

Bernays and Propaganda



BY
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Many years ago, the Jewish-American political commentator **Walter Lippmann** realised that political ideology could be completely fabricated, using the media to control both presentation and conceptualisation, not only to create deeply-ingrained false beliefs in a population, but also to entirely erase undesirable political ideas from the public mind. This was the beginning of not only the American hysteria for freedom, democracy and patriotism, but of all manufactured political opinion, a process that has been operative ever since. Lippmann created these theories of mass persuasion of the public, using totally fabricated "facts" deeply insinuated into the minds of a gullible public, but there is much more to this story. An Austrian Jew named **Edward Louis Bernays**, who was the nephew of psychoanalyst **Sigmund Freud**, was one of Lippmann's most precocious students and it was he who put Lippmann's theories into practice. **Bernays** is widely known in America as the father of Public Relations, but he would be much more accurately described as the father of American war marketing as well as the father of mass manipulation of the public mind.

Bernays claimed:

"If we understand the mechanism and motives of the group mind "it will be possible" to control and regiment the masses according to our will without their knowing about it". He called this scientific technique of opinion-molding the '*engineering of consent*', and to accomplish it he merged theories of crowd psychology with the psychoanalytical ideas of his uncle Sigmund Freud. **Bernays regarded society as irrational and dangerous**, with a "*herd instinct*", and that if the multi-party electoral system (which was fabricated by a group of European elites as a population control mechanism) were to survive and continue to serve those elites, *massive manipulation of the public mind was necessary*. **These elites, "invisible people", would have, through their influence on government and their control of the media, a monopoly on the power to shape thoughts, values, and responses of the citizenry**. His conviction was that this group should flood the public with misinformation and emotionally-loaded propaganda to "*engineer*" the acquiescence of the masses and thereby rule over them. **According to him, this manufactured consent of the masses, creating conformity of opinion molded by the tool of false propaganda, would be vital for the survival of democracy.** (1) (1a) (2)

Bernays wrote,

"The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country." He stated that in America, people are governed, their minds molded, their tastes formed, their ideas suggested, largely by men they have never heard of. He claimed, "This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner. **In almost every act of our daily lives we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the wires which control the public mind.**" (3)



In his main work titled '**Propaganda**', (4) (4a) which he wrote in 1928, Bernays argued that the manipulation of public opinion was a necessary part of democracy in which individuals were inherently dangerous (to the rapacity of the elites) but could be harnessed and channeled by these same elites for their economic benefit.

He wrote further that "No serious sociologist any longer believes that the voice of the people expresses any ... wise idea. The voice of the people expresses the mind of the people, and that mind is made up for it by ... those persons who understand the manipulation of public opinion. It is composed of inherited prejudices and symbols and clichés and verbal formulas supplied to them by the leaders. Fortunately, the ... politician is able, by the instrument of propaganda, to mold and form the will of the people."

He clearly believed that virtually total control of a population was possible, and perhaps easy to accomplish: "***So vast are the numbers of minds which can be regimented, and so tenacious are they when regimented, that (they produce) an irresistible pressure before which legislators, editors, and teachers are helpless.***"



And it wasn't only the public masses that were '*inherently dangerous*', but a nation's leaders fit this description as well, therefore also requiring manipulation and control. **Bernays realised that if you can influence the leaders of a nation, either with or without their conscious cooperation, you can control the government and the country, and that is precisely where he set his sights.** Bernays again: "In some departments of our daily life, in which we imagine ourselves free agents, we are ruled by dictators exercising great power. There are invisible rulers who control the destinies of millions.

