

# NIEMAN REPORTS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Vol. L No. 2 Summer 1996

FIVE DOLLARS

## Getting It Right Is Not Enough

And Other Reflections on the Presidential Campaign



The Eastern European Media  
From Russia to Albania

*“...to promote and elevate the standards  
of journalism”*

—Agnes Wahl Nieman, the benefactor of the  
Nieman Foundation.

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AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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## Curator's Corner

# A Year to Experiment

As every editor knows there is nothing like a deadline to concentrate the mind but this focus can narrow the mind as well. In political coverage the result gave birth to the cliché that editors plan campaign coverage like generals plan wars—they always prepare to fight the last one. But smart generals, given time and new technology, can find dramatically new and effective ways to do old business, as the Persian Gulf War clearly demonstrated.

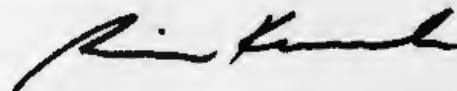
The 1996 presidential campaign offers journalists in the United States an unprecedented opportunity to do just what the Pentagon did, to more carefully plan and experiment. This year the two major party choices were confirmed by springtime. Culminating a process begun by the Tennessee Senator in a coonskin hat, Estes Kefauver, in New Hampshire in 1952, the nominating conventions were made incidental to the November elections this year. For the first time in modern history, news organizations do not have to spend the spring and summer days and weeks in heated competition on daily breaking changes in popularity, campaign intrigue, or staged events.

There is time, for example, to use computer technology to provide a far more detailed and creative report on the impact of money on the political process before the final vote has to be cast. Dwight Morris, when he worked for The Los Angeles Times and now with his own company, the Campaign Study Group, has developed an extraordinary data base on money and politics. David Burnham, a former investigative reporter for The New York Times and now heading a consulting service called Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, has developed an innovative computer-assisted project that measures the effectiveness of the Clinton administration and others in areas of enforcement and regulation. And I recently saw a new computer program being perfected by United Information Systems, Inc., in Bethesda, Maryland, that can ferret out unseen and unsuspected relationships among great masses of data. Through a process called "data warehousing" and "data mining" it is the kind of application of computer power that could, say, compare years of voting records, local job creation, tax revenues, crime and welfare rates, to search out unexpected relationships and dependencies. These and dozens of other sophisticated examinations of political behavior could build a much firmer base on which voters might stand in order to judge campaign promises and issues.

Maybe even more important, time and technology could be put to use to help voters understand better the nature of presidential leadership. Studies by corporations, military academies and academics like Richard E. Neustadt ("Presidential Leadership") and Ronald Heifetz ("Leadership Without Easy Answers") have fostered a deep understanding of the qualities important to presidential leadership. Both Bill Clinton and Bob Dole have long records filled with detailed records of their actions, which leave a trail of evidence of leadership in all sorts of circumstances and conditions. At the same time our social, political and economic efforts to cope with the post Cold War world have created a host of new issues and challenges—ranging from the new economic colonialism to renewal of neighborhoods—which the President and the American people will face after 1997.

What better tool can the press give potential voters before November than a careful in-depth examination of the proposals favored by each man who wants to be president, his record of problem-solving techniques, his leadership style, matched with the major challenges on the agenda? The amount of data available on these subjects is growing faster than kudzu on a hot summer day while the information outlets available to the public are opening faster than new sports franchises.

This combination provides an extraordinary opportunity for the traditional tools of journalism—reporting, validating and providing context for information—to reclaim territory ceded to bombastic opinion and entertainment over the last two decades. There is an endless need for a journalism that does more than report and opine about issues as important as presidential selection. The new journalism that is required is one that plumbs the depth of information available on the candidates, the nature of the challenges facing society and the way in which each candidate is likely to approach the job of president. Just as laser technology helped guide missiles to their targets in Iraq in more effective ways, thoughtful use of data technology can create a journalism that helps citizens target their votes to more accurately reflect their political choice. ■



# What They're Saying



## Salman Rushdie Value of Skepticism

Free societies are dynamic, noisy, turbulent and full of radical disagreements. Skepticism and freedom are indissolubly linked. And it is the skepticism of journalists, their show-me prove-it unwillingness to be impressed, that is perhaps their most important contribution to the freedom of the free world. It is their disrespect that is important. And it is the disrespect of journalists for power, for orthodoxies, for party lines, for ideologies, for vanity, for arrogance, for folly, for pretension, for corruption, for stupidity—perhaps even for editors—that I would like to celebrate this morning and that I would urge you all in the name of freedom to preserve.—*Salman Rushdie, the novelist, at the convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Washington, April 17, 1996.*



## Jeffrey D. Sachs Journalistic Nonsense

The standard journalistic gloss, which I read at least once a day—and usually my wife has to peel me off the ceiling as I get furious—is that the Russian people are in a backlash against the pain caused by economic reform. This is a nonsensical view of what's going on. It's simple minded. It belittles the people. They're furious because they have seen the glasnost stolen from them. They have seen the abuse of their leadership. They have seen the corruption. They see the Mercedes. That's not economic reform. That is the particular style of governance of the Central Committee of the Party, which has come back to power. And so say that. But don't call it the cost of economic reform.—*Jeffrey D. Sachs, Director of the Harvard Institute for International Development and the Galen L. Stone Professor of International Trade, at a Nieman Foundation seminar, February 9, 1996.*



## Harvey Cox The Pope Against Satan

I think the press is stuck with the rest of us in an increasingly self-fragmenting society, and this contributes to the kind of bewilderment about what the hell is going on, which motivates millions of people to buy *The Weekly World News* and *The National Enquirer*, where patterns are presented. It's the Pope against Satan. There's a pattern for you, with a very ancient lineage, I might say. It's we're coming to the end of the age and there are fires on the moon. You've got a better story? You've got a better narrative to help people link this utterly bewildering world that we live in? If so, please bring it forth, because people are turning... in a more dangerous way to people who present demagogic villains, the Japanese, the immigrants, name them, who are messing our lives up.—*Harvey Cox, Victor S. Thomas Professor at Harvard Divinity School, at John F. Kennedy School of Government, March 13, 1996.*

# Getting It Right Is Not Enough

*Footfalls echo in the memory  
Down the passage we did not take  
Toward the door we never opened*  
—T.S. Eliot

BY JOHN SEIGENTHALER

For that horde of talented journalists covering this year's presidential campaign, there came a mid-March moment of truth when finally it was safe to say, "We told you so."

Bob Dole was the "so" they told us.

They could point back to their reportage of February 1995 when Phil Gramm and Lamar Alexander officially declared their candidacies. Their forecasts documented in print and electronic tape: the inescapable, indisputable inevitability of Dole as the Republican nominee.

They had written it in newspaper articles, editorial and opinion columns and said it on television and radio talk shows: the Senate Majority leader had the name recognition, the money, the support of the Republican power brokers and an overwhelming lead in public opinion polls.

The other candidates were along merely for the ride.

They told us that Pat Buchanan was too extreme, Lamar Alexander too bland, Steve Forbes too rich, Phil Gramm too Texas, Bob Dornan too crazy, Richard Lugar too international, Arlen Specter too liberal and Allen Keyes too... well, nobody had to say too what. And then there was that Midwestern industrialist, Morry What's-His-Name, who was too unknown. It all added up and subtracted to equal Dole.

That is what those talented journalists knew. It is what they told each other. And, in ways both subtle and

direct, it is what they told readers and viewers long before Dole won enough delegates to wrap up the nomination.

And early next year when they sit down at the American Press Institute and the Media Studies Center and the Nieman Foundation, and the Poynter Institute and the Freedom Forum and at a half-dozen universities to appraise their performance during the presidential primary season they will conclude that they got it right—and did it right.

Oh, they will worry about those same old problems, most of them chronic but none critical, that have affected reporting at least since television became the dominant news force in covering presidential campaigns.

But there is a gap that separates the view of those reporters—most of them able and experienced—and the view of their readers and viewers.

And from the read-viewer perspective that gap was widened by the way the campaign was covered between the time they predicted Dole's victory and the time he finally achieved it.

Last November John Mashek and Sander Vanocur, veteran journalists from past presidential races, got off the campaign bus to conduct a Media Watch project designed to evaluate and analyze the 1996 election coverage by their former peers.

As Mashek noted at the time: "Sander and I had heard all the public criticism of past campaign coverage. But we always believed, as inside players, that the press had done a decent job. This project gave us a rare opportunity to view the campaign as outsiders."

The criticisms they had heard, often repeated in post-election seminar questions, were:

- *Reporters treat the presidential campaign as a horse race—with candidates handicapped by reporters acting as the odd-makers.*

The team of analysts found that the aspects of the horse race were evident: after rating Dole as the heavy favorite, the media—sometimes using conflicting polls released on the same day—alternately told the voters that Buchanan, Forbes and Alexander had a chance to overtake the front-runner.

- *News media representatives are key players in the so-called "expectations game" and promote competition, conflict and controversy in order to get the horses into the starting gate.*

The team of analysts found that too many in the media played the game long before the campaign was underway. For example, most reporters knew Pat Buchanan's positions on issues even before he announced as a candidate. They had been aired four years earlier in his race against President Bush and were frequently expressed as a performer on CNN's Firing Line. However, it was not until Buchanan soared in the polls in New Hampshire that journalists began to question whether his positions were "extreme."

- *Candidates, unable to raise the \$20 million qualifying fee needed to get into the race, are judged by the media to be horses without the stamina to make it to the finish line.*

The team of analysts found that two of the U.S. Senate's most able and articulate members—Lugar and Specter—were virtually ignored by the media because their campaigns were not well funded.

- *On the other hand, candidates with ample money can capture serious media attention because reporters consider their organizations viable.*

The team of analysts found that initially Gramm and subsequently Forbes were given heavy coverage simply because the reporters knew that their campaigns were funded. In Louisiana, Gramm was reported to be a shoo-in, largely because he had expended heavy funds in that state. Buchanan upset him on a shoe-string budget. At the outset many reporters expressed the private view that Forbes was a one-issue candidate whose campaign was "laughable." His \$40 million expenditures, most spent on television, stopped the laughing for a period of weeks.

• *Television attack commercials are inadequately critiqued by reporters.*

The team of analysts found that newspapers did a better job than television of reporting on these ads—but both were less effective than what the public needed to understand the commercials.

• *Opinion polls have come to drive the handicapping long before the race starts—and have made spectators of reporters covering the campaign.*

The team of analysts found that polls, a necessary and worthwhile tool in election coverage, have become too powerful in driving campaign coverage. For example, public opinion polls in Iowa indicated that Dole was the favorite of the state's Republicans by a large margin. Since only political activists attended the Iowa caucus it was impossible to accurately project a winner based on voter attitudes of all members

of the GOP. Dole's narrow victory in the caucus led reporters to call his win a loss.

• *Spin doctors, consultants and pollsters manipulate the media, diverting attention from substantive issues—what readers and viewers say they are interested in.*

While the team of analysts found that reporters hold a healthy skepticism for spinners, they remain manipulative and sometimes distort events. Again, the Iowa caucus is the best example. Spinners for Buchanan and Alexander, who ran close behind Dole, convinced many reporters that it was going to be a horse race after all.

• *Candidates, unable to make their case with the voters, were going around mainstream media to pitch their points on alternative media.*

While President Clinton and Ross Perot made effective use of alternative media four years ago, the team of analysts found that the Republicans largely ignored the opportunity.

• *And then there has been, at least since 1988 and the personal disclosures involving Gary Hart, the persistent question of whether the media have focused far too much attention on the private lives of the candidates.*

The team of analysts found that while the news media did demonstrate interest in the personal lives of candidates, there seemed to be more awareness and even restraint than in the last two elections.

Mashek, as a professional scholar at the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University, relied on the school's National Television Archive to monitor daily TV news coverage by all networks. In addition, he followed day-to-day reporting by all major dailies in the early primary and caucus states.

Vanocur, a scholar-in-residence at the Freedom Forum's headquarters in Arlington, Va., kept abreast of how Washington media critics commented on the coverage. Together, they compared notes and crafted evaluations for public distribution.

Vanocur moderated a series of half-hour TV reports with both reporters and critics on the Faith and Values cable network.

**M**ashek provided a monthly written Media Watch circulated nationally to reporters, editors, TV news directors, producers and columnists.

Meanwhile, the Freedom Forum's Media Studies Center, in New York, which four years earlier had published periodic performance reviews on how the Bush-Clinton campaign was reported, commissioned a national survey to test how voters rated the information the news media were providing during the campaign.

That Roper survey of more than 2,000 registered voters gave Mashek and Vanocur a sounding board against which to test their judgments about reportorial performance.

It was no surprise that two reporters who had shared experiences on the campaign bus and campaign debate panels would have shared common ground in their examinations of how their colleagues performed.

Nor was it a surprise, as their work progressed, that they would have some disagreements. While both of them, for example, gradually came to feel that television coverage, particularly on the three major networks, was wanting, Vanocur came to feel that print media coverage deserved higher marks than Mashek.

"I thought The Washington Post, The New York Times, The Wall Street Jour-



The three who examined media coverage of the presidential primaries: John Seigenthaler, Chairman of the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center in Nashville; John W. Mashek, former political correspondent for *The Boston Globe*, who monitored TV and the press and wrote *Media Watch*, which was circulated to journalists, and Sander Vanocur, a veteran of more than 40 years in print, radio and television, who has completed a video series on television and the presidency for the Freedom Forum.

nal and The Los Angeles Times—four national newspapers—provided their readers with solid coverage,” said Vanocur, although he conceded that most readers in primary and caucus states don’t subscribe to those newspapers.

As for their differences on television, Mashek gave CNN higher ratings than Vanocur. For instance, the “Inside Politics” program, with anchors Bernard Shaw and Judy Woodruff, was in Mashek’s view “the best daily round-up of campaign activity.”

The Media Studies Center poll—and others like it—made it clear that the public—including journalistic “outsiders” like Mashek and Vanocur—was far more negative in some important categories than either of them.

It showed:

- Seventy-six percent said the news media gave too much advantage to front runners.

- Seventy percent said media coverage was often confusing and unclear.

- Fifty-one percent found too little reporting on how the election would affect their lives.

- The same number said there was insufficient coverage of how candidates stood on issues.

- More than two-thirds said there was too much coverage of the personal lives of candidates.

- Forty-six percent found that there was too much concentration of the horse race aspect of the campaign (forty-one percent thought it was about right).

- Half the voters, given the chance to rate coverage, found it “only fair” or “poor.” Forty percent found it excellent and good.

Not surprisingly, 57 percent reported that they relied mostly on TV for their campaign news—compared to only 18 percent on newspapers and 9 percent on radio.

“I suppose I was something of a cynic about how the public feels about politics,” said Mashek. “After all, so many people don’t vote. I was surprised and encouraged that so many people said they were definitely interested in the campaign.”



*“FRANKLY, I DON’T CARE ONE WAY OR THE OTHER ABOUT VOTER APATHY”*

A total of 72 percent told Roper they were either extremely interested or very interested in the race for the presidency.

Mashek and Vanocur agreed that many reporters covering the campaign probably would look at the statistics from the Roper poll and conclude that the voters really don’t know what they want journalists to do.

“Lots of journalists believe that polls like this one won’t really tell us what the voters think,” said Mashek. “The irony is that they then use polls just like this one in reporting how the public feels about the candidates—who is ahead; who will win; whose positions are popular, whose are not. In fact, polls, in some instances, have replaced good reporting.”

Albert R. Hunt, columnist for The Wall Street Journal, expressed much the same view during one of the Vanocur-moderated TV panel discussions. “The press use polls as a crutch. We use it as a substitute to good interviewing and reporting and talking to voters.”

While Hunt—like Vanocur and Mashek—agreed that polls are valuable campaign coverage tools, he was extremely critical of daily tracking polls, such as those that dominated media coverage the week before the New

Hampshire primary.

And as worthless as tracking polls may be, so-called straw polls are even worse, Vanocur and Mashek found. Still, they were heavily covered by the news media.

These “mini-elections” usually put on by state political parties as fundraising events, allow those who pay their way into the meeting hall to cast a vote for a candidate. They are non-scientific and non-binding on the party or the state—therefore have no meaning—except that the news media treat them seriously.

For example, reporting on the non-binding straw poll in Florida in which Lamar Alexander finished third—albeit a strong third—Wolf Blitzer of CNN congratulated the candidate “on your third place win.”

For Vanocur and Mashek, the ultimate question is whether working reporters, still involved in doing their very best to provide voters with information they need, can see themselves as others see them—and improve their coverage in the general election campaign this fall.

Or, will the “insiders” again follow practices they feel have served them and their readers and viewers well over many elections—and ignore the questions being raised again by “outsiders”?



# No More 'Black Holes'

By JOHN HOHENBERG

This has been a messy Presidential election year so far. When the shortened primary season concluded in early spring with Senator Bob Dole as the presumptive Republican nominee to oppose President Bill Clinton's re-election, the long, hot summer stretched directly ahead for a bemused public. Campaign news seemed about to vanish down a "black hole," the theoretical end of a collapsing star in astronomy, as Richard L. Berke mourned in a New York Times magazine article. All he could see ahead for himself and his colleagues on the Presidential assignment was a dull time until the fall when public interest might return to the race for the highest office in the land.

Barring an unexpected stock market collapse, a foreign war or some other mindless calamity, the Presidential trail seemed a less than exciting source of news, at least until the nominating conventions of the Democratic and Republican parties in late summer. And perhaps into September, when H. Ross Perot would finally decide, at his Reform Party's first nominating convention, whether he would be its candidate in a repeat of his 1992 run.

But that four-month hiatus was destined never to occur. When Dole announced on May 15 that he was giving up his Senate seat he said the real campaign against Clinton was about to begin. He hoped for a lot.

Until mid-April, the black hole theory seemed to hold up.

Television, radio, newspapers and news magazines—all were caught up in the fascination of the Unabomber story. Then, too, arrangements were being made for the trial of two major suspects in the Oklahoma bomb explosion that

took so many lives. And, by evil chance, Commerce Secretary Ronald Brown was killed with more than 30 others in an aircraft accident in Dubrovnik, Croatia.

To many a political scientist this black hole provided an opportunity to reform the process by limiting the real campaign between the two party candidates to the two months after Labor Day when, as surveys have shown, voters begin to pay serious attention to the race.

The political scientists have long been disturbed because the election campaign has been stretched out of all proportion to either the needs or even the desires of the American people as a result of another reform—changes in party rules that gave voters, instead of party bosses, the dominant voice in choosing convention delegates. Thus candidates were forced to seek voter support in primaries and caucuses starting in February and running into June,

then going into the conventions and finally campaigning from September to November. Boosterism tactics of states like New Hampshire, Iowa and Louisiana to be the first to vote added to the hoopla. There was hope this year that the primary campaign could be shortened by perhaps two months because states got together in regional groupings to hold primaries on the same date.

Coverage of the Republican primaries was intense. (With President Clinton unopposed, the press could cover the Democratic campaign from the White House.) From the time Patrick Buchanan upset Senator Dole in the New Hampshire primary February 20 until Dole assured himself of far more than the 996 delegates he needed to clinch the nomination in California on March 29, the campaign remained in the forefront of journalistic attention. Instead of going on until June, when



*The night I met John Hohenberg at a Knoxville party on Nov. 2, 1978, I'd refused at first to go. I had heard he'd taught at Columbia, run the Pulitzer Prizes, now was at the University of Tennessee, had written a lot of books, etc., etc., etc. Anyway, it all turned out well although I interrupted a burglary coming home, ran off in one direction while the three burglars ran in another. John made up for not seeing me home, however, with a movable courtship between New York and Knoxville. We were married in Nashville March 9, 1979 in the presence of my two teen-agers. He was a widower, 73, and I was a widow, 48; this year we celebrated our 17th wedding anniversary.—JoAnn F. Hohenberg*

California had previously held its primary, the race was over.

For the correspondents, with the Clinton White House doing business as usual and Dole on a temporary vacation, the steam seemed to go out of the campaign coverage whether or not it slid down the theoretical black hole. Only a few of the political correspondents took venturesome assignments to keep campaign coverage alive.

Returning to the Senate after his primary victory, Dole tried to use his legislative leadership to make his political points—he was a doer, not a talker, he said. But he found himself hobbled by Democratic demands for an increase in the minimum wage and Republican squabbling. He was even having trouble pushing through a cut in the gasoline tax, in part because of tactics by his own party. With his poll numbers falling to dangerous levels, he decided that running as a leader of an unpopular Republican Congress would not work and resigned his Senate seat. He was thus free to recharge his lagging campaign by freeing himself from the Congressional burden. Moreover, he could spend full time in the summer exhorting voters in key states like California.

Unquestionably the black hole opportunity was lost. The campaign will probably be muted during the Olympic games, but otherwise will go ahead full tilt.

The weeks after Dole clinched his nomination did provide the opportunity to test the black-hole theory. In the absence of campaigning what would the media do? I decided to run an informal check.

The interim between the primaries and the conventions looked as if political correspondents would be consigned to covering the campaign from Washington—watching Dole and Clinton maneuvering as if they were not campaigning. (Like all presidents, Clinton used the power of the office to fly around the country making speeches.)

The pollsters, with cheerful optimism, tried to soften up the masters of the air waves and the editors with reports on public attitudes, but few appeared in the dozen or so papers that I



"MY CONSTITUENTS NOT ONLY DISAGREED WITH WHAT I SAID BUT THEY TOOK ISSUE WITH MY RIGHT TO SAY IT"

try to keep up with. There were even fewer polls mentioned on the networks and CNN.

In April The Detroit News carried a Roper Survey for the Gannett-sponsored Freedom Forum contending that 75 percent of American voters guessed that their news media have "a negative impact," unspecified, on Presidential campaigns. I suppose it may have pleased some editors, especially the one who ran the poll, because most news outlets were found to be fair and unbiased. But, as an afterthought, there also was a finding that 77 percent believed the media had too much control in defining campaign issues and that 83 percent feared candidates too often performed more for journalists and cameras instead of defining the issues, whatever they might be.

One of a series of New York Times-CBS polls reported in The Dallas Morning News around the same time put Clinton ahead of Dole by a comfortable margin even though Dole was given high marks by respondents for agreeable personal traits, leadership and his vision for the land. However, the poll also put the Republican Party's image at

a low of 41 percent, the worst showing in the 12-year history of the poll.

It was even more embarrassing for Dole to address a fund raiser in Des Moines after an Iowa poll in mid-April in The Des Moines Register showed him lagging by 17 points among Iowans against Clinton, 53 to 36 percent. That statewide figure was larger than a national Time/CNN poll issued at about the same time that also showed the Republican lagging.

"We knew it wasn't going to be easy," Dole said, but predicted he'd be neck and neck with Clinton by Election Day.

To be fair to Dole, part of his poll trouble early on was the balky Republican Congress that was absorbing much of the public's blame for two government shutdowns and the economic squeeze on the middle class. When the Senator finally prodded both houses into passing a weak "anti-terrorist" bill late in April, it was regarded mainly as a personal victory for him. Even so, despite President Clinton's signature, there was no guarantee of automatic Supreme Court approval of the new law's limitation of habeas corpus appeal.

There were, of course, peripheral features. The Chicago Tribune put this fetching headline over an article by Thomas Hardy:

**If Democrat Kerrey's head says  
'Clinton,' his heart whispers 'Dole'**

The relevant support for the apparent mind-reading was there in the text, as witness the following about the mental processes of the Democratic Senator from Nebraska:

"Kerrey comes across as almost grudging in his newfound respect for Clinton, but he is unabashed in his long-standing admiration for Dole. Millions of American voters will be similarly torn in the style vs. substance choice for President."

A rare mention of the party conventions came in an unflattering article in The Denver Post by the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Mike Royko, who announced that he would leave his Chicago home for a secluded North Woods cabin without a TV set before the first Democratic delegate reached the city.

To Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago, who is bringing the Democrats to his city, Royko presented his compliments by expressing the hope that the mayor would "suffer through the full four days of foolish blather." He also registered his dislike for what he called "that giant multiheaded beast known as the Media," adding, "They spend almost a week trying to find genuine news at an event in which there isn't any because everything is planned, programmed and decided in advance."

It was quite a switch to flip through a few pages of The Detroit News and find a piece reprinted from The Washington Post about Elizabeth Dole, the Senator's wife, and her prospective rival in the White House, Hillary Rodham Clinton. Both are law school graduates, Mrs. Dole of Harvard and Mrs. Clinton of Yale; both, too, have had distinguished careers as practicing lawyers.

"The public views the two quite differently," the reporter wrote. "Among Americans with an opinion, three times as many like Elizabeth Dole as dislike her, according to a recent poll conducted by The Washington Post. Hillary

## When Journalists Play in Washington

"It's summer camp for 65-year-olds"—*Jack Germond of The Baltimore Sun, commenting on the Washington Gridiron Club's annual gala spoofing politicians.*

Clinton fans barely outnumber her critics and she has some of the highest disapproval ratings of any First Lady."

For a Cleveland Plain Dealer associate editor, Jean Dubail, the issue for Easter Sunday appeared to be an urge to deprive members of Congress of their pensions. The idea apparently originated when Poland's Lech Walesa, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, had to return to work at a shipyard there as an electrician for about 650 zlotys a month, or about \$260. By contrast, Dubail went on:

“Democratic Rep. Pat Schroeder of Colorado, who is heading home after 22 years in the House, could take in \$4.2 million in taxpayer-supported payments over the rest of her life. Sen. William Cohen, a Maine Republican, is due \$3.2 million....

"I realize that my proposal is not without flaws but I look at it this way. If it's good enough for Lech Walesa, it ought to be good enough for Pat Schroeder and Bill Cohen."

The Miami Herald, in the interim between the spring primaries and the fall Presidential campaign, also had some new insights on national politics. There were two Page 1 stories, one on the sadness of the chef at Le Mistral, a popular Washington restaurant, because lobbyists by law no longer could buy lunches there for members of Congress; the other, a companion disappointment for Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell who had lost temporary employment as a model for clothing for the rugged outdoors.

The political editor, Tom Fiedler, meanwhile expressed his regrets on the editorial page that the Miami city

government seemed baffled by the challenge of the Miami Heat, a basketball team, which was demanding a new arena for its games, partly at taxpayer expense.

April 7 was decidedly an off-day for Presidential politics, with only an Associated Press report in The Herald on Clinton's policy on gays in the military passing its first court test.

The Los Angeles Times for the same day reported outrage in Oregon over the failure thus far of the Clinton administration to halt logging of virgin Oregonian forests. And on a worldwide view, in its commentary section, a writer for the World Policy Institute gave assurance that Pat Buchanan's threat to reform the Republican Party was not as frightening as it seemed:

"It [Buchanan's project] is a relatively benign sideshow on a global political stage fraught with ethnic, religious and economic divisions."

But the big story in The Los Angeles Times, as in most papers of that particular time, still was the Unabomber's seizure in Montana plus the continued FBI standoff with the accused criminals among the Freeman gang in their homemade fortress on the great plains. What was happening in Washington as far as Clinton and his opponents were concerned was far from public consciousness out West.

There was more interest in The Houston Chronicle that day, with a report that Congressional Republicans had finally made a little progress before their Easter break. A Knight-Ridder syndicate report cited Republican budget cuts, the passage of the farm and telecommunications reforms, others affecting small business and the grant of Line Item veto privileges to the President.

One House leader lamented, though: "We're not getting the credit we deserve."

There was more vigor in The Chronicle editorial page's criticism of Governor George W. Bush, son of the ex-President, for a state decision to release a child-molester, Larry McQuay. A Chronicle reporter wrote from Austin, the state capital, that the governor "with a little luck" will survive the furor over McQuay "although his [Bush's]

survival is of course much less important than the survival, in a very literal sense, of the child molester's next potential victim."

The big Chronicle story of the day, however, was the last stand of the popular Texas Republican Senator Phil Gramm in the November election. His opponent, as a primary that week demonstrated, will be a \$36,000-a-year high school teacher, Victor Morales, who ran for the Democratic nomination on a dare from his students and won against a veteran Congressman from Dallas. He has no war chest, however, while Senator Gramm is estimated to have \$3.5 million to spend on his re-election. Moreover, a Chronicle poll gave Gramm a big lead over the high school teacher, a 46-year-old Vietnam War veteran and the first minority nominee for senator in the state's history. Morales wasn't in the least discouraged.

A more definite hint of changing times in Texas came with the defeat of a four-term Democratic Congressman, Greg Laughlin, who switched to the Republican side last year. He lost his first race as a Republican to succeed himself when Dr. Ron Paul beat him for re-election in the 14th Texas district south of Houston. The victor had just returned to the Republican fold after a losing independent run for President in 1988 after having served as a Republican House member.

Laughlin's loss came with the opening of a Republican TV ad campaign against President Clinton for blocking \$500 tax credits for families with small children. The AFL-CIO had been attacking Republicans in other TV ads for refusing to raise the minimum wage.

But as for the Presidency, the black hole seemed to have swallowed news of the Clinton-Dole race long before the turmoil of the fall campaign.

For The Nashville Tennessean, like the rest of the national and state-wide papers I try to follow, the big story of necessity had to be the Unabomber investigation with the Presidential campaign as a distinct side issue exactly seven months before election day. But



"I DON'T LIKE ANY OF 'EM — MATTER OF FACT, I DON'T EVEN LIKE THE MEMBERS OF THE HATE GROUP I BELONG TO"

at that point, Tennessee's primary election voters already had chosen Senator Dole as President Clinton's prospective Republican challenger.

The fall campaign was recognized by The Tennessean, after a fashion, with a Hearst service discussion of Vice Presidential candidates for the Dole effort and a New York Times account of how Republican and Democratic campaign workers spy on each other. But Larry Daughtry, The Tennessean's political expert, was more interested in a forthcoming look at state legislative ethics that might wind up in an FBI inquiry, although there was no certainty of it. And as far as the state's educational establishment was concerned, there was greater interest in the effort of Vanderbilt University, the state's blue-ribbon private institution of higher education, to raise its academic standing.

Even for The Washington Post, where the Presidency and Congress are local news, the editorial going was difficult when it came to keeping up with the Clintons and Doles. Like all the rest, The Post splurged on the Unabomber story, beginning with Page 1 and jumping to two full pages inside. The one political story on the first page was the end of the Maryland assembly session the day after, coinciding with the Congressional Easter break.

There were mainly discussion pieces inside on three major candidates for Senate seats in the fall election, the odd twists of financial rules for Presidential campaigns, the hefty outside legal activities of Kenneth W. Starr, the independent counsel investigating the Whitewater affair, and, in a reprise, the tale of three men and a budget, meaning Messrs. Clinton, Dole and Gingrich. There was also an appeal to the Republican Congress for mercy called "The Homeless and the Heartless" that was worth re-reading.

It was apparent that The Post wouldn't follow the general trend but would attempt, either through innovative assignments or the enterprise of its staff, to keep campaign coverage in the forefront of the news.

That, too, appeared to be the position of The New York Times, among others. During the primary elections, The Times seemed to have been committed to running two full pages of campaign coverage plus Page 1 displays. But once Dole was sure of the Republican nomination and took a brief vacation coinciding with the spring break for Congress, even The Times's coverage for the time being began shrinking.

Still, toward mid-April The Times, apparently unable to accept the black hole, suggested by political correspondent Berke, ran an exclusive detailed

analysis of Senator Dole's handicapped physical condition caused by his grave World War II wounds. Dole himself had cooperated with the reporter who did the piece, Katharine Q. Seelye. The Senator was quoted in the article: "It's your ability that counts, not your disability."

It was just as apparent on the Democratic side that changes through injuries or death also were likely to have an effect on the way the campaign was conducted.

In summing up the play of some of the nation's leading journalists that help influence public opinion, both my professional compliments and my admiration go to the editors of all the papers herein discussed for their impressive coverage of the last homecoming of Secretary of Commerce Brown. This was something more than a farewell tribute to a government servant of the first rank. It was a tribute, however belated, to the dominant role he had achieved in the Democratic Party as well as in the advancement of blacks.

The equally spontaneous television coverage of Secretary Brown's last homecoming, which included his funeral and his burial with high military honors at Arlington, seemed to match, and at times even exceed, the splendor of the tribute of the printed press. As the President of the United States and the titular leader of his party, it was Bill Clinton's official role to preside over these ceremonies to deliver the nation's last tribute and to comfort the Secretary's widow and family—a duty he carried out with quiet dignity.

Once these rites concluded, the President strengthened both his campaign organization and his Cabinet by appointing Mickey Kantor, his current Trade Representative and 1992 campaign manager, to be his new Secretary of Commerce. For Kantor's post, his deputy, Charlene Barskefsky, was named Acting Trade Representative. To fill a vacancy in the budget office, Franklin S. Raines became the second black member of the Clinton cabinet, the other being the Energy Secretary, Hazel O'Leary.

I have gone into considerable detail, through an analysis of the reportage in



Star/The Boston Globe

some of the leading newspapers across the country, to demonstrate how difficult it is—and how wasteful—to maintain public attention in newspapers throughout a Presidential campaign that now has been stretched to almost a full year. As for television, which long ago inherited the first telling of the breaking news, the networks and CNN seemed to be contenting themselves now with the same minimal coverage, proportionately, in their regular newscasts.

**D**ole's decision to begin his campaign early drew wide coverage, of course. As he moves from city to city, from speech to speech, visiting factories and offices and malls, the media will dutifully tag along. He will set the agenda—at first. But how long will Dole be considered good copy? Perhaps forever to local TV anchors with their soft questions. But how about more sophisticated reporters and how about the voters? A candidate who repeats the same tune day after day is risking overexposure.

Once the voters starting paying attention after Labor Day, the atmosphere is bound to be entirely different. Right now in the mixture of print and broadcast media together with the ever-en-

larged Internet and its computerized feeds, we have the most inclusive communications system linking government and people in our history as a nation. I would expect, knowing something at first hand of the quality of reporting that can be expected as the campaign progresses, that the candidates themselves are not the only ones capable of surprises.

Throughout, we may expect a lively and a hard-fought campaign with exhaustive coverage of all candidates. That, at the very least, is what the media owes an open society—particularly the largest and best equipped press that the world has seen.

There is one other consideration that should be taken into account in this survey of the emerging possibilities in this next-to-last Presidential election of the 20th Century. That is the necessity—indeed, the certainty—that Presidential campaign reform will become a major consideration.

Whatever can be done to return the drive for the White House to reasonable lengths will have to be approved by the Democratic and Republican Parties, so the place to expect action, first of all, is at their respective conventions this summer. Because the delegates and the bosses no longer control the selection of the nominees for high offices, having yielded that privilege to the primaries and caucuses, the vote to renominate President Clinton among the Democrats and approve Senator Dole's nomination among the Republicans can easily be done by acclamation.

Once that happens, there is nothing except political inertia to stop both conventions from voting to appoint committees to agree on sensible reforms beginning with a more limited time schedule for the campaign in the year 2000.

It would be much appreciated by the Americans of the next century, the kind of gift the politicians and journalists at the last of the 1990's owe to those who will follow us. In a sense, no more black holes. ■

# Problems And Possibilities

BY MICKEY EDWARDS

In 1995, Albert Belle, the left fielder for the Cleveland Indians, turned in one of the most amazing performances in the history of major league baseball. Playing in a season shortened by a labor dispute, Belle hit 50 home runs and 50 doubles—something no other player had ever done, even in a season of regular length. Nobody—not Babe Ruth, not Ted Williams—had ever had such a season before. Led by Belle's hitting, his team won the American League championship and played in the World Series for the first time in more than 40 years. At the end of the season, sports reporters selected the league's Most Valuable Player. They chose a player who had a lower batting average, a lower slugging average and fewer home runs. From now until baseball ceases to exist, when fans look to see who the American League's most valuable player was in 1995, Albert Belle will not exist.

The decision to deny Albert Belle an honor he had clearly earned tells us much about the state of American journalism. More precisely, it tells us much about the state of mind of American journalists. It was not that reporters had injected their own biases into the process; in sports, like politics, we all have our biases, and reporters are human. Nor should they have been expected to keep their opinions to themselves; selection of an MVP is a matter of opinion. What is so revealing is not the "what," but the "why." Albert Belle has little use for the press. He is, in fact, rude to reporters (he would argue that it is their intrusiveness that is rude). When it came time to single out the most valuable baseball player in the American League, reporters made Belle pay for his unwillingness to show them the respect—maybe even the courtesy—

they thought they deserved. What they did, in other words, was to make themselves the focus of the story. The decision revolved not around Belle or the other players in the league, but around the reporters themselves. It was not what Belle did, but how reporters were treated that determined the result of the voting.

For years, politicians have understood that it is unwise—"dangerous" is a better word—to get drawn into a name-calling contest with somebody who buys ink by the barrel. The struggle between reporter and reportee has never been an equal one, and since the Supreme Court decision in *New York Times v. Sullivan* (which made it virtually impossible for a public figure to win a libel suit against a publisher), candidates and public officials have been subject to the whims and biases of the press. Press secretaries and public relations experts work assiduously to shape reporters' stories, but in the end they can only hope a reporter will be friendly or, at least, fair. Mario Cuomo, Bill Clinton, George Bush and Albert

Belle have this in common: no matter what their deeds and motivations, ultimately their lives and accomplishments may be judged and recorded by observers whose primary focus is on themselves.

To the press, generally, the First Amendment is akin to the Bible. That is, there are some parts of it reporters judge to be apocryphal or irrelevant (the press's persistent assault on "lobbyists," for example, brushes aside First Amendment guarantees of the citizen's "right to petition") and there are other parts of the First Amendment—"freedom of the press" in particular—that the press considers, properly, to be sacred and inviolable.

Reporters and publishers (I use "publishers" to refer to persons who "publish" news and opinion either in print or electronically) insist that there should be no interference with their constitutional right to say what they wish. In this, of course, they are on solid ground. The courts have repeatedly rejected attempts to impose prior restraints on



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ROBERT A. CHASE

publication. But in its insistence on free rein, the press has reinterpreted the Constitution to suit its own purposes.

The central concern of the Constitution's authors was the need to keep government in check. On this, both the Federalists and the anti-Federalists were in accord. The question was not whether the Constitution was to bind government, but only whether it did so sufficiently. To achieve the end—a system of constraints on the use of federal power—the Founders devised a broad spectrum of barriers: a separation of powers; division of the legislature into equal and competing branches; a division of powers between the federal government and the states; an Electoral College to ensure that candidates for the presidency would have to address the concerns of each segment of the national community; the pitting of faction against faction to ensure that no one of them would come to dominate. There was to be protection against the tyranny of the one, the tyranny of the few, the tyranny of the many. And it is in that context that the First Amendment guarantees must be considered.

If one assumes that the "freedom of the press" is guaranteed because the Founders were somehow fond of reporters—an assumption easily dispelled by reading the correspondence of such "friendly" Founders as Thomas Jefferson—it is easy to conclude that whatever the press may choose to do is not only permitted but also approved of; that, in fact, even distortion, trivialization and libel somehow serve the greater purpose of maintaining the republic. But if one reads the First Amendment in full context—as a part of the constitutional system of federal restraints—one can clearly see that the purpose of the First Amendment is to guarantee the public an accurate report on what its officials are up to. Informed readers can thus use their knowledge to exercise control over the government. If the First Amendment is interpreted not only by what it says but also by why it says it, it is clear that bias, falsehood and inaccuracy are not only not "okay," but are also counter to the intention of the protection.

How one defines the purpose of the First Amendment is crucial. If the Founders meant to give journalists *carte blanche* simply because they are journalists, then anything goes. If, on the other hand, the motivation for the First Amendment's protection was to provide for a well-informed (and accurately informed) public, then the Sullivan decision, which requires proof of both damage and malice before a maligned "personality" can sue successfully for libel, was poorly reasoned, and the falsely accused should be able to hold the press accountable.

Media spokesmen argue that to hold the press responsible for its defamations would deter the aggressive reporting necessary for reporters to do their jobs. In fact, what it would require is even more aggressiveness: reporters would have to verify their stories before using them. The press also argues that the First Amendment freedom must be absolute, unhindered both before the fact and after the fact (thus allowing the press to escape responsibility for falsehood). The rationale for this argument is that the public has "a right to know." But what the public has a right to know is the truth; it is absurd to argue that the public has a right to know inaccurate or false information.

