Ironically enough, it was to Communist Russia that Orwell alluded, the Soviet threat that once loomed so large. Corporations now preside over different media forms – television, radio, newspapers – and increasingly have story in U.S. journalism in our times.

By the government. The American intellectual left has assayed the media as a key part of a doctrinal system by which corporations, in collaboration with the government, try to impose their will on the populace. The American government has its own motives for fighting this war, just as it did during previous conflicts in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Panama and Vietnam. However, it is difficult to separate the effect of the media from the effect of the war itself. The two are inextricably linked.

The role of mass circulation and the means to produce, distribute and cross-publicise their own products and related spin transparent link with politics is in Italy where the man controlling most of the media, Silvio Berlusconi, is also the prime minister and foreign minister. In Britain, media mogul Rupert Murdoch controls a large proportion of the 'information' provision. Chairman and chief executive of News Corporation, which is perhaps the most transparently linked with politics in the media. As Robert McChesney has noted, a 'sustained examination of the way media and telecommunication policies are produced behind closed doors in Washington provides virtually everything that Americans see and hear on the screen, the airwaves, in print and on the Web.'

It is clear that the American government has its own motives for fighting this war, just as it did during previous conflicts in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Panama and Vietnam. However, it is difficult to separate the effect of the media from the effect of the war itself. The two are inextricably linked. Telecommunication policies are produced behind closed doors in Washington, and a 'sustained examination of the way media and telecommunication policies are produced behind closed doors in Washington provides virtually everything that Americans see and hear on the screen, the airwaves, in print and on the Web.'

The fact that, more so than any other nation, the mainstream US media is controlled by huge multi-national corporations is the key to understanding its reluctance to give an objective perspective on internal politics, foreign affairs or any subject that would affect the commercial interests of these big businesses allied which provide its advertising revenue. The process of conglomeramation that created this situation through mergers and acquisitions accelerated throughout the 1990s, largely at the expense of independent titles. Media corporations now preside over different media forms – television, radio, newspapers – and increasingly have the means to produce, distribute and cross-publicise their own products and related spin-offs. There is also clear evidence of links between the media giants, with most of the directors serving on the board of the world's most.

In addition to co-operating with each other to ensure that this oligopoly persists, the media companies also lobby the government to deregulate the industry and allow empire building to continue, often in return for electoral support. As Noam Chomsky noted, a 'sustained examination of the way media and telecommunication policies are produced behind closed doors in Washington is arguably the most off-limits story in U.S. journalism in our times.'

At the start of this text is a passage from George Orwell's notoriously dystopian novel Nineteen Eighty-four. Ironically enough, it was to Communist Russia that Orwell alluded, the Soviet threat which once loomed so large in the American consciousness and which has now been replaced with the war on terror. Noam Chomsky has observed:

So magnificently has the doctrinal system risen to its task that to this day, 30 years later, the idea that the US attacked Vietnam is unmentionable, even unthinkable, in the mainstream. The essential issues of the war are, correspondingly, beyond any possibility of discussion. The guard of the provision is the doctrine: it is not only legally critical to the war, but can be quite proud of an achievement that would be hard to duplicate in a well-run totalitarian state. The American intellectual left has assayed the media as a key part of a doctrinal system by which corporations, in collaboration with the government, try to impose their will on the populace. The American government has its own motives for fighting this war, just as it did during previous conflicts in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Panama and Vietnam. However, it is difficult to separate the effect of the media from the effect of the war itself. The two are inextricably linked.

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Freedom of Speech vs. Freedom of Thought

How many people are proud to be citizens of this beautiful country of ours? The stripes and the stars for the rights that men have died for to protect democracy and the liberties that would harm the interests of big business and garnering support for crusades in the name of "freedom".

In parallel to activities in the Gulf, a frenzied propaganda war is being waged on all fronts, suppressing information that would harm the interests of big business and garnering support for crusades in the name of "freedom".

In what is explicitly referred to as a "strategic weapon," oil and weapons are being used over the mangled remains of the willing dead. The effect is to make it impossible to find words to talk about matters of human significance in a coherent way. We can then see that little will be understood about how our society works and what is happening in the name of "freedom" and "democracy."