It is not generally realized to what extent the words and actions of our most influential public men are dictated by shrewd persons operating behind the scenes. **Nor, what is still more important, the extent to which our thoughts and habits are modified by authorities."** He went on to tell us that "The invisible government tends to be concentrated in the hands of the few because of the expense of manipulating the social machinery which controls the opinions and habits of the masses." And in this case, **the "few" are the wealthy elites, their even wealthier bankers, and their brethren who control the media, publishing and entertainment industries.**



US President Wilson was desperate to fulfill his obligations to his handlers by putting the US into the First World War as they wished, but was having little success with public opinion at home; **few Americans wanted to enter the European war.** In 1917 Wilson founded what was called **The Committee on Public Information**, of which Bernays became a star member. It was Bernays' vast propaganda schemes and his influence in promoting the patently false idea that US entry to the war was primarily aimed at "bringing democracy to all of Europe", that proved so successful in altering public opinion about the war. **Thanks to Edward Bernays, American war marketing was born and would never die.**

Until the First World War, these theories of creating an entirely false public opinion based on misinformation, then manipulating this for population control, were still only theories, **but the astounding success of propaganda by Bernays and his group during the war laid bare the possibilities of perpetually controlling the public mind on all matters.** The "shrewd" designers of Bernays' "invisible government" developed a standard technique for what was essentially propaganda and mind control, or at least opinion control, and infiltrated it throughout the US government, its departments and agencies, and its leaders and politicians. **Coincident with this, they practiced infecting the leaders of every identifiable group – fraternal, religious, commercial, patriotic, social – and encouraging these men to likewise infect their supporters.**

Bernays was apparently stunned by the outstanding success of his democracy slogan and hate campaign in swaying public opinion in favor of war, and so immediately began to apply his model to peacetime enterprises. "In applying his uncle's Freudian theories to deal with public conceptions, **Bernays realised that provoking a fear of communism and then manipulating the public's emotions toward it, could be a sure recipe for success in the widespread engineering of popular opinion and control of the population.** This theory was so powerful that it became a weapon of its own during the cold war." The term 'propaganda' had acquired a poor reputation so **Bernays created and promoted the term 'Public Relations'**, but of course his processes were no such thing. **Bernays' PR ethic involved psychological manipulation and control of the public mind through cleverly-devised – and thoroughly false – propaganda.**



Source

Bernays carries the blame for more than American entry into the two world wars, having been instrumental in paving the way for the US cannibalisation and military colonisation of much of the world, and for the US installing and supporting the dozens of brutal military dictatorships around the world. His first international project was helping to engineer the US overthrow of the popular elected government of **Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala**. **At the time, the Rockefellers' United Fruit Company and various US elites and international financiers owned most of Guatemala including 70% of all the arable land, the communications facilities, the only railroad and shipping port, and controlled most exports.** When Arbenz commenced expropriations and land redistribution, Bernays developed a massive propaganda campaign that colored Arbenz as communist, a terrorist, an enemy to democracy, a blot on humanity, and much more, to the extent that American public opinion supported an outrageous travesty and one of the most brutal violations of human rights in US history. **Bernays' template has been used about 70 times with US invasions of that many nations,** which is one source of the vast disconnect between what the American people believe their government has done and what it has actually done. As a side note, **Guatemala appealed to the United Nations to stop the Americans' massive interference in their country, a plea that was sympathetically received by UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold who proved troublesome for the US. He would do so again a few years later, and would be assassinated by the CIA for his trouble.**

I discussed earlier the black and white mentality that pervades America. Much of this is supported by the witch-hunting versions of Christianity that Americans have embraced, but much of the blame must be laid on Bernays' propaganda methods. Bernays himself asserted that propaganda could produce rapid and strong emotional responses in the public, but that the range of these responses was limited because the emotional loading inherent in his propaganda would create a kind of binary mentality,

eventually **forcing the population into a programmed black and white world – which is precisely what we see in the US today.** This isn't difficult to understand. In a discussion of a landscaping option for our garden, we could have a range of dispassionate responses from antipathy to adoration, but when Bernays flooded the public with fabricated tales of Germans killing babies, the range of potential responses was not dispassionate but rather entirely emotional and would be limited to either abhorrence or perhaps a blocking of the information. In a sense, our emotional switch will be forced into either an 'on' or 'off' position, with no other reasonable choices. We see this in debates on subjects like global warming, where positions do not correspond to educational or employment circumstances, nor to experience, **but tend to be strongly emotional responses along ideological and political lines with precisely the kind of binary mentality Bernays predicted.**