The press is sometimes incompetent to do the job it has accepted. Increasingly, major newspapers and television networks use specialists to cover issues of economics, the sciences, or the arts. And most medium-sized newspapers have their own political reporters who regularly cover elections and candidates. Most Americans, however, live in much smaller communities in which candidates must attempt to communicate with voters through the filter of poorly trained journalists. The results are often favorable to the candidates (many local reporters are better at taking notes than at asking questions) but inadequate in conveying information to the voters.

In addition, the press has fallen victim to the belief that communication between candidate and voter—even if articulately stated—must be "explained," either in analysis sidebars or

broadcast recapitulations. Reporters, few with advanced degrees in economics, history, or international relations, critique the proposals of candidates who have spent most of their adult lives dealing with just those issues, attending countless hearings and briefings, reading position papers drafted by experts. Arthur Maass, a retired government professor at Harvard, once wrote that what Congress contributes to policy-making is the analysis of the non-expert. The media is working assiduously to supplant the Congress in that role.

Then there is the fact that in reporting on politics the media product is often not very good. This is not because reporters are inadequate to the task but because journalists focus on the wrong things. Determined to fill a news hole even if there is no news, reporters report on every speech by every major presidential candidate, no matter how repetitive. As a result, they become bored with the presentation, and report instead on the disturbance in the back of the room. The tail wags the dog. The result is both trivialization—the public reads about the sideshow rather than the substance—and sensationalism—a protest, a flubbed line in a speech, an incorrect introduction—takes on a prominence out of proportion to its significance.

The most widely noted of these press failures is the tendency of reporters to report not on the substance of the campaign, but about the public mood of the moment—the so-called horse race report that focuses on opinion polls rather than policy proposals. Sometimes the opinion polls are surveys of how the public—with a smattering of as-yet-undigested information—reacts to one proposal or another. The result is twofold: serious reflection and deliberation are diminished as the press shoves the public into a quick-decision mode, and voters receive a distorted perception of the candidates vying for high office. Instead of a race between Candidate A, who believes we should place more emphasis on the deterioration of relations between the United States and China, and Candidate B,

who believes it is more important to address the problems of international trade, the public is presented a race between candidate A, who has dropped four points among white females between the ages of 19 and 25, and candidate B, who has moved up from fourth to third in the anybody-can-vote straw poll in Iowa.

This problem is exacerbated by the fact that so many of the reporters covering elections—including those who are best known and most widely respected—simply have no idea what they are talking about. After the Republican presidential primary in New Hampshire this year, reporters presented the public with stories describing speech-writer Pat Buchanan as a serious challenger for the party's nomination, and suggested that his message was apparently popular with Republican voters. Yet any campaign activist who knew how to read—and count—could clearly see that Mr. Buchanan had received only 28 percent of the vote (that is, 72 percent of the voters voted for somebody else), that his was the single highest vote total only because the “other” vote was divided among many other candidates, and that since the other candidates all disagreed, generally, with Mr. Buchanan's trade and foreign policy positions, the results in New Hampshire showed not his strength but his weakness. In the desire to create a story—to fill a news hole—to make the election exciting to readers and viewers—the press distorted what was really happening in American politics and gave both voters and overseas observers a highly misleading perception.

This raises another point, which brings us back full circle to the earlier comments about the press's misreading of the First Amendment: reporters often justify their reporting of rumor and innuendo by the fact that other media outlets are doing the same. “If they do it, we have to do it, too.” Or they justify their focus on the horse race, or the disturbance at a campaign rally, by the need to (a) file a story, and (b) say, or write, something “interesting.” This is not, of course, a “news” response; it is a “business” re-

sponse. Newspapers and television and radio outlets are, we are reminded, competitive business enterprises.

Perhaps. But if they make reporting judgments from the standpoint of business competition—if *The New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* are not, after all, all that different from a shoe store or Macy's—then they have no right to wrap themselves in the cloak of First Amendment protection. They are given a shield available to no other private business because journalism is—or professes to be—a profession, and one that has undertaken a serious public responsibility. If owners of these businesses are to pursue profit by means of special privilege—access to information and events, protection against laws that apply to the rest of us—then they must sometimes be willing to forego profit in the name of providing a professional product. When there is no “news,” none should be manufactured.

Finally, there is the question of “point of view.” As a journalism student in the 1950's, I was taught that the press had a responsibility to inform the public in an unbiased, “objective” way. If we wished to be “players” in the political process, to influence outcomes, we were free, as were all Americans, to run for public office. But if we chose, instead, to be “reporters,” we had the obligation to be fair, neutral, and, so far as possible, comprehensive in our reports.

In a representative democracy in which voters are represented by surrogates they have chosen it is important that the citizens, not self-appointed élites, dominate the decision-making process. For a system such as ours to succeed—success being defined as the making of wise decisions—it is necessary that the decision-makers be given as much information as possible, from all sides of an issue, and with as little filtration and journalistic analysis as possible, that they may themselves weigh the options and choose between them. Journalists who from their own biases and opinions, whether informed or not, attempt to “color” the news, either by weight or omission, undermine the very essence of self-government.

An ideal reporter—one who takes seriously the mission to “report”—will convey accurately what was said by a candidate or officeholder, and if he or she considers it necessary to expose some perceived flaw in a proposal, or to further explain or clarify (one cannot, for example, expect the average reader to understand, without help, the significance of congressional budget alternatives), the proper means of explanation is to seek, and report, the opinions of experts of differing backgrounds and philosophies. To this a reporter on deadline may respond: “But there is no time to do all of that and make the morning edition (or 6 p.m. broadcast).” The only correct response to such an assertion is: “Then do the analysis after you've had time to get it right.” Unless an election is to be held the next morning, “deadlines” exist only to help the press—in its role as a “business”—get the jump on the competition. But to analyze before a broad and fair analysis can be rendered, is to put business concerns ahead of the professional responsibilities of journalism.

The American voter can, by his or her decisions, plunge the world into economic catastrophe or mind-numbing escalations to war. The press, in reporting on campaigns for the presidency—or for other important national offices—can enhance, or impinge on, the decision-making process. If reporters take an élitist view—“the voters are unintelligent” (as opposed to being merely uninformed)—and attempt to “shape” their reports to bring about preferred outcomes, American government will hover somewhere between participatory democracy and indirect oligarchy. If they take seriously the idea that the people should govern themselves, and to do so are in need of accurate information, they will seek, in their reporting, to be precise, neutral, and comprehensive.

Because we are now in the midst of another important presidential election (there has not been an “unimportant” election since 1924), there are ample opportunities to demonstrate that journalists have a level of commitment to excellence comparable to that they demand of the candidates themselves. ■



# Solving Problems, Listening to Local Voters

## *Virginian-Pilot Disavows Economic/Sports Model Of Covering Presidential Election Campaign*

BY COLE C. CAMPBELL

This is an important year in American politics. The presidential election will select the last president of the millennium. The entire House of Representatives and a third of the Senate faces an electorate that seemingly voted for one kind of change in 1992 and a contrary kind in 1994. A phalanx of congressional veterans is marching off the battleground because the fight now seems more vain than glorious.

And political journalists are engaged in both self-flagellation over sins past and self-indulgence in sinning yet again.

"The proposition that 'the media' are complicit in the public's disenchantment with politics and its cynicism about democratic government is so widely accepted that it is barely debated," E.J. Dionne of *The Washington Post* concedes in his 1996 book, "They Only Look Dead."

In fact, a slew of books still on the new arrivals shelves at your local bookstore reinforce that view, including "The System" by journalists Haynes Johnson and David Broder, "The Politics of Meaning" by social critic Michael Lerner and "House Divided" by Mark Gerzon of the Rockefeller Foundation.

"Politics is not working well, and the press seems caught up in this failure," Jay Rosen of New York University writes in his 1996 treatise, "Getting the Connections Right."

"For years journalists and academic observers have worried about the fall-out from certain predictable patterns in the press treatment of politics: the 'feeding frenzies,' in which public figures become the target of an overzealous press pack; the horse race angle that treats politics as little more than a sporting match; the obsession with

political strategy and the 'who's up, who's down' game of savvy insiders; the insufficient attention paid to serious issues of public policy as journalists compete with each other and with a tabloid culture that shows less and less restraint."

Citizens share that critical assessment.

In "America's Struggle Within," a 1996 research report commissioned by the Pew Center for Civic Journalism, Richard C. Harwood discusses what citizens had to say about politics and political coverage in 15 discussions around the country. Harwood concludes:

"People are deeply frustrated and exasperated by the state of the union. They believe that the nation is heading seriously off course and has been for some time. These feelings are not a momentary or passing fad but emerge from day-to-day experiences. They are based on Americans' growing fear that their aspirations will be dashed and that their worst nightmares will become reality."

Citizen indictments of the news media are particularly acerbic—and disturbingly familiar. The media convey too much gossip, go after the dirt, put people in polarized camps. Citizens, Harwood writes, feel betrayed:

"At the core of people's concerns was a belief that news media have lost a sense of their mission in society and have failed to live up to their responsibility to inform people about the news and challenges around them... People said that they were turning away from the news media because, as one Los Angeles woman put it, 'The media is killing us.'"

Despite quadrennial promises on the

part of the press to sober up, coverage of the 1996 presidential campaign shows the same tendencies.

On April 18, during the annual convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, American Opinion Research and the Foundation for American Communications released results from a survey of 888 newspaper executives.

"Fewer than 1 in 10 American newspaper executives feel the media is doing an excellent job of covering the campaign," the survey showed. "...More than eight in 10 (83 percent) said the



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media focuses too much on the 'horse race' aspects of the campaign compared with 1 percent who say it focuses too much on issues."

At The Virginian-Pilot, we don't pretend to know exactly how presidential elections should be covered. With the exception of the 1988 primary season—when Pat Robertson of Virginia Beach was seeking the Republican nomination—we don't staff presidential campaigns and depend primarily on the wires to inform our readers.

We also recognize that politics can be as fascinating as baseball as a spectator sport, so we continue to keep readers posted about who's on injured reserve, various standings as roughly approximated by public opinion polls (of which we have mixed opinions), new game plans and consultants-as-coaches on the sidelines. And we will persist in acting as a watchdog, monitoring campaign contributions and political entanglements

**B**ut we have been exploring ways to change how congressional, legislative and local elections are covered, and we are trying to change the way we present coverage of the presidential election.

We have been inspired by this challenge from Jay Rosen: to try to close the gap between the trouble in people's lives and the way politics as usual is done.

We want our election coverage to move beyond the usual name-calling of conventional politics. And we want to close the gap between political conversation—the discussions about our common destiny as a community, a state and a nation—and political campaigning—the process we use to choose our leaders and our political direction.

This is what we're doing.

*We're disavowing the economic/sports event model of campaigns in favor of a problem-solving model.*

Most political reporters conceive of campaigns as a major marketing event: candidates sell their platforms to voters in return for votes—a simple economic exchange. Then they dress it up as a horse race, focusing on who's ahead at a given turn on the track.

At The Pilot, we pay attention to this model, because candidates use it as well. But we're also treating the campaign as a time of focused political discourse about shared problems. Tom Warhover, the editor charged with shaping much of our political coverage, defines the two views of politics this way:

"POLITICS 1: The manipulation of power by elected officials. Running campaigns for the purpose of winning elections. In this, the current definition, politician is a dirty name and politics has little to do with people.

"POLITICS 2: Public problems that require shared decisions: a recognition that politics shapes and defines us in many ways; that politics is in danger of losing its meaning to people (see definition 1), and that the newspaper's task is to help get straight the connection between politics and life."

These definitions led us to divide our coverage in two: Decision '96 stories, about the process of electoral decision-making, and Discussion '96 stories, about the public discourse that shapes that decision-making.

Warhover defines Discussion '96 coverage as "the place where important concerns of citizens are aired: the declining standard of living, in which people see economic opportunity and security slipping away; an 'American dream' that's lost; a nation of missing parents; the disintegration of values for our next generation, etc. While Decision '96—the race for the presidency, or Congress, or City Hall—goes on, Discussion '96 is occurring every day."

Since late January, we've devoted our Sunday Commentary section to Discussion '96—politics in the broadest sense—covering job security, economic development, troubles in the family, populism, extremism, the religious right and ways to improve public discourse. (We slipped in a couple of Decision '96 topics, too, including tips on how to make smarter choices at the ballot box.)

As part of Decision '96, we published on the eve of the May 7 local elections exhaustive summaries of candidates' positions on key issues in a series of Election Guides for each of the cities of South Hampton Roads.

*We're focusing on what matters to Virginia's citizens.* During the fall 1995 legislative campaign, The Richmond Times-Dispatch kicked off its coverage by focusing on whether Gov. George Allen, a Republican, would finally win majorities in the two legislative chambers. The paper ran an impressive, nearly full-page seating chart of both houses, color-coded to show the likelihood of re-election for every member of the legislature.

For journalists and politicians, that's an important story, but it was a long way away from the central concerns of citizens. The Virginian-Pilot launched its campaign coverage with a series of stories on key issues identified by citizens in community conversations around the state with our reporters, confirmed by sophisticated deliberative polling. Those issues were education and the future of our children; the economy and job opportunities; the effective use of public monies; public safety, and partisan wrangling. We framed our campaign coverage around these issues and how the candidates addressed them.

**I**n January, we covered the National Issues Convention in Austin, Texas, in which government professor James Fishkin brought together a nationally representative sample of citizens to discuss what mattered to them. These concerns paralleled the issues in Virginia in two respects—the economy and the family—and added America's role in the world. When citizens were asking some of the Republican candidates about these issues in Austin, we sent a correspondent to put their questions to Bob Dole on the campaign trail in New Hampshire. Unfortunately, he was too busy swatting softballs from Tabitha Sorenson of MTV.

This spring, we again engaged citizens across our region, Hampton Roads, to discover their concerns about the issues facing city councils and school boards. Again we built our coverage not around who might win but how the candidates would address the problems vexing their constituents.

This summer, we will work with Richard Harwood to develop a delibera-

tive poll of Virginians to determine how they evaluate the issues being debated by the presidential candidates.

*We're imagining new ways for citizens and politicians to talk together.*

When citizens discuss concerns about the economy or the family—or the impact of the economy on the family—they speak in real terms based on their real experiences. Politicians tend to talk about policies or political ideologies that don't seem tied to real experience, unless they dress up their speeches with carefully selected anecdotes.

Our coverage of citizen deliberation at the Austin convention was a start, as was our use of correspondents in New Hampshire and Iowa, who focused on citizens connecting with presidential aspirants. Two Commentary sections have focused on political discourse: One reflected on where political conversation takes place in a community, while the second explored ways to move away from negative campaigning. A group of citizens we brought together drafted an ethical code for the campaign trail that the League of Women Voters mailed to every candidate and read at the beginning of every campaign forum it sponsored. (It's important to understand: this was a citizen's code, not the newspaper's.)

In a regular Sunday summary of the presidential campaign, we have been paying particular attention to paid campaign advertising and public opinion polling as two forms of communication that dominate current discourse. We have published essays by a variety of people—a retired legislator, the director of a conservative political advocacy group, Labor Secretary Robert B. Reich—on their best thinking about new social and political compacts to bind our citizens, our communities,



Sketch by The Boston Globe

our businesses, our schools, our government.

*We'll cover the selection of our next senator like a job search.*

We don't want to default to the horse race model of campaign coverage: Who's ahead now? Who's doing what to edge out the opponent? Which political constituency is this proposal supposed to please?

**I**nstead, in Virginia's upcoming 1996 U.S. Senate race, we will work with citizens and with respectable scholars to identify what the job requires by way of skill and qualification, how the candidates match up, how their conduct as candidates might predict how they will act as officeholders, what their resumes and job references say about their ability to act in the public interest. And we'll use the citizens' agenda to determine the top job tasks the candidates will need to tackle, so we can learn how they would approach them if elected.

We'll use the same approach to framing our selection of wire copy for the presidential campaign.

*We'll help citizens see their stake and the stake of others.*

Politics is not solely about self-interest. We are learning to construct our

stories so citizens can see what's at stake for themselves and people like them—and what's at stake for other people, so they can appreciate the tensions in political life.

We are encouraged in this effort by ASNE's Journalism Values Institute, which produced a "Journalism Values Handbook," described as "tools to help newspapers revitalize journalism's core values and restore connections with the public." The handbook encourages newspapers: "to reflect the 'wholeness' of communities. Coverage needs to capture diverse voices and viewpoints; solutions and problems,

the profoundly ordinary as well as the unusual, the good with the bad."

We still fall into bad habits, placing black hats on some politicians and white hats on others. We still depend on the wires, which do not frame political coverage the way we do. But we believe that as we master our new approach, we can begin to close the gap between politics, citizens and the press.

We want to avoid this fate warned of by E.J. Dionne:

"Journalism is under such sharp attack now precisely because the public (and most journalists) suspect that it is not promoting a level of public debate that matches the seriousness of the choices the country confronts. The country is now engaged in one of the great arguments in its history, an argument in which many of the most basic questions—about definitions of morality, the role of government, the shape of the economy—are in play. If Americans in large numbers sit out this great debate and decide that politics has nothing to do with the problems at hand, and nothing to do with them, the whole political class and perhaps especially journalists—will have failed." ■

# Layoffs in Newspapers (Continued)

Here are some letters and a column responding directly to articles in Nieman Reports Spring edition, a story about opportunities on line, a book review and other material on the subject.

## Clark Hoyt: Make Newspapers Essential to Readers

To the Editor:

I read with interest the recent package of articles in Nieman Reports dealing with the future of newspapers in this age of corporate ownership. While I found the articles thoughtful in many respects, I was ultimately frustrated because, like so much of the seemingly endless debate about journalistic quality and the bottom line, I think they missed the central point.

If newspaper journalism is in trouble today, and I believe it is, it's not because a new wave of greedy corporate bean counters has cut the hearts and souls out of newsrooms. It's because newspapering, as we have been practicing it for decades, is steadily losing audience. Our challenge, while the industry is still economically healthy—while the newsrooms we grew up in and love still have plenty of resources to do the job—is to reinvent and reinvigorate newspapers in ways that make them truly essential to readers.

The numbers that matter most to me should be burned in the consciousness of every journalist who cares about the future of what we do. In 1970, 78 percent of Americans in a survey said they had read a daily newspaper the day before. In 1994, a similar survey found that only 62 percent had bothered to look at the previous day's paper.

Is this because newspaper ownership over the last quarter century has become more concentrated in publicly traded corporations and they aren't investing enough in newsgathering? Or is it because the world is changing rapidly in ways that no longer allow newspapers to assume everyone needs us and will read us, no matter how hard and unrewarding we make the experience?

I know my answer to that question. Certainly some owners, family and corporate, produce shriveled, low-quality newspapers—and always have. But most newspapers are really far better today than they once were—better



"I HATE TO BREAK THE NEWS TO YOU IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS GREAT SERIES ON UNEMPLOYMENT, JACK, BUT YOU'VE BEEN Laid OFF."

## Walter Mattson Weakening News Operations Weakens Newspapers

To the Editor:

I particularly enjoyed the articles by Alex Jones and Gene Patterson. I too feel that newspapers are a wonderful franchise and that their value is their news report. Anyone who significantly weakens the ability of the news operation to meet the needs of its community does so at his or her peril. And those who feel that print will be short lived and newspapers must adapt to electronic outlets are plain dumb if they think such a conversion can successfully be made if they take the heart out of the data base they plan to offer. Almost as dumb as those who feel they can continue to increase the cover price of their newspapers and at the same time subtract from the content that attracts people to subscribe in the first place.

Walter Mattson  
Retired President,  
The New York Times Co.

*continued on next page*

reported and written by better educated staffs, better designed, more colorful with helpful graphics. But they aren't better enough in the face of intense competition for the reader's time and attention.

We all know the trends that work against traditional newspaper readership. Television, all-news radio and the emerging on-line services have eroded the newspaper's role as first-bearer of news. Women have entered the workplace in full force, leaving fewer adults at home to browse a paper during the day. The American sense of community is deteriorating, whether you measure it by the falloff in voting, the decline in bowling leagues or the rise of walled and gated subdivisions. People with less time on their hands and in active retreat from their neighbors and their government are less likely to be interested in newspapers.

Declining circulation at the great majority of the nation's newspapers makes the competition with other media for advertising revenue even more intense. Add to that the fact that the price of our raw material, newsprint, rose 40 percent last year and will be up perhaps another 25 percent this year. Sure, virtually every newspaper in the nation has taken some cost-cutting steps to protect its economic future. At the good newspapers, the impact of those steps on newsrooms has been relatively limited, the volume and intensity of the outcry to the contrary.

At Knight-Ridder, we will still invest nearly 11 percent of our revenues in newsrooms, above the industry average. Some of our newsholes will be smaller than they were last year, although most will be larger than they were five years ago. Some staffs will be marginally smaller, though, again, larger for the most part than five years ago.

John Morton chided newspapers in his Nieman Reports piece for wanting operating margins "two times the Fortune 500 average." How curious. Business Week said recently he thought Knight-Ridder's margin of 12.5 percent in 1995 was "dispiritingly slim." Which is it: too high or too low?

Alex Jones suggested that newspaper margins of 20 percent were so strong

as to be too much. First, no margin is guaranteed to last in a world changing as rapidly as ours. Second, operating margins obscure the fact that the real financial goal of investors, whether family members or public shareholders, is return on their capital.

Some businesses—grocery stores come to mind—can do just fine, thank you, on razor-thin, single-digit operating margins. Their revenue is high and their need for capital relatively low. Newspapers are capital intensive. Knight-Ridder spent nearly \$300 million building a state-of-the-art printing facility for The Philadelphia Inquirer and Daily News. We are spending \$110 million for new presses in Miami. We're just completing a press project in Charlotte and starting one in Akron. We're replacing computer systems at a number of our newspapers. We spend more than \$10 million a year developing on-line and other new information products.

If we and other newspaper companies don't earn a sufficient return on all this capital investment of shareholders' dollars, the market will punish us by taking its investments elsewhere. The price of our stocks will fall and at some point reach a level tempting to investors interested in taking control. Such investors would believe *they* knew how to make more money out of newspapers. The ultimate punishment for a company that doesn't perform is loss of independence. And even companies where family members dominate the ownership are not immune from such market pressures.

Newspaper people could wish the world were different, that there was a separate stock market, with lower financial demands, for companies that produce socially critical products, such as news. There isn't. And until there is, we have to operate in the real world, balancing the legitimate needs of readers, shareholders, communities, employees.

That brings us back to those numbers I care the most about, the numbers that record our declining readership. If we reverse that trend, all the other numbers—circulation, advertising lin-

eage, newshole, newsroom FTEs [full-time equivalents, e.g., two half-time employees equal one full-time employee]—will follow.

It does take a certain level of investment—and I believe we at Knight-Ridder are making it. But it takes something else.

There's another number worth the sober contemplation of journalists. It's the 71 percent of respondents who told a 1994 Times Mirror survey that they believe the press "gets in the way of society solving its problems."

This isn't about how many resources we have to do our jobs. It's about what we're doing with the resources we have. It's about the mindset we bring to journalism.

We like to think of ourselves as the citizens' surrogate, the community watchdog, the reporter of news, often bad news, people have to know. Our readers—and those who don't read us regularly—don't see us the same way. They see us as aloof, arrogant, even reveling in the community's problems. They believe we're another unapproachable institution, just like the government we believe we're watching over for them.

What has gone wrong and what could repair it would be worth another whole special section in Nieman Reports. I have ideas, as do so many others. But I would like to suggest that all of us need to start listening better, not necessarily to each other, but to the public we're trying to serve. Newsroom cultures have always been inward-looking and resistant to change. I fear they're growing more so in some cases under the economic pressures you chronicled.

We need to get outside our own concerns, to start listening and then to fashion a journalism that truly serves readers and community and that will, as a result, truly serve the future of newspapers.

*Clark Hoyt*  
Vice President/News  
Knight-Ridder, Inc.

## Bill Felber Trust Publishers

To the editor:

Viewed from the perspective of one Midwestern editor who (his publisher correctly reminds him) knows how to spend money, but not how to make it:

1. Unless I miss my guess, many editors (and reporters) feel that the answer to the problems outlined in your presentation can be summarized in two simple words: Spend More. Easy for me to say. I am not alone, of course. Alex Jones ("news budgets are being squeezed, news staffs depleted, news travel curtailed, newsholes reduced and the news itself dumbed down") says the same thing. John Morton ("the smart thing to do... is invest some of its profits to improve product and service") says the same thing.

2. Based on experience and on reading, my sense is that publishers are fixated on 15 percent as the fiscal litmus test, as if this standard were so universally accepted that its violation constituted professional heresy. I may be overstating the case: the Veronis, Suhler study suggests that in the past five years, at least, 15 percent is less a dogma than a goal. At the minimum, however, such a preoccupation—to the extent that it exists—speaks first to the fact that the driving force in publishers' offices is the satisfaction of stockholders, not the perfection of product; and second to the implicit assertion that the one does *not* follow naturally out of the other. From an editor's standpoint, that is the true professional heresy.

3. On the other hand, responsibility for the secure operation of any company is at the same time a public, corporate *and* personal trust, and publishers must take all those responsibilities seriously. It would be possible for my publisher, for example, to invest so much into the improvement of product in methods—that is not serendipitous at least held no reasonably certain prospect of return—that the stability of the company was itself jeopardized. Plainly, it does neither the stockholders, nor the public at large, nor any reporters, nor most especially me, any good if the

## Downsizing? So What?

BY DAVID WARSH

There is a lot of dire talk to be heard around newspapers, inside them and out. Bill Kovach, curator of the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University, wrote in the Spring issue of Nieman Reports, which featured newspaper layoffs, that "corporate journalism, today's journalism, is a very troubled industry caught in the throes of a long struggle between editorial independence and market demands for a steady stream of mandated profit."

James Fallows, Washington editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, asserts in a new book ("Breaking the News: How the Media Undermine American Democracy") that Americans' disdain for the media establishment has reached dangerous new highs during the last de-

cade. And media critic Alex Jones—scion of a newspaper family, former reporter for *The New York Times* and host of a media talk show on National Public Radio—writes that the question facing the nation's newspapers "is as stark as it is simple: Will they survive?"

From a back seat in the business section of a prosperous daily paper, however, the answer that seems likely to prove correct is that not only will most ink-and-paper newspapers survive in the electronic age, but they also will prosper—as long as they stick to what they do best.

The current crop of doomsayers is divided about equally between Sidelined Veterans and Outsiders. Take the Old Vets first. Let me suggest this rule of

*continued on next page*

company goes belly-up, or jeopardizes its other commitments.

4. Editors tend, I think, not to be especially well-positioned to assess the decision-making process as it relates to the industry's fiscal implications because our focus tends to be on only a part of the picture. It is essentially the same reason why I tend to trust editors' news judgments above reporters' news judgments. A reporter—if I may generalize broadly—tends primarily to see his or her beat, and tends to make judgments vis a vis that perspective. An editor is as a rule generally better positioned than a reporter to judge contextual impact in terms of the community as a whole. Publishers—because they have access to more (and presumably) better information—tend to be better positioned to judge appropriate fiscal steps. Of course, just as editors can make self-destructive judgments, so too can publishers.

5. In sum, I wish that we as an industry were less focused on corporate con-

siderations and more focused on profit considerations...as I see them. The fact that these spending trends occur nationally, however, strongly suggests to the logical part of me that there are deeper, more legitimate rationales at work in most publishers' offices than I and other editors are recognizing. Whatever I believe about publishers as a class, I do not believe that they are stupid, and I do not believe that they are lemmings. That being the case, I am compelled to accept and trust their best collective judgments at the same time that I internally question those judgments as I feel it appropriate.

6. On the other hand, I would consider it to be at least some improvement if the fellow at the Publisher's Business School who teaches the course on the sanctity of the 15 percent figure could be identified...and exiled.

*Bill Felber*  
Executive Editor  
The Manhattan Mercury  
Manhattan, Kansas

thumb: don't take at face value what anybody in a university says about a newspaper. That includes deans of journalism schools, proprietors of centers on the press and others who no longer write and report the news for a living.

With few exceptions, these are extraordinary performers who have been squeezed out of the business in one of an endless series of behind-the-scenes battles over the direction of particular newspapers. That doesn't mean their heads are not full of good thoughts; after all, the Old Vets' ranks include some of the ablest men and women in the business. It does mean that their biases ought to be taken into account along with their views. And once they are benched, they have little incentive to cheer the continuing efforts of the managers who shouldered them out of the game.

Take the layoffs issue. Much gloom and doom has to do with "eating the seed corn," in Jones's phrase—meaning cutting back on staff reporters and editors when circulation and advertising revenues fall. And indeed, a few newspapers are collapsing, particularly in two-paper cities, while others grow. (The decline of head-to-head competition is another story.)

What the current despair about downsizing neglects is any serious recognition of the role of markets in governing the ebb and flow of companies' fortunes over time. Just as American auto companies entered the 1980's fat and happy after decades of record growth, so American newspapers entered the 1990's. A wicked advertising recession followed by a cyclical increase in newsprint prices now has shaken them to their marrow. Managers have ordered cost savings and cutbacks throughout the industry—everything from buy-outs to layoffs, from narrower page widths to diminished newsholes.

Yet The Washington Post's Richard Harwood recently surveyed newsroom employment and found that, after a 15-year hiring binge fueled by record profits, total jobs had peaked at something like 56,900 in 1990. That total now is down a little more than 5 percent, to 53,800. We do not know whether news

coverage has been affected adversely (if at all) by cutbacks, Harwood wrote; "editors seeking bigger staffs and bigger budgets can be self-serving as well as public spirited." In a second downsizing column, Harwood noted that the cutbacks had fallen disproportionately on the nation's smaller dailies—the 1,350 papers (among 1,500 total) with circulations of fewer than 50,000 copies.

What about the charge that newspapers have been trying to push profit margins back up to stratospheric levels? John Morton, a well-known newspaper industry analyst, noted in the Spring issue of *Nieman Reports* that major papers were shooting for margins of around 20 percent on sales—or around four times the present-day average profitability of the Fortune 500. But 20 percent margins—if they can be attained—are simply the levels that newspapers historically have enjoyed. They always have been more profitable businesses than most big manufacturing concerns. And of course Fortune 500 companies aren't what they used to be, either. Faced with intense global competition, they may not offer the best benchmark of a reasonable rate of return these days.

Pruning and shaping is not Armageddon; brand maintenance is not the *Gotterdammerung*. Even if newspapers continue to shed jobs as the technology of advertising changes, there is no reason to think that they will not find willing customers for their products, much as have the auto manufacturers. What went on in Detroit in the 1980's wasn't pretty, but it wasn't a case of an industry "eating its seed corn." It was the story of an industry painfully reconfiguring itself to produce better cars more efficiently with fewer people—in order to compete successfully in a fast-changing world.

The Outsiders are a different matter. A downright ominous threat to the integrity of the press has been the entry of the Pew Charitable Trusts into the news business since 1993. In a series of grants supporting a movement it calls "public" or "civic" journalism, the Pew Foundation is actually

paying for projects inside newsrooms that it deems worthy. (National Public Radio is a big recipient. The Boston Globe is one of many papers that has a Pew-financed program, "The People's Voice." Author Fallows belongs to the civic journalism wing.)

The idea behind "public journalism," its backers say, is for newspapers to somehow amplify the citizen's voice in the newsroom: organizing town meetings, conducting polling exercises and focus groups and developing projects to tell editors what readers are thinking. This notion leaves many mainstream news professionals cold; they consider that a great deal of two-way communication goes on anyway. Yet other foundations are lining up to get into the act, ready to spend modest amounts (by their standard) to ensure the provision of more of the kind of news they'd like to see.

It is a measure of the success of the press, not its failure, that so many people are lining up to get into its act. And it's hard to begrudge the university that wants to start up a program for visiting journalists, or offer a graduate program in economic journalism, even though the net effect of these new offerings may not be to raise the level of disciplined curiosity and skepticism upon which the reputation of the press ultimately must depend.

But a little money goes a long way in this business. It is easy to imagine outside grants from foundations distorting and confusing what is in many ways the best thing that a newspaper offers its readers—its editors' independent but market-driven judgment about what the newspaper-buying public wants to know and is willing to pay for. Pew's \$25,000 prize for public journalism is more than eight times greater than the purse that accompanies a Pulitzer Prize; no wonder it attracted more than 100 entries last year. Newspapers thus are complicit in this; they, too, are anxious to be well-thought-of by the Great and Good. But they do best when they stick to their guns.

Goodness knows that there are plenty of serious threats to the newspapers' comfortable place at the top of the story-telling chain—I don't mean to

sound like Pollyanna. There are those proliferating television networks, cable systems and wire services, for instance; these may be hurting the smaller city papers in particular. There is the Internet and customized "search engines," designed to equip the user with all the news clips that he or she can comfortably digest—the "Daily Me" of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Media Lab. There are also any number of ways to siphon off the advertising revenues that have been newspapers' lifeblood—direct mail chief among them.

So far at least, this proliferation of technologies by which publishers can formulate audiences whom advertisers are willing to pay to reach seems to be a situation requiring newspapers to forcefully reassert their natural market niche. They must narrate events, explain them and put them in context. Maybe advertisers will pay less of the bill for these services; maybe readers will pay more. But even if newspapers eventually come to be seen as nothing more than "the front-end to a vast electronic world" of data banks and advertising copy, as one of my technically oriented friends puts it, they surely will remain as vital middlemen between the public and a complex and confusing world for a long time to come.

**W**hat evidence is there that the press is in good shape? Well, one indicator of its quality are the stories for which Pulitzer Prizes are given annually. If you look carefully at what was honored for last year's work, it was simply astonishing. Laurie Garrett of *Newsday* traveled to backwater Zaire where the Ebola virus had broken out and traced the story throughout the high realms of medical science. David Rohde of *The Christian Science Monitor* was arrested at gunpoint while documenting the massacres at Srebrenica. Alix M. Freedman of *The Wall Street Journal* repeatedly got behind the scenes at the tobacco firms, even recording a moment when, with cigars and champagne in New York's Rainbow Room, its executives and their lawyers toasted a fleeting triumph over TV investigators.

Robert McFadden of *The New York Times* banged away as rewrite man, turning accounts from various reporters into seamless, riveting descriptions of events as momentous as the bombing of the World Trade Center, as intimate as the death of a single lonely woman. A *Times* editorial writer, Robert Semple, Jr., seized on a threat to Yellowstone National Park to crystallize fears about the future of Western public lands. A *Boston Globe* critic, Robert Campbell, kept up a lonely 23-year patrol of architecture trends.

The excellence of the award winners was no different this year than last, or, in all likelihood, from next. Indeed, for a simple, informal test of the proposition that the quality of American journalism has deteriorated over time, pick up the two-volume set from the Library of America called "Reporting World War II." This compilation of pieces, beginning with William Shirer at Munich and ending with John Hersey at Hiroshima, is simply dazzling—but it is no more dazzling than is the work being done nowadays.

Likewise, an informal survey of the nation's Class A newspapers—meaning those that aspire to offer their readers a full line of locally produced political, social, economic and cultural news—suggests that for the most part they are in glistening good health, financially and editorially.

After a rough transition to a new generation in the early 1980's, *The Wall Street Journal* is in terrific shape. The *Washington Post* sells 900,000 copies daily for 25 cents apiece. The *Los Angeles Times* is under sophisticated new management. The *Chicago Tribune*, the *Boston Globe* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* are moving aggressively to meet new challenges.

The *New York Times*, the nation's premier paper, is engaged in a choppy transition—not only is its metropolitan market stagnating, but its corporate parent is facing a question of succession within its controlling family. With penetration among New York City households of barely 11 percent daily and 15 percent on Sunday—granted the most affluent in the city—*The Times* risks becoming irrelevant to many local advertisers. Like many other metropoli-

tan papers, it has begun delivering whatever it reasonably can—in its case, including *The New York Post*—in an effort to get more out of its home delivery system.

**I**f *The Times* were to lose much more of its geographic base, it could wind up looking a lot like one of England's quality papers, *The London Times*, say, or *The Manchester Guardian*—a thinner, more tightly edited national daily, whose smaller readership and fewer advertisers are willing to pay higher prices for a premium product. (At \$1 a copy away from New York City, *The Times* is not yet priced as aggressively as London's *Financial Times*, which sells for \$1.50 in American cities, but it's 25 cents more than *The Wall Street Journal*.) Either way, *The Times*'s fundamental place in the firmament of American papers—and the place of New York among cities—is no more threatened than was *The Wall Street Journal* 10 years ago—as long as it is properly managed.

Perhaps the best evidence of the healthy state of American newspapering is to be found in Jack Fuller's book, "News Values: Ideas for an Information Age." Fuller, publisher of *The Chicago Tribune*, is among the foremost of the generation of newspaper managers who came of age professionally during the Vietnam War. Others include Joseph Lelyveld of *The New York Times*, Donald Graham of *The Post*, Peter Kann of *The Journal*, Knight-Ridder's Maxwell King, and Geneva Overholser, formerly of *The Des Moines Register*, now at *The Post*.

Fuller is at home in other milieu. He has written five novels; as a lawyer in the Justice Department, he helped put the FBI back on its feet after the Watergate scandal. But he is nevertheless a newsman to his core. As *The Tribune*'s editor, he led some of the boldest newspaper investigations of the 1980's. Among the best parts of an excellent book is a comparison of Col. Robert McCormick's *Tribune* in the heyday of personal journalism, and the same paper under the corporate journalism of the present day. There was, he finds, no golden age.



The vision Fuller sets out for newspapers is part umpire, part scribe, part interpreter, part translator, pursuer of "a provisional sort of truth, the best that can be said quickly." People come to a newspaper "craving a unifying human presence," Fuller writes. "The narrator in a piece of fiction, the guide who knows the way or the colleague whose view one values.... Readers don't just want random snatches of information flying at them out of the ether. They want information that hangs together, makes sense, has some degree of order to it. They want knowledge rather than facts, perhaps even a little wisdom."

Or as I said to my kid at breakfast the other morning, as she turned to the jump on the story about the little girl whose airplane crashed, "Let's see what they've been able to find out." As long as she learns to say that for herself, we'll be all right—readers and writers alike.

*David Warsh writes the column "Economic Principals" for The Boston Globe. The above is a slightly revised version of his April 14 column.*

## Arthur Sulzberger Jr. These Are Tough Times

These are tough times. I think it's a little extreme to say that everyone comes to work with their jobs in jeopardy but I am the first to recognize that none of us have the same level of assurance that over the next 20 or 30 years or however long it is before you choose to retire, that your job will be safe. Those days are gone. They are gone here, they are gone everywhere. You have to take more responsibility for yourself, make sure your skills are up to date, that your abilities are what they should be. Your career is in your own hands more. From management's point of view, we have the responsibility to give you the opportunity to enhance your skills and to make yourselves better and to give you an opportunity to get new job openings and so forth. But the old contract is gone. —Arthur Sulzberger Jr., *Publisher of The New York Times, in discussions with the staff on the state of the newspaper, January 30-February 2, 1996.*

## Times Mirror Chief Willes Exudes Optimism on Publishing

In a major restructuring, The Times Mirror Co. closed New York Newsday, The Baltimore Evening Sun, and a number of Los Angeles Times supplements. In an interview in *Editor & Publisher* for March 30, Chief Executive Officer Mark H. Willes expressed optimism about the future. Here are some excerpts:

**Q.**—Now that the streamlining is well underway and the company, as you said, has returned to its "core business" of news and information... where is the company looking for revenue and profit growth?

**A.**—Well, it's very simple, and absolutely nobody will believe us until we do it. And that is, we're going to grow primarily by growing the businesses we're already in. I get two very interesting reactions when I say that. One is, "Well, how are you possibly going to grow newspaper businesses? They're old, they're mature, they're very slow-growth by definition. Therefore, don't you need to go find something

else?" Then, the reaction I get from people who've been successful in growing, quote, mature, slow-growth businesses is, "Well, of course."

