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Psywar

Riveting debut film on controlling the public mind

by Kim Petersen / January 31st, 2011

Psywar is a sterling debut documentary from writer-director Scott Noble. It is chock full of interviews with thinkers, historical background, and excellent narration by Mikela Jay.

Psywar explores the evolution of propaganda and public relations in the United States, with an emphasis on the “elitist theory of democracy” and the relationship between war, propaganda, and class.

This film is designed both as an introduction to the concept of psychological warfare by governments against their citizens and as an exploration of certain dominant themes in American propaganda. Significant time is also devoted to different conceptions of “democracy” as theorized by figures like Walter Lippmann, Edward Bernays, and the “founding fathers” of the United States itself.

Psywar illuminates how the state of the world reached the point it is at today: where an imperialist United States wages several wars abroad and maintains the support of its people, despite a growing and yawning chasm between the haves (who profit from warring) and the have-nots (cannon fodder deluded by unquestioning patriotic idealism). The US has managed to drag its fellow capitalist nations along in more-or-less support of its imperialist aggressions.

People who analyze the state of the world and consider the manifest moral and humanitarian violations might be forgiven for shaking their heads that such a whopping segment of humanity could go along with such inequality, such carnage, such insouciance.



Psywar begins by looking at how people’s distorted perceptions are crafted and maintained

In the opening segment of *Psywar*, there is video footage of American soldiers defacing a statue of Iraqi president Saddam Hussein with the Old Glory. It was a staged event by psyop group. The film then segues into another infamous pysop about the fallen American soldier Jessica Lynch. Both events were disinformation campaigns that deliberately misreported events.

John Rendon, an “information warrior and perception manager,” is a major player in the \$200 billion a year perception-management industry. Rendon is the figure who orchestrated the effort to sell the American public on a war against Iraq. The American public was buying it early on. At best, it can be stated the government thought highly enough about the public acumen that it resorted to disinformation; at least public perception matters.

The corporate media is heavily complicit in the warmongering and warring, even to the extent that psywarriors at CNN “helped in the production of news.”

Psywar points to a synergy: “The invasion of Iraq represents a pinnacle of domestic psywar in the United States, an unparalleled integration between [sic] public relations firms, corporate media, and military psyops.”

The perception management was so powerful that even soldiers were so deceived that they engaged in the greatest crime as defined by the Nuremberg Tribunal at the end of World War II: aggression.

Perception management is “steeped in class warfare.” *Psywar* tells the story of the exploitation of workers by the wealthy Rockefeller family. Striking coal miners seeking better working conditions and pay were attacked by the National Guard who were in the pay of the Rockefeller family. It is known as the Ludlow Massacre.

In one of his last videotaped interviews, historian Howard Zinn explains the dilemma of the working poor against plutocrats such as the Rockefeller family.

The Ludlow Massacre was a PR nightmare for the Rockefellers. An early psywarrior, Ivy Lee was instrumental in attempting to rehabilitate the image of the Rockefellers. His public relations involved smears and disinformation against the coal miners and their supporters. As *Psywar* mentions later in the film, Lee would later propagandize for Nazis against Americans.

Early on, it became clear that public perception needed to operate behind the scenes. Staged PR was arranged, such as charity.

Richard Coniff, author of *A Natural History of the Rich*, challenges the philanthropy of rich – stating that the rich hold a “functional view of wealth rather than a strictly charitable view.”

Zinn agreed, noting that charity can be exploitative and that the American system is exploitative. Zinn said that the “system is maintained [...] by giving people a little bit, and giving enough people just enough to prevent them from breaking out in open rebellion”

In the second part of the documentary, Noble looked at propagating the faith. It begins with Graeme MacQueen, co-founder of the Center for Peace Studies. He also holds that the support of the people is necessary for war. However, he said “war is disgusting to most people”; therefore great psychological pressure is brought to bear upon soldiers. National Security is there to swindle people

Christopher Simpson, author of *The Science of Coercion*, says propaganda is about mindset and ideology.

