

Power and Papers: Ownership and Editorship of the News

"My chief area of concern...the paper's stand on major issues. Of course it takes attitudes but I fail to find any consistency in them, anything that indicates unmistakably the clear position of conscience that a great newspaper must be seen to hold. Just what that position is, it is your duty to define, and it cannot be mine. But it must be defined with clarity and authority and even repetition."

—Rupert Murdoch in a 1982 memo to *The Times* editor, Harold Evans

Selected Events in Newspaper History

- 1887 William Randolph Hearst becomes Proprietor of *San Francisco Examiner*
- 1894 William Randolph Hearst buys *New York Morning Journal*
- 1915 Rothermere launches *Sunday Pictorial*
- 1916 Lord Beaverbrook buys *Daily Express*
- 1918 William Randolph Hearst acquires *Chicago Herald and Examiner*
- 1922 J. J. Astor buys *The Times* from the Northcliffe Estate
- 1934 William Randolph Hearst buys *Baltimore Post*
- 1959 Roy Thomson buys the *Sunday Times* from Lord Kelmsley
- 1960 Rupert Murdoch buys *Daily Mirror* in Sydney
- 1964 Manchester *Guardian* moves to London
- 1966 Astors sell *The Times* to Roy Thomson, safeguards are installed to prevent his abusing editorial independence before the sale is approved
- 1965 Denis Hamilton becomes Editor in Chief of *The Times*, William Rees-Mogg become editor of *The Times* and Harold Evans editor of the *Sunday Times*
- 1969 Rupert Murdoch buys *News of the World* and the *London Sun*
- 1970s The *Sunday Times* becomes known for investigative journalism; articles on Thalidomide lead to compensation for drug victims
- 1973 Rupert Murdoch buys *San Antonio Express* and *News*
- 1974 Rupert Murdoch launches *National Star*
- 1976 Rupert Murdoch buys *New York Post* and *New York* magazine
- 1976 Death of Roy Thomson, owner of *The Times* and *Sunday Times*
- 1977 Astors sell *Observer* to Atlantic Richfield (ARCO)
- 1977 Beaverbrook (*Express*) Papers sold to Trafalgar House
- 1978 *The Times* and *Sunday Times* are closed for a year while trying to pressure the National Graphic Association (NGA) to agree to updated technologies
- 1979 *The Times* and *Sunday Times* reopen and concede to NGA demands
- 1980 *The Times* and *Sunday Times* are put up for sale by the Thomson family Rees-Mogg and Evans independently seek funding for consortia to save their papers but the consortia bids fall apart



Throughout the history of newspapers, a handful of proprietors or corporations have owned multiple newspapers. Well-known names like William Randolph Hearst, the Astors, Rupert Murdoch, Robert Maxwell and others have often been the subject of praise or criticism for their vast news holdings. When newspapers have been sold, the change in ownership and editorship was often public and painful. One of the most prominent changes in ownership shook all of Fleet Street, the British newspaper district. It was the 1981 sale of the British papers **The Times** and the **Sunday Times** to Australian Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. Conflicts between Fleet Street management and the printing unions over new technology resulted in a yearlong shut down between 1978–1979. The papers ultimately conceded to the demands of the National Graphics Association, but **The Times** and the **Sunday Times** had lost money and were left vulnerable. After the

sale of the newspapers, Murdoch replaced **The Times** editor William Rees-Mogg with **Sunday Times** editor Harold Evans. The battle between Murdoch and his editors was publicized in the news with the fervor of journalists covering their own kind.



"But of course, while being consistent in our editorial position, we have deliberately opened the paper to a diversity of views in the belief that truth will triumph and that our readers, especially, want a fully informed debate rather than a monolithic line of propaganda."