Added to the Western calumnies over Syria are claims that Syrian state forces have been using chemical weapons on civilian populations. The evidence points in fact to the Western-backed so-called jihadists who have been stealthily using these weapons for false-flag propaganda stunts. Source

It is interesting to note that the manipulators eventually became the manipulated. **Wilson**, in his eagerness to manipulate public opinion in favor of war, failed to realise he was himself being manipulated by his handlers, by these same elite propagandists whose war ambitions he was fulfilling, as well as other schemes they had already planted in his mind. The puppeteer became the puppet, and the practice became permanent. **The elite few, as Bernays called them, realised early on the potential for control of governments, and in every subsequent US administration the president and his White House staff, the politicians, the leaders of the military and intelligence agencies, all fell prey to this same disease of shrewd manipulation.** Roosevelt's "intense desire for war" (5) (6) (7) in 1939 was the result of

this same infection process and, once infected, he of course approved of the infection of the entire American population. **George Bush with Iraq and Obama with Libya and Syria are not different. Walter Lippmann and Edward Bernays succeeded beyond their wildest expectations.**

Bernays was very correct in stating that a society's ability to participate in a democracy was dependent on how well-informed the society was, but **Americans fail to appreciate that it is ignorance and not knowledge or education that protects the existence of multi-party political systems.** That is why American leaders, controlled by the same "invisible government" and with a fully-compliant elite-owned media, have intentionally misrepresented their current policies and actions to the public, while their "elite few" specialised in massive historical revisionism, especially American history in the world and the effects of that history on other nations.

By keeping Americans ignorant and uninformed, their minds filled with foolish and false myths, and forever distracted by irrelevancies, American leaders and their puppet-masters have used Bernays' theories to control public opinion and beliefs with lies, religion, patriotism and emotional propaganda. It was very much an "engineered ignorance" created by a continuing program of misinformation, manipulation and deception, a shrewdly-planned subversion of the American public.

The almost overwhelming political-religious ideological fog permeating America today is due to generations of institutionalized deception and propaganda, and **is the direct cause of much of the renowned ignorance of the American people. Their capitalist ideology as well, is rooted in economic misconceptions and false propaganda, with the result that almost no Americans today have any understanding of the real (and largely criminal) reasons for their nation's economic success.** The astonishing extent of the binary polarisation of politics and government is another example, yet few Americans have any understanding of their condition.

As one author noted, "The wealthy in America have created an inherently imbalanced system that is exploitable by the wealthy and they are working through the use of propaganda and misinformation to convince Americans that the system is just, or, if anything, unfairly biased toward the poor."

And again, **"The economic system that America has developed is dependent on the exploitation of foreign countries and the acquisition of foreign resources, which is why (the US) pursues a strategy of global preeminence."** He went on to state that **the foreign policy of the American Right-Wing has been developed through extensive propaganda and exaggeration of foreign threats in order to maintain the conditions for public support and to justify the suppression of dissent.**



I have written before that no Right-Wing government could survive in the full light of day with all truths exposed, because most of these truths are bitterly anti-social and designed only to create a flow of a nation's wealth to the relatively few members of the elites and financiers. In order to function at all, **a Right-Wing government like that in the US must be increasingly secretive and rely ever more heavily on Bernays and on his propaganda in order to produce in the population both his engineered consent and engineered ignorance, without which a democracy could not survive.**

This is so true that after World War II, the US military heavily restricted media control in occupied Germany and Japan because it recognized that the media could easily educate citizens to the dangers of the American presence both at home and in Europe. This veil of secrecy has been carried to an extent that the American and international elites have created what one writer called a massive framework of lies that functions as an arena within which the desired propaganda ideas are presented to the American people as information, but where the reality is very different from that in which American leadership functions. The same writer stated so perfectly, "Within this framework of lies the world appears to be a simplistic place of good and evil.

