

September 11, 2001: 9/11, Bin Laden and the Tyranny of the Corporate Media

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This essay originally appeared on September 21, 2001 in my [Daily Iowan](#) column, "Firing Line." The piece uses George Orwell's 1984 as a basis to suggest how from the very beginning the corporate media played a central role in setting the stage for the prevalent Osama bin Laden-Al Qaeda myth, the related "blowback" thesis vigorously embraced by the progressive-left community, and the assemblage of rearguard actions defending such perspectives and reflexively labeling all accounts conflicting with government pronouncements as "conspiracy theories."

An expertly orchestrated barrage of 9/11 propaganda in the weeks and months following the attacks had a devastatingly traumatic effect on a majority of the US population while simultaneously rendering many of the most legitimate and important questions to the sidelines. Together these discursive elements have helped to create an environment where, as Orwell envisaged, essential civil liberties have been forsaken and perpetual war has become the norm. -JT

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In the age of the concentration camp, castration is more characteristic of social reality than competitiveness. -Theodor Adorno

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Students in my media theory class couldn't be reading 1984 at a more opportune time. Orwell's thesis, articulated shortly after World War II, was a disturbingly prescient scenario of the world geopolitical order in the late 20th century and what it would be like to inhabit that then future world.

The dire anti-utopian predictions were largely informed by Orwell's activities as an engaged European socialist who, in 1947, believed that the greatest obstacles to human liberation were Soviet and U.S. imperialist conquest and the human inability to collectively imagine a world free from tyranny and bloodshed.

The means of technological communication were central to the project of perpetuating a condition wherein the very soul of individuals was replaced by lockstep allegiance to the state. Protagonist Winston Smith is a peon bureaucrat who refashions the past to be in accord with present edicts of the ruling party's inner circle.

The higher strata of the social order are lulled into a rabid nationalism rationalized by the Manichean representations of Big Brother, warm paternal protector, and Emanuel Goldstein, Party traitor and embodiment of all evil. The good/evil dichotomy and state of siege prove sufficient in keeping obtuse party members in line, while the more humane must undergo a concerted brainwashing.

The U.S. media function in an entirely similar fashion, particularly with regard to U.S. foreign policy and coverage of the horrific bombings of the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Indeed, it is in what the media have willfully omitted or feigned in such coverage that would have likely made Winston's role as censor much easier, if not entirely expendable.

In June, a French judge did what the U.S. is now attempting with Osama bin Laden in summoning the former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to the French Hall of Justice for questioning about the 1973 Chilean coup. Kissinger's track record makes bin Laden look like the Good Humor man, and when Kissinger fled the country the next day, the U.S. media never batted an eye. Does two plus two equal five?

Earlier this year, CNN President of News Gathering Eason Jordan confirmed that the U.S. military's special Psychological Operations Group (Psy-ops) had personnel working at CNN during the Kosovo conflict. A U.S. Army spokesperson remarked, "Psy-ops personnel, soldiers and officers, have been working in CNN's headquarters in Atlanta through our program 'Training with Industry.' They worked as regular employees of CNN. They helped in the production of news."

CNN is [among] the most widely circulated means of electronic news in the world. Whether Psy-ops personnel returned to assist in coverage of "911" is a matter for consideration.

While journalists seldom missed an opportunity to pursue grieving and petrified New Yorkers with vampire-like zeal, they dismissed the story of an Iranian man who, along with German authorities on Sept. 10 made 14 attempts to contact the U.S. State Department and the CIA about a possible attack; he was hung up on.

Nor was it examined in any detail that since August, the World TradeCenter has been on "heightened security alert." Or that a censored ABC videotape purportedly showed an F-16 Fighter trailing the second passenger jet that hit the WTC.

Canadians were shown video footage of Yasser Arafat giving blood on Sept. 12—U.S. viewers were not. And on Sept. 15, thousands went to mark a national day of mourning for victims of the terrorism and to protest plans to deploy massive military action in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Although the events were covered in mainstream media, the calls for peace were conveniently edited out.

Finally, that our elaborate \$30 billion per year intelligence and surveillance apparatus had no foreknowledge of the attacks may have been laughable if the circumstances were not so dire. That story has been dismissed and with it government accountability to the families of the 6,300 [sic] missing or deceased and to the remaining U.S. citizenry.

At a time when information is crucial and thousands if not millions more innocent lives may be lost, U.S. journalists are again "stenographers to power" -obsequiously conveying the pronouncements of saber rattling military and government officials screaming quixotic bloodlust at an enemy that remains undefined.

As Hitler, Stalin , and Big Brother well knew, the more poorly defined' the enemy, the stronger the blind allegiance given the state in fighting it and the greater willingness of the polity in repudiating its own civil liberties. The fear is real, and the enemy this time around isn't Jews, Gypsies, Formalists, or Eurasians. The new enemy is us.

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James F. Tracy was a tenured Associate Professor of Journalism and Media Studies at Florida Atlantic University from 2002 to 2016. He was fired by FAU ostensibly for violating the university's policies imposed on the free speech rights of faculty. Tracy has filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the university, with trial set to begin November 27, 2017. Tracy received his PhD from University of Iowa. His work on media history, politics and culture has appeared in a wide variety of academic journals, edited volumes, and alternative news and opinion outlets. Additional information is available at MemoryHoleBlog.com, TracyLegalDefense.org, and jamesftracy.wordpress.com.

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