—Harold Evans reply memo to Rupert Murdoch

- 1981 Rupert Murdoch buys *The Times* and *Sunday Times*. Rees-Mogg resigns as editor of *The Times*, Murdoch offers Harold Evans editorship
- 1981 The Wedding of the Prince and Princess of Wales is given the first full-page color photograph in *The Times*
- 1982 "Son of Sam" serial killer coverage boosts *New York Post* circulation
- 1982 Harold Evans resigns as Editor of *The Times* two weeks after Murdoch asked him to resign; Charles Douglas-Home replaces him
- 1984 Public Float of *Reuters*
- 1986 Rupert Murdoch moves London titles to print at Wapping cutting costs
- 1986 Rupert Murdoch obtains *Melbourne Herald*, the paper his father built
- 1987 Murdoch buys *Today* from Lonhro for £38 million

The Iron Lady: Margaret Thatcher and Thatcherism



Margaret Thatcher was elected to the House of Commons in 1959. In 1961, she was promoted to the front bench as Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance. She stepped down when the Conservatives lost the 1964 election. When Conservative, Edward Heath, became Prime Minister in 1970, she was appointed Secretary of State for Education and Science. As Secretary, Thatcher faced controversy when she eliminated free milk in schools as part of a budget cut. The measure was highly unpopular and she was dubbed “Maggie Thatcher, milk snatcher” by *The Sun*.

When the Conservatives lost the next election, Thatcher became a prominent member of the Conservative Shadow Cabinet. In 1975, she challenged Heath for leadership of the party and won. As leader of the Conservatives, she became the voice of the party. After a 1976 speech on the Soviet Union, Thatcher was dubbed “the Iron Lady” in the Soviet newspaper, *The Red Star*. This appellation was one she relished. “The Iron Lady” would be used to describe Thatcher and her dogged approach to the many issues she would face during her 1979–1990 tenure as Prime Minister.

Margaret Thatcher was elected Prime Minister in 1979. She was the first woman to serve as Prime Minister. On April 2, 1982, Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands. Thatcher dispatched the British Navy to the islands and eleven weeks later Argentina surrendered. National outrage at the invasion and satisfaction at the successful conclusion of the war would contribute to her landslide reelection in 1983.

In 1984, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) started a yearlong strike. Thatcher was committed to reducing union power and stockpiled coal before the strike. Consequently, electric power was not disrupted during the strike and the miner’s were ultimately forced to return to work without having any concessions.

Thatcher’s fall from power was the result of the 1988 Community Charge, a tax levied to fund local governments. Essentially a tiered poll tax (a fixed tax on a per individual basis), it took effect in 1990. The tax was highly unpopular and the Conservative Party feared certain defeat in the next election if Thatcher remained the party’s leader. Thus, under pressure from her own party, Thatcher resigned on November 22, 1990.

Thatcherism, as the policies of the Prime Minister came to be known, was defined by: a strong but small central government, shifting control away from regional government, weakened trade unions, the promotion of private enterprise, the privatization of government owned companies, the dismantling of welfare programs and strong nationalism. She viewed her policies as an overdue correction of the Labour and Social Democratic plans that had expanded government. Thatcherism was also marked by the Prime Minister’s strong sense of ideology as the driving factor in her policy decisions. This ideology was one she shared on almost every point with American President Ronald Reagan, with whom she shared an incredibly close working relationship. The term Thatcherism is also used to refer to her autocratic style of governing.

“I’m extraordinarily patient provided I get my own way.”

—Margaret Thatcher

“I am in politics because of the conflict between good and evil, and I believe that in the end good will triumph.”

—Margaret Thatcher



“The Russians are bent on world dominance, and they are rapidly acquiring the means to become the most powerful imperial nation the world has seen...They put guns before butter, while we put just about everything before guns.”

—Margaret Thatcher, 1976

Democratic Laughter: Political Playwrights Howard Brenton and David Hare

“As a joke between ourselves, to keep our spirits up during writing, we said, ‘We’re writing this play to stop people reading newspapers.’”

—Howard Brenton on writing *Pravda* with David Hare

Both Howard Brenton and David Hare have, at times, been called “political playwrights.” While the phrase “political playwrights” is loaded with potential positive and negative connotations, there is no doubt that being political in their plays is something both men have never avoided. Both are members of the same generation. Brenton was born in 1942, Hare in 1947. Both began writing for fringe theaters that were interested in satire and social change. However, in 1974, Brenton said, “the fringe has failed...what happens is that the ‘alternative society’ gets hermetically sealed and surrounded...and, in the end, is strangled to death.” Independently, Hare and Brenton sought out new audiences in well-established theaters, not because they wanted to write commercial theater, but because they wanted the human subject matter of their non-elitist theater to reach a wider audience.

