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And the second gift is journalist Matt Taibbi's new book, *Hate Inc.: Why Today's Media Makes Us Despise One Another*. It's an insider's guide to the variety of ways today's corporate media cherry-pick facts and tell us lies.

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HATE INC.

Why Today's Media Makes Us Despise One Another

SEPTEMBER 1, 1996

The Jewish Media: The Lie That Won't Die

MARK CRISPIN MILLER



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When Marlon Brando declared on **Larry King Live** (4/5/96) that "Hollywood is owned by Jews," he only said what quite a few Americans believe. Since they don't know who owns the media, millions think that it's "the Jews."

It is an old canard. Having been codified in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (forged by Czarist cops in 1905), the lie was sold here by Henry Ford through the 1920s. ("The Twelfth Protocol," proclaimed his **Dearborn Independent**, "contains the entire plan of Control of the Press, reaching from the present time into the future when the Jewish World Government shall be established.")

In the 1930s, the lie was propagated much more broadly by a loose network of native fascists guided or inspired by Berlin. The best-known of those tools was Father Joseph Coughlin, whose Sunday broadcasts had an audience in the tens of millions, and whose weekly Social Justice had perhaps a third as many readers. Others fiercely seconded his thesis that the media were run by so-called "aliens"—a myth that, on the fringes, lasted through the war. "The motion picture industry," far-right demagogue Gerald L.K. Smith railed in 1945, "is being exploited by Russian Jewish Communists determined to inject their materialistic propaganda into the fresh young minds of our children."



The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a classic antisemitic hoax

Starting in the late 1930s, there was a notable attempt to set Americans straight. The radio cleric's charge that U.S. media were in the hands of "orientals" (one of his codewords) sparked a salutary counter-propaganda drive by academics, clergy and journalists. The Institute for Propaganda Analysis, based at Columbia University, publicly refuted the canard, as did Dorothy Thompson, whose syndicated column "On the Record" made clear to a massive public that the media were not "Jewish": not the press, not publishing, not even Hollywood, which was dominated not by those crude "moguls" but by New York's major banks, most run by WASPs.

Gentiles in High Places

Today, the myth may be as widespread as ever—and no one is refuting it. Every type of far-right propaganda luridly revives the spectre of the "Jewish media." In a pamphlet and website entitled "Who Owns America?" the prolific neo-Nazi William Pierce, author of *The Turner Diaries*, tells us that the news and "entertainment media" are "Jew-controlled," which is why they push miscegenation, homosexuality and other race-polluting practices.

Meanwhile, the same spectre haunts the propaganda churned out by the Nation of Islam and other Afro-fascists—all of whom Pierce's readership would like to string up from the streetlamps. Every time Khalid Abdul Muhammad vents in public, he and his audience exult together in the fiction that the whole shebang is "Jew-controlled."

All such diatribe plays up your Eisners and your Sulzbergers—and plays down many other names: Jack Welch and Michael H. Jordan, CEOs, respectively, of **GE (NBC)** and **Westinghouse (CBS)**; Rupert Murdoch (who owns **20th Century Fox**); John Malone, CEO of **TCI**, the nation's largest cable company; maverick globalist Ted Turner; and many more. Also tuned out are such goyische giants as **Hearst Communications**, **Times Mirror**, the **Chicago Tribune's** empire, **Reader's Digest Inc.**—and the Shintoist directorship of **Sony** (which owns **Columbia Studios** and **Tri-Star Pictures**).

The far-right media "critique" also ignores the role of major shareholders: buccaneers like Warren Buffett (**Disney's** largest investor); cyberlord Bill Gates (who owns a big piece of **Dreamworks** and **MSNBC**); Gordon Crawford, who manages the media holdings for the secretive **Capital Group** (which owns a chunk of every major player).

But more important, the far-right attack ignores the crucial point about today's media: Increasingly, their owners are publicly traded multinational corporations, chiefly answerable to banks, insurance companies and other institutional investors—and to advertisers, who are almost always the key source of revenue. Thus guided, corporate capitalism runs the show with no concern for any race or faith or for anything but profits.

Nixonian Jew-Baiting

While crackpot screeds have clearly riled up some explosive folk out on the margins, most of those who think "the Jews" control the media have probably been thus persuaded not by any neo-fascist agitation, but by the systematic rabble-rousing of some big-time pols and their supporters in the press.

The mass distrust of the alleged Hebraic cabal behind the media was first politically exploited at the highest levels by Richard Nixon, who sincerely hated that imaginary clique. He often raved to H.R. Haldeman about those "satanic Jews" atop the networks and the **New York Times**. Nixon's button-man in the campaign was his felonious understudy, Spiro Agnew, whose paranoid attack on the news media—"a tiny and closed fraternity of privileged men, elected by no one"—was tacitly antisemitic.

His animus became much more explicit after Agnew's forcible retirement: "All you have to do is look around and see who owns the networks, who owns the **Washington Post**, the **New York Times**," he declared in 1976. "As you look around in the big news business, you see a heavy concentration of Jewish people."

Agnew's assault on Big Media was both conceived and crafted by the young Pat Buchanan. Since then, Buchanan has ebulliently parlayed his media celebrity into a full-time political jihad against the media (among other targets), and has done so with a tang of antisemitism so pronounced that even William Buckley finally had to clear his throat.

Arnold Good, Murphy Bad

However, many a rightist less flamboyant than Buchanan has deployed the Coughlinesque innuendo. In his contretemps with Murphy Brown, Dan Quayle suggestively attacked the "cultural elite" who "mock us in newsrooms, sitcom studios and faculty lounges across America." Christlike, he declared: "I wear their scorn as a badge of honor!" The identity of these folks was left deliberately vague: "I know exactly who the cultural elite, the media elite and the Hollywood elite are," Quayle noted darkly. (Presumably he did not mean his his own family, which controls a billion-dollar media empire that includes the **Arizona Republic** and the **Indianapolis Star**.)

More recently, Bob Dole, pretending to take on Hollywood entire, swung his wrath pointedly and only at **Time-Warner** (CEO: Gerald Levin). At the same time, Dole praised as family-friendly the film *True Lies*, starring noted Aryan and cinematic serial killer Arnold Schwarzenegger. It is surely no coincidence that *True Lies* was released by **20th Century Fox** —the studio owned by Rupert Murdoch, dark financial angel of the **New York Post**, the **Weekly Standard** and other founts of GOP propaganda.

Meanwhile, off the stump, the trope of the "the liberal media" has been copiously reconfirmed for years by countless rightist hacks and true believers. While "liberals" need not always stand for "Jews," the rhetorical strategy is the same in both cases: to distract attention from the real elite that actually controls the media by scapegoating the usual minority as conspiratorial outsiders.

Thus the time has come for another counter-propaganda drive—and not just to fight the rise of antisemitism, but to reaffirm democracy itself, which is again at risk.

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Mark Crispin Miller

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