

## Sober up

‘I am as mad as hell, and I am not going to take this anymore.’ Very angry words uttered by Howard Beale in *The Network*, a black comedy film that won major prizes. Are you similarly angry? If not, you should be.

‘Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength. War is peace.’ – With the compliments of the Ministry of Truth. (George Orwell: 1984)

Do these slogans sound familiar? If you imagine that such madness exists only in an Orwellian nightmarish world, you will need to reconsider, particularly when you hear phrases like ‘friendly fire’, which was first used by American television and subsequently by all world televisions. The phrase refers to armies mistakenly killing their own soldiers. They are said to be killed by ‘friendly fire’.

Such phrases are used with a smile by men wearing smart suits and pretty women announcers.

If the lies advanced by the media do not drive you mad, then remember George Orwell’s words: ‘Only the proletariat have retained their mental faculties as they have not understood the great mass of rubbish and lies they are fed. They swallow it like a finch swallowing a corn seed but discharges it without digesting it’. The overwhelming majority of the world population are just like this little bird. In 1983, fifty major companies controlled ninety percent of the world media. Is that a fair percentage? Well, today only six companies control the world media. Is this hard to believe?

People tend to think that companies like Fox, Wall Street Journal and New York Post are independent, but they all belong to News Corp. In short, we may say that CBS, Time Warner, Viacom, Disney, News Corp and GE control ninety percent of the world media. I do not mean they control the news, but all the media output, including films, documentaries, publications, etc. If we focus our attention on television, we realize that these companies control seventy percent of cable channels. The remaining thirty percent are owned by 3,762 companies. Does this alter our image of the media?

Those major companies make annual profits in excess of 250 billion dollars. No wonder, then that AOL paid as much as 162 billion dollar to buy Time Warner. The figure is more than six times the amount approved by Congress for reconstruction in Iraq.

In the United States, there are 232 media executives who control what all 277 million American receive on the media. This works out as one media executive for every 850,000 Americans. Are you interested to know under whom you happen to be?

We are not trying to persuade you to turn a deaf ear and a blind eye to the media, or to answer the lies and fabrications that the media circulate day and night. Since lies will never stop, answering them is an endless exercise.

However, they accuse Islam of humiliating women when sexual harassment and rape are ever increasing in the Western world which boasts of being progressive and civilised. They level at Islam the charge of ill-treating wives, when many a talk show in Europe and the US give airtime to women with black eyes caused by a husband or a boyfriend. Each time, the story is followed by a stereotype discussion that yields no results. Yet the notion prevails that Muslim women are badly treated.

There is a simple solution for everyone who wishes to abandon the stage of finch that cannot digest a corn seed and rise to the rank of a rational human being who examines what he is told. To begin with, two things are needed: the first is to sober up so that we cannot be deceived by a handful of people. The second is to undertake one's own research, using those grey cells in our brains. When we do that, we shall make the same angry outburst as Howard Beale. But then we will be free.