David Hare made a name writing satires for the fringe theater, using what he called the, “democratizing elements of public laughter.” He followed up with larger productions, **Knuckle** and **Plenty**, at the National Theatre. Hare stopped writing in the early 1980s. He said he “felt trapped in the theater, and I went through a period of intense bitterness and self-pity.” During the early Thatcher years, Hare lived in self-imposed exile in New York until he realized that, “hating England is not a good enough reason to live in America.” **Pravda**, which debuted in 1985, marked Hare’s return to England.

One of Brenton’s plays led to a lawsuit. The Royal National Theatre produced Brenton’s **The Romans in Britain** in 1980. The play, a critique of the British presence in Northern Ireland, was set during the invasion of Britain by Julius Caesar and the Roman army. *The Romans in Britain* sparked public controversy because it depicted the homosexual rape of a Celt by a Roman soldier. Sir Horace Cutler, the leader of the Greater London Council, a funder of the National Theatre, walked out of the performance and threatened to withdraw the GLC grant. *The Romans in Britain* was front-page news. Headlines were filled with stories about the play and its potential salaciousness, and the editorials continued for many weeks.

The news caught the attention of British moral campaigner Mary Whitehouse who, although she had never actually seen the play, brought a lawsuit against director Michael Bogdanov. Under the 1956 Sexual Offenses Act, Whitehouse sued Bogdanov on the grounds of the “procuring by a male, the commission of an act of gross indecency with another male, in a public place.” The law was designed for the prosecution of pimping and prostitution; this unique reading of the law raised the issue of whether or not a representation on stage can be considered a true “act of gross indecency.” The lawsuit was dropped when prosecuting attorney, Ian Kennedy, refused to proceed, saying, “I cannot continue to try an honorable man.” Peter Hall, the supportive director of the National Theatre, during *The Romans in Britain* scandal said, “Without controversial work in the repertoire, we would be evading our social responsibilities.”



< David Hare



^ Howard Brenton

“The kind of comedy we tried to write is one, we hope, of democratic laughter. The audience are invited to dissociate themselves from the tiny clique of the ruling class paraded across the stage.”

—Howard Brenton on writing *Pravda* with David Hare

Pravda in Journalism: A History of the Soviet Newspaper

“Net izvestij v «Pravde», i net pravdy v «Izvestiyax»”

Founded in 1912 as a Bolshevik revolutionary paper, *Pravda*, meaning truth, was the frequent target of censorship by the Tsarist police. The exiled Vladimir Lenin was among the early newspaper contributors. The language of the paper was kept simple to appeal to the working classes; articles encouraged labor strikes and provided various views on Communist political theory. After the Revolution of March 1917, the Provisional Government offered *Pravda* and all newspapers freedom of the press. However, by November 1917, the Bolshevik Revolution had occurred, and the same paper that had been hounded by Tsarist police was one of the few not shut down by Lenin's Press Decree. Non-Bolshevik papers were closed or taken over, and soon all papers were publishing only articles approved by the party. *Pravda* editors rather than the Central Committee enforced the party line both for themselves and for other Soviet newspapers.

The fortunes of those working for *Pravda* followed those of the political leaders they covered. Nikolai Bukharin, the editor of *Pravda* under Lenin, was removed in 1929, shortly after Joseph Stalin came to power. The newspaper Bukharin had once edited ran an article condemning his errors. The government executed Bukharin in 1938, and no public recognition remains of his years of editorship.

After Stalin's death, *Pravda* slowly revised its assessment of his political policies as Krushchev came to power and distanced himself from the earlier regime. Similarly, Krushchev's name disappeared from the paper when the party shifted power to Leonid Brezhnev.

During the cold war, *Pravda* became famous for its unfavorable assessments of events in non-communist nations and glowing reports of its own government's successes. Cold War *Pravda's* policy sparked the classic soviet joke involving the titles of the two largest papers *Pravda* (truth) and *Izvestia* (news). “There is no *Izvestia* in *Pravda*, and there is no *Pravda* in *Izvestia*.”



< Lenin reading *Pravda*.