Recognizing this, *Psywar* relates how president Woodrow Wilson helped cast the propagandistic George Creel Commission which would pave the way for the US to enter World War I by planting false atrocity stories, stoking fear in Americans and calling on them to fight the good fight for democracy.

The propagandist firm of **Hill and Knowlton** arranged an infamous staged op as a prelude to an assault against Iraq. A teenage girl, Nasriyah, cried crocodile tears and lied about babies being ripped from incubators by Iraqi soldiers. The false story moved American sentiment to back military action against Iraqi soldiers in Kuwait.

Patriotism is the sentiment widely relied upon by governments to attain their ends against foreign foes. Historian Michael Parenti appears to challenge typical notions of patriotism. He identifies patriotism as being about greater values than attacking foreign lands; he sees it as about social justice, peace and stability, an end to racism, etc.

Another problem identified as preventing a public solidarity was that unions were based on gender and ethnicity.

Historian Sharon Smith said a breakthrough came with the anarcho-syndicalist union the **Industrial Workers of the World** (better known as the Wobblies) which set out to organize and include women, immigrants, and African Americans in one big union.

Anarcho-syndicalist scholar Noam Chomsky holds that it is natural for humans to free associate.

The unity among humans is thwarted by a state which uses war to accumulate power and by corporations to gain enormous fortunes. The Left worldwide labor movement is in disarray

In part 3, *We the People*, *Psywar* elucidates on how people are pawns in a system set up in favor of the wealthy.

The existence of democracy is refuted. Chomsky calls elections “*a marketing exercise.*”

Says William I. Robinson, editor of *Critical Globalization Studies*, we live in polyarchy: “a system of elite rule.” That is the way the system was designed to be.

Historian John Manley states that the so-called founding fathers were slave owners who sought to protect propertied interests. To this end, the Constitution was crafted behind closed doors. Chomsky notes that James Madison, the major framer of the Constitution, designed it to protect the opulent from the majority.

Little known is that the US Constitution is based on the [Kaianerekowa](#) (Great Law of Peace) of the Haudenosaunee (called Iroquois in *Psywar*). Stephen M. Sachs, author of *Remembering the Circle*, lists how the Kaianerekowa allowed the Haudenosaunee to easily remove corrupt leaders, that women had a major role in decision-making, that everyone was involved in policy formation, thus creating a participatory society.

One weak link stood out in *Psywar*. Why did the film turn to a white man to tell the history of “native Americans”? Why not talk to one of the Haudenosaunee?

The final part of *Psywar* is Consumers. People are indoctrinated to see themselves as consumers. Advertising reminds people of this. The system would have people work to consume. To this end, the emphasis is on work, not leisure. It is feared that less hours of work might foment radicalism.

Sut Jhally of the Media Education Foundation attacked consumptive society: “The problem of capitalism is the problem of consumption. And the problem is that after your needs have been met, there is no real need for consumption.”

The system is reeling now. Neoliberalism calls for cutbacks and results in increasing inequality. Parenti said we are back to about 1900 in terms of inequality. “People are poor because they are paid less than the value that they produce. You need poverty. Poverty is needed if you are gonna have wealth.”

Psywar argues that it is the monopoly media’s relentless propaganda that holds up capitalism. Democracy and capitalism are argued to be mutually exclusive. If capitalism is sacrosanct, then you can not have democracy.

“Behind political democracy was economic equality.”

Psywar tells the story of how and why the world is the way it is now. It tells of the system, why it was concocted and why it is kept in place.

Knowledge is requisite to combat propaganda and disinformation. It is necessary to overcome the system and to erect a people-centered system that respects the needs and aspirations of the society as a whole. *Psywar* makes clear that public opinion is important. If it were not important, then there would be no need for perception management. It is the incessant propaganda and disinformation that creates a perception of reality. Noble reveals the framework that exploits class, race, gender, and resources to benefit the already wealthy at the expense of the masses.

Psywar is a documentary that augurs well for future filmmaking by Noble who made the film for \$1500 while working a blue collar job. It is a good example of the democratization of filmmaking occurring via the internet.