Interestingly enough, an enormous amount of our ability to succeed is just in convincing ourselves that we can succeed. We have an enormous number of very bright people.... So what we're now saying across the company is: The future isn't in multimedia, it isn't in cable television—the future is right here [in publishing]... And it turns out that... we don't have to have heroic growth in order to get very good growth in earnings per share.... Now, what I can't respond to is people saying, "Well, what specifically are you going to do?" I don't know—but I don't need to know. In fact, you don't want me to know, because you don't want me to go down and tell The L.A. Times, "Now, here's how you're going to grow." I happen to know there are just a lot of people in The L.A. Times who are all charged up, and they're convinced they're going to grow, and we'll fund it and they'll do it.

### *Winston-Salem Journal Drops Efficiency Grid*

About a week after I received my copy of *Nieman Reports*, I received a telephone call from Ken Otterberg, the Assignment Editor at The Winston-Salem Journal. In my *Nieman Reports* (Spring 1996) article "Efficiency Expert: Reporters told how long it should take to gather and write a story," Otterberg said that the newspaper was no longer using a grid that a management consultant had developed that spelled out just how long it should take a reporter to produce stories of specific lengths and complexity. The decision was announced shortly after distribution of the Spring edition of *Nieman Reports*. He said the decision was made before anyone had seen the *Nieman Reports* article.

The grid, printed in *Nieman Reports*, classified news articles into five categories for length and three levels for complexity. Otterberg said the grid was no longer being used as a way to determine the efficiency of a reporter, nor as a way to evaluate just how long it should take for an assignment to be completed. He said reporters and editors, working together, were dealing with each assignment to determine the details of complexity and amount of time needed to produce an article. The grid, he said, was no longer in use in the newsroom. ■—Seth Effron

### Correction

The Spring issue of *Nieman Reports* incorrectly reported the number of Pulitzer Prizes won by Newsday and New York Newsday. From 1985 through 1995 Newsday and New York Newsday won seven Pulitzers. Newsday also won two of 1996 Pulitzers, for beat reporting and explanatory journalism.

## Lead, Follow And Get Out of the Way

Management of the Absurd: Paradoxes in Leadership

Richard Farson

Simon & Schuster. 170 Pages. \$21.

BY WILLIAM M. BOYD, II

**H**ave you mastered the skill of dealing simultaneously with seemingly contradictory or incompatible concepts like the three in the title of this article? If not, "Management of the Absurd: Paradoxes in Leadership" can help. This little book (170 pages) will impress you with its lightness in your hand and its weight in your mind. Read the book quickly and ponder its meaning slowly as you try to appreciate notions like the need to see "the invisible obvious." In other words, managers need the ability to see things they have learned not to notice because they do not support their "belief systems" or "groupthink."

"In Management of the Absurd," Richard Farson, an experienced organizational leader, tries to deepen the reader's understanding of complex organizational challenges rather than to provide advice in the form of "techniques" or "checklists" to be applied in specified situations. Farson argues that deeper understanding makes an executive "less vulnerable to fashion and therefore stronger as a leader." Take the important, if somewhat trendy, emphasis on identifying and emphasizing "core competencies." Farson alerts managers to the danger of seizing on that to the extent that they "fail to see what they really need to do" if it is outside the sphere of things they already do well. Easily understood examples of what is outside the core competencies in journalism organizations include: new product development, creation of partnerships or alliances and rapid decision making.

Assuming that you are a newspaper executive, you are probably moving from a "monopoly" market where your concern was protecting the "franchise" to a situation where survival may be at

stake. Your organization now has legions of competitors and you have to learn to make both peace and war simultaneously (via "cooperation?" with entities as diverse as phone companies, computer companies, cable companies and broadcasting companies. To succeed in that environment you may have to embrace ideas that were unthinkable in the past, such as television and/or Web site staffers in your newsroom.

Even if you generally do not read books on media management and have even less exposure to books dealing with management generically, Farson's book is worth your time. He does not mention the cliché that to someone with a hammer everything looks like a nail. He does, however, explore the consequences of several corollaries. One is that to someone whose self-image is "problem solver," everything looks like a problem to be solved. Another is that to someone whose self-image is person-in-control, everything looks like a situation where more control is the answer. Farson does not urge readers to ignore either problem solving or control, but simply not to make them the major concern. In his view, it is less important for the leader to continually display problem solving skill or the ability to exert control than it is to recognize that the "real strength of a leader is the ability to elicit the strength of the group."

No doubt that was not part of the rules of the game you learned in newsrooms. Neither was diversity or interacting with readers, but you are accountable for some diversity today in most organizations and are about to be accountable for interactivity. As media critic Jon Katz put it in *Wired*, newspapers will "have to really listen to us, not just pretend...[and give] consumers

nearly as much power as its reporters and editors have." Would that be abdicating the key role of gatekeeper or just recognizing the paradox described by Katz—that reporters and editors need the assistance of consumers in deciding what "political, social and cultural issues [consumers] care about but need help in comprehending?" To deepen the paradox, consider the fact that if you define your job as explaining something to the public, you also create an interest in and at least partial responsibility for whether most of the public does in fact understand the issues you have explained.

**A**ccording to Farson, approaching "predicaments" as problems to be solved is unproductive and more of the same can actually make the predicament harder to handle. Interactivity, for example, is a messy predicament for journalism organizations, not a problem to be solved. Farson suggests that most managers are good only at "analytic" thinking. My experience suggests that is particularly true of newsrooms. Analytic thinking only would be sufficient but for the fact noted by Farson that "human affairs usually work not rationally but paradoxically." As a result, managers increasingly need "interpretive" thinking. The new thinking deals with the "many contexts" of a situation as well as its "deeper and often paradoxical causes and consequences." It emphasizes "appreciating the coexistence of opposites" and "coping with contradictions." The first step is acknowledging that you cannot cover a complex issue fully by dealing with "both sides" as journalists are wont to do. Taking such an approach only makes "many managers become frustrated, aggressive and

sometimes verbally abusive," according to Farson.

You do not have to be under 45 years old to "get it." Max Frankel in *The New York Times* of April 21 mused about value added by "content purveyors" when the news is omnipresent [and] it's what you do with and around information that counts more and more." A key part of the value added is a "community of well-oriented readers who are attractive to one another, as much members as consumers of *The Times*." Frankel lists interaction with that community as an asset side by side with "a staff that can expertly and distantly breathe meaning into information from around the globe."

**I**t is common knowledge that many organizational change efforts fail. A frequent reaction to such failures is to treat them as a problem of communication. Specifically the leader of the effort is faulted for not communicating better. Farson urges the reader to think about the following:

"People are more likely to change...when they themselves have a chance to talk. Yet the popular view persists that our leaders must [have] great speaking ability, not...listening ability."

Similarly, fuller and more accurate communication usually is advocated when change efforts fail. That, Farson says, undervalues "distortion and deception" which are valued when they are called "diplomacy and tact" or other ways "people must maneuver to keep relationships on an even keel." It also undervalues the political dimension of communication which makes "truly candid communication" appropriate "only when the balance of power is relatively equal."

So, who's protecting the franchise? Is it someone who is ignoring or belittling readers and cutting both the side and talent level of newsroom staff? Or is it someone who is investing in the development of both? The average American company spends less than \$1,500 per year per employee on training and top companies spend about \$3,000. Journalism companies traditionally have been low on investment in train-

ing while high in profit margins. Now they face the predicament of increasing investment in people while profit margins are relatively low. The fact that only two newspapers have a full-time technology trainer for their newsrooms illustrates one aspect of the training deficit.

It is common knowledge that many organizations change efforts fail. One such effort may be trying to "downsize" newsrooms to make journalism organizations more adaptive. Treating newsroom staff as costs to be trimmed rather than as assets to be developed can leave an organization less adaptive and less attractive to its customers.

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Farson practices what he preaches most of the time. He urges people to free themselves from linear, categorical thought patterns even when they are reading his book. He notes early in the book that the chapters do not have to be read in sequence. If that sounds "fishy" to you, you probably can benefit greatly from it. He also gives ample examples of thinking both abstractly and concretely. For example, he talks about "metamessages" which often undermine the stated message. Then he applies the thinking to something as apparently mundane as the seating arrangements at meetings.

"There is a great difference between sitting at the customary oblong table with the leader at the head, and sitting around a circular table at which no distinction is made for the leader...If the table is removed... if [people] take off their shoes and sit on the floor...At each of these stages the discussion becomes less formal, more participative, more personal. Nothing has changed except the form, and yet because of that, everything has changed."

There are, however, a couple of instances when he oversimplifies. For example, instead of sticking to the point that opposites are true simultaneously, he comes down at one pole in saying "It is easier to make big changes rather than small ones because the benefits are so much more dramatic and they occur so much more quickly."

**F**or journalism organizations in particular, reward systems are so traditional and so much based on individual performance that they tend to undermine efforts to make big changes like having reporters gather multimedia information for dissemination via a variety of media or like organizing an entire newsroom into teams.

The few quibbles I have with Farson's work diminish only slightly my estimation of it. If you are inclined to dismiss Farson as contrarian to a fault, consider other well-respected conveyors of similar messages. A brief and a very long example are a *Fortune* magazine article, "The Nine Dilemmas Leaders Face" by Tom Stewart (the source for the title of this article) and "The Fifth Discipline" by Peter Senge. The common theme is that all of us have to become more adept at dealing with situations where there is no right answer and where "even the best of us are not sure what to do." As traditional media try to come to grips with the era of "new media" that certainly is the case and the time to read or reread Farson. ■

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# New Media Offer Growing Job Prospects

*A Review of Where the Opportunities Lie,  
Skills Required and Salaries Paid*

BY JOHN V. PAVLIK

While graduates of traditional newspaper journalism programs enter a diminishing job market, those who are comfortable with technology and have some experience producing new media content have a brighter future. Although some major news organizations have recently scaled back their new media endeavors (e.g., Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation/MCI on-line venture), the new media market still represents the best opportunity for growth.

Jobs in new media journalism today are increasingly in content creation. A year ago, most were largely involved in coding Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) and in repurposing the writing of other journalists for on-line distribution and access. Today, although many positions still entail a significant amount of such work, more new media journalists are creating original content for on-line news publications and new media products on CD-ROM, etc. A good example is Publius, a new on-line publication devoted to covering the 1996 presidential campaign. A year ago Publius did not even exist, and today its journalists report extensively on campaign activity both at a national and local level (see the World Wide Web at <http://www.publius.com/>).

Importantly, all types of traditional news organizations are developing or offering new media news products: at least 162 U.S. daily newspapers and some 30 or more weeklies (see the Newspaper Association of America, 1996, at <http://www.infi.net/naa/>; see Editor & Publisher, 1995 at <http://www.mediainfo.com/edpub/>) now have on-line offerings and as many as 1,000 are expected to be on line by the end of the decade. The New York Times, for

example, launched its on-line edition, Cybertimes, this year on the Web (<http://www.nytimes.com/pope/>). Dozens of U.S. television stations and all major networks offer Web sites, although not all include news content. Many cable companies have created a Web presence, as well. Cablevision (<http://www.cablevision.com/>), for example, is launching a neighborhood news service via the Web, featuring "streaming" video, or real-time video content delivered using cable modem technology.

An annual survey by Professor Steven Sander Ross of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism and Don Middleberg of Middleberg & Associates confirms this growth pattern. Their data show that 30 percent of magazines distribute their product electronically, up from 26 percent a year before; similarly, 15 percent of newspapers distribute electronically, an increase from 13 percent the year before (Steven Sander Ross and Don Middleberg, "The Media in Cyberspace," January 12, 1996: 16). Further, only 30 percent of newspapers now have no plans to go on line (down from 51 percent the year before). The Ross and Middleberg study also indicates that many new media jobs are for on-line magazine products.

Particularly significant among the developments in the new media marketplace are the recently announced new joint ventures of some major communication industry players. These ventures include the multi-million dollar Microsoft-NBC alliance slated for a 1996 debut, which will likely produce many new media positions producing interactive news content for the NBC Supernet (<http://www.nbc.com/msn/index.html#news.html>). Another inter-

esting joint new media venture is the Alternative News Network, Inc. (ANNI), a partnership of Cummings Multimedia Entertainment and Internet Video Services, a Sunnyvale, California-based Internet service provider specializing in video storage and distribution. Scheduled for a launch on the World Wide Web, ANNI will provide 24-hour coverage of local, state, national, and worldwide news aimed at young adults (<http://www.anninews.com/news>). ANNI's



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full-time staff of more than 200 professional journalists from around the world will be supported by a staff of "stringer reporters" including university and college journalism students.

In addition, many of the most interesting new media journalism jobs involved in content creation are for specialized publications, such as publications in the worlds of computing, medicine and science. Medscape is an example of one growing on-line medical news and information service (<http://www.medscape.com/home/news/medscape-news.html>).

Finally, a broad category of new media jobs often overlooked is in financial news services, including the big three of Reuters, Dow Jones and Bloomberg (<http://www.reuters.com/index.html>; <http://bis.dowjones.com/>; <http://www.bloomberg.com/>). Specializing in financial news and information, although featuring general news products as well, these companies offer commercial real-time, multimedia news information at a premium price, distributed via the public telecommunications network, designed for a delivery to proprietary PC systems. Growth in this industry sector has been extraordinary, and shows little sign of slowing. Each of the major players has introduced new on-line news services or features over the past year and sought new editors and reporters.

Geographically, most of the companies hiring for new media content creation positions are headquartered in New York and San Francisco. A Bay Area Multimedia Partnership study of new media employment in the San Francisco area found that 2,200 Bay-area new media companies employed some 62,000 workers in 1995. A just-released study by accounting firm Coopers & Lybrand shows that more than 4,200 New York area new media companies employ some 71,500 full-time employees, up from 28,500 in 1992 (Steve Lohr, "New York Area Is Forging Ahead In New Media," *The New York Times*, D1, April 15, 1996). The study indicates that so-called Silicon Alley, the Manhattan home of many new media companies, employs 18,300 full-time workers, more than the number working in

Manhattan in television broadcasting (16,914), book publishing (13,466), newspapers (12,226) or cable television (6,784). The study forecasts that Silicon Alley will employ 39,000 full-time workers by 1998. Of course, not all these will be new media journalists.

**B**ecause of the nature of new media, these employment data don't mean living in New York or San Francisco is necessarily a requirement. Many new media journalism positions involve freelancing, and this can be done from almost anywhere in the world—wherever the story may be. One interesting example is Tamnet, the second on-line daily in Louisiana, a joint project of two community newspapers in St. Tammany Parish, a suburban parish north of New Orleans, but staffed and maintained by The News Banner in Covington. The so-called Webmaster for the site is Eric Ulken, a native of the St. Tammany Parish, but a full-time student in the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri. Ulken conducts his duties as Webmaster remotely via the Internet. Although it's not an ideal working arrangement, it works. "The most difficult part about working from several hundred miles away is coordinating efforts on anything," Ulken admits. Notably, the actual Web site is uploaded through an Internet server in Houston.

Following is a partial list of companies that were seeking journalists in late spring for their on-line products (obviously many jobs will have been filled by the time this article is published in June):

- America Online (AOL)—on-line reporter.
- The Chicago Tribune digital publishing group—two web-versed editors.
- Digital Ink, electronic publishing subsidiary of The Washington Post—experienced on-line journalist; entry-level reporter.
- Dow Jones & Company, Inc.—managing editor for a new, on-line publication.
- Fairchild Publications in NYC—on-line production assistant.
- Living Digital, an on-line cyberculture magazine published by Prodigy

Services Co.—full-time reporter to write news stories about computer and new media industry as it relates to average American computer user.

- The New York Post Interactive—on-line reporter.
- OMNI Internet, the on-line version of OMNI magazine, funded by AOL—associate editor/producer.
- OnLine Arts Magazine (Prodigy is seed sponsor)—contributing writer.
- The Online NewsHour, The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer website—two on-line journalists.
- Prodigy—on-line reporter.
- Starwave—ten editorial positions in new media.
- Time Inc. New Media—editor of the Pathfinder World Wide Web; producer; assistant producer.

**A**lthough the most fundamental skills required for a new media journalist are good reporting, writing and editing, it is essential to understand the capabilities and aesthetics of new media. This includes developing an appreciation for the interactive nature of digital, networked media and learning to think in new ways for non-linear communication. At Columbia University, students in the Graduate School of Journalism learn to report and tell stories with these new media capabilities in mind. Importantly, students learn reporting and storytelling capabilities that transcend the specific tools of today's new media environment. Visit the Graduate School of Journalism Web site at <http://www.jrn.columbia.edu/> or the Center for New Media at <http://www.cnm.columbia.edu/>.

Nevertheless, certain specific skills are useful in obtaining and succeeding in a new media job. Foremost is comfort with using a computer to go on line, in particular to navigate the Internet and the World Wide Web. Prerequisite to getting a job in new media is having and using an E-mail address, knowing how to transfer files electronically, and maintaining your own Web site. Although creating a Web site means having some facility in HTML, the development of Pagemill and other software authoring tools for the Web is

making this less critical. Increasingly, an eye for multimedia design and knowing how to launch an on-line publication are the pre-eminent requirements for landing a position in new media journalism. This includes understanding everything from Web page layout and graphics, to selection of fonts and the use of RealAudio and VDOLive for streaming video delivery, to being experienced with the Java programming language and managing on-line forums and electronic databases.

Following are some of the requirements and preferred skills noted by some new media employers in recent months:

- Two to five years experience in journalism, print or broadcast, including reporting and copy editing handling multiple feeds.
- Experience on a major on-line service and facility with HTML and World Wide Web site design.
- Strong attention to details.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, solid experience with PC and MS Office.
- Experience in business journalism
- At least two years experience as sports editor/writer in newspaper or magazine industry, fantasy sports knowledge.
- Exceptionally motivated individuals, strong interest in news, and knowledge of personal computers and World Wide Web.
- Industrious reporter who will aggressively pursue original stories, experience in computer reporting, and
- Submit resume via E-mail.

As even a cursory reading of the above requirements makes clear, the most important requirement for a position in new media is experience in reporting, writing and editing. Web experience and skill follows as a close second or third, but it is clearly subordinate to sound skill as a journalist. Many positions in new media are senior, or at least not entry level, thus giving those with solid journalism experience an upper hand, especially if they can complement their reporting

experience with HTML skill, obtained perhaps through a professional training seminar on Web design. An additional skill often valuable in new media is a specialized knowledge base in an area of coverage, such as sports, financial or fashion reporting. Knowing what works well in an on-line publication is also important, as is an eye for graphic design.

Jobs in new media are generally better paid than comparable positions in traditional news organizations. Many job postings indicate that salaries are competitive and commensurate with experience, with a typical beginning job paid in the mid-\$30,000's to \$40,000's. Last year's Columbia University Journalism graduates with a concentration in new media obtained positions in new media with starting salaries averaging roughly \$40,000, nearly double their print and broadcast counterparts. Positions the new media graduates obtained were at a wide range of companies, including New Jersey Online, News Corp/MCI, Time Warner's Pathfinder, Publius and ABC Online.

These patterns in the new media journalism marketplace are likely to shift somewhat during the coming months, as some news companies downsize their new media efforts, and we see some consolidation among on-line news operations. But the overall patterns are likely to continue: job growth, content creation emphasis and competitive salaries in new media ventures. Those entering the market should keep their focus on quality journalism and quality content, but be sure to envision the creative opportunities afforded by new media, especially non-linear, interactive storytelling and multimedia content. Those attracted by the non-linear world of cyberspace will be particularly rewarded as pioneers on the frontier of new media journalism. ■

## Judy Smith Challenge to Blacks



We must realize that if we are targeting African-Americans on the Internet, we must help develop the customer base we serve. Many of our parents and grandparents didn't have a full range of opportunities, but they worked hard to provide opportunities for us. We must serve the same role for those that follow us. And one way is to do our part in bringing each other to the technology revolution—one school, one church, one library, one community and, if we have to, one person at a time.—*Judy Smith, Senior Vice President, Corporate Communications, for the National Broadcasting Company, at the convention of Minority Opportunities in Black Entertainment, in Atlanta, March 17, 1996.*

## Duquesne Program

Duquesne University is offering master's degree concentrations in on-line publishing. To date, most of the international responses have been from Italy, Austria, Spain, Germany and England. Nationally, most inquiries are coming from working professionals who wish to retool and students looking toward a graduate education.

Website for additional journalism information: <http://the-duke.duq-duke.duq.edu/comhome.htm>

On-line registration (College View): <http://www.duq.edu/general.html>

## Electronics Is Publishers' Solution

BY TOM REGAN

What "is" the point of printing news on paper? Sorry. Didn't mean to spook you. For many journalists, editors and even a majority of publishers, this question falls into the category of "Nightmare on Fleet Street." It does for me as well. Like most news hounds, I want to believe that there will always be an England...so to speak. Which means, there will always be a significant number of people who will want to read, hold, smell, get up-close-and-personal with a real, live newspaper.

The reality is, however, that the process of printing news with ink-on-dead-trees, while hardly on its last legs, is missing the odd step these days.

Just look at the problems confronting the business—and it is a business, don't forget.

First, and foremost, there is newsprint. Iron-willed publishers, normally not given to emotional outbursts, dissolve into babbling idiots when discussing its cost. In the past few years alone, several quality newspapers have been driven onto the "out-of-business" shoals by newsprint costs.

Modernizing printing presses is another wallet-thumper. Then there's the cost of distribution. Maintaining a fleet of vehicles to get the news to the consumer is another expensive venture—which is why many publishers are looking for ways to bundle their publication with another. Exorbitant mailing costs prevent most papers from enticing out-of-town fans into a subscription. Besides, who wants to read the news a day or more late?

Electronic publishing eliminates all of these economic bogeymen.

There are no dead trees in cyberspace. The customer's printer becomes the presses, since he or she will print the articles they want to save or have friends read. Your delivery vehicle is the Internet's World Wide Web, or even E-mail. The paper always arrives on time. In fact, eager readers can often read it on line the night before (as with The New York Times On The Web). And suddenly, you can reach out and touch interested readers in every corner of your town, state or province, country...world.

No doubt these economic factors encouraged the publishers of Onni Magazine and Interactive Age to trash their print versions and rely solely on a cyberspace edition to reach the public.

Electronic publishing offers good news, and bad news, for

the newsroom grunts who actually fill a "paper" with what counts every day. In cyberspace, a paper's most important asset suddenly becomes the people who work for it. No longer will delivery trucks, printing presses, or even buildings be what matters most to the corporate bottom line. Talented writers, artists and editors will make or break an on-line publication—and should be remunerated appropriately for their contributions. After all, with so many papers so easily available in cyberspace, quality will be what brings readers back time after time.

On the other hand, as far-sighted journalists continue to embrace on-line publishing, some newsroom jobs will be lost.

While the ability to write is the most important qualification for a journalist, it's not enough any more—considering the number of good writers on the job market. Journalists who don't know about computer-assisted reporting, or how to surf the net, or who are reluctant to engage in the interactivity required in the on-line world will find it more and more difficult to find—or hold—a job.

That's hard news at a time when so many jobs are being lost. Fortunately, electronic publishing is still in its infancy—more than enough time for a smart journalist to learn the necessary skills.

The arguments against publishing only in cyberspace have a "but we've always done it the other way" quality to them. We cling to the printed page like religious zealots cling to a stone idol. Yet it's really a matter of perception more than anything else. As the jump from the written page to printed page enabled writers to reach a larger audience, the jump from the printed page to the World Wide Web page once again opens new opportunities...in spite of our best efforts to ignore them.

Twenty-five years ago, my late father, a telecommunications expert, said one day I would read my newspaper on a TV screen. I laughed at him and called him crazy.

Sometimes, at night, I swear I hear my Dad saying "I hate to say it but..." If our industry is smart, maybe it won't have to listen to the ghosts of its past saying, "I told you so." ■

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*Tom Regan is the Managing Editor of The Christian Science Monitor's On-line Edition. Tom also writes about the Internet and on-line publishing for The Halifax Daily News and Nando.net's on-line site. You can find Tom's homepage at <http://www1.usa.com/~regan/Hometom.html>.*

## *It's Time to Tell the Bloody Truth*

BY LORIE CONWAY

Only 24 years ago the Boston Athletic Association allowed the first woman to run officially in the Boston Marathon. Until then, women were either thrown off the course or elbowed out of the way by male runners. On April 15 of this year, during the running of the 100th Marathon, Uta Pippig, the first woman to cross the finish line, had menstrual blood and diarrhea running down her legs.

While the crowd gathered in Copley Square roared their support, male commentators on radio and TV were, uncharacteristically, tongue-tied. Ironically, the only person to graphically describe what was happening on live TV was commentator Katherine Switzer. "Look, there's been a history of diarrhea in marathons, for any world class competitor knows it happens," Switzer said. "You just don't worry about it. You've got a race to run." There was no mention of bleeding. It was "diarrhea" that surprised people and that announcers picked up on. During the 1967 Marathon, it was Switzer who had registered to run as K. Switzer but had her number ripped off her chest while running past a BAA official who discovered she was a woman.

During the 100th Marathon, it was apparent to hundreds of thousands of spectators, watching the race on TV and in person, that Pippig, the winner of the last two Boston Marathons, was in trouble. Gone was the playful demeanor she was known for; replacing it was a face wrenched in pain and legs covered with blood. "Physical problems and diarrhea," said some commentators. Others stopped at the phrase "physical problems," not wanting to utter the word diarrhea on live television. Meanwhile, at water stops, Pippig



Tom Hiron/The Boston Globe

had to worry not only about overtaking Kenyan Tegla Loroupe, but also about maintaining her dignity. She explained at the post-race news conference, "I

*When Lorie Conway, Nieman Fellow 1994, is not running marathons or producing television out of Boston, she's trying to keep up with her nine-year old son, Max, on rollerblades.*

used a lot of water around me so that I look better and also for my legs that I could clean up a bit." At one point, she shooed the cameraman in the truck ahead of her away and told him to stop filming her.

So, how was Pippig's victorious battle of mind over body, at "that time of the month," covered in the press the day after? Well, as can be expected of certain sophomoric radio talk show hosts, it was open season for bad taste. For others, even male sportswriters who couldn't get beyond the description "female problems," it was the beginning of a discussion on a topic that was long overdue.

The Boston Globe's Dan Shaughnessy wrote: "There is no delicate way to put this. Pippig had female issues at the worst possible time. She was in pain. She was a mess. And she thought about dropping out of the race." He left it to Pippig to say the real reason, which she stated shyly but openly at the post-race press conference.

"I had some problems with my period." Period. A word she could say but few others could. Another Globe sportswriter, Joe Burris, almost got it right. He wrote, "Pippig, who had nearly been forced out of the race by menstrual cramps and diarrhea, stormed past Loroupe at the marker and opened a lead of 200 yards en route to a stunning triumph."



The Boston Herald captioned a front-page finish-line photo with "...overcoming cramps," while articles inside got a bit more detailed. Michael Gee wrote, "There were few smiles from Pippig. She ran the course in visible pain and disarray, her body going dysfunctional when she needed it most." Then he goes on to describe the scene at the water stops. "Pippig was stopping at water stations not to drink, but to freshen up. Distance running, like childbirth, isn't exactly a dainty process." Another Herald writer, Stephannie Tunnera, wrote that Pippig was "battling stomach pain," in an article that had "Cramps End Strong Run," as the headline.

It was the next day, however, in a Boston Globe column written by Eileen McNamara (Nieman Fellow 1988), that it all came together. Titled "Uta's victory a female thing," McNamara got up close and personal about the issue that was on display for all to see but had yet to be truly discussed. McNamara said it was the boorish behavior of talk radio hosts that motivated her to bring the discussion out of the ladies room and into the newspaper. "The talk radio was misogynistic and disgusting. I felt it was about time." She wrote: "When Pippig grabbed that water bottle to clean her legs, there were all of our private female moments made starkly public. That time you picked the wrong day to wear a white skirt. That time you had to back out of a dining room." McNamara went on, "Her victory was sweet as it was messy. Many men just saw the mess.... They like their women athletes pretty, perky and photogenic. Uta Pippig has always been that. On Monday, though, those men had to confront the fact that this extraordinary athlete is no Marathon Barbie; she's a real flesh and blood woman."

The roar of reaction to Eileen McNamara's column was almost as loud as when Uta crossed the finish line. Across breakfast tables, computers and water coolers, an ensuing discussion raged. This time, it was not split by gender. "How dare you?" wrote one grandmother. "It was unnecessary and I'm deeply offended by it."

Another woman complained in a let-

ter to the editor: "I am not interested in reading about blood over breakfast." Perhaps for that reader the usual stories of murder and mayhem is acceptable but not the taboo of menstrual blood. McNamara was flooded with calls, letters and E-mail. "The response was huge, overwhelming," she said. "Mostly from women who felt at long last someone was saying what they were thinking. One woman posted the article on line on a bulletin board." And then there were the responses from men. One response still has McNamara shaking her head. "John Doe" wrote, "I hope your son grows up to hate you as much as you hate me and my son." Or the one caller who wanted to know, "What's your problem, you feminazi?"

On the television side, most sports anchors sidestepped the issue with phrases like "menstrual cramps and severe diarrhea." Except David Robichaud of WBZ, who was assigned to report a story on "Pippig as role model." But by the time he had completed several random man on the street interviews, the real issue people wanted to talk about was how Pippig overcame both the pain and stigma of her period. And McNamara's column in support of her. When it came time to write his script, Robichaud asked his female executive producer "how to put it." "She told me to say what it really was, menstrual bleeding. So I did, live on the 6 o'clock news. I'm a hero to all the women in the newsroom." Not bad for a reporter who just started reporting in January!

For Switzer the major point of Pippig's ordeal was this: "She's overcome incredible adversity. This is wonderful for women to show that women can go through considerable distress and anguish like this and emerge as heroes."

Next year, I've been asked to do live commentating from the lead women's truck during the 101st Boston Marathon. Having just completed my ninth marathon during the 100th, I accepted the opportunity without a moments hesitation. I'm more than happy to ride the next one out. But what if someone in the pack happens to suffer the same indignities that befell Pippig? Will I be

able to talk about it on live television? Yes, although I think I will be armed with research about the effects of running on women's periods and be ready to put some facts behind the graphic video. Facts such as those found in one recent study that showed one in every five serious runners is amenorrheic—they don't menstruate. And in another study, on elite runners like Pippig, half were found to be "period free."

Although the direct cause is still unknown, many doctors link intense training, low body fat, and subsequent loss of estrogen to losing periods. So why did an elite runner like Uta Pippig, with very little body fat, end up bleeding so profusely? According to her coach, the pressure of winning the 100th intensified the usual pre-race stress and may have contributed to her difficulties. Medical tests done on Pippig after the race were inconclusive. But whatever the reasons, her victory over severe cramps and bleeding challenged the stigma of periods and performance.

The ensuing coverage, while uncomfortable for some, is about a fact of life for all women, those who wear a laurel wreath and those who don't. And it's time we start reporting it as such. ■

## Letter

### Radio Jamming

To the Editor:

Support for the supposedly anathema idea of jamming radio stations, even in extreme situations, and of entrusting the United Nations to decide when this is appropriate is immensely disturbing ("Should There Be 'Propaganda for Peace?,'" Nieman Reports, Spring 1996). As has been said, "There always is a good excuse for tinkering with our liberties." Once started, where does it end?

Dana Bullen  
Executive Director  
World Press Freedom  
Committee

# Two Publications Battle for Congress's Eyes

BY BILL EATON

Inside the Washington political village called Capitol Hill, a new weekly publication, born on the eve of the Republicans' landslide triumph in the 1994 elections, is challenging Roll Call, the traditional community paper devoted to politics and personalities. Their lively competition has made Congress more accountable and the Capitol's elite readership better informed.

For many years, Congressional Quarterly has been a solid source of reliable information on policy issues, details of legislation and voting records. It now has a daily newsletter, called Congressional Monitor, that provides scheduling information and reporting on day-to-day developments in the legislative process. Similarly, National Journal, a small-circulation weekly, devotes serious attention to Congress. It also has a Monday-Friday publication—Congress Daily—that is sent by fax to Capitol Hill offices each afternoon, supplemented by a printed version each weekday morning.

Now, adding to all this reading matter, which only political junkies could absorb, another publication has found a following. The brash newcomer is The Hill, a bright tabloid that defied the odds to take on the well-entrenched Roll Call and apparently has carved out a niche for itself in a relatively short time.

Roll Call was started in 1955 by Sid Yudain, a former Congressional staff aide. For many years it acted more like a friendly puppy than a watchdog in its dealings with members of the House and Senate. Nina Totenberg, the National Public Radio legal affairs reporter, recalled that she was the only editorial employee of Roll Call in 1968. "I wrote everything," she said. "Sid was the boss and his sister sold the ads."

When financier Arthur Levitt acquired Roll Call in 1986, he expanded the staff and hired James Glassman, an experienced journalist, to run the editorial side. It quickly became a must-read for members of Congress and their staffs.

As new reporters were hired to scrutinize lawmakers more aggressively, Roll Call in 1989 began publishing twice weekly, on Mondays and Thursdays, and became more like a mainstream newspaper in its approach to Capitol Hill. Two years later, reporter Timothy Burger broke the House bank scandal that led to the unplanned departure of many lawmakers who over-indulged in overdrafts at a bank that never said no.

In 1993, when Levitt was appointed chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, he sold Roll Call for a reported \$14 million to The Economist, the British newsmagazine, which still owns it.

The Hill was launched on Sept. 21, 1994 by News Communication, Inc., a New York publishing firm headed by Jerry Finklestein, who selected veteran New York Times correspondent Martin Tolchin as publisher. In one of the more rapid upward movements in journalism history, Tolchin left his reporter's role—and the task of union shop steward in The Times's Washington bureau—to become a newspaper publisher and boss of a staff of 35.

"We benefited from the Gingrich revolution," Tolchin recalled in an interview. "Enormously benefited."

Battles over legislation in 1995, he said, led to a wave of advocacy advertising in The Hill by telecommunications companies, health care firms and others pushing an "issue du jour" to capture congressional attention. It helped the new company to show a profit for the first time in May, 1995, according to

Tolchin, although he acknowledged that The Hill overall does not appear to be breaking even because of red-ink spells when Congress is not in session.

Roll Call executives said The Hill is not cutting into their business. "We're very much in the black—very profitable," said Executive Editor Morton Kondracke.

The Hill followed a pattern set earlier by Roll Call, hiring young reporters with little experience at relatively low salaries. Even so, the new paper came up with some well-known names. Deborah Kalb, the daughter of former television correspondent Marvin Kalb, and Doug Obey, son of Rep. David



*William J. Eaton, who won a Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting in 1970 while a member of the Washington Bureau of The Chicago Daily News, is the Curator of the Humphrey Journalism Fellowship Program at the University of Maryland. He also worked in Washington for United Press International, Knight-Ridder and The Los Angeles Times. His overseas experience included tours as Moscow and New Delhi Bureau Chiefs for The Times. He is a 1963 Nieman Fellow.*

Obey (D-Wis.) brought two familiar surnames to the staff. Since then, Deborah Kalb has gone to work for Congressional Quarterly.

Kondracke said in an interview that his staff reporters were once beginners but have become Capitol Hill veterans in the past decade. Susan B. Glasser, who also is an executive editor of the paper, added: "It's a hometown paper [but] we have expanded that mission to include a lot of hard-hitting investigative reporting." Kondracke added: "Tough love. When somebody is screwing up, we rap 'em."

Roll Call's stories on GOPAC, the fund-raising organization headed by Newt Gingrich before he became Speaker, set the pace for other news organizations. It also disclosed irregularities in Gingrich's college course. More recently, Roll Call disclosed an unusually close relationship between Rep. Bud Shuster (R-Pa.) and a transportation industry lobbyist that suggested a violation of new House gift rules.

The Hill also can boast of its detailed reports on Rep. Enid Waldholtz (R-Utah) and her tangled finances well ahead of its competition and ahead of most daily publications as well. The Hill's stories on financial irregularities involving Rep. Barbara Rose Collins (D-Mich.) helped to trigger a House Ethics committee investigation.

Both The Hill and Roll Call focus more on politics and personalities than policy issues such as a seven-year balanced budget or the fine print of appropriations bills.

"There are few budget stories in either The Hill or Roll Call," said Bud Newman, a Capitol Hill reporter for Congress Daily. "They haven't taken away from what we do in terms of policy-related stories."

Some reporters who cover Congress for major newspapers regard Roll Call and The Hill as worthwhile reading.

"I read them both," said Ed Chen of The Los Angeles Times. "It's great to have competing sources of information." Steve Gerstel of Media General News Service, a veteran congressional correspondent, agreed, saying: "They both do some good things...and they

give a lot of young reporters a chance to work."

Other Capitol Hill veterans, however, contended that Roll Call has a clear edge over its younger rival as far as comprehensive coverage and breaking news are concerned.

"Roll Call really benefits from being around a long time," said one wire service reporter who asked not to be quoted by name. "They've got some very hustling young reporters who have their fingers on the pulse of this place. The Hill has a long way to go to catch up with that."

Richard Sammon, a reporter for Congressional Monitor, added: "Some people expected The Hill to be more trailblazing than it has been. It has run a lot of profiles that are not that strong."

**R**oll Call rarely does profiles and its editors scoffed at The Hill's practice of profiling state Congressional delegations, usually in a highly favorable light.

Executives of The Hill said its content is influenced by once-a-week publication and the paper's distinctive agenda.

"We're trying to be better designed, better written, more substantive and broader," Tolchin said. He mentioned the paper's book and restaurant reviews, a variety of columnists and a crossword puzzle as features not found in Roll Call. "We try to be unpredictable."

Al Eisele, Editor of The Hill, said the writers' motto was "tight and bright," with the usual story running no more than 750 words.

Makeup of The Hill is colorful—literally. Its front page is topped by a blue masthead, color photos dominate and a bright red box highlights major stories inside the paper. The designer, Louis Silverstein, formerly worked for The New York Times. Arthur Gelb, former Managing Editor of The Times, helped with front-page makeup and what Tolchin described as "withering" critiques.

This weekly splash of color has not caused Roll Call, with its black-and-white format, to follow suit. It did spruce up its front-page design, however, to

include a front-page index.

"I don't think members of Congress need a hill version of USA Today," Glasser said of the rival's bright look.

Despite the cutting remarks, Roll Call editors carefully monitor The Hill each week. "Sometimes they have a story we wish we'd gotten first," Kondracke said. Similarly, Tolchin pays tribute to Roll Call, saying: "They do some things very, very well."

The competition assures a steady flow of readable stories on the inner workings of Congress and the questionable conduct of some lawmakers and their staff aides.

Roll Call, for example, has expanded its coverage of the most contested congressional elections, including a list of the "15 most vulnerable" House members. The paper's "casualty list" of Senators and Representatives who are not seeking re-election, resigned, died or are seeking other office, is a widely used reference.

It also has provided detailed coverage of congressional "junkets," the overseas trips that members of Congress sometimes regard as a vacation entitlement rather than a fact-finding opportunity.

The Hill, too, does its share to keep lawmakers accountable. It disclosed that Rep. Waldholtz bounced dozens of checks from the congressional credit union and contrasted Republican oratory about family values with the divorces and separations among GOP members of the House.

Both publications deal at less than arm's length with some members of Congress in advertising-related events. The Hill sponsored a forum for 300 advertisers where Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) gave a keynote address and other congressional leaders, including then-Senator Bob Packwood (R-Ore.) also appeared.

"That really helped us with our advertisers," Tolchin recalled. Asked if he felt the paper had a conflict of interest or would be obligated to the lawmakers who took part, he replied: "We thought it would be mutually beneficial...like having a politician come to your [newspaper] bureau for breakfast....I don't know. It's a fair question."

## Bonner Receives Lyons Award

For its part, Roll Call invites written contributions from Senate and House members for issue-oriented "policy briefing" sections that draw substantial advertising revenue. "It's all pretty well done in the open," Kondracke said. "We have members [of Congress] or scholars do it.... We don't have advertisers or special interests do it."

Easily the most controversial story in The Hill since its inception was a book review by Aldrich Ames, the ex-CIA agent who sold U.S. secrets to the Kremlin. The headline over the review of a spy novel by Columnist William Safire referred to "Traitor Aldrich Ames" but that did not appease the critics for allowing Ames an audience. "Federal prisoners can't take any money for their writing so the price was right," quipped Tolchin, who initiated the arrangements.

