C., one result of which was Netanyahu's "how-to" book. The 1984 conference was marked by Secretary of State George Shultz's public acceptance of the Israeli "active strategy" against terrorism-according to which the best defense against terrorism is preemptive attack, even if it is unconstitutional and illegal. This was a coup for Netanyahu, who had worked hard to accomplish it as deputy to Israeli Ambassador to the U.S., Moshe Arens.

A new propagandist theme surfaced at the 1984 second conference, a theme that is still being echoed in right-wing and neoconservative magazines: the need for a new "Western" alliance against terrorism-an alliance that would supersede NATO and deliver the coup de grace to the United Nations. The new alliance would be dominated by the U.S.; Israel would be anti-terrorist and propaganda mentor.

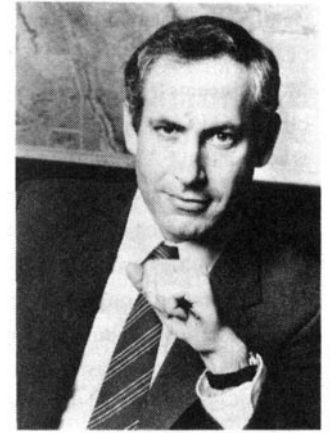
With or without formal recognition, this is a role that Israeli government officials have been playing since the earliest days of the Reagan presidency. •

1. Stephen Engleberg, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 7-11-87, page 7.
2. *International Terrorism: The Propaganda War*, by Philip Paull. M.A. Thesis, San Francisco State University, 1982.
3. *International Terrorism: Challenge and Response*. Proceedings of the Jerusalem Conference on International Terrorism. Transaction Press, New Brunswick, NJ, 1982.

## Partial list of participants at the Jonathan Institute Conferences, 1979 and 1984

### The Americans

Vice President George Bush  
 Attorney General Edwin Meese  
 Secretary of State George Shultz  
 Former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger  
 CIA Director William Webster  
 Former UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick  
 Congressperson Jack Kemp: R-NY  
 Senator Henry Jackson: D-WA (now deceased)  
 Paul Laxalt: former senator (R-NV) and Reagan confidante  
 Senator Alan Cranston: D-CA  
 Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan: D-NY  
 Professor Edward Teller (father of H-bomb and Star Wars)  
 AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland  
 Professor Richard Pipes (author of George Bush's Team B report)  
 Major General George Keegan: former head of Air Force Intelligence  
 Ben Wattenberg: media personality, American Enterprise Institute  
 Arnaud de Borchgrave: Washington Times Editor-in-Chief  
 Claire Sterling: author of *The Terror Network*  
 Michael Ledeen: National Security Council terrorism expert  
 Norman Podhoretz: editor, *Commentary* magazine  
 Midge Decter: chair, Committee to Save the Free World  
 George F. Will: political columnist and Reagan debate coach  
 Ted Koppel: anchor for ABC's *Nightline*  
 Charles Krauthammer: senior editor, *New Republic* magazine  
 Bob Woodward: editor, *Washington Post*  
 Arthur J. Goldberg: former Supreme Court Associate Justice



Benjamin Netanyahu

Thomas Victor

### The Israelis

Former Prime Minister Menachem Begin  
 Prime Minister Shimon Peres  
 Minister of Defense Yitzhak Rabin  
 President Chaim Herzog: former chief of IDF Intelligence  
 Moshe Arens: former Minister of Defense, Israeli Ambassador to U.S.  
 Yitzhak Navon: former president of Israel  
 Chief Justice Meir Shamgar  
 Major General Meir Amit: former Chief of Mossad  
 Major General Shlomo Gazit: former Chief of IDF Intelligence  
 Major General Aharon Yariv: former Chief of IDF Intelligence  
 Professor Benjamin Netanyahu: founding chair of Jonathan Institute

*Phil Paull served in U.S. Army Intelligence during World War II, helped lead the first post-war student strike in 1949, and was cited for contempt by the Ohio Un-American Activities Committee during the McCarthy period. Since 1982, he has focused on research and writing on international terrorism, particularly on the exploitation of this issue by both the United States and Israeli governments. He is a contributing editor of Propaganda Review.*

## **FAIR: Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting**

Ever wonder why you never see representatives of SANE or the Nuclear Freeze on network news-talk shows about arms control? Or why right-wing propagandist Reed Irvine, founder of the laughably misnamed AIM (Accuracy in Media), seems to be the resident "media critic" on ABC's *Viewpoint*? Well, so did Jeff Cohen, who founded FAIR to bring a little reason and balance to the mainstream media's coverage and analysis of major public issues. FAIR's excellent monthly newsletter, *EXTRA!*, reports on the organization's ongoing efforts and contains first-rate articles about the way the establishment press puts inconsistently conservative (and self-serving) "spin" on the news.