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<http://www.cvltnation.com/the-destroyed-sanctum-psywar-documentary/>



[THE DESTROYED SANCTUM – PSYWAR DOCUMENTARY](#)

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It comes in with the tide. A documentary with a calmly delivered narration pointing out the inconsistencies of those with power. Sir Bob Geldof showed us that it really does not take a genius to point out the problems in the world but once in a while some one will truly take an axe to the wall of psuedo-intellectual problem-calling. PSYWAR explores the evolution of propaganda and public relations in the United States, with an emphasis on the “elitist theory of democracy” and the relationship between war, propaganda and class. All the falling statues, all the strong-jawed stiff-lipped Marines, All the terrorist wagging a finger and looking about surreptitiously, all of these images are introduced into society to burrow deep in our psyche and never really come out. Most of Generation F(ucked) will forever see the “Enemy” as an Arabic man and the “Hero” as an absurdly buff Nebraskan. The effects of propaganda are every where and rarely let up. Everyday we are constantly bombarded with thousands of ads, which often times more or less take our happiness and piece of mind and hold it for ransom, the most jarring fact though is that whether or not we are aware many of them are geared towards stripping us of left-like-leanings. The first war we ever fight, we’ve already lost. I hate concepts like this because they sound so banal and trite and ultimately as a species we are helpless against our own ignorant yet hilariously destructive nature but in order to truly hate your enemy you must know every facet of your enemy and *propaganda is a huge facet*.

Ads at this point are arbitrary distractions that insult our intelligence and waste our time, so the next time you stroll forth from your favorite well-franchised coffee outlet and see a bus pass by demanding that you tune your station to an esoterically jovial Cumbia station: BOYCOTT IT!

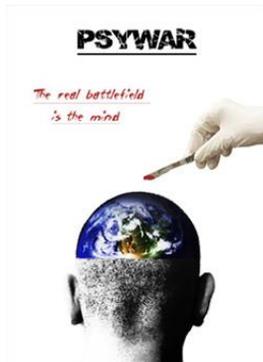
Media Review: Psywar

Psywar: History of American propaganda for political, corporate control of Americans



Written by Anna Pernod

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Psychological Warfare (or 'Psywar') is the use of psychological techniques to manipulate the human mind. It is the subject of a compelling documentary by Scott Noble, the director of other acclaimed documentaries, including '[Human Resources](#)'. In referring to 'Psywar' Noble said that the "real battlefield is the mind". The documentary (*freely available to watch online*) is a disturbing introduction to the current state of psychological warfare. It explores the evolution of propaganda, public relations and the rise of consumerism. It should be required viewing for all psychologists. *Psywar provides a powerful insight into how people's perceptions are first warped and then sustained by psychological techniques. **Note taking is highly recommended.***

- Psywar
- Director: Scott Noble
- Duration: 1 hour 38 minutes
- Released: 2010
- Website: [Metanoia Films](#)
- Free and available for download or viewing online (see link below)

Psywar - psychological warfare, has also been known as 'Psyops' (Psychological Operations), Political Warfare, 'winning hearts and minds', Propaganda or Public Relations. Edward Bernays, the so called 'father of Public Relations' defines Propaganda as "an effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to a particular enterprise, idea or group."

“The planned use of propaganda and other psychological actions having the primary purpose of influencing the opinions, attitudes, and behaviour of hostile foreign groups in such a way as to support the achievement national objectives”. - U.S. Department of Defence

The documentary emphasises the “elitist theory of democracy” and **the relationship between war, PR, consumers and class**. It also goes a long way towards providing an insight into U.S. foreign policy.

The documentary is in four parts and starts with TV footage of the statue of Saddam Hussein being toppled. Jubilant Iraqis are seen pushing the head around. It goes on to show a wide angle view of the event where the whole of Fardus Square (near the Palestine Hotel where the international media are based) and instead of the cheering thousands, the pictures reveal only around 200 people – most of them US troops. The film then flips to another **disinformation event** about the fallen American soldier Jessica Lynch.

