

Press and Media Coverups

Americans like to think of their supposedly free press as a watchdog on government, a fourth branch -- especially because the press itself shamelessly promotes that myth. One of the first tenets for the control of a population, though, is to control all sources of information the population receives (or at least those it believes, with other sources discredited). The mainstream American press is a controlled corporate/government megaphone, and the few real exceptions prove the rule.

- The revelations of U.S. radiation experiments that occurred at the end of 1993 and which resulted in a Presidential Commission to study the situation were treated as a new story. But the information had been known for almost a decade, openly, and most news organizations chose to ignore the story. Even the dying victims of the crimes, known to our supposed press "watchdogs," were never informed. The sources of these the revelations? The original activists were ignored for some time, but **even after the House Subcommittee on Energy Conservation and Power issued a report in 1986 detailing the abuses** it took almost a decade for the press to report them. This story by Geoffery Sea in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, "[The Radiation Story No One Would Touch](#)," [*] describes the coverup.

- This [CIA document from 1991](#), [*] at Ralph McGehee's CIABASE site, describes recent CIA programs to influence the media:

a. PAO now has relationships with reporters from every major wire service, newspaper, news weekly, and television network in the nation. This has helped up turn some "intelligence failure" stories into "Intelligence success" stories...In many instances, we have persuaded reporters to postpone, change, hold, or even scrap stories...

The document also describes the CIA's ongoing contacts with academics. For more information about the CIA and academia, see also the [CIA on Campus](#) site.

- A good example of the mainstream press not publicizing, minimizing, and misreporting important information related to intelligence matters is the matter of the CIA's involvement with drug trafficking. This is an article by Norman Solomon from the Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) web site, "[Snow Job: The Establishment's Papers Do Damage Control for the CIA.](#)" [*] There are two sidebars to the article: "[That Delusional Mindset](#)" [*] concerns media insinuations that black people are simply paranoid about the CIA, and "[Our Man at the Post](#)" [*] is about Walter Pincus at the *Washington Post*,
- This is an article by Alex Constantine on [the CIA's Operation Mockingbird](#) [*] which infiltrated and influenced news organizations inside the U.S. This version also has a letter to the editor by Julian C. Holmes appended to it.
- It was not just the press that the CIA set out to influence during the Cold War (and afterward, unless you believe all of this magically stopped sometime). The goal was to influence the entire culture in a way that benefited those in charge. Here are some reviews of the book *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* by Frances Stonor Saunders. First is [one by James Petras](#) [*] at *The Monthly Review*. Next is a [copy of a review](#) (here is [another copy](#)) by Laurence Zuckerman from *The New York Times*. Here also is a [review by Jeff Sharlet](#) [*] at *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Yes, the CIA really applied Orwellian tactics to Orwell's literature. They really supported abstract painting in the hopes of supplanting other art with political content. Do you think they would somehow not tamper with *popular* art and music?
- This article at Parascope on [Operation Mongoose](#) [*] shows the extent to which the CIA, often via its press proxies, employs symbolism and cultural analysis to influence populations. This particular example deals with Cuba, but similar examples exist for other Central and South American operations.

During Operation Mongoose, Patchell reported, the CIA "decided that the 'worm' is preferable to the 'fish' and that it has been popularized by Castro and we should take advantage of it." (Castro had derided opponents of the revolutionary government as "gusanos" -- worms.) By late 1962 the CIA was pushing the slogan "Gusano Libre!" -- Free Worm! -- in its broadcasts to Cuba.

Patchell suggested using catch-phrases such as "the worm will turn" to bolster the propaganda pitch. He also recommended using bible verses to spread the message, such as this quote from the book of Isaiah: "Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched."

- Media critics have voiced concern in the last few years about the increasing concentration of media ownership to a few mega-corporations. Here is a story from *The Independent*, UK, (www.independent.co.uk) [describing a Brooklyn court case which alleged that Time-Warner AOL](#) [*] sabotaged the business of a competitor and even had staff members beaten up. The case was settled out of court and neither party is allowed to discuss it as a term of the settlement. The settlement was estimated to be on the order of \$90 million.
- This article by Noam Chomsky, "[Propaganda, American-style](#)," [*] gives his observations on the system of thought control in the U.S., with emphasis on the media. It is an expanded version of a magazine article by Chomsky from 1988, including information from an interview and an essay (though it is not clear who expanded it).

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 have jobs in management, media, and academia and therefore work in some capacity as agents of the propaganda system -- and they believe what the system expects them to believe. By and large, they're part of the privileged elite, and share the interests and perceptions of those in power.