



THE FREE PRESS?

A MONTHLY JOURNAL AND TEACHING TOOL EXPOSING PROPAGANDA IN THE MASS MEDIA

A news resource which is **not**:

Owned by **billionaires**
Beholden to **advertisers**
Staffed by **the elite**

Unlike other journals we **declare our interests**:

No **profit motive**
No **cronyism**
An interest in exposing **media bias** by applying the **propaganda model**

What is the propaganda model?

The vast majority of “headline news” providers in the UK are profit-driven corporations, affiliated to even larger corporations, who make most of their money from selling advertising space to other businesses.

The propaganda model predicts that such media will generate a view of the world that is overwhelmingly favourable to the interests of big business and marginalises, ignores or attacks opposing views.

A wealth of evidence supports the model. Head to www.the-free-press.co.uk for an overview.

Wondering why you’ve never heard of the propaganda model?

Perhaps you’ve been getting your news from...the news.



TUMBLING STATUES: CHURCHILL, RACISM AND THE MEDIA

“History will be kind to me for I intend to write it,” said Winston Churchill.

The history of Churchill has been written by many – including an ex-journalist called Boris Johnson – but a new chapter has been opened by the Black Lives Matter protests.

Sean O’Grady, associate editor of The Independent (rated a “left centre” newspaper by Media Bias Fact Check¹), described a BLM protestor daubing “was a racist” on Churchill’s statue as “a minor piece of vandalism – but an unfortunate one as, quite unlike the defenestration of slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol, the wartime prime minister is an obviously revered national hero”².

The Guardian didn’t explicitly take a position on Churchill’s statue, but it seems telling that stories covering the issue leant heavily on voices defending the wartime PM. One article sought the opinion of a grand total of two people, ex-Conservative MP Nicholas Soames and ex-Telegraph magazine editor Emma Soames, both of them Churchill’s grandchildren!³

It seems fair to say that the “left centre” media share the opinion of London Mayor Sadiq Khan, who expressed approval over the removal of Colston’s statue but took a different line on Churchill. “Look, no one’s perfect...there are some statues that are quite a clear cut. Slavers, quite a clear cut in my view. Plantation owners, quite a clear cut.”⁴

What, we might ask, places Churchill in a separate category to slavers and plantation owners? After all, Churchill shared many of their views. He unapologetically described the colonisation of Australia and America as “a stronger race, a higher-grade race”⁵ taking the place of the indigenous population and stated “I hate Indians. They are a beastly people with a beastly religion”⁶

Indian politician and author Dr Shashi Tharoor argues that Churchill “has as much blood on his hands as some of the worst genocidal dictators of the 20th century”⁷ thanks to

His role in the Bengal famine which claimed three million lives. According to a study on the famine Churchill “not only refused to help but prevented others from doing so” and ensured that Britain continued to export grain from India as the population starved⁸.

The propaganda model, which highlights the link between corporate ownership of the press and journalistic output, predicts a restricted spectrum of opinion in the media (views tolerable by/reflective of elite interests). Noam Chomsky argues that the liberal end of the media spectrum play an important role in setting the limits of debate, saying to readers “thus far and no further”⁹.

In this case, it appears the liberal elite are happy to disown Colston, but “revered national hero” Churchill is out of bounds.

What of the right-wing of the media?

Peter Hitchens produced a remarkably hyperbolic piece in the Daily Mail¹⁰ in which he claimed that “the Left now controls every lever of power” (somewhat overlooking a decade of Conservative rule, privatisation and Brexit!) and compared the BLM protests to the Soviet Revolution.

Melanie Phillips, writing in The Times, also spoke in the terms of revolution when she branded the largely peaceful BLM protests as “a form of insurrection against western society and its institutions”¹¹ under a subheading that mentioned “mobs rampaging”.

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How does the propaganda model work in practice?

Critics of the propaganda model claim that it is a “conspiracy theory.”

This, perhaps purposefully, misses the point of the propaganda model.

A conspiracy will not happen of its own accord. People must gather in rooms and have meetings to instigate a conspiracy.

