

The Media

Journalism is a perfect cover for CIA agents. People talk freely to journalists, and few think suspiciously of a journalist aggressively searching for information. Journalists also have power, influence and clout. Not surprisingly, the CIA began a mission in the late 1940s to recruit American journalists on a wide scale, a mission it dubbed Operation MOCKINGBIRD. The agency wanted these journalists not only to relay any sensitive information they discovered, but also to write anti-communist, pro-capitalist propaganda when needed.

The instigators of MOCKINGBIRD were Frank Wisner, Allan Dulles, Richard Helms and Philip Graham. Graham was the husband of Katherine Graham, today's publisher of the *Washington Post*. In fact, it was the *Post's* ties to the CIA that allowed it to grow so quickly after the war, both in readership and influence. (8)

MOCKINGBIRD was extraordinarily successful. In no time, the agency had recruited at least 25 media organizations to disseminate CIA propaganda. At least 400 journalists would eventually join the CIA payroll, according to the CIA's testimony before a stunned Church Committee in 1975. (The committee felt the true number was considerably higher.) The names of those recruited reads like a Who's Who of journalism:

- Philip and Katharine Graham (Publishers, *Washington Post*)
- William Paley (President, CBS)
- Henry Luce (Publisher, *Time* and *Life* magazine)
- Arthur Hays Sulzberger (Publisher, *N.Y. Times*)
- Jerry O'Leary (*Washington Star*)
- Hal Hendrix (Pulitzer Prize winner, *Miami News*)
- Barry Bingham Sr., (*Louisville Courier-Journal*)
- James Copley (Copley News Services)
- Joseph Harrison (Editor, *Christian Science Monitor*)
- C.D. Jackson (*Fortune*)
- Walter Pincus (Reporter, *Washington Post*)
- ABC
- NBC
- Associated Press
- United Press International
- Reuters
- Hearst Newspapers
- Scripps-Howard
- *Newsweek* magazine
- Mutual Broadcasting System
- *Miami Herald*
- *Old Saturday Evening Post*
- *New York Herald-Tribune*

Perhaps no newspaper is more important to the CIA than the *Washington Post*, one of the nation's most right-wing dailies. Its location in the nation's capitol enables the paper to maintain valuable personal contacts with leading intelligence, political and business figures. Unlike other newspapers, the *Post* operates its own bureaus around the world, rather than relying on AP wire services. Owner Philip Graham was a military intelligence officer in World War II, and later became close friends with CIA figures like Frank Wisner, Allen Dulles, Desmond FitzGerald and Richard Helms. He inherited the *Post* by marrying Katherine Graham, whose father owned it.

After Philip's suicide in 1963, Katharine Graham took over the *Post*. Seduced by her husband's world of government and espionage, she expanded her newspaper's relationship with the CIA. In a 1988 speech before CIA officials at Langley, Virginia, she stated:

We live in a dirty and dangerous world. There are some things that the general public does not need to know and shouldn't. I believe democracy flourishes when the government can take legitimate steps to keep its secrets and when the press can decide whether to print what it knows.

This quote has since become a classic among CIA critics for its belittlement of democracy and its admission that there is a political agenda behind the *Post*'s headlines.

Ben Bradlee was the *Post*'s managing editor during most of the Cold War. He worked in the U.S. Paris embassy from 1951 to 1953, where he followed orders by the CIA station chief to place propaganda in the European press. (9) Most Americans incorrectly believe that Bradlee personifies the liberal slant of the *Post*, given his role in publishing the Pentagon Papers and the Watergate investigations. But neither of these two incidents are what they seem. The *Post* merely published the Pentagon Papers after *The New York Times* already had, because it wanted to appear competitive. As for Watergate, we'll examine the CIA's reasons for wanting to bring down Nixon in a moment. Someone once asked Bradlee: "Does it irk you when *The Washington Post* is made out to be a bastion of slanted liberal thinkers instead of champion journalists just because of Watergate?" Bradlee responded: "Damn right it does!" (10)

It would be impossible to elaborate in this short space even the most important examples of the CIA/media alliance. Sig Mickelson was a CIA asset the entire time he was president of CBS News from 1954 to 1961. Later he went on to become president of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, two major outlets of CIA propaganda.

The CIA also secretly bought or created its own media companies. It owned 40 percent of the *Rome Daily American* at a time when communists were threatening to win the Italian elections. Worse, the CIA has bought many *domestic* media companies. A prime example is Capital Cities, created in 1954 by CIA businessman William Casey (who would later become Reagan's CIA director). Another founder was Lowell Thomas, a close friend and business contact with CIA Director Allen Dulles. Another founder was CIA businessman Thomas Dewey. By 1985, Capital Cities had grown so powerful that it was able to buy an entire TV network: ABC.

