

Rupert Murdoch's mass media octopus

by Edward Spannaus

One of the most strident voices in the news media in the United States and Great Britain for the BAC war policy—against Iraq, Russia, China, and in the Balkans—is that of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation.

Murdoch's primary policy outlets are the *Times* of London, the *New York Post*, the "neo-conservative" *Weekly Standard* news magazine in the United States, and his Fox TV network. Several years ago, Murdoch bailed out televangelist Pat Robertson by buying up the lion's share of his Family Channel TV network, thereby enabling Robertson to continue airing his 700 Club.

Murdoch's biggest source of influence in the U.S. is through Fox Television and its cable offshoots. Using an unabashed sex-and-violence format, Murdoch has broken the dominance of the three major networks (ABC, NBC, CBS), and by some measures Fox is now the number-two network in the United States in terms of viewership.

Likewise, he has transformed the *New York Post*—a paper founded by Alexander Hamilton—into a British tabloid look-alike. Murdoch has the London market covered through his ownership of the 200-year-old "broadsheet," the *Times*, and Britain's leading tabloid, the *Sun*. All in all, Murdoch's News Corp. owns some 80 newspapers and 11 magazines in key international markets, including Australia's leading tabloid, *The Australian*. The combined international readership of Murdoch's publications is several score millions.

Murdoch has also purchased the American publishing house Harper & Row, merging it with the British house William Collins, to create the world's largest publisher, HarperCollins.

Internationally, Murdoch owns BSkyB, a satellite television service, which has 4 million subscribers in the United Kingdom and Ireland; STAR TV, a Hong Kong-based satellite operation, with feeds to 220 million viewers in 53 countries, largely Asia. Murdoch also has television outlets in Germany (VOX), Australia (FOXTEL), India, Indonesia, Japan,



Ibero-America, and the Caribbean Basin. He claims he reaches close to 75% of world's population through television.

Born in Australia, Murdoch comes from a family of press barons. His father, Sir Keith Murdoch, was the most influential of Australian media owners until his death in 1952. Rupert had been apprenticed under Lord Beaverbrook, the British press lord, at the London *Daily Express*, where he learned what Beaverbrook referred to as the "black art of journalism."

Murdoch was an ardent supporter of Margaret Thatcher, but he is also quite close to Tony Blair. His economics columnist Irwin Stelzer served as his secret go-between with Blair and "New Labour," even before the Labour Party election victory in 1997.

Other political interventions:

- During 1992, Murdoch did everything he could to defeat Clinton, including publishing scandal articles in British press, which were then reprinted in the U.S. media.
- That pattern continued with the Whitewater scandal, Monica Lewinsky, Chinagate, Vincent Foster, etc.
- Murdoch advanced \$4.5 million to former House Speaker Newt Gingrich for Gingrich's book.
- He hired the discredited Dick Morris as a columnist for the *New York Post*, and hired cyber-gossip Matt Drudge as commentator on Fox TV.
- His Fox News Sunday is now one of the major Sunday morning talk shows; plus the *Weekly Standard's* William Kristol is a regular "round-table" commentator on ABC's "This Week."
- In 1997, he was presented the United Jewish Appeal "Humanitarian of the Year" award by another "great humanitarian," Henry Kissinger.

Maggie Thatcher's New Atlantic Initiative

by Michele Steinberg

Our energies must be directed towards strengthening NATO, which is as important in the post-Cold War world as in the circumstances of its creation. NATO's role should be expanded. It must be prepared to go out-of-area, where so many of today's threats lie. . . . NATO can also coordinate support for the construction of that system of global missile defence which is now an imperative requirement.

—Baroness Margaret Thatcher, May 11, 1996, to the *New Atlantic Initiative's* Congress of Prague