A year's subscription to *EXTRA!* is \$24. Order it from FAIR, 666 Broadway, Suite 400, New York, NY 10012.

## **Paper Tiger Television**

PAPER TIGER is an extraordinary collective of media activists who have been working since the 1970s to produce videotapes analyzing the full range of American media institutions and to distribute them to schools, libraries, and local public access stations. Proud of its low-cost, "home-made" style, Paper Tiger offers programs from *Noam Chomsky Reads the New York Times* to *Varda Burstyn Reads Playboy* to *Tuli Kupferberg Reads Rolling Stone*. Well over 100 titles are available—on the foreign press, on major stories, on the alternative press, and on the establishment press. The tapes are both enlightening and extremely useful as organizing tools.

Individual titles rent for \$50. A full catalog is available from Paper Tiger TV, 339 Lafayette Street, New York, NY 10012.

## **The Chicago Media Critic**

Bill Nigut, Sr. speaks with a growl and smokes old stogies—or at least he ought to, since he brings the style and intensity of the classic old-fashioned newspaperman to his monthly reports on all that is wrong with the contemporary American news media. Calling himself "the conscience of the American media," Nigut delights in dissecting "classic examples of bad journalism" and is especially harsh (and rightly so) on what he calls "America's newest endangered species: Washington reporters with noses for news." Every issue is a gem.

Annual subscription fee is \$15. Write *The Chicago Media Critic*, 8235 Karlov Avenue, Skokie, IL 60076.

## **Union for Democratic Communications**

Do you think "our media today is overwhelmingly owned or controlled by the capitalist class?" Do you furthermore "reject a media system that functions for the benefit of bureaucratic elites?" Then the UDC is for you—they fighting words are from the preamble of its bylaws. UDC members are leftist academics, activists, and media producers; the group has yearly conferences and regional meetings, a membership directory and media bibliography, and a bi-monthly newsletter.

Dues are \$20 regular, \$10 for students/low income. Contact the Union for Democratic Communications, 5338 College, #C, Oakland, CA 94618.

## **Center for War, Peace, and the News Media**

What stories does the press get wrong, or miss entirely? What can be done to improve the coverage of arms control and the peace movement? Of the next summit? Of Star Wars?

These questions and other issues related to press coverage of the arms race are addressed in the Center's excellent bimonthly bulletin, *Deadline*. Jay Rosen, whose work appears in this issue of *Propaganda Review*, is a center associate and frequent contributor to *Deadline*.

Center membership (which includes a subscription to *Deadline*) is \$25 for individuals, \$50 for institutions. Make checks payable to New York University and mail to Center, 10 Washington Place, Fourth Floor, New York, NY 10003.

## **David Barsamian's Cassette Catalogue**

Put some thought into your cassette library. David Barsamian's catalogue lists dozens of interviews and programs on politics, history, poetry, literature, music, and religion. Among them are the interviews from which the article by Noam Chomsky in this issue of *Propaganda Review* was drawn. Other programs related to propaganda include Daniel Sheehan on the roots of the Con-tractate scandal, John Stockwell on covert wars and the ideology that fuels them, Michael Parenti on the politics of the mass media, and Alexander Cockburn on the media and the New Cold War.

Many of Barsamian's productions have been broadcast on public radio stations throughout the U.S. and Canada. For a catalogue, write David Barsamian, 1415 Dellwood, Boulder, CO 80302; or call 303-449-4885.

## **Institute for Media Analysis**

The Institute for Media Analysis is a newly formed New York-based non-profit organization that is devoted to monitoring, analyzing, and reporting on propaganda and disinformation. Co-directors Ellen Ray and Bill Schaap are the publishers of *Covert*

*Action Information Bulletin*, an indispensable tool for understanding the role of the "intelligence community" in the worldwide power struggle. Some 28 issues of *Covert Action* have so far appeared; number 26 on terrorism and number 27 on the American religious right are of special interest. IMA also publishes excellent monographs on specialized subjects, the latest being "Packaging the Contras" by Edgar Chamorro. One indication of the quality of IMA's work is that its board of directors includes such notables as Noam Chomsky, Edward S. Herman, and Sean MacBride (the only person to ever win both the Nobel Peace Prize and the Lenin Peace Prize).