For those who believe in "separation of press and state," the very idea that the CIA has secret propaganda outlets throughout the media is appalling. The reason why America was so oblivious to CIA crimes in the 40s and 50s was because the media willingly complied with the agency. Even today, when the immorality of the CIA should be an open-and-shut case, "debate" about the issue rages in the media. Here is but one example:

In 1996, *The San Jose Mercury News* published an investigative report suggesting that the CIA had sold crack in Los Angeles to fund the Contra war in Central America. A month later, three of the CIA's most important media allies — *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times* — immediately leveled their guns at the Mercury report and blasted away in an attempt to discredit it. Who wrote the *Post* article? Walter Pincus, longtime CIA journalist. The dangers here are obvious.

<http://lists.essential.org/pipermail/corp-focus/2001/000077.html>

[corp-focus] Censorship at the National Press Club

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Fri, 22 Jun 2001 10:55:25 -0400 (EDT)

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Censorship at the National Press Club
By Russell Mokhiber and Robert Weissman

Henry Kissinger came to the National Press Club here in Washington, D.C. last night to give a talk, sell his latest book, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* and take questions from an audience of about 300 people.

We weren't as interested in the talk or the book as much as the question period. We figured, correctly as it turned out, that Henry hadn't change over the years -- his unspoken theory of foreign policy was still the same: the corporate state -- including his client corporations -- should dictate the country's foreign policy. As usual, his words barely masked that reality.

But scattered throughout the ballroom at the Press Club were little white note cards for questions, and it appeared that perhaps 100 questions were scribbled and sent up to the moderator, Richard Koonce, a member of the Press Club's book and author committee.

It was Koonce's job to sift through the questions, pick out some interesting ones, and ask Henry some probing questions. This system seemed to work well at luncheon talks, where the past three presidents of the Press Club -- Doug Harbrecht of Business Week, John Cushman of the New York Times and Dick Ryan of the Detroit News -- would ask speakers some pretty tough and newsworthy questions. We never got the sense that Press Club moderators were pulling punches.

Last night, things changed.

Earlier this year, Harper's magazine published a two-part series of articles by British journalist Christopher Hitchens, "The Case Against Henry Kissinger that has since been published as a book, The Trial of Henry Kissinger (Verso).

Hitchens has drawn up an indictment, charged Kissinger with war crimes, and is begging some government to go after the former Secretary of State under Richard Nixon for the killings of innocents in Laos, Cambodia, South America, East Timor and elsewhere.

Magistrates in three countries -- Chile, Argentina, and France -- have responded and summoned Kissinger to answer questions.

Le Monde reported earlier this month that when French Judge Roger Le Loire had a summons served on Kissinger on May 31 at the Ritz Hotel in Paris, Kissinger promptly left the hotel, and then left town. The judge wanted to ask Kissinger about his knowledge of Operation Condor, an effort by the dictators of South America to kill or "disappear" dissidents.

The fact that Kissinger was being sought for questioning didn't make the mainstream media here in the United States, until yesterday's New York Times reported that the Chilean judge wanted Kissinger to "testify about the disappearance of an American in Chile when the dictator Augusto Pinochet seized power in the 1970s."

Kissinger began lashing back at Hitchens last week, not by answering the substance of Hitchen's argument, but by smearing the journalist.

Kissinger told Detroit radio talk show host Mitch Albom that Hitchens had "denied the Holocaust ever took place."

In response, Hitchens, who says both he and his wife are Jewish, told the New York Post: "Mr. Kissinger will be hearing from my attorney, who will tell him two things he already knows -- what he said is false, malicious and defamatory, and if he says it again, we will proceed against him in court."

So, you can imagine that the Press Club audience had questions. And so did we.

We wrote down six questions -- about the report in the Times, Kissinger's interview with Albom, the incident at the Ritz Hotel in Paris, Hitchens' articles in Harper's, about the three magistrates and simply this one: "If you are indicted for war crimes, will you defend yourself in court?"

We met a friend there who told us that in the 1970s, when Kissinger was asked about the bombing of Laos and Cambodia, he responded this way: "sometimes we have to operate outside the law."

Her question to Kissinger: "How do you square that with our Constitutional values?"

Koonce had other ideas. He lofted six or seven puff balls about Kissinger in China, about Kissinger on Nixon, about his generic views of foreign policy. Nothing about war crimes, nothing about operating outside the law, nothing about Hitchens.