Pravda >



A Comparison of *Time* Magazine and *Pravda* Cold War News Articles

On the opening of the border between West Germany and East Germany—

11/20/1989 *Time* Headline: **Freedom!**

“What happened in Berlin last week was a combination of the fall of the Bastille and a New Year's Eve blowout, of revolution and celebration.”

11/11/1989 *Pravda* Headline: **The Gordian Knot Has Been Cut**

“Yesterday evening, as soon as the GDR government's decision was made public, many residents of the capital took advantage of the possibility that had opened up: They set off for West Berlin in their own cars or on municipal electric trains. With rare exceptions, they returned. As a rule, they answered Western correspondents' questions by saying that they had jobs and homes in the GDR, that it was their native home.”

On the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan—

1/14/1980 *Time* Headline: **Moscow's Bold Challenge**

“Appearing for 13 minutes on nationwide television, he delivered the toughest speech of his presidency. Warned Carter: “Aggression unopposed becomes a contagious disease.” He denounced the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as “a deliberate effort by a powerful atheistic government to subjugate an independent Islamic people” and said that a “Soviet-occupied Afghanistan threatens both Iran and Pakistan and is a steppingstone to their possible control over much of the world's oil supplies.”

12/23/1979 *Pravda* Headline: **Soviet Troops in Afghanistan? Pure Fabrication**

“Recently Western, and especially American, mass news media have been disseminating deliberately planted rumors about some sort of “interference” by the Soviet Union in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. They have gone so far as to claim that Soviet “military units” have been moved into Afghan territory.”

“It is common knowledge that relations between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan are based on a firm foundation of good neighborliness, non-interference in each other's internal affairs and equal, mutually advantageous cooperation. These relations have become considerably stronger since the April [1978] revolution, when power in Afghanistan shifted to the hands of the people, who have begun the construction of a new life.”



^ *Pravda's* take on the 1984 British Miners' Strike.

Who Owns the News: The Newspaper, Magazine and Television Holdings of Major Media Corporations

News Corporation – Rupert Murdoch Holdings

Magazines—

TV Guide (partial ownership) *The Weekly Standard*
Maximum Golf

Newspapers—

New York Post (U.S.) *The Times* (U.K.)
The Sunday Times (U.K.) *The Times Supplements* (U.K.)
The Sun (U.K.) *News of the World* (U.K.)
The Australian (Australia) *The Daily Telegraph* (Australia)
The Herald Sun (Australia) *The Adelaide Advertiser*
The Courier Mail (Australia) (Australia)
Gold Coast Bulletin (Australia) *Sportsman* (Australia)
The Suburban (Australia) *Sunday Mail* (Australia)
Sunday Tasmanian (Australia) *Sunday Territorian* (Australia)
Sunday Times (Australia) *The Sunday Telegraph*
The Mercury (Australia) (Australia)
Fiji Times (Fiji) *Post Courier*
Weekly Times (Australia) (Papua New Guinea)

Television Networks—

FOX Broadcasting Company FOX News Channel
FOX Kids Network FOX Sports (partial in some
The Health Network markets)
Golf Channel FX
British Sky Broadcasting TV Guide Channel (44%)
National Geographic's STAR TV (Asia)
cable channel (50%)

AOL Time Warner Holdings

Magazines—

Time Magazine *Life Magazine*
Fortune Magazine *Sports Illustrated*
Money *People*
Entertainment Weekly *In Style*
Southern Living *Cooking Light*
Parenting *Baby Talk*
Baby on the Way *This Old House*
Real Simple *Golf Magazine*
Popular Science *Ski*
Yachting Magazine *Travel & Leisure*
Food & Wine *Departures*

SkyGuide

MAD Magazine

Television Networks and Production Companies—

WB Television Network HBO
Cinemax Time Warner Sports
CNN CNN/fn
CNN/SI CNN Headline News
TBS TNT
Cartoon Network Turner Classic Movies
Court TV (partial ownership) HBO Independent Productions
New Line Television Turner Original Productions
Warner Brothers Television Warner Brothers Animation
Time Warner Cable Comedy Central (50%; Viacom
owns other 50%)