Maybe it was a curious premonition that caused Scottish artist Ross Birrell to cross the Atlantic in November, 2000 to begin a state of crisis, with pressure and censorship from above dictating content. In what is explicitly referred to as a "strategic weapon," oil and weapons are being used over the mangled remains of the willing dead. The effect is to make it impossible to find words to talk about matters of human significance in a coherent way. We can then see that little will be understood about how our society works and what is happening in the name of "freedom" and "democracy."

In the process of gathering cuttings from the centre left British press to form a backdrop to this project, it has become increasingly difficult to get beyond the thousands of column inches dedicated to a discussion of impending war in Iraq. Conflict in the most obvious example of misinformation and propaganda. The documentaries of John Pilger close the information gap by taking a closer look at the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the effect of international politics on the children of Iraq, conditions in Burma and the import of globalisation on India: http://pilger whocares.com & www.bullfrogfilms.com. Aside from this, there are many other contemporary issues – human rights, the environment and biotechnology to name but a few – that are being neglected in a large part by the media. 'Between the Lines' aims to redress the balance somewhat, creating an information overload by offering access to news and publications that present an alternative and more comprehensive world-view for an American audience that is offered by the mainstream media.

The Scandinavian collective N55 has collaborated on a bookshop, realised at apexart, based on their SHOP system (www.n55.dk/shop.html), which provides a framework for the provision of information. Crucially, SHOP also aims to create a new economy based on sharing and exchange that resists the use of money. Several artists have contributed to 'Between the Lines' with their own self-published books and pamphlets, including Regina Moller with her alternative women's magazine Happyness/tears and regular columns, and Richard Bezjian and Oscar Tuazon who have collaborated to reproduce an edition of Scandinavian magazine from January 1971 (originally published by Warren Hinckle III and Sidney E. Zice) which charts the unrest among young people in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a publication which is almost unthinkable in today's climate.

Steven Duval has consistently been dealing with a range of issues in a series of pamphlets and has produced a specially commissioned booklet for this project, highlighting some themes that are being neglected in a large part by the media. 'Between the Lines' aims to redress the balance somewhat, creating an information overload by offering access to news and publications that present an alternative and more comprehensive world-view for an American audience that is offered by the mainstream media.

The bookshop has been further stocked with titles recommended by those participating in the project and their networks and special thanks are due to Brett Bloom, Satire characterises some of the publications on offer and is used as a vehicle to create a new economy based on sharing and exchange that resists the use of money. Several artists have contributed to 'Between the Lines' with their own self-published books and pamphlets, including Regina Moller with her alternative women's magazine Happyness/tears and regular columns, and Richard Bezjian and Oscar Tuazon who have collaborated to reproduce an edition of Scandinavian magazine from January 1971 (originally published by Warren Hinckle III and Sidney E. Zice) which charts the unrest among young people in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a publication which is almost unthinkable in today's climate. Steven Duval has consistently been dealing with a range of issues in a series of pamphlets and has produced a specially commissioned booklet for this project, highlighting some themes – from food to weapons – of immediate relevance. His aesthetics also permeate the publicity material surrounding the project, including this brochure.

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Customized human cloning offers the prospect of a new kind of immortality. Each generation of a particular genotype can become the ultimate artist, continually customizing and upgrading new genetic traits into the model with the goal of both perfecting and perpetuating the genotype forever. [...] The real threat that human cloning represents is one that, as far as I know, is never talked about by scientists, ethicists, biotech entrepreneurs, or politicians. In a society where more and more people clone and eventually customize their genotype to design specifications and engineering standards, how are we supposed to determine what is normal or customized? What about the child who is born with a "disability"? Will the rest of society view child with tolerance or come to see the child as an error in the genetic code – in short a defective product?

Between the Lines is just the tip of a rapidly melting iceberg, an attempt to expose the media as anything but objective and to offer a glimpse of a few perspectives worthy of serious consideration.

Rebecca Gordon Nesbit, March, 2003

Notes:

6. George Orwell, 'Politics and the English Language', Horizon, April, 1946
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Design: Steven Duval