Circulation of Roll Call and The Hill is roughly the same. The Hill distributes 22,000 copies but only 1,000 of the total are paid. Roll Call editors said paid subscriptions account for 7,000 of the 20,000 copies of each issue. Considering that the majority of the papers are given away, the subscription price is a rather steep \$210 a year for 96 issues of Roll Call and \$100 a year for The Hill's weekly edition.

What of the future? Roll Call has started a World Wide Web site (<http://www.rollcall.com>) to display its ratings for House and Senate races in an Election '96 map as well as its best stories and commentary by Kondracke, political columnist Charles Cook and congressional scholar Norman Ornstein.

The Hill, still trying to consolidate its good start, may decide to mount a stiffer challenge to Roll Call. "We're thinking about twice a week," Tolchin said.

E. Michael Myers, former political editor of The Hill who left to become political correspondent for The Washington Times, said that readers are the real winners in this match-up.

"The world loves competition," Myers said. "The competition has helped Roll Call—it's much more interesting and lively.... The Hill is a maturing publication. It's got its niche and it's doing very well." ■



Curator Bill Kovach, Tom Ashbrook and Ying Chan of the 1996 Nieman Class with Raymond T. Bonner before the awards ceremony.

**R**aymond T. Bonner of The New York Times received this year's Louis M. Lyons Award for Conscience and Integrity in Journalism at ceremonies May 8.

The 1996 Class of Nieman Fellows cited Bonner for a career of fearless and independent-minded reporting. In naming Bonner, the Fellows broke with the practice of honoring reporting done in the previous year to acknowledge a body of work stretching back to the early 1980's. Bonner is the first American in 13 years to win the award, which carries a \$1,000 honorarium.

Following are remarks by Tom Ashbrook of this year's Nieman Class in making the presentation:

Each year, the Nieman Foundation honors one journalist whose work has, by example, upheld the highest standards of conscience and integrity. Among the recipients since the award was first presented in 1964 have been Edward R. Murrow of CBS and Malcolm Browne, Neil Sheehan and David Halberstam, for their reporting on Vietnam. It has gone to Max du Preez of South Africa and Gitobu Imanyara of

Kenya for their efforts on behalf of democratic change in their countries; to the journalists of Oslobodjenje for their commitment to serving the people of Sarajevo in the midst of war; to Abdelhamid Benzine, director of the Alger Republicain for his struggle to save a beleaguered journalistic outpost in North Africa. It was given last year to Olatunji Dare for his work in the face of intense pressure from the military government of Nigeria.

There can be many ingredients to great journalism. Determination, probing insight, a way with words. But the Lyons Award is specifically designed to remind us that without a foundation of integrity and the light of conscience, a reporter can overwhelm readers with information and fail to convey the truths about a story that matter most. What distinguishes the best of our work, the award tells us, is not its political savvy, its lush prose, or its access to official sanctums. It is the extent to which it is informed by these essential values.

We live these days through a blitz of information, fired at us from all manner of cable channels, web sites and satel-

lite feeds. The threats to the physical integrity and professional survival of journalists that have often moved the Nieman Fellows presenting this award remain a source of real concern. In particular, our attention was drawn this year to the plight of a brave Chinese reporter, Gao Yu, who is imprisoned by the authorities in Beijing simply for her deterred efforts to document the political decisions that govern a billion peoples' lives. We applaud her courage and determination, and we join many others in demanding her immediate release.

But even before we began to seriously consider the award we present tonight, this year's fellows had spent a lot of time thinking about the pressures against good journalism that seem to be growing in many democratic societies—the very same societies that take pride in their protection of a free press. In the American media, especially, we see significance too often taking a back seat to sensation. It's no secret that important reporting often threatens to be lost in a dazzle of image and immediacy; even the pundits themselves moan about it on their weekly talk shows. The void diminishes the quality of our national dialogue, the texture of our national life.

This year, the Nieman Foundation honors a reporter whose work over nearly two decades has infuriated, goaded and occasionally enlightened the powerful from Washington and El Salvador to Rwanda and Uzbekistan. In all of those places, and in many others, Ray Bonner has been a quiet champion of the passionate, principled journalism that we set out to find and that we celebrate here tonight.

Before the revolutions in Nicaragua and El Salvador made Latin America a mecca for aspiring young journalists, Ray Bonner had already made his way to what was perhaps the most troubled spot on the hemisphere's map. He was already not young. And if he had acquired any significant journalistic ex-hundreds of peasants there by U.S.-trained soldiers in December of 1981 remains a morality play about American policy and its consequences for

people with no hand on the levers of power.

Ray's reporting on that massacre also starred in a morality play about American journalism. Reading back over it today, his account of what he saw and heard in El Mozote sounds grimly straightforward. At the time, however, his report and that of Alma Guillermoprieto of *The Washington Post* were savaged by the Reagan administration, American conservatives and some members of the press itself as communist propaganda.

U.S. Ambassador Dean Hinton labelled him an "advocate journalist." Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Enders said publically that there was, quote "no evidence at all to confirm that government forces systematically massacred civilians in the operations zone." *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page attacked Bonner as "overly credulous." And later that same year, in a prelude to his departure from the paper, *The New York Times* shipped Ray back to the Business Desk in New York.

Although the paper said his recall had nothing to do with the prevailing ideological winds, Bonner's slapdown had a chilling effect on reporting from Central America. It was another decade before forensic confirmed what his story had said from the beginning: that a massacre of heinous proportions had taken place. Ray had it right all along, and the pattern has been repeated throughout his career: His conscience led him to a tough story. And his integrity demanded that he tell it like it was.

"Reagan administration officials tried to undermine his credibility by calling him a leftist, but they got it all wrong," says *Times* correspondent Alan Riding, who had preceded Ray in Salvador. "Ray," says Riding today, "was just an American who was indignant about what he saw. And if time has proven him right, it is precisely because he was defending universal values and not playing ideological games."

Bonner has gone on to defend universal values in distinguished, unflinching reporting from the Philippines, Africa and Eastern Europe. In a time when superficiality, economic expediency and

cynicism lap at the foundations of American journalism, Ray has continued to stand as a beacon to those who believe in the power of important stories perceived with humanity and told with honesty.

Alma Guillermoprieto, now a staff writer at *The New Yorker*, described Ray's significance this way in a letter written to the Lyons Award Committee on behalf of his nomination:

"Ray is not a youth, but he exhaust stringers half his age. He has seen enough carnage to sicken anyone, yet he is always first in line for the most terrifying assignments. He was not born to leisure, but still doesn't believe he has earned it. He is a phenomenon, as anyone realizes who has had the numbing privilege of trying to keep pace with him in the field. Those who know him a little also have learned that, ambitious as he is, ambition is not what drives him; all that energy is fuelled by principles.

“Ray deeply believes that there are good and bad ways to behave towards other human beings and that, if enough horrors are denounced and enough scoundrels are put to flight, the world will be a better place. In these postmodern times, when lethargy threatens to overtake us, great courage is required to sustain this position.

"I don't have the files handy to quote from his stories, but they are part of the historical record now. From El Salvador to Somalia, Ray Bonner has practiced journalism as a moral activity, but his impact would be negligible if his reporting were not consistently original, daring, accurate and thorough. He is, for me, the very embodiment of what integrity and conscience in journalism are all about."

Ray Bonner, the 1996 class of Nieman Fellows salute you for your steadfast adherence, in a difficult time, to the principles that most directly nourish and sustain journalism of lasting significance. We are proud to present you with the 1996 Louis M. Lyons Award. ■

# United Nations Threat to Media Freedom

*Beijing Conference on Women Encouraged Countries  
To Establish Press 'Responsibilities'*

By JANE E. KIRTLEY

Media coverage of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing last September expended plenty of ink and video film on controversies over reproductive freedom, sexual orientation and inheritance rights that kept delegates debating far into the nights. Details of the logistical problems and oppressive surveillance by Chinese police at the parallel conference in rain-soaked Huairou were also plentiful.

But another story from Beijing went largely unreported. A short but critical portion of the 150-plus-page Platform for Action attempts to define the media's responsibility to promote the United Nation's version of a brave new world of women's equality.

Several scattered paragraphs in sections dealing with topics such as health and violence contain conclusory statements purporting to establish the media's role in "contributing to" violence against women and spreading "stereotyped and demeaning images of women for narrow commercial and consumerist purposes." But it is the dozen paragraphs of Chapter IV, Section J that form the nucleus of provisions defining media "responsibilities" in advancing the Platform for Action. Despite valiant—and occasionally successful—efforts by the United States and European Union delegations to insert phrases designed to limit government interference with independent media operations, Section J remains packed with language that could pose significant threats to a free press. These include directives urging the media to establish professional guidelines and codes of conduct, drafting them with the participation of governments and women, and to adopt a "gender per-

spective" on news, including undertaking to portray women in a non-stereotyped, balanced and diverse manner.

The Platform urges governments to use the media as a "tool" to disseminate information, both for the purpose of raising awareness about the Platform for Action itself, and to promote women's rights in general. Governments are also directed to promote women's participation in the media through goals of "gender balance" in both the public and private sector.

The Platform also calls for the establishment of media watch groups to monitor media to ensure that women's concerns are "properly" reflected.

Many of these initiatives seem to have arisen from a series of seven symposiums on "Women and the Media" sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 1994, which culminated in the adoption of the Toronto Platform for Action at the final symposium held February 28 to March 3 last year and from an accompanying set of "amendments proposed for insertion in the Beijing Platform for Action" bearing UNESCO's label, but believed by some participants to have originated at the United Nations in New York.

Among other things, the "amendments" proposed by the participants in the Toronto symposium condemn the "predominantly male culture of the mainstream media," as well as the "worldwide trend towards privatization and commercialization" of the media. They call on governments to promote women's equal participation in the media, to legislate "gender-sensitive" hiring and promotion procedures and editorial policies and to develop ethical guidelines and complaint procedures including but not limited to their expe-

riences in balancing work and family responsibilities as mothers, as professionals, as managers and as entrepreneurs, to provide role models, particularly to young women."

Bracketed text stating that the media's commitment to promoting human values and dignity "is seriously lacking" was deleted, and replaced with: "The media have a great potential to promote the advancement of women and the equality of women and men by portraying women and men in a non-stereotypical, diverse and balanced manner, and by respecting the dignity



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and worth of the human person."

Meanwhile, Working Group II addressed paragraphs making reference to the media that appeared in scattered sections of the Platform for Action involving Violence and Armed Conflict. These were ultimately revised to, among other things, state that "images in the media of violence against women...including pornography, are factors contributing to the continued prevalence of such violence," and to call on governments, non-governmental organizations and the mass media, "as appropriate," to raise awareness of the responsibility of the media in promoting non-stereotyped images of women and men, as well as in eliminating patterns of media presentation that generate violence, and to encourage those responsible for media content to establish professional guidelines and codes of conduct, consistent with freedom of expression.

Governments, international organizations (including the United Nations) and non-governmental organizations are also directed to encourage the media to examine gender role stereotypes "which foster gender-based violence and inequalities" and "take measures to eliminate" them.

Several provisions not subject to negotiation in Beijing retain troubling language calling for the involvement by the media in promoting the Platform agenda. One paragraph identifies the mass media "as an educational tool" that can be used as an "instrument for government" for the advancement of women and development. Other provisions include calls for governments to mobilize media to promote a "gender perspective;" to review media policies and incentives to promote the women's rights agenda; to establish communications training programs; and to encourage media to raise awareness of the Platform for Action and to cease "exploiting" women.

Based on their comments in the Working Groups and Main Committee meetings, as well as their willingness to organize smaller contact or informal groups to negotiate particularly contentious paragraphs, the United States and European Union delegations were the most active in tempering some of

## Reporting by American Press Faulted On 'Slump' in Japanese Economy

Almost as soon as the Tokyo stock market started tumbling in the first months of 1990, the American press began writing off the Japanese economic challenge. Since then, hardly a week has gone by without some influential American magazine or newspaper declaring Japan to be in "the grip of a dire economic slump" or even to have "hit the wall."

So much for the press's version of Japan. The story of the real Japan has been different. So different, in fact, that in the fullness of time, it will provide a new focus for the American reading public's anger over a perceived decline in the American press's reliability.

The real Japan has actually been performing quite impressively in the 1990's: Japanese per-capita income at current exchange rates recently passed Switzerland's to become the world's highest. All through the 1990's corporate Japan has been investing two to three times as much per job as corporate America. And Japan's unemployment rate remains the lowest of any major industry.

Of course, not everything in the Japanese economy has been doing well. In particular economic growth has been notably sluggish by previous Japanese standards. But even here the news has not been that bad. Japan's growth in the first five years of the 1990's averaged 2.1 percent. By comparison the United States was 2.0 percent.—*Eamonn Fingleton in the February 1996 Overseas Press Club Bulletin.*

the objectionable language in the Draft Platform for Action.

The United States delegation was particularly successful in inserting language requiring that government actions be taken or mandates be issued in ways that would be "consistent with freedom of expression." The European Union often argued for the deletion of particularly onerous language but often failed to build a consensus.

Based on their comments during Working Group sessions, much of the support for the adoption of conclusory language condemning media content came from delegates from India, Iran, Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, Kenya and Zimbabwe. Delegations that expressed a willingness to permit governments to impose regulatory mechanisms, duties and obligations on the media included Chile, El Salvador, Peru, Algeria, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Non-governmental organizations, actively lobbying delegations to promote a wide variety of agendas, seemed conspicuously uninterested in the media sections of the Platform for Action. Despite the existence of more than 30 diverse NGO caucuses—which in the

early days of the conference controlled NGO access to the Working Group sessions—none seemed to devote much energy to these issues. The NGO organizers did create an ad hoc media "committee," but that group was dedicated to facilitating media coverage of NGO position papers and press conferences, and did not involve itself with the media sections of the Platform for Action. No final list of accredited NGO observers was released, but it does not appear that any free-press groups, other than the World Press Freedom Committee, were represented at the official UN conference in Beijing.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were adopted by the UN General Assembly December 8 with an expression of gratitude to the Chinese government for the facilities of the conference. Member states were urged to take action to implement the Declaration and the Platform for action.

On the final day of the conference, The Earth Times (the self-described Conference "newspaper of record") quoted Alain Modoux, director of the Communications Division of UNESCO, as stating that UNESCO plans to con-

tinue its "dialogue with the media" to promote the results of the Beijing conference. Modoux noted that two key principles endorsed by the Toronto symposium participants were incorporated into the Platform for Action: that nothing be done to jeopardize freedom of expression, and that media policies should be shaped by self-regulation and not imposed by government.

According to a position paper dated July 1995 and available in Beijing, UNESCO's strategy for improving the status of women will include initiatives to support "pluralistic and editorially independent media" and to encourage "more diversified, realistic and non-discriminatory images of women." UNESCO also plans to develop and expand the technical and professional skills and knowledge of women media professionals. It stated: "Special importance is given to favoring the access and participation of women in decision-making and in the implementation of the Toronto Platform for Action. UNESCO thereby contributes in partnership with NGO's in the development of critical thinking as well as awareness of discriminatory images that feed gender inequality. These initiatives encourage the media to give more prominence to women's priorities in the presentation and analysis of world news and aim at curbing violence in the media."

The women's media action group established after the Toronto symposium, working cooperatively with non-media NGO's, can be expected to continue to work with UNESCO to advance the Platforms for Action adopted in Toronto and Beijing. In late 1995, UNESCO's General Conference invited member states to take "appropriate measures" to promote the implementation of both Platforms.

Although vigorously denied by some at UNESCO, many observers regard these initiatives as reminiscent of proposals in the 1970's and 1980's under the rubric of the so-called "New World Information Order" and "right to communicate." The stated intent at that time was to empower the developing world by guaranteeing access to communication channels, which was

deemed so inconsistent with First Amendment principles that it contributed to the decision of the United States to withdraw from UNESCO. Today, while the articulated goal may be different, the means of achieving it are much the same.

Less than two weeks after the conclusion of the Beijing conference, the Council of the European Union had before it a resolution on "The Portrayal of Women and Men in Advertising and Media," proposed by Spain. The president of the European Newspaper Publishers Association warned that issues of censorship and being "politically correct" are knocking at the door, mobilizing our good conscience in order to shape the freedom of creation. Will we have to remove Freud from the shelves or Rubens from museums?"

On October 5, the council adopted a modified version of the resolution. It confirmed the council's "attachment to the principle of freedom of expression" and of the press, but calls upon member states to, among other things, "encourage" advertising agencies and the media to promote the study and creation of new ideas to reflect the diversity of the roles of women and men, as well as recognition of the negative effects which gender stereotypes may have on public health, and to develop voluntary self-regulatory codes.

The council's resolution is the first of many steps along the road of implementation of the Platform. Certainly within the United States—current zealotry in Congress over cyberporn and television violence notwithstanding—the direct impact of this document on the media will be minimal. But in the developing world, where terminology such as "encourage" or "suggest" has been used by governments as a license to compel compliance with a stated agenda, the Platform poses a genuine threat to an independent press.

No matter how appealing the mission, governments simply have no business "encouraging" the media to write or broadcast anything. News organizations should be loathe to cede their editorial independence to the state. But after Beijing, many may have little choice. ■



## Ted Galen Carpenter Americans First, Journalists Second

Officials tend to see the press as merely another component of an effective national security strategy, and journalists find themselves enticed and pressured into accepting that view of their role. During both world wars and much of the Cold War, many, perhaps most, of them succumbed to the fallacy that dissent did in fact undermine national security. The passing of the Cold War has not eliminated the systemic factors that condition members of the media to see themselves as Americans first and journalists second. Press coverage of the events in the Persian Gulf, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia suggests that the aspect of the Cold War mindset is still intact...

To a distressing extent, America is still geared economically, politically, and ideologically to wage a worldwide struggle against a powerful adversary. One area in which that garrison state mentality is most evident is the relationship between the press and government on defense and foreign policy issues.

Fortunately, the First Amendment was not killed in action during the many international crises of the 20th Century. But it was seriously wounded. One of the most essential tasks of the post-Cold War era is to restore it to health.—*Ted Galen Carpenter, Director of foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, in "The Captive Press."*



# *The Eastern European Media*

A Survey of the Press in the former Soviet Union



*This hot-lead line-casting machine at the printing house that publishes the newspaper New Times in the town of Tsurib, Dagestan, was built in Leningrad in 1986. It is an eloquent example of the outdated technology still used in the far corners of the former Soviet Union.*

# A Media Blizzard Overwhelms Eastern Europe

BY JOSEPHINE SCHMIDT

The "white noise" of media overload has flooded central-eastern and southeastern Europe. Newsstands in most countries are bursting with all manner of periodicals, ranging from glossy, internationally recognized titles such as *Elle*, *MacWorld*, and *Playboy* to special-interest publications like Poland's popular weekly *Pani Domu* (Lady of the House) to the Czech Republic's fortnightly *NieReport*, the magazine of the Independent Erotic Initiative. A few serious intellectually and politically oriented journals are even appearing, as the novelty of glossy photos and Western-style entertainment begins to wear thin.

To North Americans, the number of newspapers available in each country is staggering: Belarus, a country of 10 million, boasts six major newspapers; Ukraine offers its 52 million inhabitants 4,000 nationally registered periodicals—although many of them publish sporadically. Switch on the television or the radio, and the situation is much the same. One doesn't even need a satellite to pull in programs from stations throughout Europe.

On a typical evening in Bucharest, viewers with cable can choose from two national Romanian stations or watch programs from Italy, France, and Germany as well as music videos and English-language news. Hungary is home to hundreds of cable stations, although most, admittedly, have a very limited reach and offer little in the way of

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*Circulation of Argumenty i Fakti (Arguments and Facts) is said to be 3.5 million, the largest of any daily in Russia. Despite its name this tabloid devotes many pages to entertainment, including listings and television schedules.*

information, relying heavily on bootlegged films and ancient episodes of "Dallas" and "Baywatch." Drive from Plzen in the Czech Republic to Chisinau, capital of Moldova, and if your car is equipped with a good radio you won't want for company. Stations offering everything from classical music to home-grown rap fill the airwaves. As elsewhere in the world, call-ins, contests and the U.S. top 40 are ubiquitous.

Yet the dazzle of slick magazines and boulevard newspapers and the buzz of television and radio masks a sobering reality. While the public has access to greater quantities of information than ever before, some of that information is not always less biased or more politically pluralistic than what was available six years ago. In many countries, the information boom that sounded with the end of communist rule has been muffled. Governments have learned to pay lip-service to democratic values while assiduously smothering any critical or dissenting voices. As the number of periodicals, television, and radio stations in the region have grown, so have means by which governments and poli-

ticians have learned to manipulate those information outlets to their benefit.

In all but a few countries, information is still heavily controlled by those in power. In states like Ukraine and Moldova, where privatization has been slow and an economically viable media market has had no chance to develop, that concentration of power is a direct holdover from communist days: the state is still mandated to oversee most printing facilities, newsprint distribution and financing. In Ukraine, for instance, more than 50 percent of all periodicals are state-financed.

Where economic and democratic reforms have progressed more quickly and a pluralist press has attempted to take root, governments and politicians have fashioned legal means to cripple media undesirables. Favorite weapons are ambiguously worded legislation and unchecked executive powers. They are often aided by an acquiescent public that, in many instances, is grappling with the stresses of economic and social change—or, in the former Yugoslavia with the aftermath of a war—and has let the euphoric ideals that spurred the revolutions of 1989 and 1990 to fall

by the wayside. A 1995 Freedom House survey of the states of the former Soviet Union and Soviet bloc rated only the Czech Republic, Poland and the Baltic States as having a free press. In some countries, inhabitants support government control of the media: in a 1995 survey of public attitudes toward media in Central and Eastern Europe conducted by the OMRI Audience and Opinion Research department, the majority of respondents from Belarus, Bulgaria and Ukraine expressed the belief that the government should control the activities of all radio, television and print media.

**I**nformation control takes various forms. Strong-armed censorship is practiced in Belarus and Serbia, where politicians have repeatedly embargoed information or forcibly taken over or closed media outlets that oppose their views. Politicians in countries like Slovakia, Albania and Croatia favor an insidious, systematic press control enforced through legislation on financing and the type of information that journalists may make available to the public. Nearly everywhere, more covert restrictions arise from a still poorly developed understanding of the role and responsibilities of a free press in a democratic society. In addition, a still nascent advertising and business infrastructure often requires journalists to bend to the whims of their publishers.

Over the last four years, the old adage "information is power" has been most graphically demonstrated in the conflict-riddled countries of the former Yugoslavia. There, bias in the media has been cited as a powerful tool in furthering political aims and shaping public attitudes toward the conflict. Journalists and media outlets have even been mentioned as possible war crimes suspects. Although independent media—meaning non-government owned and supported—have not been eradicated from the region, the governments of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia have fashioned mouthpieces from the influential state-owned electronic media. As the general manager of Croatian Television, Ivan Parac, announced soon after

he was appointed: "I am a political person in a political position performing political tasks."

Re-interpretation, revision, or the drafting of legislation allows presidents and their governments to appoint personnel and oversee the administration of state-owned radio and television. Such moves have created a legal framework permitting politically motivated staff purges and meddling in programming.

The state-owned broadcast media in the former Yugoslavia, as in most countries, commands the widest audience; a key tool in the propaganda campaigns of communist-era governments, it still retains the greatest impact on public opinion. The stalwarts of independent media that do continue to operate reach a limited audience. In the eyes of governments, that makes them a limited threat. They could even be regarded as an asset, since governments can point to them as proof of commitment to democratic ideals and plurality. Sarajevo, for instance, now has 45 newspapers; Croatia, dozens of periodicals. But only a handful of those periodicals print regularly, and in Croatia, just a few have escaped the influence of the ruling party. Such organizations must often overcome myriad obstacles to secure the basest necessities—including phone lines, printing facilities or broadcast frequencies, and at times even access to their own premises—which further guarantees their marginality.

The urge to stifle negative or critical media coverage is certainly not unique to the countries of the former Yugoslavia—or to the countries of central-eastern and southeastern Europe. From Poland to Bulgaria, governments and politicians have tried to install sympathetic parties in influential media posts—with varying success. Poland's former president, Lech Walesa, dismissed four members of the country's nine-member National Radio and Television Council, which grants broadcast licenses, over two years. He had appointed several of the dismissed members himself, including a council chairman who was removed after granting a license to a firm of which the president disapproved. By June 1995, parliament,

which appoints six council members, amended the broadcast law and rescinded the president's right to appoint council chairmen. Walesa vetoed the bill, but his veto was overruled.

**S**erbia's President Slobodan Milosevic has been much more successful in his grabs for power over the media, in part because Serbia lacks effective checks on executive authority. Milosevic has made control of the state-owned media and harassment of the independent media a hallmark of his rule. Playing on the nationalistic fervor of a newly independent nation (and one willing to assert its independence through violent conflict), he has portrayed opposition media organizations as "traitors to Serbian national interests"—a tactic that politicians from Slovakia to Romania have also used. Serbian journalists critical of government policies have been ousted from their jobs and legal pretexts have been found to close publications and other organizations on the ground of illegal incorporation or through levying dizzying taxes and other fees. Veran Matic, editor-in-chief of Radio B-92, the country's most widely known independent radio station—which still broadcasts with the assistance of international sponsors and under constant government scrutiny—is blunt in assessing the Serbian media situation: "Government authorities are waging a campaign to strangle the independent media." Another Serbian journalist characterized 1995 as "the darkest year for free media in a political, economic, and legal sense."

This year may not be much better. Even at a time when Serbia has been trying to curry Western favor in the wake of the Dayton agreement, blatant attacks on the independent media have continued. In February, the government forcibly closed Studio 92, the television station affiliated with Radio B-92, contending that it was illegally incorporated. That contention was based on ambiguously worded legislation dating from 1990 concerning the establishment of independent media organizations.

The closure came just days before a

meeting of opposition parties was scheduled to be held—an event that would have likely been covered by Studio 92 and not by the state media—and at the beginning of a year when elections could decide the fate of the ruling Socialist Party of Serbia. Despite public protests, the station has been placed under the aegis of the Belgrade municipal authorities. The new management, with a new staff, has focused programming on sports and culture.

In late February, the Serbian government made another grab to silence independent media by closing the Open Society Institute, financed by philanthropist George Soros. Closed on the same ground as Studio 92, the Institute had been involved in numerous humanitarian aid projects and supported small, independent periodicals. Sonia Licht, director of the Institute, has pledged to re-incorporate the organization under a different name.

A similar tactic was used to shut down the widely circulated, independent opposition-oriented daily *Borba*. In December 1994, after winning a court case on the basis that *Borba* was illegally incorporated, the government launched a daily under the same logo and with the same format. In January 1995, the independent *Borba* reincorporated as *Nasa Borba* ("Our Struggle") and has been publishing since then with assistance from international and domestic sponsors that range from the International Federation of Journalists to the Independent Union of Metalworkers of Serbia. *Nasa Borba*, along with other independent media, has weathered continued government attacks in the form of severed phone and fax lines, cut links to international press agencies, and blocked entry to the paper's offices.

Such blatant repression in the name of political control has been closely matched by Belarusian President Alaksander Lukashenka. His election in 1994 ushered in increased censorship and attempts to win nearly total control over the country's media. He has not been coy about his intentions, stating early in 1995 that the "time limit" for the independent mass media had

ended. In December 1994, Lukashenka's attitude toward the press was literally depicted in black and white terms: many newspapers appeared with blank areas on their front pages where articles on a parliament speech alleging corruption in the president's administration had been scheduled to run. State-financed papers were banned from printing the article, and most non-state owned papers were not permitted to publish at all.

Since most papers—state and independently owned—are printed by the Belarusian Publishing House, which is overseen by the presidents' office, the president effectively controls the dissemination of news. He also exerts control over the independent broadcast media, as illustrated during the 1995 parliamentary elections. During the campaign, the independent television station Channel 18 was closed by the government, allegedly because technical work had to be done on its receiver. The closure—and suspension of the station's license—occurred shortly after its staff had applied for permission to cover the elections. The new version of the station's license sports a govern-

ment-inserted clause banning political programming.

Michail Doroshevich of the Mass Media Center of Belarus, an internationally financed group dedicated to fostering a free press, argues that Lukashenka's actions amount to a "ban on printing and distributing disobedient independent newspapers." Three independent newspapers that were forbidden from renewing their contracts with the Belarusian Publishing House last year now print in Lithuania, but distribution remains a problem, as the postal service will not deliver them.

Elsewhere, governments have learned to hijack legislation to increase their leverage over the independent media. Although their tactics may be less forthright and therefore appear less damaging than those used in Serbia and Belarus, over time they can be equally effective in limiting the range of information available to the public and squelching dissent or criticism. Such moves limit any real dialogue within the media, creating an eerily soto-voce information system, reminiscent of that available under communist rule. Laws covering privatization of government-



*Girlie magazines being sold at an outdoor kiosk in Budapest. Risqué publications are widely available throughout Eastern Europe.*

# KOHA JONE

*Koha Jone (Our Times) is published in Tirana, Albania, and has a reputation as a credible source for news.*

owned electronic media and the financing and taxation of non-government media outlets are favorite tools.

Hungary's six-year battle over the privatization of electronic media is one example. Dubbed the "media war" by Hungarians, arguments over how to ensure state-owned television and radio's freedom from government control effectively allowed those mediums to become tools in the hands of the three governments that ruled the country during the six years of indecision. The argument centered over whether the media should, as public service institutions, further the goals of the ruling parties or whether it should be completely independent of government influence even though it was state-financed. The final law, passed in December, wrests control of television from the ruling and opposition parties by appointing public foundations to oversee the three state-financed television stations and slating one for privatization.

Neither of Slovakia's two national television stations has been privatized, a fate that seems unlikely to change under Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar's government. Since returning to power in late 1994, Meciar has launched a systematic attack on unsympathetic media and journalists, using government-controlled and appointed commissions and new and re-interpreted legislation.

One of his first moves was to oust the director of Slovak Television and replace him with the nationalistically minded head of the Association of Slovak Journalists, Jozef Darmo, who declared that, according to the constitution, "television cannot continue to be used to offend the nation...[or] national

institutions." He then canceled three of STV's most popular programs, all of which were political satires. Public protests throughout the country had seemingly little impact. State radio and television were thoroughly purged of politically undesirable personnel.

Early this year, the Slovak government threatened to revoke the local broadcast license for Radio Free Europe, which traditionally broadcasts to countries with a dearth of fact-based, unbiased information sources. The TV Broadcasting Council, a watchdog government organization founded and tightly controlled by Meciar, asserted that RFE had not made "a single positive comment" about Slovakia during two months of broadcasting.

Comprehensive draft legislation placing control of the press firmly in the government's palm appeared in mid-March, when the legislative council approved the 14th draft of a media bill. That draft bill bars the dissemination of information that offends Slovakia "in a hidden or open way," forces journalists to disclose all sources, and requires periodicals to publish readers' responses to articles that directly affect them—a clause that could force papers to double in size, making printing and distribution costs soar.

A comprehensive media law is still a long way off for Bulgarian journalists, but the government has found ways to hobble the media with existing legislation. In what the editor of one of the country's largest papers proclaimed "a threat to the press and a brutal violation of freedom of speech," two reporters from non-government papers were charged with libel and jailed after writing that a police investigator had been fired from his job for corruption. Journalists from ruling party papers who

filed nearly identical stories were not arrested.

Albanian journalists from opposition papers are suffering similar fates. *Koha Jone*, the country's largest opposition paper, had several of its delivery vehicles impounded in February, allegedly because government investigators suspected the organization of accepting funding from the Serbian secret service. Later that month, more vehicles were impounded and a number of staff members were detained after a bomb exploded in downtown Tirana. Police investigators claimed that the staff members resembled sketches of the bombing suspects.

After the February incidents, the paper, part of a six-paper publishing conglomerate, stopped printing several titles. Late last year, a journalist for another opposition paper was fined the equivalent of \$300 for inciting terrorism: he had written an article suggesting that a car-bomb attack similar to the October attempt on the Macedonian president's life could occur in Albania.

Related methods of eroding the financial and legal basis for an independent, unbiased media abound throughout the region. In what many saw as the Croatian government's attempt to squelch the country's remaining remnants of a free press, the Culture Ministry in 1994 levied a stiff pornography tax on the satirical Split newspaper *Feral Tribune*. The paper, which is no racier than some periodicals supported by government-coalition parties, has been a sharp critic of the ruling HDZ and President Franjo Tudjman. The Croatian Constitutional Court rescinded the government-imposed tax, but the paper has been subject to ongoing harassment.

In Romania, a draft law passed by the upper parliament chamber declares that citizens must protect state and professional secrets as a "legal obligation and a civic duty [and] an expression of loyalty to their country." Critics assert that the law could seriously restrict free speech and the media's right to publish information. Romanian journalists are also protesting legislation allowing punishment for "defamation of the Romanian nation." Politicians have filed numerous libel suits against media organizations. Ukrainian journalists are subject to similar suits, thanks to a recent law on libel and slander.

Article 19 of the UN International Convention on Civil Rights guarantees freedom of expression and the "freedom to search for, receive, and share information and ideas without limits." The Council of Europe—to which most central and east European nations belong—includes a similar clause in Article 10 of the European Convention. (Although that clause has been widely criticized for an accompanying list of restrictions.) The premise of an independent media based on open access to and dissemination of information is widely espoused throughout the region. But those who want to defend that premise are increasingly shackled by strict legislation and strong executive control.

The future of independent media in central and eastern Europe is not in jeopardy. In nearly every country, one can find options to state-controlled information if one knows where and when to look. Alternatives to state-owned news services—often the main information source for all but the wealthiest media—have a firm hold in Moldova (BASA-press, Infotag), the former Yugoslavia (AIM, Montefax, BETA, ONASA), Ukraine (UNIAR) and elsewhere.

From Estonia, where an enraged media community successfully blocked legislation that would have required media organizations with any foreign investment to be licensed and regulated by the government, to Bulgaria, where the president joined journalists in protesting government interference in national radio programming, there is

## *Journalism Centers in Fifth Year of Help*

For five years, the Centers for Independent Journalism have been bringing leading American journalists to Eastern Europe in an effort to strengthen and improve the independent media in those emerging democracies. The first center opened in Prague in 1992, and there are now four others: Bratislava and Kosice, Slovakia, Bucharest and Budapest.

The centers provide training, expert consultants and advisers to journalists in these countries. The centers are used not only by Czech, Slovak, Romanian and Hungarian journalists, but also by journalists from the rest of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The centers are similar in facilities and programs offered. Each is equipped with large conference rooms for classes and exhibitions, mock newsrooms, modern libraries fully equipped with CD-ROMs and on-line access to databases, sponsored by the Freedom Forum, and access to radio and television studios for production training. Most importantly, each is staffed with nationals who provide the local expertise and contacts needed to ensure the programs have reasonable and appropriate goals and that the target audience is reached.

Trainers in the centers offer on-going core teaching programs aimed at young professionals already working for publications and broadcast stations. There are 12-week intensive courses in fundamental journalism, writing, newsgathering and ethics, most of them taught by experienced Western and Western-trained journalists. In many cases, Western journalists team with local journalists to teach the courses. The centers offer courses in business and environmental reporting, and business administration. They also provide custom training for a particular center; for example, in Bratislava, a special program to train

economics graduate students in journalism was implemented.

a demonstrated solidarity with and commitment to a free press. Independent periodicals continue to exist even under harsh conditions, as proved by Serbia's *Vreme*, Slovakia's *Sme* and *Narodna Obrada*, and Belarus's *Svaboa*. But often, information from independent sources is not freely and widely available as an alternative to government-sanctioned or entertainment-based media and plays a scant role in contributing to public debate and opinion.

Journalists and their audiences now have the task of persuading politicians and others in positions of power that an independent, unfettered media is crucial to the further economic and civic development of their nations. It has been a battle that has been fought by people of many nations. Nearly three and a half centuries ago, Milton argued for press freedom in his *Areopagitica* by stating, "Though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously, by licensing and prohibiting, to misdoubt her strength." The plea did not fall on completely deaf ears: 50 years later, England banned censorship through licensing and registration. ■

Many of the trainers are volunteers; the rest are experts willing to work for a fraction of their usual fees. They include professors from the University of Missouri and Columbia University schools of Journalism, staff members of *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Time* magazine and *60 Minutes*, producers from CBS, correspondents from CNN and the BBC, and successful publishers and editors from around the country. The training is long-term, rather than the "fly-in, fly-out" arrangements. These volunteers come and stay, often for several months, or for full college terms. While most of them are American or Western European, the journalistic principals they stress are universal—fact-based reporting, fairness, double-checking, responsibility. In short, professionalism.

The centers also work to improve communication within Eastern Europe by providing basic access to information. The Freedom Forum News libraries, connected to the world by Internet, provide a first step. Perhaps more important is access to information from within their own countries. Until now, this information did not exist. The centers are working with local publications to build electronic databases in the local languages.

Support comes from contributions from approximately 20 foundations and individuals. ■

*Nancy N.W. Ward, Managing Director, The Independent Journalism Foundation.*

# Russian Media at Risk in Election

BY ALEXANDER PUMPYANSKY

Several memorable dates mark the birth and development of the free Russian press. At a meeting of the Communist Party Central Committee in March 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev took power as general secretary of the ruling party and leader of the Soviet Union. The new party czar, strikingly different from his predecessors with his lively demeanor and ability to talk on his feet, launched the following month his new national program defined by the words, "glasnost" and "perestroika."

Perestroika was well understood—it translates as "reconstruction"—and it led to reforming the failed, centrally planned economy. But "glasnost" could not be translated into any foreign language and had a mysterious tone in Russian. By June 1990, when the new Law on the Freedom of the Press was approved, and in August, when official censorship was ended, it became clear: glasnost meant freedom of the press.

We soon learned two important lessons from this new freedom. While we were free to report and publish as we wished, we were also free to fail in economic terms. In August 1991, during the brief but frightening attempted coup against Gorbachev, we discovered that we could quickly lose our legal freedom. Thus, it was August 1991 that proved to be the true birthday of Russian press freedom. We knew then that we could challenge repressive power and defend social and press freedom as well.

Now, five years later, the June presidential election presents the Russian press with a new challenge as the Communist Party poses a serious threat to unseat Boris Yeltsin, who ended its controlling position in the country's political, social and cultural life. The election itself is an immense challenge

to journalists, with several candidates registering in public opinion polls and "none of the above"—a ballot choice—drawing support of the electorate.

The election season offers a good opportunity to measure the changes that have taken place among the Russian media in five years. There are three clear trends: home television has become the main supplier of news and entertainment for most people; the daily circulation of all periodicals has fallen from some 96 million copies in 1990 to an estimated 8 million in 1994; and the position of the Moscow-based press has declined dramatically, with half of the reading population preferring local papers.

The contemporary media zoo includes all kinds of publications, including fascist and monarchist leaflets, communist and independent private papers and magazines. Compared with the seven decades when all public media were controlled by the central government and Communist Party, the scene is still bewildering to many.

Local publishers of *Argumenti* and *Fakti* and *Kommersant* have successfully aimed their publications at the emerging middle class and the "new Russians." Most, a major local financial house, developed the new, successful daily *Sevodaya* that appeals to similar readers. Most is also the major investor in independent television (NTV) and controls *Radio Echo*, one of the most important of a dozen independent new radio outlets.

There has been little foreign investment in Russian media except for *The Moscow Times*, created with money from the Netherlands and aimed at foreigners, and the Russian editions of *Penthouse* and *Playboy*. The popular German magazine, *Bunte Illustrierte*,

reportedly financed the revamped *Ogonyok*, a magazine aimed at housewives.

*Radio Echo*, *Ogonyok* and *The Moscow News*, a one-time propaganda sheet now owned by its staff and published in English and Russian, have special standing because they were pioneers in developing the era of glasnost and kept their independence during the abortive coup against Gorbachev.

The Russian non-communist press, more and more clearly, falls into two categories: quality and popular. This does not mean that the quality papers are elitist and the others shallow. It does mean that popular periodicals pursue commercial success more openly, which dictates changes in their



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content. Naturally, the degrees of depth and impartiality is different in these two categories. It is much more difficult to mistake an observer's opinion for information about events in quality periodicals.