The beauty of modern media propaganda is that it simply **follows from the institutional structure of large media companies.**

Consider someone at the bottom of this structure: a young journalist at Rupert Murdoch’s Sun newspaper: **Will this journalist have to be told, in a conspiratorial manner, not to pursue stories about unrest in the News International boardroom and corporate malpractice by one of the paper’s leading advertisers?**

Not likely. Do **you** try to earn job security by going against the values of the institution that employs you?

Of course, like us, journalists are unlikely to reflect on the institutional parameters that confine them. Far easier to subconsciously adopt these values and *believe* that you believe them.

If 90-95% of mainstream journalism positions are filled by people who share the same framework of values, know which stories to pursue and which to ignore, what can be said and can’t be said, that makes for a robust propaganda system.

You will, of course, have a hard time convincing journalists that this is what they’re doing. Then again, as Upton Sinclair famously said:

(...Main article continued)

Raising the spectre of Communism is appropriate in a sense, if not the one Hitchens and Phillips intended: the Daily Mail is owned by Viscount Rothermere¹², a direct descendent of Lord Rothermere, who visited Benito Mussolini shortly after he came to power in Italy and wrote in the Mail that “in saving Italy (Mussolini) stopped the inroads of Bolshevism which would have left Europe in ruins.”¹³

The Times fares only a little better in terms of being on the “Right” side of history.

Joachim von Ribbentrop, Foreign Minister of Nazi Germany from 1938 until 1945 and the first man to be hanged during the Nuremberg trials, met with Geoffrey Dawson, then editor of The Times, in London in 1936¹⁴. Dawson told fellow newspaper editor and proponent of appeasement, Lord Lothian: “I should like to get going with the Germans...I spend my nights in taking out (of The Times) anything which I think will hurt their susceptibilities and in dropping little things which are intended to soothe them”¹⁵

Rothermere, Lothian and Dawson were not alone in hailing fascism as a barrier to every wealthy elite’s greatest fear, a revolution that would confiscate their wealth. A certain Winston Churchill stated “if I were an Italian I would don the Fascist Black shirt...I would have been wholeheartedly with you from start to finish in your triumphant struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism.”¹⁶

Churchill’s famous anti-fascist credentials were also on display during the Spanish Civil War when he described

the Republicans as “a poverty stricken and backward proletariat demand(ing) the overthrow of Church, state and property” and praised General Franco’s army “marching to re-establish order by setting up a military dictatorship.”¹⁷

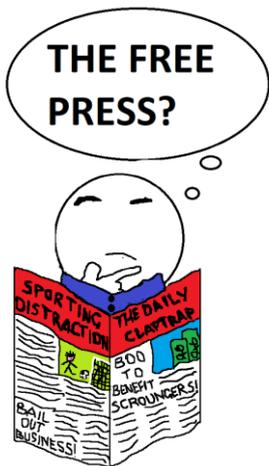
BLM protestors have been accused by Boris Johnston of “seeking to edit or censor the past”. The corporate media outlets who covered this did well to keep a straight face; the Conservatives recently erased their online archive of pre-2010 speeches¹⁸ and Boris Johnson was once sacked by The Times for falsifying history!¹⁹

Yet keep a straight face they did. There is, after all, a reason mainstream media coverage of Churchill’s statue alternated between “thus far and no further” and hysterical cries of impending revolution.

Churchill, perhaps more than any other figure in British history, is used to mobilise the population behind unpopular policies: war, austerity, the coronavirus lockdown. If this figure were to be revealed as a member of the elite who only cared about freedom for his class, their wealth and their empire - in line with the newspapers of the day - it would risk exposing the media as part of the very same system.

History, like the present, is written by elites - and that’s the way they want to keep it.

**“Whoever controls the media, controls the mind”
Jim Morrison**



“It’s difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon him not understanding it.”

HOMEWORK!

An Exercise in Disorientation 2

Search online for an article in an English-language version of a respected foreign news outlet like the India Times, Al Jazeera or an Irish newspaper - one that covers the issue of Churchill’s statue or his historical legacy.

Can you spot any differences in the tone the foreign outlet adopts when discussing Churchill compared to the British press?

If so, do you think this is:

- a) Because foreign press are biased against Churchill
- b) Because the British press is biased in favour of Churchill
- c) All news outlets have an inherent bias

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