

The #FakeNews Cabal Strikes Again

The Post, Steven Spielberg's new historical drama, is admittedly dramatic, but not very historical. It tells a very one-sided, ultimately shallow, left-leaning story about how the federal government tried to stop *The New York Times*, then *The Washington Post*, from printing the "Pentagon Papers," which allegedly revealed that all the presidents through Nixon knew the Vietnam war was "unwinnable."

The movie opens in Vietnam, with Daniel Ellsberg telling Secretary of State Bob McNamara that he thinks the war situation there is going in a negative direction. Immediately after telling McNamara that, Ellsberg is astonished to hear McNamara lie to the press, telling them that the situation is going in a positive direction. A couple years later, Ellsberg is working at the Rand Corporation with his friend, Anthony Russo, and making copies of the top-secret Pentagon Papers study compiled by Morton Halperin and Les Gelb (two leftist opponents of the war) for McNamara. In fact, the movie shows Ellsberg and Russo cutting off the bottoms of their copies, which say "Top Secret."

Cut to 1971. Ben Bradlee (Tom Hanks), executive editor of *The Washington Post*, is concerned he hasn't seen Neil Sheehan, the top investigative reporter at *The New York Times*, write anything for several months. He thinks Sheehan is working on a big story.

Meanwhile, Kathryn Graham has just taken over as the *Post*'s publisher after the tragic suicide of her husband. Her father passed control of the family paper to her brilliant husband, but now she has to make all the tough decisions. Kathryn has also decided to put the *Post* on the now-defunct American Stock Exchange, to raise enough money to hire more reporters and make the *Post* a national newspaper able to compete with the *Times* and other national papers.

Sure enough, Bradlee's suspicions about Sheehan of *The New York Times* turn out to be right. The *Times* starts publishing Sheehan's stories about the Pentagon Papers. However, two days later, President Nixon orders his attorney general to stop the *Times* from publishing any more of the top-secret documents. So, the Justice Dept. takes the *Times* to court.

Meanwhile, Bradlee's right-hand man gets hold of Daniel Ellsberg, the guy he thinks turned the Pentagon Papers over to the *Times*. Ellsberg agrees to give the massive report to the *Post* too. Now, Kathryn Graham has to decide to publish, and endanger the newspaper's public offering and its financial future, or not to publish and let the government get away with suppressing the "freedom of the press."

The Post is a riveting movie, with superb editing and direction and a great score by John Williams, the longtime master of movie music. However, the movie contains a lot of gratuitous foul language, including many strong profanities misusing God's holy name. Also, *The Post* contains multiple factual errors and omissions that turn the movie into a one-sided, shallow, misleading propaganda piece.

First, the movie magnifies *The Washington Post's* role in the Pentagon Papers controversy and court case. In fact, it gives *The Washington Post* most of the credit for getting other newspapers to start publishing the Pentagon Papers. The role of *The New York Times* seems almost like an afterthought.

Second, the movie never shows that the Papers were assembled and edited by two left-wing opponents of the war, Morton Halperin and his assistant, Leslie Gelb. According to *Discover the Networks* (a conservative publication, Halperin and Gelb assigned most of the writing of the massive report to "left-wing opponents of the war" such as Daniel Ellsberg! After the Vietnam War, Halperin became a pro-Soviet apologist for the anti-American communist leaders in Moscow and argued for the dismantling of American intelligence operations. Since 2002, he has been a close associate of leftist billionaire George Soros, even working officially for Soros' Open Society Policy Center!.

Third, in Spielberg's movie, Bradlee is impressed that the Pentagon Papers contend that all the presidents, from Truman through Nixon, knew that the Vietnam War was "unwinnable." The historical facts show otherwise, however. For example, though the communist "Tet Offensive" in 1968 caught the U.S. military by surprise, the American forces actually won that battle, contrary to press reports on Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers. Also, when President Nixon started using a strong, targeted bombing campaign against the North and its allies, the North finally agreed to hold peace talks. In addition, America's goal in fighting the Vietnam War was not to conquer North Vietnam but simply to ensure some measure of liberty and self-government for the people and the anti-communists in South Vietnam. These facts clearly show that the Vietnam War was far from "unwinnable." Not only that, but, after the United States pulled all its troops out of Southeast Asia and withdrew all its funding from the government there, the government collapsed and the victorious communist leaders of North Vietnam and Cambodia decided to build concentration camps, eventually slaughtering about 2 million people.

Fourth, contrary to Spielberg's movie, there's evidence that reporters from *The Washington Post* and especially *The New York Times* misrepresented some of the major conclusions in the Pentagon Papers. For example, John Burke and Fred Greenstein's 1989 book on Vietnam, *How Presidents Test Reality*, how *The New York Times* falsely stated in its coverage of the Pentagon Papers that the Papers showed that President Johnson had already decided to expand America's involvement in the Vietnam War before the 1964 presidential elections (where Johnson told the voters he had no intention of expanding the country's involvement). In reality, Johnson was still making up his mind and didn't make the decision to expand American involvement until *after* the election. Also, Edward Jay Epstein's 1975 book *Between Fact and Fiction* shows how the press "mishandled" the Pentagon Papers and the Vietnam War because of their biases against the Vietnam War. Thus, it was wrong for the *Times* and the *Post* to use the Papers to launch a media campaign against American involvement in Vietnam.

Finally, during the movie, Ben Bradlee assures his boss at the Post, Kathryn Graham, that publication of the Pentagon Papers won't endanger any American troops in Vietnam. However, the movie fails to note that this was one of the strongest arguments in the government's case against *The New York Times* to stop it from publishing elements of the top-secret report. MOVIEGUIDE® cannot adjudicate this dispute here, of course, but the dissenting opinions of the Supreme Court in the Pentagon Papers case make some good points about why the *Times* should not be allowed to continue publishing the Papers.

One of the things Tom Hanks as Post Editor Ben Bradlee says toward the end of the movie is that news outlets must hold government officials "accountable." That's his job, he tells Mrs. Graham and other people. MOVIEGUIDE® asks, however, "Who holds the press accountable?" For years, it's been clearly obvious that the national "news" media, including the people running *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times* and the network news outlets, has an Anti-American, Anti-Christian, radical liberal and leftist agenda. #FakeNews has become their primary modus operandi, and particularly so when it comes to President Trump. The fact that Director Steven Spielberg clearly didn't do his due diligence when making this movie or reveal the leftist bias behind the Pentagon Papers compiled and composed by Morton Halperin and his aide, Les Gelb and the *Times* and the *Post*'s reportage on the Pentagon Papers, nor examine the dissenting court opinions in the Pentagon Papers case, shows that he's become part and parcel of the leftist #FakeNews cabal.

Ultimately, *The Post* is an abhorrent, shallow, one-sided propaganda piece. This kind of annoying ham-fisted propaganda irreparably taints the artistic achievements of Steven Spielberg's *The Post*.

Tom Snyder is editor of MOVIEGUIDE®, which *The New York Times* has called the "most conservative" review service on the internet. He has more than 30 years' experience as a journalist, with a doctorate degree in film studies from Northwestern University.