According to a poll conducted among journalists by the Moscow Press Center and the foreign journalists club, *Izvestia*, once the afternoon mouthpiece of the Soviet government and now privately owned with a circulation of 700,000, was rated the best newspaper. Then came *Moscow News* (150,000), a weekly, and *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (50,000), a paper established with the beginning of glasnost.

Oddly, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (Independent Gazette), which is filled with a wide assortment of opinion articles, was unanimously praised by foreign journalists for its "pluralism and independence" while Russian journalists were unanimously skeptical about its "omnivorous character and exhibitionism." Among magazines, the weekly *Novoe Vremya* (25,000) was the clear winner.

Another class of publications has scored great success with the mass audience. The weekly *Argumenti i Fakti* claims a circulation of 3.5 million in various editions. *MK*, previously *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, a daily paper for young Communists, reaches 1 million customers with a mixture of sensationalism and scandal. Another daily aimed at young readers, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, puts its audience at 1.5 million for its mixture of hot politics, big names, sex and scandal. All circulation figures are suspect since they are produced by the publications themselves.

The free press in Russia is developing in conditions that are far from favorable. Russia's political system is still far behind Western standards. The market resembles a flea-market much more than it does a social market system. The situation with the press is different. The radical transformation it has gone through has brought it closer to Western standards than the political and economic systems.

In communist times, the press was



*Racing Toward Power:* This cartoon, published in *Zafira*, the nationalist-patriotic newspaper, pictures Boris Yeltsin as an unstoppable locomotive, spurred on by Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, roaring down the tracks over ties made of corpses of people killed by the Yeltsin reforms. To the right is a depiction of Russia burning in which Christians and Chechen Muslims, alike, are going up in smoke.

either an instrument of propaganda or, at best and in exceptional cases, an exercise in Aesopian language. The contemporary Russian media compete in obtaining news, journalistic investigations, political analyses and criticism of the ruling authorities, as their Western colleagues do.

The government owns and operates a couple of newspapers, but their role in public life is negligible. The official government newspaper, *Rosсыskaya Gazeta* (500,000 copies), is interesting only because it publishes authentic texts of new laws and decrees. The government-owned *Itar-Tass*, successor to *Tass*, is useful for hard news as well as for the official statements it carries. The service has improved greatly because of competition from foreign news agencies and *Interfax*, the invaluable, inde-

pendent news service established with glasnost.

While opinions about the independent publications differ widely, there is one unquestioned fact. The role and position of each paper and magazine is determined not by its association with a particular power base but by its intimate ties with the reading public. This poses the question that challenges Russian journalists—what will be the impact of the presidential election, especially if the communist candidate, Gennady Zyuganov, wins on June 16?

Zyuganov likes to complain that all media, especially TV, are controlled by the present government. In fact, three leaders of the main channels including Igor Malashenko, head of independent NTV, are members of Yeltsin's campaign staff.



At the same time, Zyuganov boasts that 130 publications are mouthpieces of the Communist Party. Of course, this is far from its former omnipotence when Pravda was the national voice of the ruling party and had the income and circulation of 10 million copies. Pravda today claims a circulation of 250,000 while the more aggressive, "popular" Sovetskaya Rossiya has double that number and Zavtra, "the newspaper of spiritual opposition," claims 100,000.

Opposition communist-style has its own advantages including freedom from moral restrictions in the choice of means to use that freedom. The content of these papers is a bouquet of nostalgically communist, overtly nationalist and, more importantly, militantly anti-liberal ideas and programs. In style, it is a Molotov cocktail of impertinent propaganda and new freedom of expression that manifests itself mainly in complete unceremoniousness with regard to opponents and facts. The communist press addresses exclusively those embittered and discontented and appeals to emotions and instincts rather than to reason.

**T**he television scene is different. The main broadcasting channels are still state-owned, but the state, with its thin budget and exorbitant expenditures, is unable to finance them and must turn for support to private capital, which uses this leverage to impose control on these channels. In addition, the paradigm of total propaganda has long since been destroyed. The state-controlled TV, with its commercial influences, reflects a mixture of invisible private interests and heterogeneous political and creative perspectives. No one wants to appear to the TV audience like a simple mouthpiece of official ideas. This was especially true in coverage of the war in Chechnya.

More importantly, competition has appeared in the form of independent channels of which NTV offers the best news and entertainment programs.

Just over five years ago, the communist regime still seemed monolithic and strong as a granite rock. This was so as long as the press remained monolithic, controlled by the state and ruling party. However, as soon as two weeklies vio-

lated this inviolable rule, the system of propaganda began to collapse. Thus began the avalanche. Following Moscow News and Ogonyok, other periodicals joined the new and daring play: "Let's call things their names," apprehensively at first, but more and more resolutely afterwards. To begin with, facts of the remote past were published.

The paradox was that much had been known already in some way or other: the Great Terror, Stalin's purges, the deportation of peoples; the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact; which country began the Korean War, what Soviet troops were doing in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968. But far from everything, and not to everybody. This was forbidden knowledge and it was to be concealed. Suddenly the mystery of mysteries began to be disclosed. You could read about it freely and discuss it with your neighbor without fear of being reported to the KGB.

Glasnost was the disclosure not of unknown, but of officially denied facts and events. A highly subversive thing, as it proved to be. It was strange under early glasnost when major news was information about what happened 70, 50 or 25 years ago. Nevertheless, in a closed society such publications produced an explosive effect: just to think what really took place in the world!

The press began to command great influence on people. It did not simply inform, it referred to people whose names had long been verboten, rehabilitated lost souls. It freed facts and thoughts that had been kept captive for decades. It liberated society's mentality. Nothing remained of communist mythology after five years. It was a revolution—or a counterrevolution—of consciousness. It was the result of glasnost, no matter what meaning its creators intended for this word.

Soon, the press discovered attractive aspects of pluralism and political struggle. It turned out that one could not only be an obedient servant of censorship, but also play an independent role. One could openly oppose Pravda and Soviet Russia, these strongholds of conservatism, discern nuances in the Politburo, ostracize communist diehards and even take the side of persecuted Yeltsin against the whole of the

Politburo headed by Gorbachev. This was risky, but no longer deadly. And this paid back in unprecedented popularity for the press.

It was a remarkable romantic and heroic period in the life of Russian media. People had no more absorbing occupation than the reading of periodicals that cleared the Augean stables of filth and official lies. The circulation of democratic periodicals reached transcendental figures. The weekly Argumenti i Fakti, unheard of earlier, was mentioned by The Guinness Book of Records thanks to its circulation of 35 million copies at that time.

**T**he tide of glasnost tugged along the cart of political democratization. In turn, the democratic process, which had gained momentum, ensured security of new journalism. The 1990 Law on Freedom of the Press, unprecedented in the history of a communist country, any party, movement, organization, group of people or individual could found a newspaper, a magazine or a radio station. The Communist Party lost its monopoly in the press and its power once and for all.

In Soviet times all periodicals were subordinated to certain official structures. Pravda was the bearer of the highest title: the mouthpiece of the Communist Party. Sovetskaya Rossiya was another mouthpiece at a grade lower in the Soviet table. Izvestiya was the newspaper of the USSR Supreme Soviet; Trud, of the Trade Unions Central Committee; Literaturnaya Gazeta, the Writers' Union; Komsomolskaya Pravda, the Young Communist League, and so on.

strict hierarchy was observed even in relations between newspapers. Besides, all of them were under strict control by the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the CPSU, commonly known as Agitprop.

Under Gorbachev's law, each existing periodical and new publications had to register by January 1991, in a capacity defined by itself. Most periodicals broke the bureaucratic navel cord. We of The New Times weekly chose the formula: "Founders: New Times journalists." We did not want any bosses or patrons to control us, be it a party or a

bank. We were confident that only such a formula would guarantee freedom.

It proved correct juridically but not economically, as we came to understand from our own experience.

On August 19, 1991, all freedoms obtained through the new law were suspended by the revanchist coup mounted by old-line communist bureaucrats who realized they were losing power rapidly. I remember my own thought that morning: "This is the end." Many liberals admitted at the bottom of their hearts that totalitarianism was eternal in this country and that any experiments with freedom, all thaws and Prague Springs, were temporary phenomena, that sooner or later the iron heel would restore its domination.

To begin with, the new regime restored censorship. After allowing a few conservative periodicals, it banned all the rest. It was the hour of the ultimate trial for the press, which had known the taste of freedom. What to do: demonstrate "realism" and return to the former slavish condition under the guidance of Agitprop? Or challenge the regime, call the putschists and usurpers their true names, risking personal freedom and, possibly, life itself?

The presence of tanks under the windows and memories of real communism made the choice. A decision had to be made in a matter of minutes and hours. The coup took place on Sunday night, an inconvenient time for our weekly, *Novoe Vremya*. Monday was the day when an issue was to be signed for printing. To the honor of our collective of journalists, there was not a vote in favor of "prudent" conformism.

A new edition was quickly prepared. It unmasked the communist junta under the heading: "They have staged a putsch, but their hands are trembling." The printing house obeyed the ban, refusing to print the issue. We then ran it off on a photo copier and distributed it in metro stations.

Being unable to get published, five newspapers of active democratic orientation prepared a joint extraordinary issue, had it printed in Leningrad, where censorship had not yet been re-imposed, and distributed in Moscow. After three days the putsch breathed its

last breath. However, even before that it became clear that freedom of the press had been born in this country and that it was irreversible.

Now, the adventure of subversive ideas and romanticism of barricades has been replaced by the routine of survival. Press freedom has turned from an ideal and a dream into an everyday life full of prosaic financial problems.

Under the old regime, the press lived in a gold cage like a captive bird. All expenses of a periodical were paid by those agencies it spoke for. The editor could be sacked for publishing an article that was not liked "up there." A journalist could be kicked out and his name could be entered in a black list, and no court of justice would help him. But no newspaper or magazine could fail to come out in time—this would

have been violation of "order."

Now, all periodicals have to be self-supporting. Money becomes the incessant headache of editors. Freedom of the press turned out to be not only freedom to live, but also freedom to die, a not very inspiring discovery.

The disintegration of the USSR meant, for Moscow-based periodicals, the loss of gigantic readership territories: the Ukraine, the Baltic states, Central Asia, Transcaucasia. The postal service proved unable to deliver parcels in time but still demanded sums exceeding subscription prices several times for its unreliable services. Crisis also struck the retail market of periodicals. Newspaper booths disappeared at once, changing to trade in alcohol, a product which was much more profitable and, possibly, more necessary to the masses.



"The Three Hunters." This cartoon in *Argumenti i Fakti* is a takeoff on a classic Russian painting depicting three hunters sharing tall tales rather than hunting. In this parody, President Yeltsin, dressed as a game warden, is spying on the trio of enemies, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, ultra nationalists, and Gennadi Zyuganov and Viktor Anpilov, leaders of Communist factions, making sure they do not reconstitute the U.S.S.R.

The post-Soviet press discovered that it must generate its income from advertising, but for this source to become stable and abundant the economy must be stable and prosperous too.

A whole sea of new, overtly apolitical periodicals, informational, entertaining and pornographic, came into being. Editors hurried to engage in the hitherto unknown source, business. They did not content themselves with marketing or commercial advertising. Trade in hidden advertising, the sale of influence, the making of profit from closeness to a branch of power—in a word, various ways of recasting political capital into just capital became popular.

Journalism experienced the pressure of commercialization. Its consequences are libertinism, unceremoniousness, haste. As an editor has put it, "to be a success, a newspaper has to turn a bit yellow." The free press in Russia is developing under conditions that will remain unfavorable at least until the presidential election.

If the Communists lose the election, the course of events will be a more or less natural continuation of the present situation, promising no special surprises. If the Communists win, two outcomes seem the most probable.

Pessimists are positive that the new communist regime would be extremely aggressive in conformity with its doctrinal purposes and inherent instincts. If such be the case, freedom of the press would certainly be its first victim. Optimists believe the Communist president, having been challenged by real responsibility, will abandon his ideological weaponry quickly and conduct the same social and economic policy, with some amendments, as the present President.

I believe that this is an overly optimistic prognosis. Nevertheless, it is free press that is the main guarantor that communist revanchists may fail to implement their intentions. As long as it exists, society will not remain silent, obedient and thoughtless. The latter is the only condition on which communism is at all possible. ■

## Ukraine Startup Faces Tough Going

BY JULIA E. SEIDLER

**T**he recent careers of two Cherkassy journalists, Katya Koval and Victoria Kuzmina, are a miniature model of the changing fortunes of journalism in newly independent Ukraine.

I first met the two in the summer of 1993, when they were on internships to Iowa publications. At that time, they were reporters for the regional paper Cherkasky Krai (Cherkassy Region), which appeared three times a week with a circulation of about 15,000. The newspaper was still dependent on the regional government for a portion of its operating funds.

Region descended from the regional Pravda, the newspaper of the Communist Party. The editor was a good party man, trained as an ideological instructor for journalists. Under Soviet rule, it had a circulation of 100,000 and was the pinnacle of success for journalists working in the region.

After the Communist Party lost official power, Cherkassy Region lost its standing and the youth newspaper, Molod' Cherkashchiny (Cherkassy Youth) began its ascendancy. By 1994 when I arrived in Cherkassy, the weekly, formerly a Young Communist League publication, gained an audience of 80,000 to 100,000 by innovating such things as printing television listings, using state-of-the-art technology and selling through newsboys rather than in the government-owned kiosks. They also adopted a decidedly sensational bent, occasionally printing photos of the corpses of people who had died of natural causes on the street.

Another unique feature of Cherkassy Youth is that it is owned by an independent printing company, which means the paper does not have to rely on the government printing house. This also means that the newspaper does not rely on government funds because it is subsidized by other printing jobs the company takes in.

In mid-1994, Koval and Kuzmina

moved to the youth newspaper, where both had previously worked before being hired at Cherkassy Region. Koval entered the advertising section and Kuzmina joined the staff of 35 as a political reporter. However, Kuzmina was relegated to covering hot political issues, such as the trial of the new mayor for election fraud, from her apartment as there was no room for her to write in the editorial offices above the town's crumbling wedding palace.

After less than half a year, however, the two quit the youth paper to edit their own women's magazine, Ya Zhinka (I Am Woman) full-time. They had published three issues previously as a sideline but finally decided to devote all their time, energy and money to the enterprise.

Money seems to have been the deciding factor for the change, specifically donations from the people in and



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around Santa Rosa, California. Kuzmina's husband, John Masura, lived there before moving to Ukraine and he has spent some time establishing relations between the two regions. With this outside backing, Koval and Kuzmina were able to rent an office and buy enough paper for two issues.

Their office was located in a building owned and operated by the now-defunct city council newspaper, Cherkassy. This newspaper went bankrupt for two main reasons. One was the withdrawal of support from the city council after the paper ran articles critical of irregularities in the election of the new mayor. Second, was the unfavorable outcome of litigation. Cherkassy lost a major suit brought by the Regional Council of Veterans of World War II. Earlier, an article written by a correspondent appeared in which the patriotism of the veterans' group was questioned because members had demonstrated under the banner of the Soviet Union. The veterans won a settlement of over \$3,000 based on Article 47 of the Law on Information, which allows one to sue if he or she feels his or her honor has been damaged.

Fortunately for Koval and Kuzmina, *I Am Woman* was not named in such a suit but most publications in Cherkassy are fighting several. The women have come close, however, with the placement of a photograph of an unnamed woman near an article on prostitution.



## Я - ЖІНКА

Paper procurement is a constant headache for Cherkassy publications, including the women's magazine. Kuzmina explained that in order to print the first few issues they bought Ukrainian sugar and traded it for Russian paper. Now the problem is simply the price. Ukraine has no paper plants so editors are at the mercy of their Russian suppliers, which often charge more than world prices.

As with most publications in Cherkassy, the majority of revenue for *I Am Woman* came from sales rather than advertising, although the magazine did carry a few display ads, some for American firms. Even in the youth newspaper, the most popular in

Cherkassy, the majority of advertising is the classifieds, which are not a big money-maker anywhere in East Europe.

Currently, the tides have changed again for Koval and Kuzmina. The money donated by the Americans has all been spent and *I Am Woman* has fallen on hard times. Koval recently went back to work as a reporter for one of the new papers in town, *Courier Priniprovia* (*Courier by the Dnipro*), to support herself and her family. The last issue of their magazine appeared in February, 1995 and the staff is appealing to other organizations for support. As with all journalism in newly independent Ukraine, the future for Katya Koval, Victoria Kuzmina and *I Am Woman* is still up in the air. ■



*Katya Koval returned to newspapering when the magazine *I Am Woman* ran out of money.*

# Czech Media: Democratic or Anti-Communist?

BY BEVERLY WACHTEL

Civil society, the sphere considered separately from the economy and the state, is endangered in the Czech Republic by media transformation grounded in an "uncritical critique" of the past as well as in a lingering adherence to elitist models of administration. The new policies of free-market anti-communism—often, paradoxically, both in the name of and at the expense of democracy—seem to be the result of thinking along the lines, in Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm's words, that "since the North Pole is freezing cold, the opposite pole will be beautifully warm." Stamping toward capitalism, Czech media industries are undergoing a process of commercialization and internationalization that tends to encourage the blending of the civil and economic realms, thereby threatening participatory democracy and non-consumerist culture.

As the demands of the marketplace eclipse civil concerns and the state turns its interest from the people to the private sector and, increasingly, to its own well-being, such capitalist by-products as the death of nation-wide public radio, the restriction of political content in the media and the crippling of the national film industry begin to surface. In embracing the laissez-faire economic ideals that were formerly anathema, the state turns its back on the deleterious cultural effects of the changes that it has initiated and allowed.

As American political theorist Andrew Arato warns, "those in Eastern Europe who forget the destructive effects of the self-regulating market on the cultural fabric of society because of their hatred for state interventionism seek to rejoin Europe not as it is today...but as it once was, thereby in-

venting the repetition of already known disasters."

The restructuring of the Czech radio broadcasting system illuminates the hazardous ramifications of the blithe swing from anti-capitalism to anti-communism. While the opening of the Czech radio frontier to international media giants has precipitated a torrential increase in listening options, it has also provoked a conflict among corporate, state and civil interests centering on the selling of the public radio frequency by the Czechoslovak Council on Radio and Television Broadcasting (CRTVB). This council was established by Parliament in the spring of 1991 after the breakdown of central media control in order to issue licenses, allocate frequencies, and set standards.

Lacking both experience with the private sector and a firm set of priorities, this regulating body showed its inadequacies during the debate last year that raged around the council's decision to allocate the medium-wave frequency of the public station Radiozurnal to the commercial broadcaster, Rádio Echo, which has since gone bankrupt. The consequent reassignment of Radiozurnal to a frequency of smaller transmitting range means that significant portions of the Czech Republic are no longer able to receive it. Despite strenuous criticism from Prime Minister Václav Klaus, President Václav Havel and the trade union of communication media, the council's decision still stands.

Havel supports protest in the popular press, disapproving of the "dangerous and exaggerated passion for privatization" in relation to the frequency change, citing that proper regulations concerning nonprofit spheres such as public broadcasting are not yet

in place. He further contends that "if we have only private radio broadcasting pop music and advertisements all the time...it could happen one day that important political information does not reach the public at all." Klaus characterizes the council's decision as "absurd and terrifying," asserting in an interview that "the government does not have the slightest chance to intervene" nor is it informed of the council's meetings.

This crisis in the dissemination of information to the public as well as in the effective hierarchy of an emerging democracy reflects the dangers inherent in a media-regulating structure that has not yet developed a system of checks and balances. Even though the council was created by Parliament, it can act against the will of the government simply because there are no laws preventing it from doing so. This



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counter-intuitive situation of a Parliament-formed council being able to rule in favor of international corporate interests over those of the public in spite of high-level and popular protest demonstrates the need for continued modifications to the system of broadcast regulation along with a questioning of the nature of the present "democracy." Both the council's inordinate power and its failure to recognize the importance of public communication contravene the participatory ideal of political will formation through peer discourse.

Instead, these factors reinforce the dangerous trend toward "élite democracy," characterized by Andrew Arato and Jean Cohen as a system in which "the democratic method becomes merely an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide." Such a system would seem to preclude one of the primary goals of civil society, the generation of influence.

Even though Radiozurnal is not a citizens' forum but rather the only state-funded "public" news station, its potential to inform political dialogue should not be underestimated. In a country without a national newspaper, Radiozurnal served as the only news source with nation-wide accessibility that was free from market forces (its funding comes from license fees and other state subsidies while both "public" television stations now rely on advertising).

The council's decision renders some parts of Moravia unable to receive non-commercial news and public affairs programming even though they have their choice of hit parades. By neglecting the importance of a politically informed and engaged citizenry, the CRTVB's ruling seems to promulgate an idea of political involvement as a matter of privilege.

**W**hat seems to be happening in the Czech Republic is that as the trend turns sharply against any form of state intervention in the regulation of media enterprises, the state is turning its energies toward the regulation of media content. This con-

straint on the exchange of ideas further undermines the democratic ideals so vigorously advocated after the Velvet Revolution. Although censorship was officially banned with the signing of the Charter of Basic Rights and Freedoms more than five years ago, current attempts by the executive branch to exercise control over political expression raise questions regarding the tensions among a democratic government's duties to protect citizens, guarantee freedom and preserve itself.

Although Prime Minister Klaus enjoys widespread public approval, he has long fought with the press. Referring to journalists as "mankind's greatest enemies" in a *Forbes* magazine interview in August of 1994, he contends that the national press agency CTK's editing and rephrasing of his statements "violates the very essence and purpose of a news agency." While he argues that such "misinformation" could threaten the security of the Republic, many (including President Havel) hint that it is merely his vanity which is at stake.

Havel, renowned for the spontaneous eloquence and affability that Klaus sorely lacks, has a regular Sunday interview on Czech radio during which he has defended media freedom. Acknowledging that the press "often makes errors and indulges in speculation," he maintained that "anyone who decides to become a public figure has to put up with the risk of being misinterpreted."

This controversy intensified last year as the press coverage of an intelligence agency scandal provoked outrage from Klaus and other leading members of the ruling Civic Democratic party. Alleging that CTK's omission of certain material from a government press statement was intended maliciously to slant public opinion against the Party, Klaus and his deputy, Libor Novák, initiated legislation that would obligate CTK to print government statements in full. CTK's editor-in-chief, Petr Holubec, contended that although the agency is primarily funded by the state, it is "independent of political parties" and has no reason to alter its practice of printing edited versions of longer political statements and later making the full text of the documents available.

Within days of Deputy Culture Minister Michal Prokop's February 1, 1995, announcement that amendments to the law regulating CTK were under discussion, the Vienna-based International Press Institute (which has several Czech members) sent Klaus an open letter of protest. The letter asserted that releasing the full text of government statements is the "task of individual press departments of the respective ministries" and that compelling CTK to perform this function would be an anti-democratic degradation.

Apparently, this highly publicized effort by the IPI had a significant impact: the vote on regulatory amendments that was supposed to take place late in February last year was postponed until the following October. The state's attempt to restrict press freedom in this instance lends credence to the accusation that the post-socialist government has merely replaced one set of élite ideologues with another. IPI's successful challenge to this measure certainly reflects both the vitality and continued necessity of such organs of international civil society, although Klaus's desire to maintain a NATO-friendly image also cannot be underestimated.

While CTK maintained its freedom to edit government statements under the media bill eventually passed on October 18, 1995, journalists were outraged over new offenses against their freedom. The bill, which lacks two paragraphs contained in the original proposal, no longer obliges organs of state to provide journalists with information and no longer guarantees journalists the right to conceal their sources. Railing against the bill as "nothing other than a frontal attack on freedom of the press," Pavel Dostal, a commentator for the daily *Pravo*, joined other journalists as well as the leading opposition party, the Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD), in their condemnation of the bill as an echo of totalitarianism. Despite protests from Prague's Center for Independent Journalism and accusations that the bill is inconsistent with European Union legislation, the government seems unwilling to consider reform.

The year-old Criminal Code imperils not only media freedom but political expression itself. Containing an "anti-defamation of the Republic" paragraph, the document strikes a blow at the open exchange of ideas crucial to a democracy by stipulating that "offenders who insult the state or its highest representatives can be given a maximum sentence of two years imprisonment." Though this measure was signed by Havel himself, it seems strangely inconsistent with his pronouncements advocating tolerance.

Radically anti-democratic in nature, this part of the code has drawn fire from publications such as *The Wall Street Journal*, which compared the anti-defamation law to that of quasi-totalitarian Romania. The controversy ebbed as the law remained unenforced, but outcry swelled after the conviction of 62-year-old pensioner Zdenek Svavorsky. Referring to Havel as a "traitor" and a "mendacious prophet" in a Czech newspaper published in the United States, Svavorsky was charged with defamation and given a four months suspended sentence with one year of probation. Although nine people have been accused of defaming Havel since the code went into effect last November, Svavorsky was the first to receive an actual sentence.

The anti-defamation paragraph of the Criminal Code, seemingly contradicted by the Charter of Basic Rights and Freedoms (one of which is free speech), sets a dangerous precedent for the media as it curtails debate and dissent and extends the government's jurisdiction to material printed by Czech citizens in foreign-based publications. In effectively criminalizing dissent, the state is compromising the input of its most vital resource, its constituent members, thereby rendering itself a "democracy" in name only.

The repudiation of the prior regime's practices seems to be based more on convenience and opportunism than on principle. Pursuing an aggressive policy of privatization, the state ultimately seems to be neglecting the nation's cultural well-being. Regarding Czech audiovisual work



*Jakub Prázdný and Simon Vázny in the studio at Radio Jedna in Prague in 1993.*

as a "tool and a display of the national culture," the Czech Film and Television Union (FITES) asserts that the privatization of the state film studio AB Barrandov has dealt a devastating blow to the creative community as well as to the spiritual health of the republic. Those in favor of the commercial move, namely the studio's controlling shareholder, Václav Marhoul, and Prime Minister Klaus, dismiss issues of "national culture" as both nebulous and irrelevant. Preferring instead to focus on the concrete rewards of the bottom line, they have few qualms about in effect eradicating a specifically Czech film industry. The potential consequences of amputating (or maiming) this limb of the national media, such as a shift in the way people define themselves culturally and interact in a socio-

political framework, are so far-reachingly complex as to defy estimation. Whether or not one believes that this change represents a tragedy or simply a transformation, it seems undeniable that the pool of ideas has become shallower.

After the sweeping changes of 1989, much debate initially surrounded the issue of whether the studio would even be considered eligible for privatization. Claiming that Barrandov was "industry and creativity and art all mixed together," a group of prominent filmmakers gained a modicum of governmental support for their belief that Barrandov as a purveyor of "national culture" should be exempt from the feeding frenzy surrounding other state enterprises. The Wild West-style chaos and double-dealing that have charac-

terized Czech media restructuring thus far seem to have eliminated any official support for this view, leaving only an outraged group of film and television artists (FITES) to sound the alarm about the dangers of privileging commerce over culture.

Vera Chytilová and Jiri Menzel, the principal exponents of the view that cinema is a national art worthy of being kept under the umbrella of the state, are both film-makers who came to the forefront of their field with groundbreaking work done during the celebrated New Wave of the Sixties. Though both are currently able to obtain enough funding to carry out their projects, they share a fear for their younger colleagues as well as for the nation as a whole.

Chytilová sees the recent commercialization of Barrandov and the subsequent drastic reduction in its staff and production as an unfortunate product of naiveté, immorality and incompetence. According to Chytilová, many people in the film industry were foolishly optimistic in 1989 in believing that the end of the totalitarian regime would herald an era of artistic freedom. Instead they were shocked by the ruthlessness of capitalism, feeling like "ping-pong players plunged into a professional tennis tournament," unable to respond to the maneuverings of shrewd entrepreneurs. The heady rhetoric of liberty has long since dissipated, leaving behind what Chytilová calls "an atmosphere permeated with immorality where if you've a lot of money, then you have power." This corrupt mentality is coupled with what the FITES members consider to be a short-sighted and inept privatization committee that is "dangerously pliant" to the desires of financiers and investors.

But questions arise: what exactly is the "danger" of losing the national film industry, and why is commercialization implicated in such a loss? Implicit in the FITES members' fears is a notion of film as a powerful story-telling medium, a vehicle for depicting the self-creation of both an artist and a nation. Because film can reach a mass audience and is generally experienced in a group, it can be seen as particularly important for the shaping and reinforcing of a

## Tension Hobbles Azerbaijani Press

Azerbaijan, a small oil-rich country that borders the Caspian Sea, is one of the three Caucasian states that broke free from the Soviet Union in 1991. Compared with its neighbors, Georgia and Armenia, Azerbaijan had the best prospects for early economic development because Western companies were eager to expand and deepen oil fields near Baku, one of the oldest petroleum centers in the world.

With the collapse of communism and an outbreak of war with Armenia, two newspapers, *Azadliq*, representing the new Popular Front political party, and *Azerbaijan*, representing the Committee of People Assistance to Karabakh, the battle region that was lost to Armenia, challenged the monopoly of government party-run media. These papers helped develop national feelings among the Azeri people, mostly Muslim and the overwhelming majority of the population that also includes Russians, Armenians, Georgian and Jews.

Like mushrooms after a rain, publications representing all points of view tried to grow in the new, democratic

atmosphere. Now, with economic development stalled by the continued tension with Armenia, only three papers, *7 Gun* (Days), *GunAy* and *Ayna/Zerkalo* challenge the official papers, *Azerbaijan*, voice of Parliament; *Xalq Gazeti*, representing President Heydar Aliyev, and two Russian language papers, *Bakinsky Rabochy* and *Vishka*, which are hangovers from the Soviet period. *Birzha*, a business weekly, is the only publication that draws advertising in this period of economic crisis. There are four other papers tied specifically to political factions. Political censorship was ended five years ago, but military censorship imposed during the Armenian war continues.

Two private television and radio companies, ANS-CM, and Sara, compete with television and radio broadcasters in Moscow (Russian), Baku (Azeri) and Ankara (Turkish, which is understood by the Azeris). ■

*Fakhad M. Aliev, an Azerbaijani graduate student at Northeastern University in Boston.*

community's identity. Commerce threatens culture because it necessarily limits the views that can be expressed to those that adhere to a relatively predictable formula. Also, the limitations inherent in a small linguistic market virtually guarantee that even a smash hit in the Czech Republic on Czech themes will not make anyone a koruna richer, and so is unlikely to get made. This reduces the communication of ideas, thus diminishing the opportunities for the kind of cultural dialogue central to a democracy.

The question still remains as to what can be done to preserve this cultural dialogue, not just in the film industry, but also in the fields of broadcast and print media. While political theorists such as Slavko Splichal and Andrew

Arato advocate "the institutionalization of civil society in its widest sense" through the expanded role of public communications, the potential to fund such an endeavor is close to nil. Unfortunately, the cultural horizon looks grim, giving ample evidence to support Czech dissident Milan Zeleny's perhaps overly dramatic view that now is "a time of twilight, not so much in terms of economy, but in terms of polity and society—it is a long night before us as we will be guided by dilettantism, mediocrity, vulgarity and stubbornness." ■



# One-Man Control in Belarus

BY VERA RICH

In Belarus the media are, de facto, completely under the control not so much of the government as of the president, former collective-farm manager Alaksandr Lukashenka, who, since his election in 1994, has repeatedly intervened in the activities of both the electronic and print media, to block the dissemination of opinions other than his own.

These interventions, normally made either via members of his own immediate entourage, or through the local representatives he has appointed to the elected provincial, county and city councils, have on numerous occasions been ruled illegal by the Constitutional Court—but have nevertheless not been reversed or rectified.

A particular censorship technique, peculiar to Belarus, is the president's effective monopoly over all printing and distribution facilities. Newspapers that refuse to toe the presidential line have to be printed abroad, in Vilnius, Lithuania (courtesy of Lithuania's leading daily, *Lietuvos Rytas*), and cannot officially be distributed by post or sold in public kiosks. Attempts are being made to build an alternative network of distribution agents, who either sell the papers, extra-legally, on the streets or deliver to subscribers' homes, but this, in practice, limits their circulation to major towns and cities.

Lukashenka was elected on a platform that promised a free press for, in effect, the first time in the history of Belarus. During that election campaign the control of the media was effectively in the hands of his archrival, the then-Prime Minister Vyachaslau Kiebach. The latter's publicity, which included a huge mud-slinging campaign directed at Lukashenka himself, was run by Vladimir Zametalin. Shortly after coming to power, however, Lukashenka took Zametalin on, ostensibly as head of his press office, in reality as his own

personal censor. (Zametalin appears to have given up his censorship duties early this year.) Lukashenka's preferred style of intervention in media matters is to have one of his entourage telephone his orders to the relevant person.

During his seven months of rule by decree (when the failure of the parliamentary elections in May/June 1995 left him, de facto, as supreme power in both executive and legislature) Lukashenka ran the country as he had formerly run his collective farm—by issuing a spate of decrees and directives often on matters that elsewhere would be automatically left to the initiative of the lower administrative levels. These pronouncements were, as a matter of routine, published in the press.

Attempts in this way to restrict freedom of expression have tended to backfire. In particular, a directive issued in mid-August banning the use at all levels (from grade school to post-graduate) of all textbooks in the humanities published since Belarus proclaimed its independence in 1991, and a "temporary" return to the old Soviet texts, produced such an outcry from the educational profession, on both ideological and pragmatic grounds (the Soviet texts had—it was claimed—long since been sent for pulping), that Lukashenka appeared on TV and denied having issued the decree, which had appeared in the press, above his name, only a few days previously.

The history of the media in Belarus is somewhat peculiar. Until 1905, publishing in the vernacular was forbidden. Unlike neighboring Ukraine, part of whose territory lay, at this era, within the more liberal Hapsburg empire, Belarus was entirely incorporated in the Russian empire, and publication of Belarusian language material abroad was virtually non-existent. In Septem-

ber 1906, the first Belarusian-language newspaper, *Nasha Dolya*, (Our Fate) appeared. This survived the Czarist censors for only six issues—but was then reincarnated as *Nasha Niva* (Our Grainfield), which survived until the outbreak of World War I, and which gave its name to the whole movement of ethnic/cultural/political revival of those years. Since the *Nasha Niva* movement was "reinterpreted" by the Soviet ideologues as a manifestation of the "class struggle," the paper receives due (if slanted) acclaim in the Soviet histories of Belarus, no less than among independence-minded "nationalists."

Yet, in spite of the perhaps unique role of a newspaper in their national history, Belarusians as a whole show relatively little enthusiasm for their press. In a country of some 10.2 million people, the six official and quasi-official newspapers have a total circulation of little over 800,000. Of them, only one—*Narodnaya Hazieta* (People's Newspaper), makes even a token attempt to give space to opposition views—being owned by Parliament, it is supposed to open its columns to all members. The rest—both in the Belarusian and Russian languages—are little more than a voice for the Presidential line—and any attempt to depart from this stance is liable to immediate reprisals. It is symptomatic of the "unreconstructed" state of the Belarusian press that a leading central newspaper (i.e. not the official organ of a particular political group or party) still includes the word "Soviet"

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in its name—the Russian-language Sovetskaya Belorussiya.

Samizdat was almost unknown in Belarus—only a couple of essays on the language problem and a satirical poem attacking the literary establishment had a certain circulation in literary circles. As late as 1988, one of the few Western experts on Belarusian literature, Professor Arnold McMillin, published a paper suggesting that the underground press was unlikely ever to appear on the Belarusian scene. However, in October of that year, there was a sudden burst of small cyclostyled journals from newly found informal clubs, just legalized by a change in the Soviet law—including what was at first called the “Belarusian Popular Front for Perestroika—‘Rebirth,’” founded as an umbrella organization for pro-democracy pro-independent initiatives in October, 1988.

In the final months of the Soviet Union, and the first phase of independence, a number of independent newspapers were founded. (Nasha Niva itself was revived as a monthly, published in Vilnius, Lithuania in May, 1991). Some of these papers collapsed from “natural causes” (shortage of funds, lack of expertise) and the rest, in both Belarusian and Russian, have been crushed or driven abroad by Lukashenka. As a result, many people turn to newspapers from Russia for unbiased information about what is happening in Belarus. Izvestiya is considered a particularly reliable source—and, as a result, the Izvestiya correspondent in Minsk has long since lost his official accreditation.

Belarusian officialdom appears to have little idea about what freedom of the media constitutes. The idea of editorial independence has not yet taken hold. Newspapers are viewed as the mouthpiece of a particular organization—with the central mass-circulation papers owned by the government—or in the case of Narodnaya Hazieta—Parliament.

Even those who question whether the government should own the press tacitly acknowledge the principle that the paymaster dictates policy. Thus in August 1994, the then Deputy Premier Viktor Hanchar said that it was absurd

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## Belarus Torn Over Union with Russia



*Moscow newspapers are popular in Belarus because they are considered more reliable.*

that the government owned five of the six central newspapers, and suggested that one would be sufficient. But since, in practice, the remainder could not be left to “float free” but needed government subsidies, he suggested a legal model by which they could become “state” newspapers, subsidized from the state budget. And since, said Hanchar, the papers would then belong to the state, the state would influence the line taken by the papers by personnel policy, and in particular by the choice of the editor-in-chief. What precisely Hanchar meant by “state” in this context was not clear—his model was never adopted. But Lukashenka has on several occasions used his position as head of state to fire editors of government-subsidized papers. So much so that, in December 1994, the editors of Sovetskaya Belorussiya tried to refuse their subsidy, which inflation had rendered derisory—equivalent to one day’s running and production costs. The request was refused—clearly because Lukashenka did not wish to lose his legal pretext for meddling.

Lukashenka came to power in an election notable for its biased media coverage. His main rival from the ex-Communist wing, Kiebich, used his position as Prime Minister to make

nonsense of the official ruling on equal media access for all candidates. Some papers—including the weekly of the Belarusian Union of Writers, Litaratura i Mastastva (Literature and Art)—were suspended for “technical reasons” during the election campaign. (The government owns the only printing plant capable of producing mass-circulation papers.) The opposition weekly Svaboda was threatened with suspension. A popular radio program for young people was likewise suspended. But Kiebich, whose premiership had simply continued the old, Brezhnevian policies of stagnation, was fighting for his political career. Under Lukashenka, blatant manipulation of the media from on high has become a way of life—as the following brief chronicle will indicate:

December 1994. When an opposition Member of Parliament, Siarhiey Antonchyk, began reading a report, drawn up by a consortium of democratic lawyers, alleging corruption among members of Lukashenka’s personal team, Lukashenka had the direct broadcasting facilities in the debating chamber turned off. Newspapers were forbidden to print the text of the report. Over the next two days, central papers appeared with blank spaces,

where the text had been withdrawn, and on December 24, scheduled issues of *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* and *Narodnaya Hazieta* did not appear at all. Journalists and editors were warned that if they published material from the Antonchuk report, they would lose their jobs. An outcry from the opposition MPs made Lukashenka backtrack officially—and one of his aides was fired as a scapegoat. But a few days later Lukashenka dismissed the editor-in-chief of *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* (ostensibly for financial irregularities) and ordered the printing house not to bring out the paper until he had gone. Journalists at *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* tried to organize protest actions—but in the end the president prevailed.

April 1995. Lukashenka announced a national referendum on closer ties with Russia, “state” status for the Russian language, greater powers for the president and replacement of the state flag and coat-of-arms by those of Soviet times. Fearing that the referendum would be preceded by media manipulation, 18 MPs from the democratic opposition staged a hunger strike in Parliament. Lukashenka had them evicted by force by special police. All media coverage of the incident was forbidden, including a special report on the incident made by the TV current affairs program *Corridors*.

May 1995. The referendum took place simultaneously with parliamentary elections. The media manipulation was gross. Lukashenka appointed a special “information team” to put over his viewpoint in the media. Minsk local TV was closed down for the duration of the campaign. *Corridors* was prevented from screening interviews with the U.S. and Polish ambassadors about how the state flag and coat-of-arms were revered in those countries. There was no official barrier, however, to the prime-time screening of a TV film “Children of Hatred,” calumniating the BNF leader, Zianon Pazniak. When the referendum took place, it was announced to have been successful on all points. In fact, the vote on the change of flag and coat of arms gained support from only 47 percent of the total electorate—and 50 percent was needed constitutionally to implement the change. Nevertheless,

Lukashenka said, since more than 50 percent of those who actually cast their vote supported the change, it would go ahead.