Part **two** focuses on ‘Propagating the Faith’. Graeme MacQueen, founder of the *Centre for Peace Studies* points out that war is disgusting to most people. **It is therefore necessary to gain the support of the people by putting great psychological pressure upon soldiers. National Security is there to swindle people.** Walter Lippmann, Ivy Lee, Edward Bernays – the “founding fathers” of modern journalism and PR – imposed pro-war propaganda on the American people during WW1. We have seen a disturbingly similar pattern repeat itself since then.

In part **three**, ‘We the People’, Psywar explains on how **people are pawns in a system set up in favour of the wealthy**. The ideals of monopoly capital in the context of democracy are discussed by early proponents of PR such as Walter Lippmann and Edwards Bernays. An interesting insight is offered by flipping back 140 years earlier. James Madison, who was primarily responsible for drafting the American Constitution said that **the primary goal of government was to protect the ‘opulent from the majority’** so that the ‘wealth of the nations’ should be in charge. The existence of democracy is refuted. In the documentary **Chomsky describes elections “a marketing exercise.”**

The final and most compelling part of Psywar is ‘Consumers’ – and **how people are indoctrinated to see themselves not as citizens but as consumers**. The consumer society is a natural outgrowth of capitalism. Endless growth means endless mountains of junk. To sell it, you have to **convince people that buying objects leads to happiness**.

"A lucid and insightful study of the manipulation of public consciousness...Take heed."
Michael Yates, Associate Editor, Monthly Review.

Watch Psywar

Click here to watch Psywar online (opens in a new tab).

<http://www.betterlivingresources.info/product/DVD070>

Psywar: the Interviews

History of American propaganda for political, corporate control of Americans

Documentary about how propaganda is being used to manipulate your mind.

Psywar interlaces historical development of US governmental and corporate propaganda with interviews of current leading social scientists to explain the US government as a psychopathic oligarchy committed to its own enrichment at the expense of any consideration for the public good.

The 98-minute film focuses on the inception of US propaganda that resulted from media exposure to Robber Baron corporate labor practices, and government/oligarchic interest for US involvement in World War 1. This history extends into our world of the present with US corporate media dominated by pure propaganda in all key policy areas for money and power. This is obvious because an independent media would expose the Orwellian unlawful US wars, the paper-thin lies propagandized as reasons for war that were all known to be lies as they were told, and the unprecedented transfer of trillions of American tax-payer dollars to the oligarchy through rigged-casino economics.

Sources for this film:

- Beder, Sharon -- Consumerism: an Historical Perspective
- Chomsky, Noam -- What Makes Mainstream Media Mainstream
- Darwinia -- WWI Propaganda
- Ewen, Stuart -- Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture
- Lazere, Donald -- American media and mass culture
- Lutins, Allen -- An Eclectic list of Events in US Labor History
- Millies, Stephen -- The Ludlow Massacre and the Birth of Company Unions

- Parenti, Michael -- Super-Patriotism
- Simpson, Christopher -- The Science of Coercion
- Smith, Sharon -- Subterranean Fire: A History of Working-Class Radicalism in the United States
- Snow, Nancy -- Propaganda, Inc., Selling America's Culture to the World
- Stauber, John and Rampton, Sheldon -- Weapons of Mass Deception: The Uses of Propaganda in Bush's War on Iraq ; Toxic Sludge is Good For You
- Tye, Larry -- The Father of Spin: Edward L. Bernays & The Birth of PR

PsyWar - Synopsis

This film explores the evolution of propaganda and public relations in the United States, with an emphasis on the *elitist theory of democracy* and the relationship between war, propaganda and class.

Includes original interviews with a number of dissident scholars including Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Michael Parenti, Peter Phillips (Project Censored), John Stauber (PR Watch), Christopher Simpson (The Science of Coercion) and others.

A deep, richly illustrated study of the nature and history of propaganda, featuring some of the world's most insightful critics, *Psywar* exposes the propaganda system, providing crucial background and insight into the control of information and thought.