

Interview:

Bill O'Reilly

By Charley J. Levine

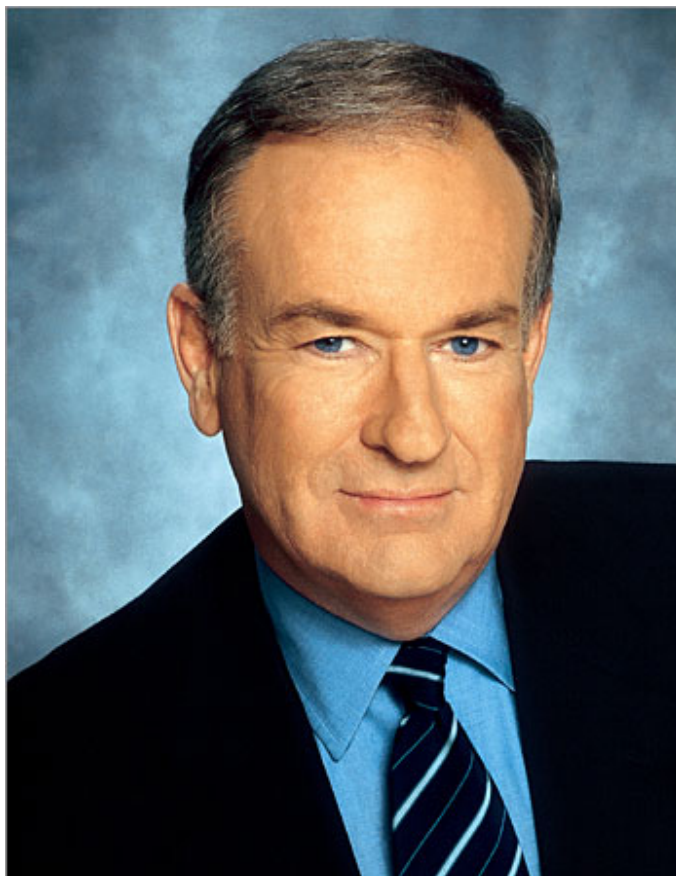
After 25 years in journalism, Bill O'Reilly seems to be everywhere— from hosting the highly rated *The O'Reilly Factor* on the Fox News Channel, to his syndicated radio programs, to columns in hundreds of newspapers. Like his first two books, his latest, *Who's Looking Out for You?* (Broadway), is on *The New York Times* best-seller list. O'Reilly has elevated the term “no spin” into a journalistic standard. He is also a steadfast supporter of Israel.

Q. Much of the world dislikes, envies or hates America. What do you make of a recent Hudson Institute poll that shows the vast majority of Israelis admiring and supporting the United States?

A. First, Israel has a much freer press than Western Europe...so you get two sides of the story about America. The result is that the Israeli public gets a wide variety of opinion...far from the monolithic images one gets in France or Denmark or Holland, where the government sharply controls the flow of information. It may not be totalitarianism, but it's certainly not freedom of the press. Canada, for example, does not let Fox News in. All they get there is the CBC, which, along with their major daily newspapers, [is] primarily anti-American. [Second,] Israel is a much more debate-driven society. Most people in Israel deal with and talk to people in the United States. In addition, there's gratitude on the part of many Israelis, understanding how significantly America has supported them and continues to do so at our own risk.

Q. What's your take on the Palestinians' situation, their lack of independence?

A. No matter what opinion one takes regarding the Palestinians, you must agree that they have no infrastructure to speak of. They don't have a country. [The Palestinian Authority] is a fiefdom run in a medieval way by a criminal, Yasser Arafat. Why does this guy have tens of millions of dollars in banks all over Europe? How did he make that money? I want to know what job he ever had. It's not totally fair to lay it on the Palestinian people.... The Palestinians had a chance with Clinton, they had earlier chances with Carter and Reagan...plenty of chances to work out a deal. But their



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corrupt leadership sold them out time after time after time... and they blame you and they blame us. It's difficult for these people to ever know the truth because they're even more deprived of information than Europeans.

Q. In Europe there is a virulent rebirth of anti-Semitism. How can this be happening so soon after Hitler and the Holocaust?