May/June 1995. Roman Catholic services were dropped from Belarusian TV (Lukashenka favors the Orthodox Church as conducive to closer ties with Russia), Radio and TV were told to drop most Belarusian-language pop music and to broadcast Belarusian folksongs only in Russian translation. The transmission by the electronic media of the patriotic hymn “O God Almighty, O Lord of Creation” by the Belarusian-American poet, Natalla Arsiennieva (which is frequently sung at democratic and nationalist gatherings), was likewise banned.

August 1995. Lukashenka, in an emotional outburst on TV, accused the media of the Russian Republic of having “declared war” on him. Zametalin wrote to the Russian State Duma threatening that if it did not curb the criticism in the Russian press, he would cancel the contracts for the distribution of Russian newspapers in Belarus.

September, 1995. While a conference on the freedom of speech, hosted by the Belarusian chapter of International PEN, was taking place in a country retreat 30 miles from Minsk, Lukashenka issued a “timely warning” to editors, about the “lack of objectivity” of certain elements of the media—and if they did not change their attitude, the Ministries of Justice and of Culture and the Press would “no longer be tolerant.” A few days later, the bank account of the independent and outspoken weekly *Svaboda* was frozen. A new Independent Journalists’ Association was established in Minsk, and issued a founding declaration deploring the current restrictions on the media. On September 12 a U.S. sporting balloon was shot down over Belarus, causing the death of the two crew members, and a media cover-up was imposed. A correspondent from the *Echo of Moscow* radio program reported telephone threats from one of Lukashenka’s aides, over his attempts to investigate corruption at an ex-Soviet army base in Belarus.

October, 1995. Lukashenka banned the printing anywhere in Belarus of

three Russian-language newspapers: *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta* (Belorussian Business Gazette), *Imya* (Name) and *Narodnaya Volya* (People’s Will) on the ground that they consistently criticized him. The Ministry of Culture and the Press was split up. A new State Committee for the Press was established, under rules that facilitated censorship.

December, 1995. In the run-up to the parliamentary elections, the former Speaker of Parliament (pre-Lukashenka) Miachyslau Hryb, was denied a slot on TV. He had wanted to appeal for a mass turn-out “to save democracy.” The electoral law requires a minimum 50 percent turnout in a constituency to be valid there, and two-thirds of the constituencies to return a member for Parliament. These conditions were not met in May. Lukashenka was known to be hoping that the elections would fail again—so that he could continue one-man rule indefinitely.

January 1996. *Svaboda* (and shortly afterwards, other newspapers banned from printing in Belarus) moved production to Vilnius.

Lukashenka introduced new rules on the press, by which virtually all publications receiving government subsidies would have their editors appointed by the government, “after consultation with the presidential administration,” and all local printing facilities were placed under the control of the local authorities. Newsprint for local papers would be assigned by the State Committee for the Press. In mid-January, journalists from the government-owned media were banned from Parliament during what it later transpired was an attack on Lukashenka and calls for constitutional reform from opposition MPs. Later it was announced that live coverage of Parliament by the electronic media would be replaced by a weekly (edited) “Parliamentary hour” on TV.

March/April 1996. Mass rallies took place in Minsk to celebrate the anniversary of the proclamation of the short-lived Belarusian National Republic induced to encourage the revival of the Belarusian language—but these have been effectively reversed in the past year by Lukashenka. ■

# Russian Hinterland Shows Vitality

BY NICHOLAS DANILOFF

For 70 years, the Kremlin sought political support for its policies by molding popular opinion with a highly controlled press, bolstered by a political police always ready to intimidate and to arrest. This media manipulation machine, though massive and powerful, proved to be brittle. Once Soviet isolation began breaking down after Stalin's death, censorship began to crack. Trade with the West, exchanges of scientists, foreign tourism and Western broadcasting into the Soviet Union unplugged the wires of thought control. Furthermore, Russia's growing technological lag and unimpressive economic performance contrasted with the spectacular gains of Asian countries told the Soviet leadership by the early 1980's that something was wrong.

Even before Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985, the political leadership and top editors were debating the merits of a more liberal media environment. Discussions about a new law of the press surfaced intermittently. These discussions accelerated when Gorbachev became the Kremlin leader. He saw clearly that without robust discussion of societal ills, the Soviet Union was unlikely to find constructive solutions to its problems. Within a year of his accession, Gorbachev was promoting greater openness, lowering the profile of the KGB and loosening censorship restrictions.

On December 27, 1991, as the Soviet Union was collapsing, Boris Yeltsin, president of the Russian Federation, signed a new Law of the Press which set the rules for Russia's new independent media today. This law is a compromise between Communist ideologues who wished to maintain control and modern thinkers who felt that open debate



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would identify and correct the nation's problems. Two distinctive features of the new law are these: (a) a clearly stated ban on media censorship in Article Three, and (b) prohibitions on publication of state secrets, pornography, racial hatred, war propaganda, and religious intolerance, in Article Four.

During the Yeltsin and Gorbachev administrations, major changes began to occur in Moscow in the print media and broadcasting. Between 1988 and 1991, for example, all restrictions on content seemed to be lifted and newspapers and magazines began publishing disturbing revelations of the nation's history. Criticism knew no bounds. Not only was Lenin criticized, but so were all the other sacred cows: Gorbachev, his wife Raisa, the Communist Party, the KGB, the military, Stalin.

Subsequently, when Yeltsin became the Russian leader in 1992, his government began to reduce press subsidies and demanded that journalistic organizations stand on their own feet. As a result of the new market forces, the Moscow-based, national newspapers like Pravda and Izvestia saw their 10 million circulations fall to a few hundred thousand. On the other hand, local newspapers and broadcasting stations began to develop. In the Wild West atmosphere of the New Russia, some of the changes turned out to be less than admirable. Money began to buy favorable journalistic coverage as well as access to officials. Rising newsprint prices, extravagant distribution costs and mounting broadcasting bills forced many news organizations into bankruptcy. Journalists who offended powerful special interests were more than occasionally assassinated.

However, Moscow is not Russia. How have the media changed in the Russian hinterland as a result of these changes in the capital? Are they showing signs of vitality? Are they likely to become a force for democracy? Are they threatened by the growing strength of the born-again Communists or the savagery of the war in Chechnya?

To get an idea, I decided to travel during the summer of 1995 to one of the most isolated parts of the Russian Federation—the Northern Caucasus. Instead of beginning in Moscow, I flew

directly from London to Baku, Azerbaijan, by British Air, then traveled overland across the Azeri-Russian border to Makhachkala, capital of Dagestan. In Dagestan, I skirted the rebellious province of Chechnya, traveled to mountain hamlets and cities on the coastal plain looking out on the Caspian Sea. This gave me the opportunity to assess the Dagestani media and contrast it with the media south of the border in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Dagestan is often referred to as the "tinder box of Russia." Lying between the Black and the Caspian Seas, it is a major crossroads of civilization where Islam confronts Christianity and Judaism; where traditions such as revenge killings and arranged marriages survive, where communications remain primitive and E-mail has yet to penetrate. This is an area where 32 distinct nationalities live side by side; where villages only a few miles apart must communicate in badly spoken Russian because their own tongues are incomprehensible to the other.

The Republic of Dagestan these days is a depressed region. Under Soviet rule, it was not allowed to develop a well-balanced economy. Kaspisk, on the Caspian Sea, became a part of the military-industrial complex, constituting the single production center of naval torpedoes. The war in Chechnya has had a disruptive effect because freight trains have stopped transporting raw materials, causing numerous factories to shut down. Dagestan is a hostage to Moscow: it depends on the federal capital for 80 percent of its annual budget.

The media, on the other hand in this out-of-the-way area, have been experiencing a major reorientation. As in Moscow, the traditional party newspapers have suffered major losses of circulation. Dagestanskaya Pravda, once the organ of the Dagestan Communist Party, has gone from 200,000 copies to 22,000 a day. On the other hand, there has been an explosion of small newspapers. Of 169 newspapers, about 90 have sprung up since the collapse of the U.S.S.R. For the most part, they are modest tabloids of four to six pages, with circulations varying from 1,500 to 4,500 copies. Their focus is principally to restore historical traditions and pre-

serve cultural values of the region's 32 ethnic groups.

While some newspapers express a preference for one political candidate or another, there is little discussion of democracy or democratic values. That's easy enough to understand. There is no democratic tradition here, and no example of a working democratic country nearby. The foreign presence is Islamic, either Turkish or Iranian. In the provincial capital of Makhachkala, the Mufti of Dagestan publishes a newspaper, Assalam, whose aim is to promote a knowledge of Islam. By contrast, in the southern city of Derbent, a small editorial office issues a newspaper, Vatan, whose goal is to reinvigorate Judaism. Other newspapers openly describe Russian Orthodoxy. There is no doubt: religion comes before democracy.

In broadcasting, major tensions are at play as ethnic traditions clash with the urge for instant gratification which comes from the West. Moscow national channels 1 and 2 are received in Dagestan much as they are elsewhere in the Russian Federation. Their fare includes heavy advertising, entertainment and political shows, and regular news programs. Interestingly, these programs project a Russian vision of the world much to the disgust of the ethnic groups, which have quietly resisted "russification" over the decades. Particularly offensive to the ethnic communities are the steamy soap operas, reflecting what are considered the "loose ways" of the Western world.

In Makhachkala, Dagestan Republic Broadcasting Company operates its own Channel 7 and promotes ethnic programming. "Currently, programming consists of broadcasts in national languages, concerts, sports, films, home-grown programs, programs from Moscow's Channel 6," says Salam A. Khavchaev, first deputy director. "Television is doing what it can to preserve national culture and provide a better alternative to Channels 1 and 2."

Editors and journalists throughout the republic remark that the disappearance of Soviet censorship has been a mixed blessing. Because of competing interests of different ethnic groups, editors find that they must be careful about what they print. What may ap-

peal to one community, may offend another. Editors assert that the explosiveness of ethnic tensions causes them to practice self-restraint. In Dagestan, as in other areas of the Russian Federation, Moscow maintains a branch of the Press Inspectorate, which monitors the press. If a newspaper violates Article Four of the press law banning coverage that could incite national violence, it will be given up to three warnings.

"If its editor still refuses to moderate his coverage, the case will be referred to a court, which is likely to order its closure," says Magomed I. Amiraliev, the chief press inspector.

Moscow is trying to minimize the seriousness of the Chechnya war and is seeking various ways to prevent the national press from exposing army brutality. For example, President Yeltsin recently fired Oleg Poptsov, the director of Channel 2, for overly graphic coverage of the conflict. The army has not hesitated to harass journalists, confiscate their film and notes, and even, on occasion, fire on them. The army has sealed off Chechnya and made it difficult for observers to approach.

The Chechen raid into Kizlyar resulted in a massive bombardment of the nearby town of Pervomaiskoye, bringing the war into Dagestani territory. In this atmosphere, Dagestani editors are exhibiting caution that approaches self-censorship. As to the rebel Chechens, they are struggling to get the word out about the Russian use of force. Gen. Dzhokhar M. Dudayev, the Chechen leader, has turned a bus into a mobile TV studio and outfitted it to look like an office. In the evenings, about 6 p.m., Chechen leaders (Dudayev was killed April 21, 1996, in a rocket attack) comment on latest developments.

South of the border, the Republic of Azerbaijan shares with Dagestan a rebirth of journalistic vitality. Of some 190 newspapers, about 127 have been established since 1989 when the movement for independence from Moscow first began to stir. The conflict with Armenia over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh had an impact on independent-minded journalists. Many objected to what they viewed as pro-Armenian



*New freedoms of expression have allowed ethnic conflicts and anti-Russianism to surface. In the editorial offices of New Times in Tsurib is a calendar portrait of Shamil, the 19th Century Muslim holy warrior who tied up the armies of Czar Nicholas I for 30 years in his effort to gain independence. Note the abacus, the ancient calculating machine still in use throughout Russia.*

views of the Soviet news agency Tass. They set out to correct this slant, especially by creating new media.

Zerkalo, which means The Mirror, is often cited as the best example of post-Soviet media. Established in 1990, it boasts a circulation of 25,000 and is financed by advertising and reader subscriptions. It is published weekly in Russian and Azeri. The paper struggles constantly against an array of obstacles—rising newsprint costs, distribution difficulties and political pressures. Although political censorship has been officially repealed, military censorship continues. The government has been known to exert political pressure and persuasion behind the scenes.

"We welcome the military and political censorship," says the dynamic editor of Zerkalo, Dr. Rauf R. Talishinsky. "Our censor sits in this building. What I don't like, however, is the stupidity of the censors. They can't explain anything: when you ask them why they make a cut and they just answer, 'It's my work.'"

Talishinsky says his editorial approach is to be neutral, not independent. Independent, he defines as supporting Aliyev's opposition. Neutral, he says, means giving both sides of the issue. A competing newspaper Vyshka (The Derrick), he says, is independent but not neutral. "We publish all sides," he adds. "When Aliyev was out of power, we published his opinion and the Minister of Justice paid a call on us one day with four armed thugs who broke up a lot of the editorial offices."

Another sign of vitality in Baku's new journalism is the struggling agency, Assa-Irada. This wire service was created by the iron-willed journalist Irada A. Vekilova. She objected to the skewed coverage by the Soviet news agency Tass on the war with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh. Like Talishinsky, she says she wants to give all sides. She adds, "You must avoid spreading hate and in some situations this means you must censor yourself."

Interestingly, Assa-Irada is not censored by the authorities, probably because its reach is limited. The agency, she says, counts only 20 clients which are primarily foreign embassies and oil companies. However, she does supply her news free of charge to state TV.

Whether a formal censorship regime exists (as in Azerbaijan) or not (as in Dagestan), considerable journalistic vitality has been unleashed. This has resulted in the proliferation of small newspapers, largely concerned with rescuing and preserving cultural heritage from decades of "russification." The media has yet to get into a continuing and sophisticated discussion of democratic ways; no immediate neighbor has a democratic system to offer as an example. Furthermore, because of ethnic and nationalistic strife (Chechnya in the case of Dagestan and Nagorno-Karabakh in the case of Azerbaijan) both political authorities and editors are wary. Where formal censorship does not exist, editors are inclined to use some amount of self-censorship. Attitudes towards the West vary from love to hate, but most thinking people remain deeply curious about the United States and western ways. ■

# A Pole Returns to Political Reporting

BY ANDRZEJ WRÓBLEWSKI

In 1983, during my Nieman year, I explained why I had left my weekly publication *Polityka* a year earlier, when martial law was imposed in Poland. Now, let me explain why I have come back to *Polityka* 14 years later. The first decision was strictly political: I believed that as long as journalists were not free and could not protest with words, they should protest with absence. The latter decision, though, was strictly professional: in a democratic country, which Poland has become, journalists do not have to replace politicians. Resignation is a part of theirs, not our, game.

Nothing is like it was then. The Berlin wall has come down. Russian troops left Poland. Lech Walesa, after being elected president, failed to win another term five years later. To publish a newspaper or a periodical you do not have to enjoy support in the Central Committee of the Communist Party, to be given an office, a printing house, a paper, a permit to a distribution network. All you need is money. Mr. Dollar has replaced Mr. Big Brother.

It does not mean the Polish media have become apolitical. Unlike the Anglo-Saxon press, which tries to separate news from opinions (restricted to editorial and op-ed pages), Polish media do not hide their political sympathies and all the reader can expect is that the opinion of the editor will be marked different typographically. This applies both to *Trybuna*, the heir of the official Communist Party newspaper *Trybuna Ludu* and to the child of the 1989 "Spring of the Nation," the largest circulation national newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

Censorship has been a long-forgotten institution and for younger Polish journalists the ominous name of a small

street in the city of Warsaw, where its office once was—*Mysia*—does not ring any bell. Poland has also her small Watergate-like scandals, revealed mercilessly by the media; recently it was the case of Acting Prime Minister Jozef Oleksy, reportedly spying for the Russians. *Gazeta Wyborcza* commented ironically, that "the old love does not get rusted" (Oleksy had been a medium-level communist functionaire before 1989 and had contacts with the Russian comrades), while *Trybuna* accused the accusers of disrespect for the interest of the state (the undocumented affair, which might have been blown up by anticommunists, overshadowed attempts to join NATO).

Everything in Central Europe is counted "before" and "after" 1989. Before newspapers were thin and ugly, paper was in short supply, printing machines obsolete. In a command economy the need for ads was minimal, color printing was a luxury of a few expensive or export-oriented publications. *Polityka* had a format of a big tabloid and it was really difficult to read it in a bus.

While our media owe a lot to the Western world as far as freedom of expression is concerned—no less so applies to the look. Publishers from France, Sweden, Italy and, most of all, Germany, rushed to the 40-million no-illiteracy Polish market with modern printing technology and know-how. New printing facilities have been built and old ones modernized. An advertising market has been created and specialized agencies born. As a result, a typical Polish daily newspaper has a dozen-plus pages plus some supplements, some or all pages (at least in week-end edition) are in color, and no longer must the poor reader guess

whether the picture presents the war in Chechnya, the spring coming to Slovak mountains or the entrance to the eye clinic in the city of Poznan.

Before, all newspapers belonged to the government. When RSW Prasa, which administered hundreds of publications, was broken up, morsels were distributed among individual publishers, who in turn joined hands with



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foreign ones. I experienced such a transaction myself.

At the end of 1989 the company that owned *Gazeta Bankowa* weekly (one private person, one bank, one scientific association) appointed me the editor. Two weeks later I got a cable from Paris from Jean Louis Servant Schreiber, the well-known press mogul: please come, bring some copies of your journal with you. After an hour of cross examination (Why is this title so big? Why is the news in this sequence? Why do you have profiles on separate pages?) he said: "OK, I will buy 51 percent of your paper." Why not 49 percent? "Because telephones in your country do not work well and I want to retain control." Why not 100 percent? "Because you will not work but spend my money." I was so much taken by his professionalism that I said "agreed." Only on the plane back to Warsaw did I realize I was not in a position to agree or disagree. But my publishers followed my recommendation and sold a majority stake at *Gazeta Bankowa* to Schreiber's L'Expansion group (which went bankrupt two years ago). The money we got made it possible for us to computerize the paper and to move to a different office.

Increasingly, it had become more and more difficult to maintain our position in the market without heavy expenses. Technological revolution of the Polish press would have been impossible without foreign capital. The Germans bought into some local newspapers in Katowice, Opole, Szczecin. *Rzeczpospolita* daily sold 49 percent to the French mogul Hersant. The Swiss, the Swedes, the Norwegians came to fish in the Polish pond. Even *Gazeta Wyborcza*, which has solidified its strong position, had to raise money to build a new printing house—and sold 12 percent to American Cox Enterprises.

Polish law restricts the presence of foreign capital in the electronic media to 33 percent, but printed media are open to any ownership. Not everybody in Poland is happy with such liberal regulation. More than once I have met people who were sure political influence goes hand in hand with money. Special consideration is given to German presence in the Western part of



*Polityka*, voted No. 1 weekly magazine in Poland.

Poland, the so-called regained territories, which had belonged to Germany until World War II (Wrocław, Zielona Góra and Szczecin).

I have had no experience with the Germans, but with the French, the Swiss and the Italians—and can swear that never ever have I encountered even the slightest attempt of political influence. I believe all that matters for those foreign publishers is money—and pride, a kind of pioneer satisfaction to have been among the first. In any event, I am sure, without foreign money Polish media would not look as good as they do today.

Not everybody who comes with dollars, marks or francs wins. *USA Today*

sank \$3 million in the new daily *Dziennik Krajowy*, which never appeared. Some investors expect a return on their capital only in the next century. But some make quite handsome profits. Forty million Poles buy 50 million multicolor magazines every week—to the joy of their publishers, to the despair of intellectuals.

On the pages of those magazines you see pretty and not always properly dressed girls rather than politicians trying to persuade the public that they should be the hub of "moral reconstruction," or the "forward to Europe" coalition. The two worlds merge at only one point: those magazines offer the landscape of easy, opulent, pleasant



and free life—and so do the politicians.

The leading ones (in circulation, not in editorial standard) are owned and published by the big German publishers Gruner+Jahr, H. Bauer and Axel Springer. Traditional hostility, or toleration between the two nations turned out to be less dividing than the similarity of a cultural pattern of a consumer society. Saleswomen or waitresses or nurses in Poland as well as in Germany were interested in royal weddings, what to do about hairy legs and how to lose weight. Some sociologists jokingly commented that "the Germans sustained Polish literacy."

Not everybody involved is ready to joke. One journalist from such a magazine begged me to give him a job: "I may go mad if I do not leave the place. A female student abandoned by a random lover, some complications with the exams or summer job, find a picture in one of German copies so she could look like a Pole, 17 lines in 15 min—those are my journalistic tasks."

There are by and large 10,000 journalists in the country, most of them graduates of schools of journalism, economy or history. The great political schism, which divided us with the imposition of the martial law in 1981 (and divided me from my friends in *Polityka* 14 years ago), is falling into oblivion. We have much more contemporary worries. The media—and the journalists—are much more prone to ethical corrosion. Promotional articles are commonplace, and there are no clear regulations for what is, and what is not tolerable. Unlike before there is no collective contract for the profession, because on neither side is there fair representation. The Association of Polish Journalists can hardly gather enough members once a year to elect a new chairman, and the publishers are in complete disarray.

Some medium-level journalists see, with disappointment, that to be free from the censorship does not mean to be free from problems. And an increasingly competitive society, which we are becoming, inevitably increases the stratification. Editors make more money (an improvement I have experienced myself). Very good writers dictate their

Dziś dodatek **tele**



# RZECZPOSPOLITA

Nr 290 (4243) Wydanie 3 Warszawa, piątek, 15 grudnia 1995 r. Nakład 282 158 egz. Cena 1 zł (10 000 zł)

*Rzeczpospolita was set up in the early 1980's as a Communist government daily. Since 1989 it has been independent. It is owned 51 percent by French interests and 49 percent by the government. It sells 280,000 copies, more than 90 percent by subscription.*

**PUTEX**  
15 grudnia 1995  
Nr 291, 1079 WAW  
cena 490 zł  
4  
LIT 4  
11 000 zł

**gazeta**  
WYBORCZA

Wszystki Świat  
i Szybką Nawiązanie  
wystąpić znowu Klientom  
DZ  
**DAEWOO**  
DAEWOO ELECTRONICS POLAND

*Gazeta Wyborcza is the largest national daily in Poland (500,000 copies weekdays and 800,000 weekends). Started in May 1989 as the first independent daily in Communist countries, it is 87.5 percent owned by its journalists.*

## ZYCIE WARSZAWY

*Zycie Warszawy is a small national newspaper (about 100,000 copies). It is influential in Warsaw, where it is known as the oldest daily in Poland. Also independent, it was recently sold by Italian owner Nicola Grauso to a Polish businessman, with a shift toward the left in its political leanings.*

conditions. Little money is left for the journalistic infantry.

Why did I leave *Gazeta Bankowa* to return to *Polityka*?

For one thing, I could not do much more as the editor. My foreign publishers persuaded me that in a country that is building a market economy, where so many people are starting a new business, a business paper should be growing rapidly. I knew that without their telling me. But I felt I had done what I could. I did not see any new frontier. Moreover, *Gazeta Bankowa* had 25,000 circulation, or 50,000 readers. *Polityka* has had tenfold more. Its opinionating power compared to *Gazeta Bankowa* was like a nuclear weapon versus a rifle.

But now let us look at the political background. Old scars have been healed (the problem whether the Soviets would have invaded Poland to defend socialism, if General Jaruzelski would not have done it, will probably never be

solved). *Polityka* is a free publication, independent of any government agency or political party. The old editor retired long ago and the people running the magazine today are politically meticulous.

But more important—and what I must take into consideration—my nation in both parliamentary and presidential elections absolved former communists of their former sins. I believe the journalist may, or even should, embrace his or her conviction, ideology, religion. At the same time journalists should not ignore what readers think. *Polityka*, modernized, better laid-off, with color, but above all rational, middle-of-the-road, open to the world, sells 250,000 copies. The readers must think this is the right magazine for them. I think it is the right place for me, and therefore I did not hesitate long before I accepted the invitation to go back. ■

# A Magyar Melange

*Politics Still Control Hungarian Television and Radio  
But Newspapers Are Freer and Vibrant*

By MARVIN STONE

**T**he Hungarian media is an easy mark for Western critics prone to measure it against values and practices in their own countries.

Political control of network television and radio is one reason for criticism. An overabundance of foreign ownership is another. Unseemly intrusion by banking interests, an uneven monopoly over distribution by the post office, a hangover from communist-style journalism, unethical practices and poor professional training all leave a surface impression of a media lacking dedication to the principles of a democratic society.

To draw such a picture is tempting enough, but under closer scrutiny, is it at least partly out-of-focus?

Consider two important factors:

First, the Hungarian printed press is more vibrant, relatively sophisticated and certainly freer than virtually any other press in the former Soviet bloc of Eastern Europe or the Balkans. Only Poland and the Czech Republic are comparable. Contributing to this vibrancy is the same foreign ownership that some Hungarians most violently rail against.

Secondly, one cannot weigh the media situation today without putting it in its proper historical perspective.

My first experience with the Communist-controlled Hungarian press goes back 45 years when I was based in neighboring Vienna as Central European correspondent for International News Service. Because of the Iron Curtain imposed by the Soviets, Hungary was off-limits to U.S. correspondents. We covered Hungary, as best we could, by staying in phone contact with diplomats at the American Embassy in Budapest, by reading the dull, gray propaganda sheets that passed as newspapers in those days. We also had a

stringer in Budapest named Eugen Szatmari. Szatmari was a fearless reporter and paid for it. One day in 1950 he simply disappeared from Budapest. Whether Szatmari died in one of the dark Andrassy jail cells of the communist security forces is unknown. What is known is that other journalists did forfeit their freedom there.

That was Hungary then, and for many years thereafter. Consider the red phone on every editor's desk, connected to Communist Party headquarters. A call on the red phone could command: "Don't print the resignation of so-and-so from the Central Committee," or "Give page one to the speech Prime Minister Rakosi will make tonight." Purges of non-complying editors or free-thinking reporters were not uncommon. Those who pandered to the demanding Communist rulers were rewarded with vacations at cost-free summer resorts, subsidized cafeterias, an assured income. Their papers had access to state printing presses, a state distribution system—and no need to worry about selling advertising to stay afloat.

**I**ronically, the country where press freedom was perhaps most suppressed was the first to start breaking free. The 1956 Hungarian revolution was crushed by Soviet tanks and infantry, but Moscow apparently had learned a lesson and a subsequent more liberal approach led by Hungarian communist leader Janos Kadar led to a more open media policy. So long as the printed press did not threaten the influence of state-controlled TV, limits were eased and became less severe than in neighboring Soviet bloc states. Loosening of reins on television was not forthcoming then or now, how-

ever, and as 1996 dawned, television was still caught in a political morass, partly as a result of the so-called "media wars" that started in the early 1990's.

The Hungarian communist regime of Janos Kadar was ousted in 1988 even before the fall of the Berlin wall. The next year Hungary proclaimed the abolition of communist rule and renamed itself the Republic of Hungary. Free elections led to the naming of Jozsef Antall as prime minister in 1990 and set off the "media wars."

Antall's conservative party, the Hun-



*Marvin Stone got his first view of central and eastern Europe as a foreign correspondent for International News Service, a Hearst agency later merged with United Press to form United Press International. From 1974 to 1985 he was Editor-in-Chief of U.S. News & World Report. He was Deputy Director of the United States Information Agency in the Reagan Administration and created and then closed another agency, the International Media Fund, which supported the development of free press outlets in former Communist countries. Capping a four-decade career as a journalist, Stone is a Knight International Press Fellow working from bases in Hungary and Croatia.*

garian Democratic Forum, fell under unremitting attack from "intellectuals" in the media, largely left-leaning former communists. Antall's government fought back by sacking television and radio commentators and pillorying the printed press at every opportunity.

Antall died in 1993, but his party carried on the vendetta.

Leading up to the 1994 national election, 129 mostly liberal journalists from state television and radio were punished as part of the continuing effort to still criticism of the ruling conservative coalition. At least 30 largely political and cultural programs were forced off the state's three radio networks. Almost all traces of critical programming were removed from state television. Any form of political debate was banned, preventing the opposition Hungarian Socialist Party from appearing on programs with government politicians. State television, meanwhile, was warning viewers on its leading current affairs program to beware of socialist "red barons, militiamen and mass murderers" thirsting to take over the country.

"It was shocking," said Laszlo Lengyel, head of an independent research center in Budapest. "Even the news bulletins were running blatant propaganda."

**W**ith the socialist victory in May 1994, an armistice of sorts followed—but only temporarily. The battlefield remains littered and sniping continues.

Reports Sandor Orban, a former newspaper editor and television commentator now at the Center for Independent Journalism in Budapest:

"The Hungarian media war has taken its highest toll at the state-controlled public TV and radio. The legal vacuum due to the lack of media law, the government's repeated attempts at political manipulation, the division of journalists into two hostile camps, the personnel cleansings, the inefficient use of the limited financial resources have had a devastating impact on the moral standards of the staff and the professional quality of the shows."

"However, now there is room for optimism since, exhausted after the

battles of the last five years, the parliamentary parties have reached consensus on the media law, which can be adopted by the Parliament within a few months."

**U**nless things come unstuck once more, Hungary is finally ready to enter an era of post-communist peace for its troubled television system.

First, further background.

The problem lies with the makeup of the Hungarian Parliament and its six contentious major parties. For years their members have been unable to reach a required two-thirds consensus on how to privatize state television and radio—or how to delineate the appointment of the presidents of those monopolies. For the past three years budgets have been managed directly by the Prime Minister for lack of parliamentary harmony. All this despite the fact that the Hungarian Supreme Court ordered the Parliament to pass a broadcast bill by the end of 1992. Action was avoided after 700 amendments were offered to the legislation and when the vote came, there was not a single vote in favor.

Instead, with questionable authority it claimed from a 1957 law, the government started issuing the first of a proposed 42 television and 61 radio licenses nationwide. The viability of many of these is in doubt inasmuch as power restrictions limit most of these local TV stations to serving a modest area. Local radio stations are similarly restricted.

As 1995 was ending, prospects were brightening that Parliament would finally come to terms with the dilemma it had created.

"A media law is coming," predicts Janos Horvat, a leading television authority and Nieman Fellow 1976. "But it will not be a good one. There are too many players."

In early November 1995, Parliament reached its broad agreement to set the stage for privatizing MTV-2, one of the two state-owned and operated networks. Consensus was reached, too, on the notion that MTV-1, the remaining state network, be insulated from political interference, with oversight in the

hands of independent foundations and regulatory boards.

MTV-2, while earmarked to go to private and commercial, would not be sold outright but allowed to lease a frequency for 10 years. Programs currently are broadcast on state-owned Antenna Hungaria from 32 core transmitters and 166 relay stations. Good reception reaches 98.5 percent of the population.

Hungarian television would receive 70 percent of the revenues from its concession, and another, lesser state outlet DUNA-TV, a satellite channel used primarily to broadcast to Hungarians outside the country, would receive 30 percent. A third TV frequency formerly operated by Russian occupation forces will also be offered to private firms on a lease basis.

"This will open the Hungarian media to real market forces and will give the Hungarian viewers the right to vote by means of their channel-changers," commented The Budapest Sun.

**N**othing has been decided about the fate of 3,700 state television employees. State television received 75 million dollars as a state subsidy, another 75 million from subscribers and 100 million from advertising—some quarter of a billion dollars in all.

A mini-explosion of local radio and television stations followed the easing of the moratorium on frequency allocation in 1994. Although approximately 150 radio stations, 250 television channels and 200 cable outlets are registered with the Ministry of Education and Culture, the number on the air is not easily ascertainable. It is believed that only a fraction operate on a regular basis.

Despite this increase in frequencies, local television outlets are not inviting advertising mediums. Their reach is severely limited by state authority and their programming tends to be second rate.

Here is a close-up of a typical community-financed station, of which there are dozens countrywide:

Varosi Televisio Pecs has a potential viewing audience of 300,000 in Pecs

and its surrounding area in southern Hungary. It had, since 1991, been delivered by cable to 36 large apartment houses in the city proper. In July 1995, it was one of the stations granted a frequency, allowing it to cover a 12-16 mile radius.

The station survives only because it relies for 90 percent of its operating costs on the Pecs municipal council. The station is, by law, authorized to raise only 10 percent of its revenue by selling commercial time so as not to compete effectively with the state's big regional station relaying TV-1 and TV-2. Most of this 10 percent comes not in cash but in barter, a fax machine in return for a series of commercials for Company X being an example.

The municipal county has equipped the station with a limited number of cameras, studio equipment, editing studio, control console, etc. located in a rundown but rent-free location.

Because it is a "public and educational channel with a mission," according to producer Levente Piczko, its job is to "strengthen community feeling." Programming includes a potpourri of church interviews, sports, business news, interviews with public officials—even an hour devoted occasionally to promote Pecs Zoo. And, of course, very old movies.

The staff of 20 regulars (as opposed to 300 at the local regional state TV station) is augmented by student interns and freelancers who get less than \$13 for a finished piece. Salaries for full-time staffers range from \$25 a month for administrative help to \$60 for the senior reporter who provided this information, Richard Fuchs. The city council retains the right to hire and fire the editor-in-chief of the station.

VTV-Pecs is a typical community-supported station, but its operations are not greatly different from many private, local commercial stations that dot the country. The main difference is that private stations receive no subsidy from local authorities and are thus very often undercapitalized and, accordingly, prone to suffer extremely short life spans.

While Parliament has become overwrought in its struggle to reach a con-

sensus on legislation governing over-the-air broadcasting, something is happening in Hungary similar to what happened in the United States three decades ago: cable television is hot, rising fast to challenge state and local television for audience share. Already, 40 percent of Hungarian households are hooked to cable TV, some say 50 percent.

Janos Horvat reports that 200,000 homes in Budapest receive cable, and notes: "The technology is moving faster than the law."

Cable fare in most cities averages up to 26 channels including, in addition to state TV-1 and TV-2, programs from German television, British Eurosport, BBC and Skychannel, America's CNN, NBC Superstation, TNT movies and cartoons.

Nationwide, cable usage is increasing at the rate of 15 percent a year. In Budapest, one gets 20 channels for as little as \$3 a month. In Pecs, where hookups are more costly, full cable service runs about \$12 a month. Subscriptions to regional state television in Pecs costs \$4 a month.

**R**adio in Hungary is like radio everywhere: you can't escape it—news, jazz, rock, golden oldies, contemporary, Mozart, quiz shows, public service, talk programs, call-ins—and commercials, although not as many as station managers would like.

Stations range from the one in Kaposvar (the U.S. staging base for Bosnia-bound troops) with its 20,000 potential listeners to the big, private stations in Budapest such as Radio Calypso and Juventus Radio, both reporting more than three-quarters of a million listeners. Owners include banks, private families, foreign investors, companies, cultural centers, consortiums.

But all are dwarfed by Hungarian Radio's three state-owned and operated national AM networks: Radio Kossuth, Radio Bartok and Radio Petofi.

Radio Danubius is a Budapest-based FM station, also state-owned, that claims 2.8 million listeners, although it does not extend nationwide. In the legislation pending in Parliament, Radio Danubius would be sold outright to private interests.

Hungarian Radio will remain in state hands, all three AM stations operating under semi-independent foundations, presumably to protect Hungarian Radio from political influences that have bedeviled it in the past.

And bedeviled it has been. Like state television, radio operates under strict authoritarian control. This is the operation that cast off 129 staff members (some later rehired) in what was widely interpreted as a political purge by the then-conservative government, with entire editorial teams sent walking. The image of Hungarian Radio was damaged by the firings and the ensuing manipulation of pre-election coverage running up to the 1994 election. Despite this, as noted with television, the government fell.

**A**s recently as mid-December 1995, the English-language Budapest Sun, somewhat above the fray, had damning words for Hungarian journalists: "One of the features of communism in practice was that its journalists served the information needs of the party state. Journalists weren't independent actors seeking to inform the public, but dependent activists seeking to pacify the public. This backward sense of the role of the media is one of the great legacies of communism. And despite all the talk of progress made in this region after six years of democracy, some things have changed less than others. Unlike in most of the other former communist countries, Hungary did not require its communist journalists to step down. Instead, most of the national and regional newspapers were privatized in the final days of the last communist government—with the stipulation that the editorial staffs would not be changed by the new owners. So, instead of being sent packing for deceiving the public for years, they were rewarded with pay raises and new job security by the likes of Bertelsmann and other foreign investors. Because they have not been forced to, the majority of Hungary's journalists have not changed their ways. They still serve some political or other interest group—be it left, right or center—instead of serving the public. In short, very little

has changed in Hungarian journalism since communism."

Overdrawn? Some observers insist it is. Perhaps, but not entirely. Sandor Orban, the media authority, confirms that some journalists behave as political advocates rather than objective reporters. And even with some temporary cooling of political passions, investigative journalism in the Western sense is almost completely lacking. Gossip and innuendo mimic the worst of the Western press. Journalists and government are still learning how to deal with each other. And, as Orban notes: "The important business partners of the [newspaper owners] cannot be treated negatively in the articles. This is also the case of the main advertisers..."

While political parties exert no direct ownership interest in major Budapest papers, most dailies are at least barely muted messengers of their political convictions. To the left are the giant national newspapers Nepszabadsag, as well as Magyar Hirlap, Nepszava and Kurir. The conservative label is often attached to Magyar Nemzet and Uj Magyarorszag.

**I**n one sense, Hungarian journalism is still in the Wild West stage. The fall of the communist regime brought, in the early '90's, an explosion of new periodicals. The latest information available reports 8,000 titles are registered with the Ministry of Education and Culture, although not all are publishing. They come and they go.

At one time or another 160 local, regional and national dailies are registered. In a country of 10 million people, a dozen "national" dailies exist. Although perhaps only four daily papers are consistently profitable. The truth of this is hard to divine. There probably are more—but figures are closely held.

Nepszabadsag, in Budapest, circulation: 220,000 (Bertelsmann)

Kisalfold, in Gyor, circulation: 90,000 (Lord Rothmere)

Delmagyarorszag, in Szeged, circulation: 50,000 (Bertelsmann)

Magyar Hirlap, in Budapest, circulation: 60,000 (Swiss holdings)

The others survive with local mu-



*Knight International Press Fellow Sam Teaford talks to journalists at the Independent Journalism Center in Budapest.*

nicipal subsidies, well-to-do-private citizens (in Pecs, one owner makes his money running a nightclub), foreign owners, political interests, and power brokers.

Economic conditions in Hungary are hardly bright enough to support newspapers that go into business undercapitalized, with little if any publishing know-how or management expertise and saddled with poor professional staffs. Add to that a ragged distribution network, skyrocketing newsprint costs, advertisers flocking to television and radio—and the route to bankruptcy for many becomes inevitable.

**W**hen you consider that only a handful of newspapers are profitable and that, in most cases, those "investors" who pay the freight at the others are generally tight-fisted, it becomes easy to understand the sorry state of working journalists, especially those thousands laboring outside of the capital city. Pay is paltry—\$200 to \$600 a month in Budapest, much less elsewhere. Professional training is minimal and the public's regard for working journalists is low.

As Gene Mater observed for the International Media Fund: "Hungary also

is the country where ethics and standards take on such shades of gray that newspaper reporters also were expected to sell—and write copy for—advertising. One explanation offered by a publisher was that selling advertising was necessary to augment a journalist's salary. The answer was silence."

The "good old days" of communist cradle-to-grave security, paid vacations at Lake Balaton, subsidized cafeterias, perks for journalists who were party members, are gone.

No one put the picture in clearer terms than Sandor Orban: "On the one hand, journalists are enjoying political freedom, and the newly emerged diversity of publications offers a greater choice of employment. On the other hand, job security has disappeared, and the uncertainty about the future of the non-profitable publications has resulted in a permanently stressful situation for many journalists.