Sony

Television Networks and Production Companies—

Columbia TriStar Domestic Television
Columbia TriStar International Television
Sony Pictures Family Entertainment
Telemundo Group (partial ownership)
Sony Entertainment Television (India, Latin America)
Game Show Network (jointly owned with Liberty Digital)
HBO Asia (partial ownership)
SET Asia (partial ownership)
Cinemax Asia (partial ownership)
HBO Ole, Latin America (partial ownership)
Cinemax, Latin America (partial ownership)
E! Entertainment Television, Latin America (partial ownership)
The Movie Channel, Middle East (partial ownership)
Showtime, Australia (partial ownership)
Encore, Australia (partial ownership)
Sky Cinema, Japan (partial ownership)

The Walt Disney Company Holdings

Magazines—

Discover Magazine *Disney Magazine*
ESPN Magazine *Talk*
US Weekly (50% stake)

DC Comics

The Health Publishing Group

Daily Newspapers—

County Press (Lapeer, MI) *Oakland Press and Reminder*
Narragansett Times (Pontiac, MI)
St. Louis Daily Record

Television Networks—

ABC The Disney Channel
SoapNet Walt Disney Animation
Buena Vista Television Touchstone Television
Walt Disney Television
A&E (partial ownership with Hearst & GE)
The History Channel (partial ownership with Hearst & GE)
Lifetime (partial ownership with Hearst)
E! (partial ownership with Comcast, MediaOne & Liberty Media)
ESPN (partial ownership with Hearst)

The Hearst Corporation Holdings

Daily Newspapers—

Albany Times Union *Beaumont Enterprise*
Edwardsville *Intelligencer*
Houston Chronicle *Huron Daily Review*
Laredo Morning Times *Midland Daily News*
Midland Reporter *Plainview Daily Herald*
San Antonio Express News *San Francisco Chronicle*
Seattle Post Intelligencer

Magazines—

Cosmopolitan *Cosmo Girl*
Country Living *Gardener*
Esquire *Good Housekeeping*
Harper's Bazaar *House Beautiful*
Marie Claire *O, The Oprah Magazine*
Popular Mechanics *Redbook*
Seventeen *Smart Money*
Town & Country *Travel*
Verdana

Television Networks and Production Companies—

AETN Enterprises Cosmopolitan TV
Locomotion NECN
A&E (partial ownership with Disney & GE)
ESPN (partial ownership with Disney)
The History Channel (partial ownership with Disney & GE)

History International (partial ownership with Disney & GE)
Lifetime (partial ownership with Disney)
Lifetime Movie (partial ownership with Disney & GE)

Viacom

Television Networks and Production Companies—

CBS UPN
MTV Network MTV
Nickelodeon Nick at Nite
TV Land CMT
TNN VH1
Showtime Networks Showtime
The Movie Channel FLIX
BET Paramount
Big Ticket Television Viacom Productions
King World Productions
Spelling Entertainment Group (80%)
Noggin (joint venture with Children's Television Workshop)
SET Pay-Per-View (sporting & entertainment events)
Comedy Central (joint venture with AOL Time Warner)
Sundance Channel (joint venture with Robert Redford & Universal Studios)

Sources:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/giants/>
<http://www.hearstcorp.com/entertainment/>
<http://www.newscorp.com/index2.html>

Scargill vs. Thatcher: 1984 Coal Miners' Strike

HMS Antelope >



"We had to fight the enemy without in the Falklands. We always have to be aware of the enemy within, which is much more difficult to fight and more dangerous to liberty."

—Margaret Thatcher



Margaret Thatcher had learned from her Conservative predecessor, **Edward Heath** the danger that labor unions could pose to a Prime Minister. Heath lost reelection shortly after the miners moved to strike in 1974. His loss prompted him to ask, "Who governs Britain?" Thatcher wanted to prove that she governed. Part of Thatcher's dearest-held policies was that she was not going to subsidize mines that were losing money. She also wanted to weaken the power that the unions had used so effectively in 1972 when the Miners' strike shut off electricity. **The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM)** was a formidable organization. Decisions about mining were not entirely in the hands of the government-run Coal Board or NUM. Thatcher's first encounter with NUM was in 1981 when she was advised by Conservative leaders to back down. By 1984, Thatcher and the Tory government had quietly prepared for a potential miners' strike. The government had stockpiled coal and made accommodations for coal-powered electrical plants to burn oil if necessary so as not to disrupt distribution.