The feeling of Americans that we are the most successful people on earth, and that America is the most successful country, is used to support the idea that America's policies are inherently altruistic because our culture tells us that success is the measure of goodness. **What is actually the case, though, is that America is successful precisely because American policy is not altruistic."**

The next essay in this series will outline in detail the beginnings – and the devastating results – of Bernays' initial efforts.

Documentary by Adam Curtis (surprisingly broadcast by BBC)

The Century of the Self – Part 1: “Happiness Machines”

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnPmgOR1M04\](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnPmgOR1M04)

The Century of the Self – Part 2: “The Engineering of Consent”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEsPOt8MG7E&t=1s>

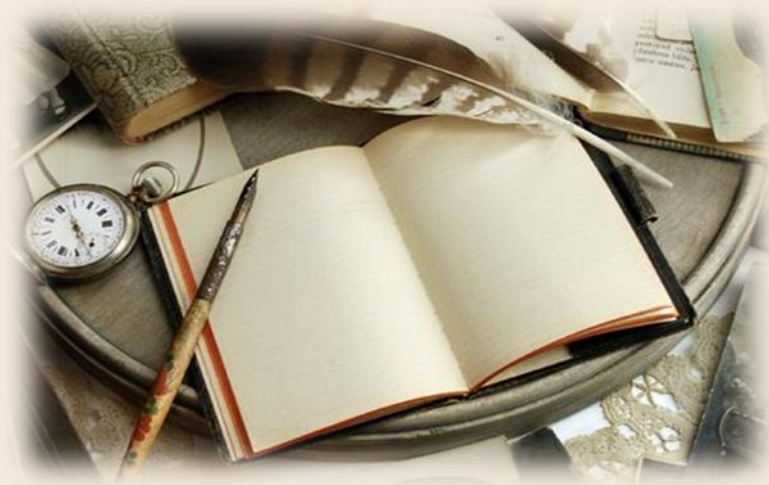
The Century of the Self – Part 3: “There is a Policeman Inside All Our Heads; He Must Be Destroyed.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ub2LB2MaGoM>

The Century of the Self – Part 4: “Eight People Sipping Wine in Kettering”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VouaAz5mQAs>

Notes



(1) <https://www.amazon.com/Engineering-Consent-Edward-L-Bernays/dp/B0007DOM5E>;

(1a) https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1b/The_Engineering_of_Consent_%28essay%29.pdf

(2) http://classes.dma.ucla.edu/Fall07/28/Engineering_of_consent.pdf

(3) <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/203430-the-conscious-and-intelligent-manipulation-of-the-organized-habits-and>

(4) <https://www.amazon.com/Propaganda-Edward-Bernays/dp/0970312598>;

(4a) <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/bernprop.html>

(5) <https://famguardian.org/Subjects/Scams/FDR/fdr.htm>

(6) <https://www.chroniclesmagazine.org/article/wikileaks-1941/>

(7) <https://mises.org/library/roosevelt-nobody-knows>

About the author



Mr. Romanoff's writing has been translated into 30 languages and his articles posted on more than 150 foreign-language news and politics websites in more than 30 countries, as well as more than 100 English-language platforms. Larry Romanoff is a retired management consultant and businessman. He has held senior executive positions in international consulting firms, and owned an international import-export business. He has been a visiting professor at Shanghai's Fudan University, presenting case studies in international affairs to senior EMBA classes. Mr. Romanoff lives in Shanghai and is currently writing a series of ten books generally related to China and the West. He is one of the contributing authors to Cynthia McKinney's new anthology '**When China Sneezes**'.