"Private newspapers tend to downsize or often employ talented but inexperienced young journalists, because their wages are lower. In addition, in order to save social security expenses, at most publications journalists are asked or forced to establish sole proprietorships. Concerning taxation,

it can be advantageous for them as well but, in case of sick leave or retirement, they face a personal financial bankruptcy. Nowadays newspapers require more articles from the leaner permanent staff (often 30-40 stories per month from a reporter). At the same time they use more freelancers whose fees are, in general, low, and delays in payment are common.

"State-owned TV and radio pay considerably better than the private print press. But in the storms of the media war many journalists were deprived partly or completely of working opportunities, mostly because of political reasons. At the same time, out of the six Hungarian trade unions for journalists, four represent the interests of TV and radio employees, and those have a definite political and economic leverage. At print publications the number of organized journalists is very low, and all in all, they are the almost completely defenseless.

"The level of education and the intellectual potential of Hungarian journalists are very good. Still, slack standards can often be seen both in print and electronic media. Furthermore, it is still common that journalists consider themselves arbiters, combine fact with commentary, and openly profess political convictions in their reports. It also happens that newspapers, because of their poor economic situation, accept gifts, donations, paid trips, etc. from private firms which makes it nearly impossible to criticize the sponsor company involved in any unclear business. However, fact-based, double-checked investigative reporting is taking root, and is considered as an example to follow by most professional publications."

**W**hat does it take for a newspaper to be profitable? The common denominator seems to be: foreign ownership.

The daily *Kisalföld*, which describes itself as "Hungary's greatest daily," is published in an ultramodern plant in the northern city of Győr. It is owned by Lord Rothmere, owner of London's *Daily Mail*. Its 90,000 circulation makes it the largest regional daily paper in the country.

The secret of success? Chief Executive Stephen Chatt ascribes it to good local coverage, service to the community, enhanced four-color and special inserts (comics, business, sports, etc.). The British provided the paper with a new Goss International offset press at a cost of about \$5 million, and attendant pre-press computers and other high-priced equipment. The plant also prints two Budapest English-language papers and is scouting for more jobs.

Chatt takes credit for taking a traditional communist-era paper and moving it quickly away from polemics and closer to British journalism. "And," he adds, "we follow market research out the window. If they want naked women, we'll give them naked women." Market research is relatively alien to Hungarian newspapers.

The paper's editor, Csaba Nyerges, insists he feels no pressure from the owner. Chatt says the British want profits, not political influence, in Hungary. Business, he emphasizes, is his responsibility—and that means Western-style management.

A second successful paper, this one in the south of Hungary, is Szeged's daily *Delmagyarország*, with a circulation of 50,000. The paper, and a smaller sister "county" paper, are owned essentially by Bertelsmann of Germany, through a complex arrangement with minority Hungarian and French interests.

The paper serves Csongrád county's 420,000 citizens with a lively mixture of local news, good photography, color inserts, sports, features and an aggressive sales effort—both for subscribers and advertisers.

Editor-in-chief Imre Dlusztus, at 34, was elected by the 50-strong editorial staff, not by Bertelsmann. "They are hands off. They know local news sells, and that's what we do best." He mused that if Bertelsmann tried to impose the stuffy style of its Berlin broadsheet on his tabloid "I'd probably commit suicide."

In Szeged, success is again the result of a foreign infusion of modern technology, high regard for a competent

and probably compliant editor and smart, professional management practices.

**T**he precise extent of foreign ownership of Hungarian newspapers is a matter of some uncertainty and, in any case, shifts from time to time. One estimate is that over the last five years, through loopholes in the law, through some questionable political favoritism and, finally, through some astute business deals, foreign interests accounted for up to 80 percent of the ownership of the country's major newspapers.

Germany's Springer is a prime example of how a loophole in the law enabled a foreign firm to move quickly to gain control of eight provincial papers, taking them over for a relative pittance from local authorities eager to cash in on the "privatization" sale of former communist publications. The loophole later closed.

A visit to the largest of the Springer papers, *Dunantuli Napló*, in Pecs, bears out the general impression that foreign owners have brought benefits in the form of new technologies such as computers, laser printers, printing presses, as well as more attention to training. Deputy Editor-in-Chief Geza Gruenwald explained that Springer has occasional training programs in Budapest for reporters and desk editors from all eight Springer papers. Almost all senior editors are sent to Springer headquarters in Hamburg for their honing.

The paper, with a daily circulation of 70,000, has its own printing plant, modern offices and a distribution system based on a grid developed and operated by Springer, rather than having to depend on the local post office.

How about editorial freedom from Springer overlords?

Gruenwald says "there is no intervention on the editorial side. In the past the editor was always elected by the staff and Springer has not changed that." (Neither Gruenwald nor any other editor we spoke to would admit to editorial pressure, but there is evidence it exists, mostly in subtle ways.)

*Nepszabadság* in Budapest cut its connections with the Communist Party

in 1989, went private in 1990 and was sold to Bertelsmann for three million Deutschmarks (DM).

Managing editor Istvan Zalai said that Bertelsmann agreed to take no profits for five years and signed a non-interference compact with the editors. However, it saw its circulation plummet from 800,000 to today's print run of 300,000, leaving the number of sold copies in doubt.

Editor Zalai took issue with the contention that foreign owners keep hands off universally. Citing the firing of the editor of Magyar Hirlap by its Swiss owners for being too critical of the then President Antall, he said the British "exerted pressure" and all of Springer's editors were subservient to their owner. One man's view—but possibly very close to the truth.

Sandor Orban believes that foreign ownership has reached its high-water mark and may actually be receding. He reports that the 80 percent figure cited above has considerably diminished. Some foreign owners (British and French, primarily) sold back their shares to state enterprises or to institutions such as Postabank.

**P**ostabank, which has a position in some 40 Hungarian media outlets, is a secretive, far-reaching octopus—and growing.

An example can be drawn from a report by Herman and Nan Obermayer, who studied the situation at the weekly Magyar Narancs. Early on, the paper was largely subsidized by George Soros's Hungarian Open Society Fund to the tune of \$375,000. In 1993 Soros ended further funding.

Narancs Publisher Peter Gyorgy and Editor Andras Vagvolgyi reported that Postabank's stake had risen to 80 percent. They sounded like a couple who had sold their souls, but, they explained, it was Postabank or bankruptcy. "They have political intent, clearly," said Vagvolgyi. "Postabank is a very big force in this country."

Postabank is Hungary's third largest commercial bank, with assets of \$160 million. Its ownership is 40 percent foreign (German and Austrian) and the remainder in the hands of institutions

such as the Hungarian Post Office and the Hungarian Railways. Its CEO is Gabor Princz, a flamboyant, ambitious and dominating presence in banking and political circles, and mastermind behind the bank's growing media presence.

Secrecy is a Postabank fetish when it comes to its media holdings. In December, Postabank took control of the Budapest conservative daily Magyar Nemzet and the country's largest weekly, Szabad Fold, with its circulation of 400,000.

Postabank's newspapers are both conservative and liberal. "We will buy anything but fascist," said Gabor Szucs, Chief Editor of Kurir.

Szucs confided that Magyar Nemzet is losing \$4 million a year and when I mentioned that Magyar Narancs must be losing at least one million, he replied: "Maybe now, but with better management, they may become good investments. But we will not interfere with their editors."

It was foreign-owned papers, he insisted, that in many subtle ways exercised editorial control. He pointed out, for example, that each day Springer printed four-page inserts in Budapest to be included in all eight of its daily papers. "That is a very clear form of editorial control," he said.

**D**istribution of daily newspapers, once the sole domain of the Post Office department, is developing into a dogfight between national and regional factions, and splintering national papers as well. There apparently is no comprehensive solution to a problem that involved subscriber lists, ownership of kiosks, sorting centers, transport systems and a need for better roads.

The post office takes 38 percent of the newsstand price as its commission. It charges a small service charge for two-third of all copies unsold. Papers ordinarily wait two months to collect their share of those copies that are sold.

Those subscribers who wish home delivery do not enter their names at the papers, but at the post office, where

these lists are maintained and not submitted for review by the papers without payment of substantial sums.

Efforts to privatize distribution are moving along, but without support of regional newspapers with small enough circulations generally to manage their own distribution. Those papers with strong foreign ownership have started, as best they can, to take control of their own subscriptions and distribution.

**T**here are three universities in Hungary that are major players in journalism education at the formal level.

Among them, the Pecs school has only 60 journalism majors on a campus of 7,000 students; the Budapest school is undistinguished at best, and Szeged uses an institution in Budapest to train the bulk of its students.

I have visited all three of these journalism schools and can best sum up my reaction by quoting from a paper delivered at a symposium of The Freedom Forum by Prof. Anna Sharogradskaya of St. Petersburg University. After all, who else but the Soviet Union taught Hungarian professors how—and what—to teach?

"Students are not satisfied with their curricula; faculty are unhappy with their working conditions and low salaries; and employers complain that university grads are unequal to the demands of their jobs....Courses such as investigative reporting are non-existent. Computer-assisted reporting and design are two other examples of courses not yet taught in most schools of journalism. Many journalists still use Paleozoic technology....Professors have to be educated on how to use modern equipment, so that when it's available every student can have access to it. Journalistic ethics is an oxymoron.■

# Romania's Struggling Press

BY KENNETH STARCK

On a May morning a year ago in a spacious second-floor meeting room of the Hotel Bucharest, about 60 Romanian journalists gathered for a press conference led by Nicolae Paduraru, the eloquent president of the Transylvania Dracula Society, which was announcing plans for the First International Dracula Congress to be held later that month in Romania.

Paduraru, arguably the world's foremost authority on Dracula, at least in terms of Dracula's Romanian roots, explained to the print and broadcast journalists that the purpose of the Congress is to present a clear image of Dracula. Western people created their own story about Dracula, he says, and it is not true—it does not reflect reality. He says the Congress will try to tell the story of Dracula in an ethnographic and folkloric manner.

The intent, he goes on, is not to destroy the legend—but to correct misperceptions. He notes there will be many Western journalists in attendance, as well as journalists from all over the world. (Indeed, some 110 foreign journalists showed up. Dracula, after all, has a curious fascination that spans diverse cultures.) Yet another purpose of the Congress, he says unabashedly and with the support of the nation's Ministries of Culture and Tourism, is to create Dracula as an international tourist attraction.

Then come the reporters' questions. To one, Paduraru notes that some tourists are disappointed that Dracula (based loosely on the historical Vlad Tepes, 1431-1476, also known as Vlad the Impaler) was not a real count. He was a prince. To another question, he responds that the main organizer of the

Congress is the Transylvania Dracula Society, and that there are many such societies throughout the world, including Santa Barbara and Dallas. He notes that this is not a kitsch event, though there will be on sale many Dracula souvenir items, such as vodka (Original Vampire's Delight), wines, liqueur (Draculina for women), jewelry, decorated plates, plastic fangs, stamps, postal cards, paintings and so on. Francis Ford Coppola ("Bram Stoker's Dracula") was invited (but does not attend). Tom Cruise ("Interview with a Vampire") wasn't invited.

Then the reporters cut to the chase. What about money? Not about how much all this is going to cost or who is going to pay—but whether Romanian journalists will have their expenses paid. The cost, after all, will be about 190,000 lei (equivalent to nearly \$100 at that time). That amount will cover meals, lodging and transportation for the Congress which will begin in Bucharest and in three days make its way northward to Bistrita and Borgo Pass where the Castle Dracula straddles a mountain amidst breath-taking scenery. The journalists become angry when they are told they—or their organizations—must pay their cost of the trip. They can't afford it on their wages, they say, and they're probably right since the average wage in Romania is equivalent to about \$100 a month. Their organizations, likewise, probably won't put up the money to send a reporter to cover an event that has the dubious if not, from the average Romanian's perspective, offensive purpose of glorifying a fictional character that somehow has emerged as a morbid mascot of Romania.

The journalists complain vigorously that the sponsors of the Congress want only free publicity—unpaid advertis-

ing—since the Ministry of Tourism is paying expenses for a number of visiting journalists but not for Romanian journalists. They argue that this simply is not right.

The journalists suddenly turn on the Congress planners and the event. It becomes clear the journalists are not thinking about this event as news. It is an opportunity to market what they



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# România Liberă

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*Revolution saved three editors of this anti-Ceausescu paper from the death penalty.*

have available—space in their publications or time in their broadcasts.

The stormy meeting highlighted two dominant issues confronting Romania's press, which is still making the difficult transition from one of the most repressive systems in the world to one that since late 1989 has been driven by a free press and a market economy. Stripped to the core, the issues deal with:

- Journalism: What is it? What is news? What role do or should news media play in society? What is or should be the press's relationship to government? What about professionalism? Ethics? Government intimidation?

- Economics: Who pays? Whom does the press serve? How is independence maintained? What happens when low salaries encourage acceptance of freebies? How and why does the government exert economic influence on the press?

The questions can't get much more basic. That's what makes the press of newly emerging nations such as Romania so fascinating. The press is one part of a huge laboratory containing all the historical-social-political-economic elements that make up a society. Standing out in bold relief are the interactions and interdependence among institutions. The press, along with the other components in this laboratory, is being defined and re-defined daily. All this is happening at a fast-forward pace in which change stands out as herky-jerky motion. Merely describing events accurately is difficult enough let alone trying to understand what is going on.

Today the press of Romania is relatively weak yet comparatively free and independent. While some nations, such as Albania, might be characterized as having freedom of the press but no free press, Romania's press enjoys a great deal of freedom. But there are distinct limitations lapping over into outright restrictions. These include economic and legal pressures applied by the government that impact on availability of newsprint, distribution of periodicals, criticism of government officials and control of broadcast media. Another limiting factor in the press's evolution to fulfill its niche in a nascent democracy are generally low professional standards of journalistic performance.

Latest figures show about 45 dailies and nearly 1,000 other newspapers and periodicals in the nation, which is about the size of Oregon and has a population of about 23 million. More than 100 newspapers and periodicals are published in minority languages, including Hungarian, German, Ukrainian, Armenian and Yiddish. Most of the newspapers are financially independent, though many have close political affiliations.

In terms of broadcasting, the state dominates with two national television channels and three national public radio channels. There are 39 private television and 110 private radio stations, but their reach and impact are extremely limited. Cable systems importing foreign programming, including CNN, are readily available.

For the casual observer of the Romanian scene, it is difficult to comprehend the gulf spanning the six years from

December 1989 to now. It was near the end of 1989 when Nicolae Ceausescu was deposed in what has been called the first televised revolution, though there are many, in light of the numerous former communists who seized power, who question whether a real revolution took place. In a three-day span in December 1989 Ceausescu and his wife, Elena, were captured, tried and executed, releasing a euphoric sigh across the countryside. During the final years of Ceausescu's reign, all typewriters had to be registered with the police, which kept a sample page typed from each machine for tracing. In 1989 three editors were sentenced to death when they tried to publish an anti-Ceausescu edition of the newspaper Romania Libera (Free Romania); the December revolution intervened to keep the death sentence from being carried out.

It is hard to overestimate the extent to which the press was controlled during the final years of Ceausescu, who had come to power in 1965. Romanian media did not play much of a role in the December uprising. The media followed the lead of students and a then-unknown clergyman, László Tökés, in the western city of Timisoara. Even at the outset of the rebellion, Romanian media covered events obliquely.

Following the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime, the Romanian press suddenly basked in the joy of complete freedom. More than 2,000 publications sprang up. Economic realities forced many to expire after a short time. Still, the press was free. This was a strange experience for most journalists who were conditioned to look to official



Romanian journalists discuss coverage of minority groups at a Mass Media and Minorities conference in February 1995 in Cluj-Napoca.

authorities for instructions. Now they had to exercise judgment on the basis of the flimsiest notion of what constituted journalism in a pluralistic society. Early support for the press came from three sources: government, political parties or special interest groups and private ownership, mostly by individuals or nonpolitical groups.

Few publications made any attempt to be factual or objective, preferring instead opinions, commentaries and polemics. This style of journalism hasn't changed much over the last seven years, yet the Romanian press has made slow, steady progress in transforming itself.

Several of my journalism students at the University of Bucharest, disenchanted with the pace of change in their country, pointed out that many of the journalists practicing today are the same journalists who worked under communism. How, they asked, can you trust these journalists or the media they work for?

Among the inhibiting factors for the Romanian press, ironically, was the introduction of the free market economy. Some journalists sought a sheltered status (e.g., government subsidies for newsprint). As noted by Virginia Gheorghiu in her thesis, "The Functions of the Media During the Transition from Totalitarianism to Democracy" (University of Cluj, 1991), this desire for "social protection" emanated not from concern for freedom of the press "but rather their [journalists']

prosaic concern to ensure the survival of their own newspaper and the preservation of their own earnings in a society that becomes more and more competitive and pitiless."

To be sure, press freedom sprang from the ruins of totalitarianism into a difficult environment, including shortages of paper, capital, modern equipment and trained personnel. At the same time, the Romanian press has been searching for its own appropriate social role in the framework of a market economy. At present this role falls somewhere between the philosophies of a libertarian (*laissez-faire*) press and a socially responsible press.

Intense competitive pressures pervade the market system. On the one hand, the press strives to inform the public and build national cohesion. On the other hand, the press functions in a highly competitive atmosphere in search of public support. This tension between the critical/competitive and the striving for public consensus, as Gheorghiu rightly points out, represents a dominating characteristic of Romania's press today.

Sensationalism and slanted reporting are still rampant. Editors themselves acknowledge the difficulty of balancing professional journalistic performance with the twin economic needs of attracting readers and advertisers.

Among 12 leading journalists, mostly from Bucharest and including newspaper and broadcast, interviewed last

year, 10 referred to the news media's primary role as a conveyor of information. But several noted that the main purpose of some publications was to destabilize government through constant criticism of officials and that few publications—maybe 5 percent—try "to uncover the truth about events." Added a broadcast official, "Journalists are not well prepared. There is no objectivity. There is no clear mirror of reality."

Perhaps the main problem for the press is the need to help build from the shambles of long repression a civil and information society. It is a tail-chasing exercise. An aggressive and independent press is essential in producing a social dialogue leading to a democratic consensus. Yet, to some extent, people must be receptive to the establishment of a civic society in which they believe they have a voice in their government.

Other problems are just as difficult for the press. These are the problems caused by an imperious government clinging to power at all costs. The government has proposed stiff penalties—for example, up to seven years in prison—for journalists libeling or defaming public officials. Similar penalties would await journalists charged with violating laws pertaining to state secrets. These efforts so far have faltered following protests from various groups, including the Romanian Helsinki Committee and the Committee to Protect Journalists. Such restrictive legislation also is sure to be scrutinized by those organizations the Romanian government is eager to join, including the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Nonetheless, government efforts to strong-arm the press remain ominous and ever-present.

A notable instance of government intimidation occurred last summer. A reporter for *Ziua* (Today) on a trip covering a visit to Moscow by Romanian President Ion Iliescu broke a story that Iliescu, while a student in Moscow in the 1950's, was recruited by the KGB, Russia's secret police. The government brought charges of slander against the reporter and the newspaper's editor, accusing them of "insulting authority."

If convicted, the journalists could face up to five years in prison. Regardless of outcome, the effect on the press has to be inhibiting.

The government has other devices to muzzle the press, such as controlling the production of newsprint within Romania. At the same time, imported newsprint carries high tariffs, further boosting the cost of doing business. The number of pages in newspapers often varies depending on availability of newsprint. There are also occasional reports of stacks of undelivered bundles of newspapers found intentionally discarded alongside railway tracks.

Another obstacle to the press is a Romanian law stipulating that only the equivalent of five percent of a company's net profit can be deducted as legitimate business expenses when it comes to advertising and sales promotion. The law obviously restricts media advertising.

When it comes to broadcast, the government maintains tight control on the issuance of licenses for private radio and television stations. Officials are clearly cognizant of the importance of television in elections. Polls commissioned by the Soros Foundation for an Open Society indicate that television is the "principal source of information regarding the national political life" for 60 percent of the public. Radio claims about 20 per cent; newspapers, only 9 percent. This is significant when one considers that state-controlled television takes a purely non-critical stance toward the presidency and the government in power.

If the woes of a weak economy and government intrusion don't provide enough obstacles to the development of a strong press in Romania, there's always the professional plight of journalists themselves. They are underprepared and underpaid and don't always have a clear notion of their mission. They meet with frustration in dealing with government officials who often feel no obligation to respond to reporters' requests for information. Said an editor for *Jurnal National* (National Journal), "The journalist has to be more persistent than a mole."

For journalists, the transformation

of the press has meant a confusion of professional values. As Peter Gross has asked in a book-length study of the Romanian press (*Mass Media in Revolution and National Development: The Romanian Laboratory*, Iowa State University Press, forthcoming), "The profession itself lacks certain, accepted definition: what is journalism? how is it to be practiced? what are the parameters of its practice? what role is it to play in society?"

Journalism education and professional retooling have been two main challenges. Several universities offer journalism degrees, including the University of Bucharest and West University of Timisoara. But only in 1994 did the universities graduate the first post-Ceausescu era journalists. The programs themselves operate on budgets less than meager. With limited success, they enlist the support of organizations in other parts of the world.

Continuing education or retraining efforts were largely nonexistent until the Independent Journalism Center opened its doors in November 1994. It is operated by the New York-based Independent Journalism Foundation, which has similar centers in Prague, Bratislava and Budapest. Staffed by Knight International Press Fellows and others, the center offers programs dealing with a wide range of journalistic topics, from basic reporting methods to ethics, from technology to press law, from investigative reporting to layout and design, from management to journalistic principles in a democratic society. Complementing the Center is a Freedom Forum News Library, which makes available at no cost to any interested journalists a variety of print and electronic sources of information.

Journalists themselves are aware of the lack of professionalism. They point to excessive sensationalism and the passion for profits. And there's the matter of professional preparation. "Four years ago I was an engineer!" exclaimed a young journalist from Iasi. "Two years ago I started a radio station. I'm still learning."

A persistent problem for journalists is dealing with the concept of objectivity, admittedly a dubious notion in the

practice of journalism anywhere. Editors interviewed tended to downplay the importance of objectivity. "Absolute objectivity is surely utopian," asserted an editor of *Evenimentul Zilei* (Event of the Day), the nation's highest circulation newspaper at more than 200,000. Editors maintained that there was a need for information that served wider social rather than special interests, but that goal at this time seems elusive.

In the struggle for survival, what happens to professional ethics? Editors with one voice endorsed the need for appropriate ethical standards but also felt the press tended to fall short. An editor at *Adevarul* (Truth), perhaps paraphrasing Brecht's line about the need for food coming before the need for morality, said of ethics, "There are limits imposed here just for surviving. These limits must be sought at the edge between sensationalism and morality." Most news media have policies calling for corrections. Newsroom policies generally prohibit conflicts of interest, but only blatant conflicts tend to be taken seriously. Few organizations have codes of ethics. The several professional organizations for journalists tend to be ineffectual.

Despite what appears to be a dismal portrait of journalism in Romania, the basic ingredients are in place for a vibrant press. Freedom of expression has taken root. Economic and government threats persist, but these are battles that no press ever conquers completely. The pace of future developments will depend on two factors.

One is the level of encouragement and material support provided to the press and journalism education by organizations outside Romania. The other consideration—perhaps more problematic—is what happens inside the country politically. Politics and economics, after all, are basic to everything else, including the press. If the government fails to move along the path of democratic principles and market reforms and, instead, reverts to repression, the press will be pulled along like a puppy at the end of a leash. Regardless of what happens, the outcome will take longer than anyone anticipated. ■

# No "Peace Dividend" for the Balkan Press

By MARVIN STONE

If independent Balkan journalists are correct, "peace" in their region will not make their lives easier in the foreseeable future. The prospect remains grim—and may even darken—for independent newspapers, radio and television stations. That was the consensus of 140 men and women representing all of former Yugoslavia at a conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia in mid-November, 1995. The meeting—"A Strategy for Independent Media in the Peace Process"—was sponsored by the International Federation of Journalists and the International Federation of Newspaper Publishers and drew participants from Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia, Slovenia, Kosovo and Vojvodina.

The pessimism, almost universally shared, was based on reports from journalists themselves. "For some of us here," said Serbian journalist Sasa Mirkovic, "the paradox will be that war or peace doesn't really make a big difference." His contentions:

- Peace will not bring democracy to nourish a free press.
- Peace will not bring a market economy. The forces striving against privatization in favor of a strong government control are still dominant.
- Peace may bring an attitude in the West that, with peace, help is no longer needed to support independent media.
- Peace will not bring legality. Laws that guarantee the freedom of the press and freedom of speech are either non-existent, underdeveloped or only enforced at random.
- Peace will not bring a higher level of professionalism. The factors defining the level of professional development are related to experience, the general level of education and the financial capabilities to develop professional skills.

The final report of the conference, in echoing those points, added: "A suc-

cessful conclusion of the current peace talks [in Dayton, Ohio] will not in any way represent an end to the critical problems of freedom of expression in the republics and territories of former Yugoslavia. Indeed, a new struggle will begin for independent media which must emerge from crisis and mere survival...This will be a long process, requiring a long term strategy."

Many, if not all, journalists felt that the signing of a peace treaty would not change the current hostile environment weighing heavily on press freedom.

In general, media independence in virtually all the former Yugoslav Republics took a step back in the past years of warfare engulfing Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia. Journalists faced extraordinary adversity, keeping alive freedom of expression against hatred and war.

Government control of nationwide television networks, as well as many radio stations and newspapers, remains a major obstacle to freedom of expression.

Limits are placed on independent media through systematic and subtle (and not-so-subtle) pressures. Examples cited at the conference:

- Reporters are still being ambushed and beaten up. Stacks of opposition newspapers are burned in the streets. Distribution of unfriendly newspapers is made difficult. In most places the government keeps a tight hold over newsprint sales, petroleum for delivery vans, foreign exchange for out-of-country equipment. Pressure is put on business to refuse to advertise in antagonistic papers, radio and television. Investigative journalism is discouraged.

Then, too, continuing inflation has priced many papers out of reach, with plummeting circulation the result. Papers are pushed to the brink of extinction.

Here are highlights of reports from individual countries. (Slovenia, the host, did not enter the discussions.)

## Serbia

Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic "has one goal, to remain in power," said Milutin Mitrovic of the Belgrade publication *Ekonomska Politika*. He added: "Oppressive rule will continue for another 10 years." His fear is that peace will bring a falloff in international interest and support of anti-Milosevic forces.

From all evidence, harassment of independent media is continuing at all levels. One report cited the past year "as the darkest for free media—political, economic and legal." Takeover of local independent media continues, newsprint is rationed, pressure against businesses not to advertise in unfriendly publications is strong. Opposition media are pilloried as "traitors of Serbian national interests." The takeover of *Borba* is well-known. Harassment of Radio-TV Studio B is relentless.

Gordana Logar, former editor of *Borba*, told the roundtable that "young journalists are confused—they are being brainwashed to the extent they don't understand what independent media means." Many journalists, she reported, were on the verge of poverty. She pleaded for more training, for an open window on the West. "We need to share the principles of other countries."

In February, Serbian authorities revoked the registration of the Soros Foundation Centers in Serbia and Montenegro, which had been working to raise the skills of journalists. With the support of the U.S. Government and the European Union, Soros applied for a new license.

Looking to the future, Professor Miroslav Radojkovic warned that if reins do loosen, Serbian media will be faced with stiffer competition, some conceivably coming from foreign investors.

His main point: competition between independent media will force constriction, not expansion. The local radio and television stations that now freely

pirate music, satellite programs and movies will be forced to stop this practice, thus putting many weaker broadcasters out of business.

Some suggestions for the future from Radojkovic:

- Gain more information on how to deal with foreign owners.
- Foster stronger competition with state media monopolies.
- Improve the quality and diversity of independent broadcasting.
- Undermine the state's monopoly.
- Improve management.
- Keep up with modern technology.
- Stop living on foreign handouts.

### Montenegro

Belgrade's influence in this rump republic (Montenegro and Serbia now form the Republic of Yugoslavia) is everywhere, in state-controlled press, radio and television. The Serbian aim, through its propaganda outlets, is "total denial of any form of Montenegrin national and state identity."

Independent media, on the other hand (Monitor, Radio M, Montena Fax among them) link Montenegro's ruling party with Milosevic, while stressing that Belgrade considers Montenegro nothing more than a province of "Greater Serbia."

Monitor's Editor, Miodrag Perovic, said he doesn't expect much change if peace takes hold. Yugoslavia, he stressed, has never had a tradition of a free press. The economy, too, is a hindrance. Monitor, a weekly magazine since 1990, sells for 22 dinars, which represents 5 to 10 percent of a purchaser's daily wages.

The government harasses Monitor continually and one of the magazine's reporters is in prison for an offensive article; his mother was the subject of gunfire aimed at her. Journalists are frequently the target of phone threats.

### Croatia

Two of the many editors who attended from Croatia typify, in oddly different ways, the mixed media picture in that country.

One, the Editor of Bumerang, a weekly published in Osijek in Eastern Croatia, was beaten up severely by po-

# Feral Tribune



*Feral Tribune, which describes itself as anarchistic, independent and heretical, wraps a satirical cover around serious contents. Published weekly in Zagreb and Split, it is under pressure from the Tudjman regime in Croatia.*

lice three days before the 1995 parliamentary elections for obliquely criticizing President Franjo Tudjman. The other, Editor Slavko Goldstein of Zagreb's influential bi-monthly political journal Erasmus, earlier directly called for Tudjman's ouster. He was left alone.

Which case is more typical? Talks with Croatian journalists indicate "both" and "neither." There has been no shortage of harassment similar to that which befell Goran Lauder, the young Bumerang Editor.

A report from the roundtable's coordinator, IFJ/FIEJ, refers to "the degradation of individuals and the humiliation of professional journalists." Two journalists from the satirical weekly La Kost were arrested and fined for "offending moral feelings of some readers in a public place." A woman writer for the anti-war bi-weekly Akzin was beaten by police, first with their hands, then their guns. They did not like her articles. The police went unpunished. Threats and harassment, some encouraged by members of Tudjman's faction in Parliament, are part of journalists' lives.

On the other hand, while Tudjman keeps a vise-like grip over the three national television networks, and tries to make certain that both national radio and local community stations stay firmly in line, he abides less-widely circulated publications such as Goldstein's Erasmus.

The danger for these publications, principally the country's five dailies—only one of which, Novi List, is free of government control—is in their becoming too critical, too satirical. Two years ago, through a legal ruse, Tudjman's

party effectively castrated Slaboda Dalmacia of Split, then the country's most respected daily. His people simply turned the paper over to allies, who in turn dismissed top editors and staff and brought in flunkies.

Some of those editors, in turn, started the weekly Feral Tribune, which resumed an openly independent stance. The reaction? Feral Tribune faced 15 lawsuits in courts notoriously under political influence. The paper is threatened with an 80 percent increase in newsprint cost, an honor already bestowed on Arkzin, another independent journal. At one time Feral Tribune was penalized with a punitive "pornography tax," presumably for showing Tudjman in an unflattering light.

Tudjman's credo seems to be: you can be independent if you are not too independent. Or in any way of a size that threatens his four controlled daily newspapers and his TV-radio monolith. By sitting atop newsprint, means of distribution and the printing presses, he maintains his desired degree of control.

The point, according to the IFJ/FIEJ report is: "Strong pluralist, critical and democratic tendencies exist in Croatian society. Unfortunately, the situation in Croatian television, radio and the majority of the papers means that actions that strengthen and defend pluralist and democratic values are not given enough media exposure."

Goldstein of Erasmus insists that Tudjman "is in love with the past" and has used the war to turn an emergency situation into a permanent one. But he is not without optimism that the current grim media picture will change. "Another two years," he predicts.

## Bosnia

Bosnia is a very special case. Where else do you find 16- and 17-year-old boys working as "professional" reporters as they do in Sarajevo? Where else do you find radio and TV anchormen being paid in onions and frozen peas, supplied as barter by advertisers?

Where else do you find newsrooms without electricity, reporters gathering around wood-burning stoves to keep their fingers nimble? Where else do you find newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations in such proliferation that the life expectancy of some may be measured in months, if not weeks?

By one count Bosnia in mid-1995 had 170 magazines, uncounted newspapers, 32 local radio stations and 16 local TV stations, in addition to the state radio-television monopoly (RTV) in the areas controlled by the Bosnian government army.

Since the signing of the Dayton agreement new publications have appeared and new radio and TV stations have gone on the air in Bosnia Herzegovina. The daily *Oslobodjenje*, which was the only paper publishing every day during the siege of Sarajevo, has started a parallel daily edition in Frankfurt, Germany, and distributed it internationally. *Oslobodjenje* has also introduced a new weekly magazine, *Svijet* (The World), which is distributed both in Bosnia and abroad. The pre-war Sarajevo daily *Vecernje novine* (Evening Newspaper) has resumed regular publication. And there is a new daily, *Dnevni Awaz* (Daily Voice) published with material support of the ruling Bosnian Muslim party, SDA. There are also numerous new weeklies, not only in Sarajevo but also in Tuzla, Zenica, Banjaluka, Mostar and other Bosnian towns. Most of the radio and TV programs are controlled by nationalistic parties but there are exceptions to that, such as Radio and TV 99 and Radio Zid in Sarajevo, as well as some small radio stations throughout Bosnia.

Reasons for this multitude are twofold:

The government in Sarajevo has taken little action to deter unlicensed entrepreneurs, ranging from college professors to black marketeers. All that

needs to be done is to fill out a form registering your company as a public-information supplier. Getting a frequency, however, can be more difficult.

The Sarajevo government, it is reported, tends to ignore it when local authorities put local radio stations off the air for political reasons. Overall, independent radio flourishes without interference in the larger cities.

A second reason for the proliferation is the low cost of doing business. Pirating of Western TV programming, is an accepted way of doing business.

Wages for employees are low (by one account, the scale is 10 percent of what it was before the war) and are negotiated by barter or are not paid at all. "Employment status" alone is valuable. It can keep an able-bodied man from being mobilized into the army.

The head of the Media Center in Sarajevo, Boro Kontic, talked of the widespread disruption of the economy; of the flight abroad of older, experienced journalists and the desperate need to train a new generation of professionals; of the lack of legal restraints, and of the dedication and courage of those journalists still at their desks.

"We may have a lot of media, but no one is making a profit except one radio and two television stations," he said. "Everything else is built on air."

Newspapers operate under appalling conditions. Because of low wages it is not possible to maintain professional standards.

Newsprint, of course, is a serious problem, much supplied as humanitarian aid. Disjointed distribution systems is one reason publications rise and fall so quickly. Ink is often in short supply, but three large printing houses are available, the largest of these in Sarajevo, a majority of whose stock is owned by the government. Circulation is limited by necessity and advertising is scarce. One report characterizes the print media in Bosnia as leading "something of a twilight existence in the context of war."

Although one participant at the conference pleaded for the "need for outside political pressure on the Bosnian government to promote the freedom of speech," few others took up the cause. It was generally recognized that the two

daily papers published in Sarajevo—*Oslobodjenje* and *Vecernje*—enjoy relative editorial freedom, though *Oslobodjenje* is 64 percent owned by the state, and *Vecernje* 49 percent. On the other hand, both private radio and TV are closely monitored for egregious departures from patriotic themes.

Editors agreed it would be unrealistic to believe that Bosnia will ever return to its pre-war stability. Said Kontic: "We certainly must start thinking about the complete change that will be needed. But right now we are only thinking survival."

## Macedonia

This small country has giant media problems. In addition to the usual economic problems, strongman rule in Skopje weighs on press freedom. "The state acts in a foul way," reported Goran Gavrilov of independent Radio Kanal 77. "It has declared war on us, demanding that private radio be banned, using blackmail, cutting advertising rates to starve us out."

As evidence of the advertising war, Gavrilov said that state radio had slashed the cost of a 30-second commercial from about \$1 to about 20 cents. Private stations were forced to follow suit.

In today's Macedonia, run by a coalition of left-wing parties (following widespread charges of election fraud last year), the state operates three channels, blanketing the country.

Private radio exists in a gray area for lack of legislation for the licensing. The result is a weed patch of at least 120 struggling stations, largely playing pirated music and operating on a shoestring with poor staffs and even poorer technical equipment.

Gavrilov of Radio Kanal 77, one of the many private stations, talked of the needs for adequate legal provisions. He saw some hope that the government would ultimately accept the idea of private mass media.

Independent television appears to be in similar straits. Macedonian State Television (MRT) broadcasts on three channels, a pro-government propaganda machine that monopolizes air time, sells commercial time and gath-

LIST GODINE  
U SVIJETU 1992.

## OSLOBODENJE

BOSANSKOHERCEGOVAČKI NEZAVISNI DNEVNIK

SARAJEVO  
GODINA L  
Broj 16241Ponedjeljak, 30.  
avgusta/kolovoza  
1993. godine

Cijena 10000 BHD

ODLUKA DVODNEVNOG ZASJEDANJA SKUPŠTINE RBiH

## GLAS ZA MIR - S GARANCIJOM

*The top of the front page of Oslobodjenje for August 30, 1993. The banner said: Signature for Peace-With a Guarantee.*

ers subscription fees from citizens, posing formidable competition to independent operators.

One of these independents, Predrag Cemerikic, the founder of A-I-T television, reported that the 10 private TV stations in the country are hobbled by "the poor work habits, the incompetence, of technicians and others trained in the Communist system." Common in the Macedonian media, he said, was the frequent necessity of dealing in "dirty money," the need to bribe local government officials from closing down a TV station.

Newspapers and magazines are of small concern to the ruling coalition because they exert so little influence. The favored pet of authorities has been Nova Makedonija, a leading daily close to one of the coalition partners. This company publishes the only other daily in the country. It also has a stranglehold in the magazine field—in Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish languages. Conveniently, the state owns the only offset roto printing press and has given it over exclusively to the Nova Makedonija conglomerate.

### Recommendations

First, from the official summary: To ensure that "peace" is translated into democratic institutions, healthy reconstruction and economic development, the West must insist that independent and free media be a precondition, an essential feature. Thus, said the report, these conditions will be necessary:

- Elimination of legal and other ob-

stacles to the exercise of independent journalism.

- Establishment of a legal framework for the free flow of information and the exercise of pluralistic and independent journalism.

- Enactment of laws and regulations that guarantee professional independence and pluralism of opinion in broadcasting media.

- Support of media efforts to become economically self-sufficient and independent. In particular, this will mean the creation of independent printing and distribution facilities for the written press, and broadcasting transmission systems accessible to private operators.

The journalists spoke in more specific terms. Primarily, they asked the West to constantly monitor incidents of curtailment, suppression and subordination of independent media. Strong appeals were made that "outsiders" protest when journalists are abused or jailed.

They recognized that outside aid should be supportive, and not their chief means of continued survival and growth. Nevertheless, individual pleadings for more outside help covered everything from requests for mobile telephones to costly transmitters.

The need to raise the level of professionalism was frequently cited—workshops for young reporters lacking in basic skills, advice on how to deal with prospective foreign investors, training in computer literacy and Internet know-how, management and marketing counseling.

### Postscript

Conditions in the region are worsening and support for independent media is more needed than ever if there is to be any chance for democracy to take root. Unfortunately, with the notable exception of the magnanimity of George Soros, help for the media has been relegated to a low priority by most private U.S. organizations.

U.S. government programs, with the exception of a substantial AID program for Croatia and several modest USIA programs, are niggling since the expiration of the International Media Fund. Serbian independent journalists in particular are embittered by the lack of U.S. interest. "What are we, the black hole of Europe?" asked the director of the Belgrade Media Center.

By contrast, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, UNESCO—through the International Federation of Journalists and the International Federation of Newspaper Publishers—as well as from individual European countries (notably British, French and Swedish) have recognized that an independent media is intimately related to the health and diversity of society in this part of Europe.

What is needed is for AID, through its democracy-building programs, and for private U.S. organizations as well, to take a fresh look at the opportunities in the former Yugoslavia, and to do something of lasting value. ■

# Albanian Print Free, Not TV or Radio

BY ROBERT ELSIE

On November 6, 1994, Albanians in a referendum rejected the only democratic constitution in the history of their country, a charter that for the first time would have guaranteed them basic rights and freedoms that other Europeans have taken for granted for decades.