A. The answer lies in the cowardice of the European authorities to regulate immigration so that it does not cause harm. We have the same cowardice here in the United States. We don't regulate our own borders. We allow hundreds of thousands of people to pour in without documentation. They commit crimes, they do terrible things. Ninety percent of these people are good, but when you have 10 percent who are bad, you are doomed to chaos. In Europe they don't assimilate. They bring their attitudes from Morocco or Algeria.... They don't say, "Here we are in a new country, so we are going to try to be Swiss."

Q. Where does anti-Semitism come in?

A. Part of the culture [the immigrants] are bringing is "We hate the Jews." There's no attempt by European authorities to cut through that and say, "If we want a civil country, we cannot have one group hating the other group because that will ultimately explode." We had the black-white situation here, and the federal government had to step in and say, "Stop the nonsense. Blacks must be permitted to vote. You can't keep them in the back of the bus, you can't abuse them." The same thing must happen in Europe. The central governments have to say, "You can't paint swastikas on cemeteries. If you do, you will go to jail." But the governments of France and Germany will not do this because they are cowards. The fanatics are thus empowered. They know they can say and do what they want with impunity. You find this attitude even in Britain. If we had a cleric in the United States who said "Go kill the Jews," the guy would be arrested. Hate speech, bias crimes, the feds would be in there in a minute to take him away. You can do that all day long in Europe and nobody bothers you.

Q. You aren't hopeful that Europe's going to see the light?

A. These people haven't learned a lesson from World War II. They are still playing the same old stupid appeasement and socialism games that have never worked. Nothing will change until there are strong central governments that regulate their countries and tell the immigrant he is obliged to follow the same laws that everyone else does. The newcomers must understand that their country doesn't tolerate hate crimes or hate speech. Sometimes you have to force people to behave, and the cowardice of the governments of Western Europe is staggering.

Q. You practically coined the term "no spin." Yet you turned a bit fuzzy when *The Passion of the Christ* debate rolled out. You didn't see the film's troubling messages, backed Mel Gibson, with whom you have business dealings, and even talked about Jewish influence in tinseltown. No spin here?

A. Mel Gibson bought my book *Those Who Trespass* long before *The Passion* was in production. He bought it to produce as a film. I know Gibson and I had a business relationship with him. Before every one of my reports on this movie, I noted that. My take on *The Passion* was very simple. Gibson had the right to take the Gospels and put them on the screen. Nobody had the right to call him an anti-Semite or any other attempt to destroy his character.... You the citizen had

the right to go and see the movie, or not, and say you didn't like it, or it wasn't accurate as far as your Christianity or Judaism is concerned. But don't try to destroy him as *The New York Times* did before the movie even came out. That was wrong. It was a freedom of speech issue for me. I didn't even think the movie was that good, as I told Gibson in the interview we did with him. I said it's too violent. I never bought into the anti-Semitism accusations of the movie.... There have been no incidents in this country as a result of that movie. What Mel Gibson did was driven by his faith. I respect his faith and I respect your faith. My defense of Gibson was about his right to do it without being personally attacked.

Q. From television, you have moved into newspapers, radio, the Internet, books. Are you in it to communicate, to inform, to change things?

A. *The O'Reilly Factor*, for me, has transcended journalism; [it] became a means to check the power of everybody in the country. We are set up to watch everybody, all the powerful people, including journalists. We've never had in this country one journalist—with the power of television plus 425 radio stations—who is monitoring other journalists [and news outlets] like *The New York Times* or the TV networks. Which is why those folks are so angry.

Q. Why angry?

A. They're not used to being watched and now they are being observed, hence the tension.... We are not ideological at all. We don't endorse candidates. We keep an eye on *all* of them. They screw up, we go after them. They're dishonest, we don't care what party they're in. I'm deeply distrusted by the conservative community and I am loathed by the far left. I see my main job as being a watchdog.

Q. How do you keep the influence from going to your head?

A. I am very powerful, no question.... We have cost [France] about a half billion dollars. The French ambassador came over to appeal to me to cancel the boycott [I had called]. I said I will as soon as you do one thing to help us in the war on terror. Do just one thing. I must be very conscious that when I make a decision to go after or hammer someone, I have to have all the facts, every side of the story so I don't do anything irresponsibly. Thank God, we haven't made too many mistakes, and when I do—like the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq—I admit it and tell the public.