After the event, we sought out Koonce.

"Was there an agreement with Dr. Kissinger not to ask questions related to Christopher Hitchens and allegations of war crimes?"

To our surprise, Koonce did not deny it.

"There was a definite sensitivity to that," Koonce said. "He [Kissinger] was afraid that if we got into a discussion of that, for the vast majority of people that, it would take so much time to explain all of the context, that you know, he preferred to avoid that, and so . . ."

And so Kissinger's wishes were accommodated and the questions were avoided.

We asked Koonce how many written questions dealt with Hitchens or war

crimes? Two or three, Koonce said.

We knew this not to be true. We handed up six ourselves. And we suspect that there were many more. (Only Kissinger knows for sure, since it's Press Club policy to deliver the written questions to the guest after the event.)

According to Press Club standards, these book events must be held in accordance with the Club's "Code of Ethics."

So, we want to know -- how can it be ethical to agree secretly with an author before hand not to ask a certain set of questions?

We're tracking down the Code of Ethics. Stay tuned.

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(c) Russell Mokhiber and Robert Weissman

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<http://www.fair.org/activism/kissinger-crimes.html>

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ACTION ALERT:

Why Wasn't Kissinger Asked About War Crimes Charges?

June 29, 2001

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was summoned last month to appear at the French Palace of Justice to answer questions about murders and disappearances in Chile in the 1970s. While the story was carried by major European news outlets, it has received relatively little coverage in U.S. media.

French authorities wanted to ask Kissinger, who was visiting Paris, about Operation Condor, the terror network set up by the governments of Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Ecuador and Bolivia. Evidence that the U.S. government was aware of and lent support to Operation Condor has been available for years (see **The Nation**, 8/9-16/99; **New York Times**, 3/6/01). The French magistrate who summoned Kissinger was particularly interested in what light he might shed on

the disappearances of five French nationals who disappeared in Chile during or shortly after the U.S.-supported coup there in 1973.

But the French courts would learn nothing from Kissinger, who left town the day after being summoned without answering any questions.

After the episode in France, Kissinger did a lengthy, one-on-one interview with **PBS's** Charlie Rose (6/20/01). Kissinger also appeared alone with **CNN's** Wolf Blitzer (6/21/01) and **Fox News Channel's** Paula Zahn (6/13/01). None of the interviews even mentioned the French attempt to question Kissinger about human rights abuses. Nor did any of the journalists bring up the question of whether Kissinger might be indictable on war crimes charges, as journalist Christopher Hitchens argued in a two-part **Harper's** magazine article (2/01, 3/01).

Was there an agreement that the interviewers would avoid raising such uncomfortable issues for Kissinger? Charlie Rose was recently accused of making such an agreement with Roger Ailes, the chairman of **Fox News Channel**. In an interview with the **New York Times Magazine** (6/24/01), Ailes claimed that he had written assurance from Rose that he would not be asked about "politics" during his May 22 interview. Yvette Vega, the executive producer for the Charlie Rose Show, told FAIR that she was unaware of any such deal with Ailes.

But Kissinger himself seemed to have this kind of agreement with the National Press Club in Washington, DC, where Kissinger spoke on June 21. Noting that none of the questions asked of Kissinger, chosen from written questions submitted by the audience, dealt with war crimes or human rights investigations, journalists Russell Mokhiber and Robert Weissman asked Press Club moderator Richard Koonce if there was some sort of arrangement to avoid these topics.

According to Mokhiber and Weissman, Koonce explained that there was a "definite sensitivity" to those kinds of questions, and that Kissinger "was afraid that if we got into a discussion of that, for the vast majority of people that, it would take so much time to explain all of the context, that, you know, he preferred to avoid that."

Which raises the question: If a former Secretary of State receiving a summons about his knowledge of murder, torture and disappearances is not news, then what is?

ACTION: Please contact Charlie Rose and ask why he failed to ask Henry Kissinger about the newsworthy issues of human rights investigations and war crimes charges. You might also contact the National Press Club to voice your disappointment that journalists were not allowed to press Kissinger on these matters.

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As always, please remember that your comments are taken more seriously if you maintain a polite tone. Please cc fair@fair.org with your correspondence.

Read Mokhiber and Weissman's column, "Censorship at the National Press Club," at:

<http://lists.essential.org/pipermail/corp-focus/2001/000077.html>

Read "The Fugitive" by Christopher Hitchens (The Nation, 6/25/01)

<http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20010625&s=hitchens>

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