

Just Following “Protocols”

A Fact Sheet on “The Occupation of the American Mind”

The Occupation of the American Mind positions itself to be above the propaganda fray of the Mideast conflict, assigning itself the singular role of exposing the Israeli “propaganda machine” and its “occupation of the American mind” by controlling American media.

The film unambiguously accuses “American Jewish” leaders of involvement in a semi-secret conspiracy with the Israeli government to “occupy” the “American mind.” The strong inference is that of an international Jewish plot to direct American foreign policy.

This theme of nefarious Jewish scheming is an anti-Semitic trope originally birthed in the infamous forgery called *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The theme of Jewish control of the media was repeated in Nazi propaganda, making it a warrant for genocide.

The film attempts to convince consumers of American mainstream media that a secretive and disreputable cabal of “Jewish leaders” conspired to manipulate news reporting of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Its central accusation is that “**leaders of major Jewish organizations**” stealthily met decades ago in Jerusalem where they intrigued to find ways to “occupy” (i.e. control) the American mainstream media, and thus “the American mind.”

The film’s producer, Sut Jhally, darkly intones:

“What we’ve seen really is another kind of occupation, an occupation of American media and what we could call the American mind by a pro-Israel narrative.”

His use of the word “occupation” is intentional. In international law, “occupation” means control of a territory by foreign military forces. The filmmakers’ use of this word while coupling it to “Jewish leaders” infers these leaders are foreigners controlling the American mind.

To bolster this indictment, the film shows a screenshot of a list of member organizations from the website of the umbrella group Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. This the film calls the “Israel Lobby.”

Roger Waters, the film’s narrator, speaks of the “Lobby’s power to shape a pro-Israel narrative” through its control of the U.S. Congress. And Columbia University Professor Rashid Khalidi broadly smears the leadership of these American Jewish groups as “extreme right wing, neo-conservatives.”

This sequence underlies the filmmakers’ inability to see American Jewish organizations as anything but a monolith. The reality is the list includes a very broad spectrum of American Jewish groups representing a wide range of opinion – from liberal to conservative – regarding Israel, including groups that publicly oppose Israeli government policies in the West Bank (Americans for Peace Now, Ameinu, Central Conference of American Rabbis).

Other member organizations include Jewish Council of Public Affairs, itself an umbrella group whose member organizations also represent a very wide and diverse set of views on Israel. The list further includes organizations (immigrant aid groups, hospital charities) that do not take positions on the conflict as it is beyond their purview. The list also contains the four major streams of American Judaism: Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist.

Thus, in one broad stroke, the filmmakers portray the entire gamut of American Jewish organizations in monolithic, negative, and conspiratorial terms.

It also presents this argument in a vacuum. Arab-American and American Muslim organizations also engage in public relations and hire communications experts to promote their respective causes. Indeed, this film itself is an expensive and slick public relations product promoting the political interests of one side in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

But when Jewish groups engage in the same activities as virtually every other community in the U.S. to promote causes important to their constituency, then this film presents this as something inherently evil.

The film's message of a malevolent Israeli public relations campaign pushed by a "powerful" and "extreme right wing, neo-conservative" cabal of "Jewish leaders" amplifies the anti-Semitic conspiracy theory found in the infamous "Protocols of the Elders of Zion."

These same themes are also promoted by extreme rightwing racists such as David Duke, a former neo-Nazi and ex-KKK leader. He often speaks of "how the US mass media is biased in favor of Israel — that this very same media... is almost completely under the direction of the same tribal elite who run Israel."

This film may carry the imprimatur of academic backing, yet its premise and message is profoundly racist. It could serve an academic function, however, in the fields of communications as a study of propaganda filmmaking and political science on how emotion-laden lethal narratives against a target population are created.

About the Film's Financial Backers¹

The film is produced by [the Media Education Foundation](#) (MEF) a registered 501c3 organization based in Northampton, Massachusetts. MEF's founder and executive director is Sut Jhally, a professor of communication at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He has produced several films, and delivered many speeches, condemning Israel and "exposing" the occupation that is taking place. Much of his work portrays Israel as controlling public opinion through its PR campaigns.

MEF is itself a multi-million-dollar operation: between the years 2009-2013, total amount received from donations was **\$226,538**; total gross from services was **\$8,034,181**.

A number of MEF's board members appear in the film denouncing Israel. Some have signed on calls for boycotts, divestment and sanctions ([BDS against Israel](#)), as well as [petitions](#) for the Palestinian Right of Return, a euphemism for undermining the right of the Jewish people to national self-determination. MEF is therefore predisposed ideologically to a radical anti-Israel position, and is a politicized and biased funder of anti-Israel projects, such as this film.

¹ Research conducted by NGO Monitor