Arthur Scargill, the leader of NUM started in the mines at age fifteen. He joined the Communist party in his youth, but left it in the 1950s. However, Communist ideals about the role of the worker would influence his time as president of NUM. He made his name in the union with the success of his "flying pickets" at the Saltley coke depot in Birmingham during the 1972 strike. He became president of NUM in 1983. He was immensely popular with the miners who had songs and chants to accompany his name. When the Cortonwood colliery began striking in 1984, to protest the proposed closure, Scargill made the fateful decision not to call for a union-wide vote on the decision strike but encouraged local unions to strike in solidarity. As a result, not all regional mines halted production. This meant coal was available and further harmed the cause of the strikers. His failure to get a union-wide mandate led to criticism in the press and few other labor unions joined in supporting the strike.

The 1984 Miners' Strike was a battle of opposing ideals. Working underground in the collieries required dependency on the other miners. This spirit of hard work and camaraderie were being challenged by Thatcher's economic ideals. Her desire to close uneconomic mines, as part of a plan to halt the economic decline of Britain, was an affront to the miners' way of life and an end to their means of subsistence. She was seen as putting economic values ahead of human ones. During the course of the year-long strike, the financial hardship on miners and their families was severe. There are many accounts of families living without heat or water and subsisting on potatoes. Thatcher never publicly expressed sympathy for the miners and their families or acknowledged the work they did. The length and severity of the strike meant that certain regions would necessarily become volatile. Police and strikers clashed. Two miners were prosecuted and imprisoned for murder when the brick they dropped on a taxi carrying Scab miners to work hit the driver and killed him. It was a watershed moment for many in the country. Those who supported the strike were vehemently opposed to Thatcher's implacability. To those who supported Tory measures, the miners' strike was viewed as excessive and without mandate. **The Labour Party**, by its close association with the unions, lost public support in the wake of the strike. After a very close NUM vote, the union workers who had suffered for a year were told they were returning to work without gaining any concessions from the government.

Arthur Scargill, the leader of NUM started in the mines at age fifteen. He joined the Communist party in his youth, but left it in the 1950s. However, Communist ideals

- January 9, 1972 Miners strike against the government
- February 9, 1972 Heath imposes three-day week
- February 16, 1972 Miners' strike turns off the lights
- February 18, 1972 Wilberforce report recommends pay raise for miners
- February 25, 1972 Miners call off coal strike
- September 26, 1972 Heath proposes "social contract" to unions
- November 12, 1973 State of emergency as miners ban overtime
- February 4, 1974 81% of miners vote to strike
- February 7, 1974 Edward Heath calls an election
- February 28, 1974 Election results in a hung Parliament
- March 6, 1974 Wilson leads minority government
- July 2, 1977 Miners demand £135 for four-day week
- November 13, 1979 Miners reject 20% pay raise
- February 10, 1981 Coal Board announces major pit closures
- February 18, 1981 Thatcher gives in to miners
- February 21, 1981 Miners vote in favor of 9.3% rise
- June 16, 1982 Miners back health workers
- March 28, 1983 Thatcher named Ian McGregor as Coal Board head
- March 5, 1984 Cortonwood colliery strikes over closure plans
- March 6, 1984 McGreave announces plan to close 20 pits or 20,000 jobs
- March 12, 1984 Miners strike over threatened pit closures
- March 15, 1984 Flying picket dies outside Ollerton colliery
- April 7, 1984 London demonstration supports miners
- April 9, 1984 Dozens arrested in picket line violence
- April 12, 1984 Scargill vetoes national ballot on strike
- May 29, 1984 Miners and police clash at Orgreave mine
- September 6, 1984 Miners and police clash at Kellingly mine
- September 21, 1984 Maltby picket sparks violence
- September 28, 1984 Pit dispute is deemed "illegal" by judge
- November 30, 1984 Two miners charged with murdering taxi driver
- December 14, 1984 Court fines Scargill for obstruction
- March 3, 1985 Miners call off year-long strike
- May 16, 1985 Miners jailed for pit-strike murder
- October 13, 1990 Thousands of miners lose their jobs

"We face not an employer but a government aided and abetted by the judiciary, the police and you people in the media."

—Arthur Scargill, NUM President

Arthur Scargill >