His full archive can be seen at

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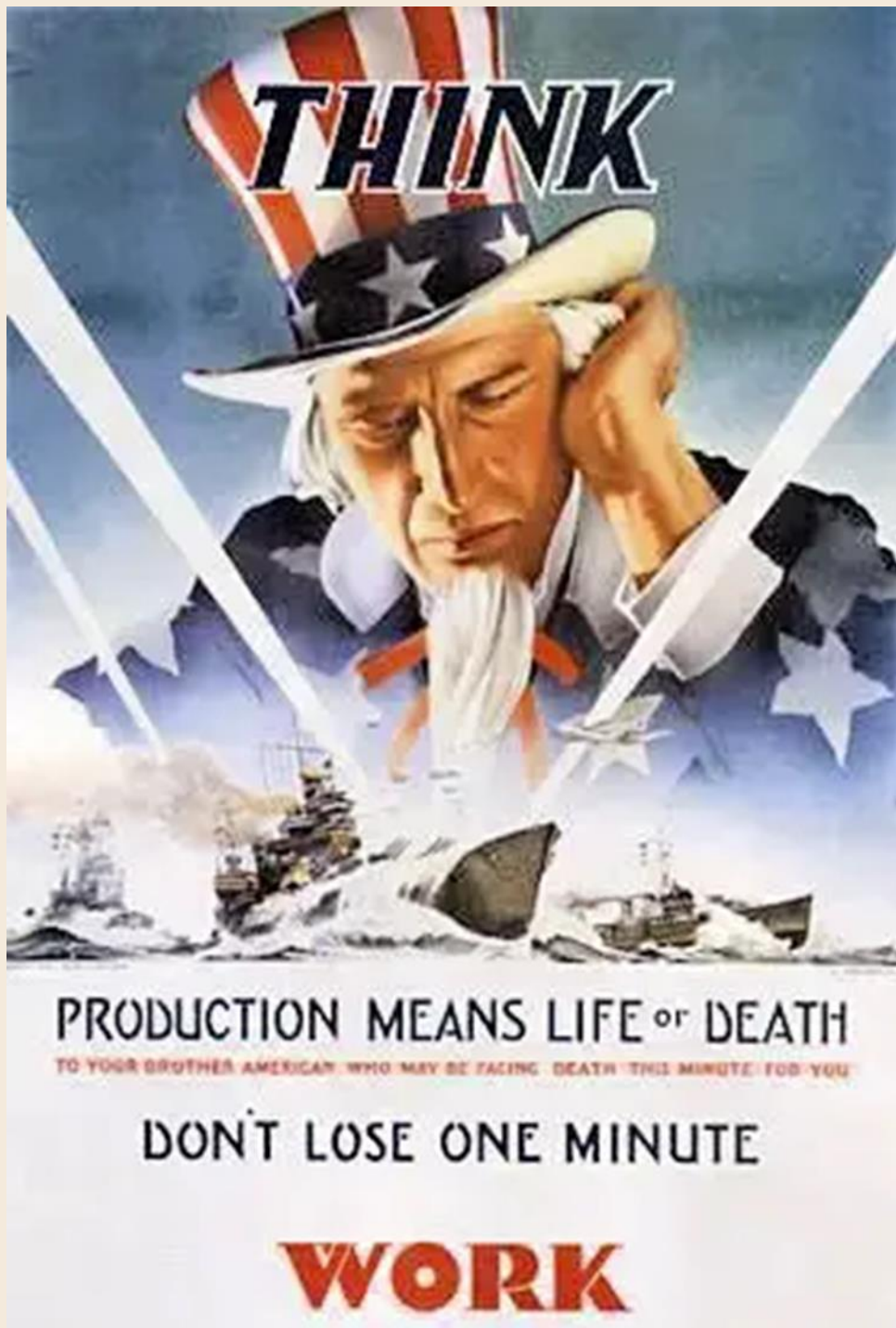
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