Contact IMA at 145 West Fourth Street, New York, NY 10012, 212-254-1061. Subscriptions to *Covert Action Information Bulletin* are \$15 per year.

## DataCenter

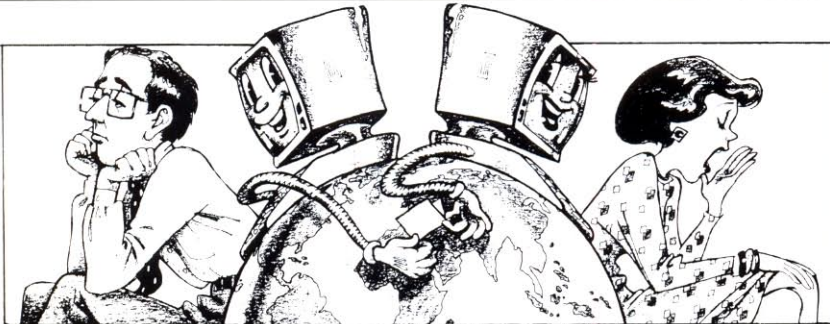
Those in the know often get that way with the help of the DataCenter, a unique user-supported library and information center in Oakland, California. The DataCenter--this year the recipient of a Meritorious Achievement Award from Media Alliance--collects, organizes, and provides access to a treasure trove of information on political, economic, and social issues. Its experienced staff can help you zoom in on the right files or resources, whether you walk in off the street or make use of its search service, corporate profile service, or customized clipping service. Now in its eleventh year, the DataCenter serves journalists, investigative reporters, academic researchers, and activists; and in its own words--"provides the tools for labor, community, church, and po-

litical organizations working to gain control over their lives."

The DataCenter, 464 19th Street, Oakland, CA 94612, 415-835-4692, is a tax-deductible membership organization.

**Coming in the next installment of Resources ...** profiles on PROJECT CENSORED (Carl Jensen, Director, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA 94928, 707-664-2149; MEDIA AND VALUES (1962 South Shenandoah, Los Angeles, CA 90034), THE NATIONAL SECURITY ARCHIVE (1755 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20036, 202-797-0882) ... and more.

Please send us information about any organizations dealing with propaganda and we'll let others know about them.



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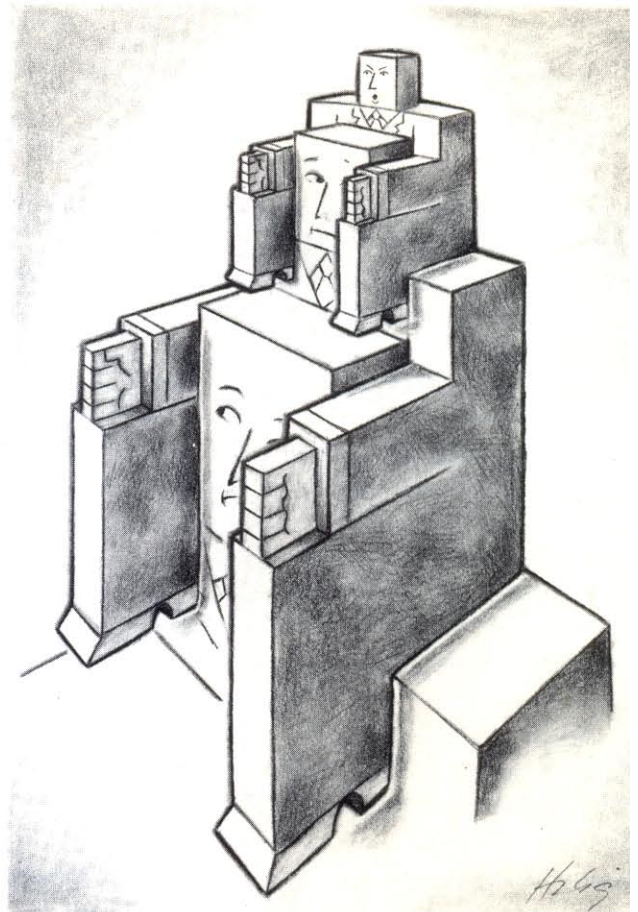
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