Despite the massive rejection, everyone who had read the draft constitution agreed that it was, in general, an excellent work and was well up to contemporary European standards. From the very start, though, the referendum campaign was waged as a political election and was interpreted by all sides as a vote of confidence or no-confidence in the current government.

It is thus more than apparent that, in their rejection, the Albanian electorate did not vote against the new constitution, and certainly not against freedom and democracy, but simply against the Democratic Party and President Sali Berisha.

Much credit, however, must be given to Berisha and his Democratic Party. They have opened Albania to the outside world, paved the way for the country's integration into Europe, swiftly introduced the foundations of a market economy after decades of socialist mismanagement and managed to maintain the principles of pluralism and parliamentary democracy in a country devoid of democratic traditions.

Compared to Russia and to many other Eastern bloc countries, Albania has advanced rapidly in its reforms. Still, while the change has been breathtaking, Albania is Europe's basket case and will remain so for some time.

For the Albanian voter, frustration and discontent with the state of the nation, and thus with the government running it, stem from immediate con-

cerns such as mass unemployment or jobs at such low salaries that it is impossible to make ends meet. After the fall of the dictatorship many Albanians had naive expectations that tiny Albania, with its pristine mountains and sparkling, untouched beaches could become a "second Switzerland" within a matter of years.

Reality has now set in. The lack of jobs and of any perceptible economic growth or foreign investment has created a climate of general despair and bitterness in the population.

Perhaps the single most important element that caused the referendum to backfire was the campaign itself. Night after night for two weeks, Albanian state television broadcast deafening propaganda in favor of the constitution. Media overkill at its best.

In the initial days, the 8 p.m. news was filled with dutiful citizens lauding the president's decision for a referendum. For a whole week thereafter, the nation, deprived of all other national and international news, followed tumultuous scenes of President Berisha on his campaign trail with a repetition of virtually the same scenario every night: the arrival of the president in his convoy, populist speeches to the jubilating masses, expressions of loyalty from local mayors and parliamentarians, a visit to the home of a veteran or local dignitary declaring his avid support for the new constitution, and finally the departure for the next town, amidst tears, applause and much waving of flags.

Albanian radio and television had given definitive proof that it was just as servile to the ruling Democratic Party as it had once been to the communist Party of Labor. Public reaction was bitter and allergic.

The reality behind such organized rallies soon became a topic of open discussion, too. Attendance had been encouraged by traditional methods. A school teacher from Elbasan, for instance, was forced to sign a document promising that he would attend the local rally with all his pupils. Otherwise he would be transferred to a remote mountain village. Groups and individuals who distributed tracts against the constitution were arrested and severely mishandled by the police.

Regular viewers of Albanian television have known for some time now that this state-run institution makes



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absolutely no endeavor to be impartial or politically neutral. Journalists and broadcasters lament privately about government censorship, about the frequent calls from ministries and people in high places, telling them to broadcast or not to broadcast certain interviews or footage, but they are powerless to resist.

Since state employees in Albania have no job contracts or security, they know full well that they can be fired for the slightest deviation from the party line. As such, the opposition rarely gets a say on radio or television.

In the print media, the situation is entirely different. Here, freedom of the press would seem to have no problem asserting itself. The first independent newspaper in post-communist Albania was Rilindja Demokratike (Democratic Rebirth), the voice of the Democratic Party then in opposition, which began publication in the winter of 1991. There are now literally dozens of newspapers published regularly in Tirana, most of which are associated with political parties or interest groups.

Though the level of journalism leaves much to be desired, basic freedom of the press seems to prevail. Of the present opposition newspapers, the most interesting is no doubt *Koha Jonë* (Our Time). The government made a rather clumsy attempt last year to clamp down on *Koha Jonë* when it was still basically a provincial scandal sheet from Lezha. The newspaper's editors, Aleksandër Frangaj and Martin Leka, were arrested and sentenced on January 30, 1994 for "divulging military secrets."

But the newspaper itself survived and indeed flourished as a result. Since that time, no overt attempt has been made to curb press freedom, although no one would deny that the opposition press is continually harassed. The journalistic standards of *Koha Jonë* have improved somewhat in recent months and, despite its stiff price (30 lek as opposed to 10 lek for Rilindja Demokratike), it has become by far the most widely read daily newspaper in the country.

Rilindja Demokratike, now the official organ of the ruling party, never succeeded in evolving into a serious, readable periodical (even by modest

Albanian standards), such as *Gazeta Shqiptare* (The Albanian Gazette), co-published by an Italian newspaper in Bari, or Rilindja (Rebirth), published by the Kosovo-Albanian community in exile, with a parallel edition under a different name printed in Prishtina.

Is Albania a democratic country in which human rights and basic freedoms are respected? This answer must be yes and no. Much progress has been made in this direction in the last four years, in particular under the influence of the Democratic Party and Berisha. When compared to the more advanced nations of Europe, however, Albanian democracy looks a bit tarnished.

With the leader of the opposition, Fatos Nano, languishing in Tepelena Prison, with the Albanian police still renowned for their rural hebetude, brutality and ignorance of civil rights, and with the new secret service, SHIK (Shërbim Informativ Kombëtar/National Information Service), opening mail, listening to phone calls and sniffing about in everybody's business, there is cause for concern.

Albania is not a country of long-standing democratic traditions upon which the present generation can rely. Its history is one of tyranny and oppression: five long centuries of autocratic Ottoman rule up to 1912, a decade of political chaos, 15 years (1924-1939) of dictatorship under Ahmet Zogu, a landowner and general who on September 1, 1928 proclaimed himself "Zog the First, King of the Albanians." Fascist occupation during the Second World War and, last but certainly not least, almost half a century of isolation and unbridled terror under Enver Hoxha's surrealist Party of Labor (1941-990).

A democratic constitution, if it can now be passed by parliament and approved in some form by the electorate, would certainly help consolidate Albania's fledgling democracy and encourage economic growth. A constitution alone will not suffice, though. The problems facing the country are simply too overwhelming and urgent everywhere you look. It is doubtful whether any government or political party in Albania at the moment could come to terms with them and satisfy the impatient electorate. ■

## Albanian Peril In Kosovo

BY ROBERT ELSIE

Kosovo, the dust-swept Plain of the Blackbirds in the southern Balkans, is many things to many people. For the majority of its inhabitants, it is the self-declared Republic of Kosovo under foreign military occupation, a country longing for democracy and freedom from the brutal Serbian yoke, an ethnic-Albanian territory since the beginning of time.

For the small Serbian minority, Kosovo is a nostalgic reverie of Old Serbia, the very cradle of Serbian Orthodox civilization overrun by the Turkish-Moslem hordes and a remaining part of Yugoslavia ruled from Belgrade. For all of its inhabitants, it is the powder-keg of Europe, a land of passions.

Albanians and Serbs have been living together in Kosovo for centuries now. Though never completely at ease with one another, they have, during happier eras of their common history, managed to co-exist in friendship and harmony. In many periods, though, relations between the two peoples have been tense.

Since the Serbian military took direct control of Kosovo in 1990 against the will of the Albanians who now make up 85 to 90 percent of the population, the situation has once again become explosive. Serbian expansionist dreams in Bosnia and Croatia have been paralleled there by an unrelenting and ruthless will to make Kosovo Serbian and Serbian only.

The Serbian authorities began their takeover of Kosovo by halting all radio and television broadcasts except programs in Serbian and by shutting down Rilindja, the only Albanian-language daily newspaper in Kosovo.

Step two was the exclusion of Albanians from the University of Kosovo in the autumn of 1991. Education at the university is presently available only to Serbian students with Serbian teach-

ers and professors. Albanian-language secondary schools and elementary schools are being eliminated in a bid to transform the people of Kosovo into uninformed, malleable peasants.

In this state of willfully created chaos, the sole defense of the Kosovo-Albanian people, ignored by the international community and more or less abandoned by Albania, are its intellectuals, writers and educators. They have not fled the country and are courageously endeavoring to give direction to an unarmed, frightened and disoriented population. Ibrahim Rugova, a noted literary critic and now President of the self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo, has worked miracles in channeling the extreme frustration of his isolated people into passive resistance at the most.

The two million or so inhabitants of Kosovo have been without their own television channel for five years. A private channel in Kosovo, even if it could be financed, would not be tolerated by Belgrade. The two-hour satellite TV program on RTSh (Albanian Radio & Television), began in the autumn of 1993 and broadcasts from Tirana every evening, reaching many viewers with satellite dishes throughout Kosovo. It is popular, despite the modest quality of broadcasts and the lack of depth in coverage of affairs in Kosovo. About half of Kosovo, the western part but not Prishtina, the largest city, also receives RTSh with traditional antennas.

The meager and tendentious half-hour Albanian-language news program broadcast daily on state-controlled Serbian television in Prishtina, translated from Serbian and read by Serbian speakers, is hardly watched in view of the political climate; it is rejected by the vast majority of Kosovo Albanians as crude Serbian propaganda.

Radio is a more widespread source of information in Kosovo, although since the closing down of Radio Prishtina the Albanian speakers in Kosovo can certainly be considered the most disadvantaged consumers on the European continent. State-controlled Serbian Radio in Prishtina transmits censored and highly tendentious news bulletins in Albanian every day but, as with television, such radio broadcasts

are largely boycotted by the public.

No private or independent radio broadcasting has arisen in Kosovo as yet, not even an underground station. Tuning into programs from neighboring Albania was always illegal for Kosovo Albanians. Nonetheless, the medium-wave broadcasts from Radio Tirana and Radio Kukës are listened to regularly in homes throughout Kosovo, as is Radio Tirana's special half-hour daily service for Kosovo.

Short-wave listeners can tune into daily broadcasts of world news and current events in Albanian not only from Radio Tirana, but also from a number of foreign stations. The most popular of these for Kosovo Albanians is the Albanian-language service of the Voice of America, the three daily broadcasts of which are considered well-informed and up-to-date on current events. Increasingly popular is the late-night news program broadcast by Deutsche Welle (Cologne).

The director of the Albanian-language service from Cologne, journalist Adelheid Feilcke-Tiemann, during a visit to Kosovo in April 1994, was interrogated by the Serbian police for six hours and all of her notes, film material, recordings and money were confiscated. Since 1993, two half-hour programs in Albanian have also been broadcast daily by the BBC, which provides excellent coverage of world affairs and a survey of the Albanian press.

The Rilindja newspaper, formerly the only Albanian-language daily in Yugoslavia, is now published in parallel daily editions in Tirana for Albania and in Switzerland for Western Europe and is soon to begin publication in an expanded edition in Germany. Neither of the present editions is available in Kosovo. Rilindja's current replacement in Kosovo is Bujku (The Farmer), which appears on an almost daily basis in Prishtina and gets most of its news from the service of Rilindja in Switzerland.

The other Albanian-language newspaper in former Yugoslavia, Flaka e vëllazërimit (The Flame of Brotherhood) of Skopje, Macedonia, has been issued daily since May 1994, but is difficult to obtain in Kosovo. The daily Bota sot (The World Today), which

began publication in Zürich last June, caters only to the Western European market.

Weekly magazines such as Zâri (The Voice), edited by Bardh Hamzaj, and the more professional and more critical Koha (The Time), edited by Veton Surroi, do appear in Prishtina on a more or less regular basis, but suffer, like almost all the media in Kosovo, from a surfeit of subjective commentaries on the local political situation and from a glaring lack of information on European and global affairs. The situation has improved somewhat over the last twelve months, though.

Other periodicals such as the literary Fjala (The Word), the educational Shkëndija (The Spark) and the children's Pionieri (The Pioneer) appear sporadically.

The Rilindja Press of Prishtina, which published over 90 percent of Albanian books and periodicals in what was once Yugoslavia, has been taken over by *Panorama*, a creation of the Serbian occupation authorities. Still, it is possible to publish a book in Kosovo privately. Like everything else in the country, it is all a question of money. There are no longer problems of censorship, as books are marketed directly and never pass through the hands of Serbian government authorities.

One of the few positive consequences of the expulsion of Albanians from public life in Kosovo has been that the Albanians were forced immediately to create a private sector, thus introducing a free market economy to Kosovo more quickly than has been the case in some other Balkan countries.

Not only has a free market been created, but also an entire alternative system of public life, under the vague auspices of a Kosovo "government in exile." University education continues, for instance, on a private basis. Classes for students are held in private homes, mosques and churches instead of at the university.

Most Kosovo Albanians working abroad faithfully pay 3 percent of their income in taxes to the exile government. As such, a disciplined if somewhat rudimentary system of government has been put in place and

functions more or less successfully.

The Belgrade authorities have been doing everything they can to "serbify" Kosovo and to wipe out all traces of Albanian culture there. The Kosovo State Archives and Albanian-language books from the National and University Library in Prishtina are said to have been carted off long ago to a brick factory to help "ease the fuel crisis."

In March 1994, Belgrade authorities served notice that they needed the modern structure housing the venerable Albanological Institute in Prishtina, where researchers and staff had been working for three years, deprived of their meager salaries, heating and light. A Serbian paramilitary unit beat up and expelled the occupants, including noted Albanian writers and intellectuals, under the eyes of the Serbian police. The take-over, and perhaps destruction of the Albanological Institute, housing one of the largest collections of Albanian-language books in the Balkans, merits severe condemnation from intellectuals everywhere.

Virtually all that remains in the once blossoming field of public cultural activity in Kosovo is the little "hut" of the Writers Union of Kosovo on the corner of a muddy parking lot in Prishtina. This modest structure, also housing the main Albanian political party, the Democratic League of Kosovo (Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës), is situated symbolically, or strategically as some might say, right behind the Serbian police headquarters, the law courts and Prishtina central prison.

It is apparent to all knowledgeable observers that the awesome specter of ethnic cleansing has become a reality in Kosovo. According to unofficial estimates, 20 percent of the Albanian population of Kosovo has been driven into exile since the takeover in 1990, well over 300,000 people, young men for the most part, who are the most productive members of that society. Left behind for the moment are the women, children and old people, whose fate, if the insanity in Belgrade continues, may soon resemble that of their counterparts in Bosnia and Hercegovina. ■

## Multi-Ethnic Reporting In Macedonia

BY DENISE HAMILTON

In June 1995, I traveled to the Macedonian capital of Skopje, where I spent the month helping a team of local Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish journalists conceptualize, report, write and edit a series of articles that would be published in the Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish language press. The aims were threefold: to expose journalists in Macedonia to Western-style reporting during an intensive, hands-on workshop. To create an environment, however brief, in which reporters of different ethnicities from different media could work cooperatively and forge bonds of respect, trust and professionalism. And lastly, to spark interest in future multi-ethnic collaborations that might continue after the project ended and I went home.

Experts agree that efforts to resolve ethnic conflict are especially crucial today in Macedonia, which has been known throughout history as "the tinderbox of the Balkans."

It was with these concerns in mind that two U.S. foundations joined forces in 1994 to develop a journalism project that could address ethnic tensions. They were Search for Common Ground (SCG), a Washington-based non-governmental organization and the Center for War, Peace and the News Media, which is based at New York University. After several workshops and study visits, it became clear that a more hands-on approach was needed to address two vital problems: ethnic segregation of the media and—at least from a Western perspective—basic journalistic shortcomings.

In Skopje, I was introduced to my team: two Macedonians, one Albanian and one Turkish reporter, corresponding roughly to the population breakdown in this nation of 2.3 million. The reporters had been selected by their editors.

Under my guidance, the team produced a series they labeled "How We Survive" that examined how ordinary citizens of all classes, ethnicities and religions were faring under tough economic conditions. We made a conscious decision to stay away from politics, to avoid inflaming nationalistic feelings. By contrast, we believed that concern over economic survival resonated universally in Macedonia. The team took to the project with gusto, interviewing ministry officials and street children, slum dwellers and millionaires. They documented the growing heroin trade and the explosion in black market cigarettes. Along the way, they fought intensely among themselves, accused each other of partisan politics and worried privately that their own ethnic group would come out looking badly in the series. One reporter even threatened to quit.



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As editor and advisor, I had to act quickly to defuse problems as they arose, mediate conflict and negotiate solutions that were acceptable to the group. But I quickly learned one thing: regardless of how much they distrusted each other initially, working cooperatively drew them together. They had to set aside their differences to get the job done, and since they were very excited about the project, they kept going.

The breadth and depth of our reporting—unusual for Macedonia—also forced them to confront and shatter stereotypes they might have held about the poor gypsy, the rich Albanian or the lazy Macedonian bureaucrat.

At one point Macedonian reporter Julijana Kocovska confided to me, "You know, I am a human being as well as a reporter. I care about the people here. And I realize that only if Albanians get along with Macedonians can we all stay at peace here."

In addition to Kocovska, who worked as an editor at the Macedonian language daily newspaper *Nova Makadonija*, the team consisted of Nazif Zejnullahu of *Flaka e Vellazerimit*, the Albanian newspaper; Seyhan Kain of *Birlik*, the Turkish newspaper, and Biljana Bekova of *Radio NoMa*, a Macedonian language state radio station.

On top of their regular salaries, the reporters received an honorarium for participating in the project, which undoubtedly whetted their enthusiasm. Regardless, within about three weeks, the team produced four main stories and five sidebars. They also took photos, designed a logo and wrote up an explanatory box to describe the project and its participants. The series began running in mid-July. One reporter even postponed her vacation to ensure that the stories sailed smoothly into print. Kocovska and Zejnullahu were so inspired that they asked their editors to undertake a joint investigative project into the country's growing heroin trade, a type of collaborative reporting across ethnic lines that was unheard of in Macedonia until our project.

Initially the reporters were suspicious of each other and of me. They were afraid to suggest their own stories, to critique the suggestions of oth-

ers or to contradict anything I said. This was a cultural hurdle: Macedonians find it rude to disagree or speak directly. (You have to ask everything three times before you get a real answer. I would ask them. "Would you like to take a coffee break now?" They would say no, and I would go on with our discussion. Meanwhile, they would be seething inside, dying for a smoke and a coffee and waiting for me to ask them again.) For an American used to a robust exchange of ideas, frank talk and fast planning, this could be frustrating.

They would have been much more comfortable had I laid out the game plan for them and assigned them topics. But I felt it crucial to the project's success that they generate the stories and feel responsible for executing them.

The reporters were fervent believers in the "one-source, one-story" approach and were shocked that I expected them to interview about 50 people of various classes, ethnicities and professions during the course of their research. I also urged them to look creatively at stories, such as to consider spending a night at the border to chronicle the black market trade or to track a crop from soil to market to show the difficulties faced by farmers.

To my delight, the reporters were game. Our Albanian journalist volunteered to hang out at the border and returned with all sorts of great quotes and anecdotes. And our Turkish journalist helped put us in touch with farmers and producers of tobacco. Yet although they developed many sources and leads for future stories, we found it difficult to do groundbreaking journalism in the time we had, especially with the level of skills and resources we had.

For instance, our refined and lady-like Turkish reporter, Seyhan Kain, was unequipped by training, temperament or culture for aggressive, Western-style reporting. "Haven't we done enough interviews yet," she asked me, after completing three. (At her paper Seyhan wrote political commentary after watching Turkish TV and reading Istanbul newspapers). But we finally settled on the following stories: 1) an economic overview and introduction; 2) how women are faring in the tough economy; 3) the exploitative cycle of tobacco and

lastly, 4) the plight of young people today.

Macedonian customs and culture slowed our work pace. Phone interviews are rare here. Instead, interviews are usually done in person, last three hours and unfold over numerous cigarettes and Turkish coffees.

But their concerns bring up a point that needs to be addressed for the success of future projects. Most East Bloc journalists I've met have a terrible inferiority complex coupled with a mighty sense of superiority. After attending endless workshops and conferences in recent years sponsored by well-meaning Western organizations, they are understandably prickly about being lectured to by another American journalist. As the editor of *Nova Makadonija* told me: "You know, our reporters are experienced professionals, they have been abroad, they have reported from Paris and London, and while people in the West may think they are 'regime reporters' and not real journalists, they are just as competent as you and it annoys us when Westerners come over here and tell us how to work."

By American journalism standards, many stories lacked structure, displayed poor development of ideas, used page-long quotes and failed to give examples to back up general statements. Additionally, some reporters inserted editorial and political commentary into their articles. However, since I attended many of the interviews and debriefed reporters daily, it was relatively simple to excise the politics, add context and structure and find better quotes to illustrate their points. It only took time and patience. And because we had been in the trenches together, the reporters found my editing more palatable.

But we had plenty of heated discussions along the way. As we got into the project, I discovered that they were enamored of statistics and official government sources. They bridled at being asked to do street reporting and found it hard to believe that veteran reporters in the U.S. often drop in without appointments or just show up at cafes or villages to do interviews.

"This is work for young, inexperienced reporters. We are veteran reporters and we should be doing analysis

and commentary," Kocovska told me. All of them pointed out to me that it would be a waste of time to interview average workers or peasants since they knew nothing about the economy. True, I responded. But ask them how many times a month they eat meat, if they can afford their own apartment or if their factory pays them in cash or script redeemable only at the overpriced company store.

Eventually, the journalists grew to like street reporting. They would descend like locusts on some unsuspecting suburban apartment dweller or cafe denizen and start firing questions and writing down every word, shocked and intrigued by what they found. They developed a little preamble of introduction and found people pleased and eager to talk to them. They also realized that as a team, they gained access to people and places that would have been off-limits to them as individuals because of language or cultural barriers. For instance, the Macedonian reporters were able to interview 10-year-old Albanian boys and girls selling cigarettes at the bazaar because they had an Albanian reporter along.

To obtain the broadest cross-pollination, I split the reporters into bi-ethnic teams of two to conduct interviews whenever possible. Each was responsible for writing one story with feeds from the others. We spent a lot of time discussing how to balance out stories to include voices from each ethnic group and class and to avoid stereotyping. It paid off. By the project's end, they were coming to me to point out passages in their stories they feared would be insensitive or offensive to another ethnic group.

Our road trips also forged bonds. I asked each reporter to organize a day trip so we could travel and talk to people outside Skopje. One day, we were gone from 8 a.m. until midnight, hitting a Turkish tobacco farming village, a tobacco processing factory and a city near the Bulgarian border known for its wealthy businessmen. At the village, our Turkish reporter arranged interviews with tobacco farmers who treated us to a delicious home-cooked lunch and then led us out into the fields

where they labor under horribly primitive conditions for 11 months out of the year. After meeting a smart young village girl who couldn't go to university for lack of money, one of our Macedonian reporters took it upon herself to try to help the young Turkish woman get a scholarship. Likewise, our Albanian and Macedonian reporters were so horrified after interviewing 12-year-old heroin addicts spawned by the burgeoning heroin trade in Macedonia that they proposed a series of joint articles on drug smuggling. Drug addiction is a new plague for the nation that is striking young Macedonians and Albanians with equal force.

While the reporters agreed with the wisdom of setting politics aside during the project, minor ethnic tensions surfaced from time to time. If not addressed, these could quickly turn experienced professional reporters into pouty, suspicious nationalists. Words assumed ominous political proportions—for instance using the word "illegal" to describe a squatter settlement outside Skopje populated mainly by poor Muslims. Since the city had installed water and electrical lines to this settlement, giving it tacit permission to exist, our Turkish and Albanian journalists bridled at calling the settlement "illegal," which connoted that its Muslim residents were lawbreakers.

So words were a mined thicket through which we all stumbled. As soon as I got hints of grumbling I pulled aside the reporter, found out what was wrong, then raised those concerns with the group so we could get at least a grudging consensus on how to proceed. Oftentimes, the problems could be corrected quickly. For instance, Zejnullahu, our Albanian reporter, complained that we had profiled a Turkish and a Macedonian millionaire but not an Albanian one, so I asked him to find us an Albanian millionaire to write about, which he did.

In general, whenever the reporters got into political debates that threatened to derail the project, I reminded them of our agreement to stay neutral but urged them to continue investigating these issues after the project ended.

Indeed, for most of the reporters,

the project was the first time they had worked and socialized with people outside their ethnic groups and they found it an eye-opening experience. Kocovska told me numerous times how much she enjoyed working with Zejnullahu and what a good journalist he was. Eventually she became the project's most staunch ally and even made a presentation to her editorial board urging more collaborations between Nova Makadonija and Flaka.

I left Macedonia before the stories started running. So I only know from anecdotal experience that the series was well-read and that many people were intrigued by the chatty Western format, the sizable number of sources and facts presented and the personal anecdotes in each story. Some said they were especially shocked by the blunt article about drug use among the youth of Macedonia.

More importantly, the success of the Macedonia Journalism Project shows the potential of such programs to improve understanding across ethnic lines while teaching solid journalism skills. While our initial effort involved only a handful of reporters, it created a ripple effect, since those four returned to their newsrooms with knowledge and ideas to pass on to others.

The Macedonia Journalism Project also has great potential as a teaching and conflict resolution tool in countries with multi-ethnic populations outside the South Balkans. The project could be easily adapted to suit specific needs from Burundi to Israel. It is clear that one month of intensive work with four local journalists cannot turn around distrust honed over centuries of conflict. Nonetheless, the project is helpful in developing a fact-based, independent press and in training reporters who can move fluidly across ethnic lines. And in many parts of the world today, including our own United States, that in itself is an accomplishment. ■

# BOOKS

## A Thoughtful Look at Journalism's Major Questions

### News Values

Jack Fuller

University of Chicago Press.  
252 Pages. \$22.95.

BY DAVID SHAW

“Pursuit of truth is not a license to be a jerk.”

“This is the secret of gossip: Part of the pleasure of tawdriness is in asserting moral superiority to it.”

“I have often been tempted to call for the abolition of the presidential press conference on the ground that it does the state of public knowledge more harm than good.”

“Before becoming a publisher, I worked as a writer and editor for nearly 30 years. This exposed me to the sloppy, self-satisfied way journalists often talk about what they do.”

“The establishment of journalists as a kind of priesthood has introduced an element of insufferable self-righteousness in newsrooms that has aggravated the journalists' natural inclination to see themselves as living in a world apart from ordinary, mercenary concerns.”

These five quotations are plucked from Jack Fuller's provocative new book “News Values,” and in the sound-bite culture in which we live today, it would be easy to reduce the book to little more than a collection of such nuggets—maxims, aphorisms, bons mots,

criticisms and observations guaranteed to engage and enrage. But “News Values” is neither the print equivalent of the glib, journalistic food-fights that pass for political discussion on weekend television nor the Midwestern version of James Fallows's widely publicized assault on the press in “Breaking the News.” “News Values” is a thoughtful, insightful examination of our craft/profession/business—past, present and future. At 252 pages—including index and chapter notes—it is no ponderous tome. But neither will any careful, interested reader come away muttering, “Where's the beef?” The “beef”—in both the literal and colloquial sense of the term, substance and gripe(s)—is manifestly evident throughout, all stated in clear, concise, learned prose.

Jack Fuller, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Tribune Co. (as in Chicago Tribune), may be uniquely qualified to undertake such a venture. I have made neither biographical inquiry nor Nexus search, but I'd be willing to wager my first edition of Lincoln Steffens's autobiography that he is the only major metropolitan newspaper CEO in America (if not the entire galaxy) who began as a reporter, won a Pulitzer Prize as an editorial writer, became a publisher, worked in the Justice Department and is the author of five novels.

Fuller manages, in the course of this slender volume, to explore virtually every question that pops up in newsrooms, reporters' barrooms and editors' conferences. He looks at negativism and cynicism, at the use of anonymous sources and overly friendly sources, at “gotcha” journalism and public journalism, at “new journalism” and the inverted pyramid, at gossip and



celebrity, at diversity and technology, at corporate pressure and government pressure. In the course of his excursion, Fuller offers the kind of common sense perceptions and prescriptions that are all too often missing from the thumb-sucking and/or fist-pounding press critiques we seem increasingly subjected to these days.

Fuller begins with the basics—Joseph Pulitzer's call for “Accuracy! Accuracy! Accuracy!”—and he points out the sad truth: “Journalism's unacknowledged shame is how often it fails to live up to Pulitzer's standard even with respect to the most commonplace details.” In Fuller's view, “The whole culture of journalism must change before simple accuracy becomes once again one of its signal virtues. Reporters who do not meet the simple standard of

*David Shaw is the Pulitzer Prize-winning media critic of The Los Angeles Times and the author of the newly published book “The Pleasure Police: How Bluenose Busybodies and Lily-Livered Alarmists Are Taking All the Fun out of Life” (Doubleday).*

accuracy should not be taken seriously, however stunning their work may appear to be in other respects." Fuller calls for the establishment of "quantified performance measures" to evaluate accuracy—and for goals and incentives to meet those goals. He acknowledges that such work is dreary—"as dull as making sure the doors on automobiles open and shut properly." But it is also "just as vital to the continued success of the enterprise."

With equal vigor—and equal rigor—Fuller advocates much tighter control on the use of unnamed sources. Personally, I have always been appalled by how easily most reporters grant anonymity—often without the source even requesting it. Do they think the source will be seduced into candor by this faux game of intimacy? Do they think they're impressing their editors and readers with inside knowledge seemingly available to no one else? I've lost track of the number of times reporters have called to interview me on one media controversy or another, often involving my own paper, and before I've said a word, they say, "Let's just talk on background" or "I don't have to quote you by name on anything" or "We can do this on or off the record, whichever makes you more comfortable." As a source, my answer is always the same: "I don't talk off the record. I'll answer any question I can—on the record." As a reporter, when a source asks me if he can go off the record, I try to persuade him to stay on the record, but if it's clear that I won't be successful immediately, I agree to anonymity on one condition: "I want the right to try to get you to change your mind after I've written my story. I'll call you and read you anything I want to quote you on, in context, and tell you why I want to use your name. But it will still be your decision." In 33 years as a reporter, I've only had one source insist that I not use her name after reading back her quotes. Perhaps three or four others have negotiated a variation on the original quote. Everyone else has said, in effect, "That's fine. Use it."

Fuller doesn't propose this particular technique, but he does insist that reporters and editors should do every-

thing they can to get sources on the record—particularly in stories that disparage others (and most particularly if those being disparaged are private individuals, unconnected with government or public affairs.) "Newspapers should establish a strict rule against publication of disparaging information about individuals based solely on anonymous sources," he says. "They may then permit rare exceptions to be made only by decision at the highest level of the news organization."

The news media's over-reliance on unnamed sources is probably the second most frequent complaint that I, as someone who writes about the media, hear from everyday newspaper readers. When we write "sources say," they're convinced we're making it up; they think the reporter himself is the source. Fuller also addresses the No. 1 public complaint that I (and many others) hear: negative news. Why, he asks, do newspapers seem to "concentrate on bad news, whether about a war or about the local sewer commission?" His answer is that a newspaper's "social value" lies in its ability to reveal "hidden facts." Good news—"about a war, about a social program, about a corporation"—will get out, he says. "Government and private institutions will make sure of it—through advertising and sophisticated public relations. Since journalism's duty to the truth requires it to present a full depiction of reality—good and bad—it has to work at learning the bad, which others will often obscure." Besides, he says, "Journalists' experience usually demonstrates that if they expect the worst, they will not be disappointed."

Fortunately, Fuller doesn't let it go at that. This view, he says, has "grave consequences." When reporters "write this assumption into their news reports, they suggest the extremely simple-minded view that all social problems could be solved if only the people wrestling with them were honest." But because most reporters seem to think that most (if not all) politicians are not honest, they inevitably convey the general impression that a whole range of problems are beyond solution, by anyone; this breeds frustration, hopelessness

and a lack of faith in nongovernmental institutions, and in each other, as well.

There is a corrosive, knee-jerk negativism prevalent in journalism these days, a cynical, hostile assumption that everyone in a position of political leadership (or would-be leadership) is a liar, a hypocrite, a crook—or all three—and that all politicians are interested only in their self-interest and self-aggrandizement, not the public good. Too many politicians do, alas, fit that description. But since Vietnam and Watergate, we seem determined to paint everyone with that broad brush, often on the flimsiest of evidence. Fuller suggests that "Watergate may have damaged journalism more than it did the presidency," by providing fame and fortune for two journalists who did a superb job, it encouraged many other journalists to seek similar pots of gold using dubious measures to pursue (and exaggerate) relatively minor wrongdoing. Too many reporters today seem more worried about being "spun," about being "taken," than about being fair and being right. The reward system is now out of kilter; as Geneva Overholser wrote in her Washington Post ombudsman column last fall, "A reporter can soar professionally on a reputation for being tough, even ruthless." But these days, a reporter is "doomed," Overholser wrote, if he or she is seen as "too soft."

It's one thing to print "hidden" negative facts; that, as Fuller says, is our job. But it's quite another thing to make things seem much more negative than they really are, which we increasingly do, in print and on the air. This can only serve to undermine confidence in our democratic institutions and, ultimately, our democratic society, something clearly contrary to our mission. As Fuller writes, "A poet or novelist might swear by the conceit that he is writing for an audience of one, but a journalist should know better. He is more an architect than a sculptor; he builds things meant to work. His purpose is to provide useful information and his privileged position in law arises from its utility to the system of self-governance."

Journalists, Fuller says, must "resist the cynical impulse. News organization

must begin to exercise more self-control over their own darkest habits of thought." He is not proposing that news organizations "abandon their role as critics and investigators." Quite the contrary. He thinks they must "expand the areas in which they accept this challenge." But he also thinks they should "hold back when allegations are made until they develop some credible evidence supporting the charges." In today's instant-news, film-at-11 climate, newspaper editors and television news directors find it difficult to follow that simple, fair, fundamental course of action.

But editors and news directors are under increasing bottom-line pressures as we near the millennium. Fragmented audiences, declining readership and viewership and competition from tabloids of both the print and broadcast variety have induced many gatekeepers to abandon their decision-making responsibility. A given story is said to be "out there," so "we have to use it," right now, today, the conspicuous absence of documentation or confirmation notwithstanding.

Some significant measure of this bottom-line pressure derives, of course, from the stockholder and stock analyst demands attendant on public ownership of news organizations. Public ownership, as Fuller notes, can lead to "pressures for short-term results at the expense of long-term performance, in newspaper companies as in all others." That is happening right now at major newspapers across the country, my own included. But Fuller argues that public ownership has "promoted the independence of journalistic judgment by dividing owner power," thus protecting journalists from "direct pressure to substitute the owners' personal preferences or individual financial interest for editorial judgments...." That may well be, and while I also agree with Fuller that many reporters and editors seem blind to the imperatives of the marketplace—no profit, no newspaper—I think he is much more sanguine about the prospects of public ownership than the facts warrant. I'm not suggesting that the picture is as unrelievedly bleak as that painted by

his predecessor as Tribune editor, Jim Squires ("Read All About It: The Corporate Takeover of American Newspapers"). But I do think the quality of some very good newspapers is threatened by corporate executives who are not satisfied—whose major stockholders won't let them be satisfied—with profit margins that would arouse envy in most other industries. I don't minimize the problems that newspapers have faced in the 1990's, but I think The New York Times proved during two World Wars and during peacetime recessions alike that spending is ultimately better than cutting as route to prosperity and that improving the editorial product, not reducing it or trivializing it, is the best means of ensuring a newspaper's niche in an increasingly congested marketplace.

Some newspapers have tried to compete in the new media environment by becoming less like newspapers and more like what they see as their primary competitor—television. But as Fuller points out, making a few superficial changes—shorter stories, more graphics, color pictures—in a traditional newspaper and "sending it forth against television is like a turn of the century oil company trying to compete with electric light by getting petroleum to burn brighter with less smoke."

Instead, Fuller advocates that newspapers combine what they do best—reporting and analyzing the news, in depth and with human feeling—with what the new technology will enable them to do better. Thus, although most of "News Values" consists of Fuller's ruminations on problems that confront reporters, editors and publishers on a daily basis, he is often at his most interesting in looking at issues that some might consider to be on the periphery of the traditional newsgathering process—technology among them. "Journalists are going to have to become more comfortable with technology," he says. "If nothing else, a journalist today must be thoroughly grounded in computers and what they can do if he is going to have a chance of understanding our world, or for that matter of helping news organizations navigate the changes that technology drives....A

movie critic cannot understand what goes on the screen without understanding modern computerized film technique. A sportswriter cannot understand the making of an athletic team—or the making of athletic profit—without paying mind to medical and other machines. In writing about food, fashion, you name it, ignorance of technology is as appalling in journalism today as ignorance of history was a hundred years ago."

And what of the impact of technology on the newspaper itself? What of the computerized newspaper of the future? Fuller is optimistic. He recounts how top editors at The Chicago Tribune "went through an exercise in which we tried to imagine looking back on The Tribune from retirement.... We asked ourselves what... would The Tribune of the 21st Century have to be doing in order for us to feel we had left it better than we found it?" The editors came up with a short list—none of which specifically included the newspaper being produced as a paper-and-ink product. So Fuller doesn't seem much worried about the prospect of a 21st Century newspaper that is delivered electronically, perhaps on a home information appliance that is a hybrid of a sophisticated television set (with a large, flat screen and high-resolution picture) and a high-powered computer (probably without a keyboard since you'll operate it by touching the screen or talking directly to it). The amount of information available on these machines will be prodigious—electronic clippings from newspapers, wire services, magazines, television programs, live speeches, newsletters—more sources than you can shake a pica pole at. "The profusion of choices presented to people will make the function of those who help make those choices more secure, not less," Fuller says. "When people can get any information available anywhere, they will need ways to simplify the selection process.... They will need ways to create meaning from the muddle."

Isn't that what the best reporters and editors have always tried to do? ■



## Who's Bamboozling Whom on Whitewater?

### Blood Sport

#### The President and His Adversaries

James B. Stewart

Simon & Schuster. 479 Pages. \$25.

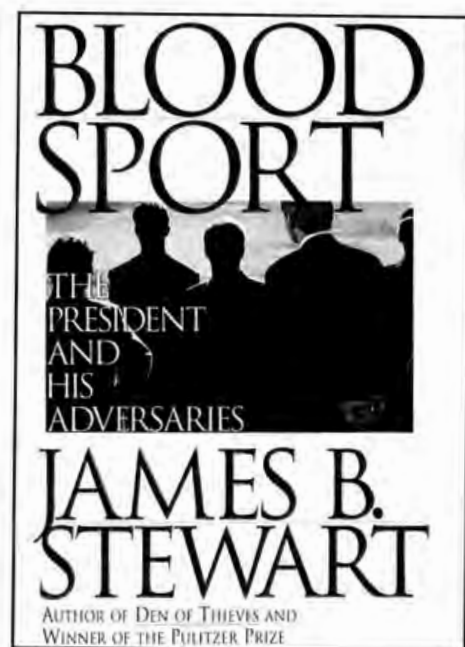
BY ERNEST DUMAS

If Whitewater is baffling, James B. Stewart writes reassuringly in the foreword to "Blood Sport," it is only because you have been bamboozled by those involved in the scandal—Bill and Hillary Clinton and the ranks of their apologists and strategists—into thinking that it is arcane and confusing. Whitewater, he says, is really very simple. Until the independent counsel makes a full and final report, which may be toward the end of the century, Stewart offers what he says is finally a clear and comprehensive account of what happened and why.

Whitewater is, indeed, a simple plot. While a 30-year-old state attorney general in 1978, Clinton, along with his wife and another couple, Jim and Susan McDougal, formed a company and, with borrowed money, bought 230 acres of wilderness along the rocky bluffs of Crooked Creek and the White River, a rugged 20-minute drive from the mountain hamlet of Flippin in a remote region of north Arkansas. (Until then, Stewart writes, Flippin was best known for an annual celebration in which turkeys were dropped on the town from low-flying airplanes and the White River was valued by small-mouth bass fishermen and rafters. None of that is true. The turkey drop is at Yellville, and bass fishermen and rafters are about as rare on the chilly White, famous for its rainbow and brown trout. Those are not the only examples of errant verisimilitude in the book.) McDougal spotted the land opportunity and asked the Clintons to get in on it. He would clear

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a road to the land, divide the hilltop into 44 lots and quickly sell them unimproved for a quick, nifty profit for the foursome. It seems now and must have seemed to the Clintons long ago to have been an appallingly stupid investment. McDougal, a casual friend and political supporter who would shortly go to work as an economic development adviser to the governor, had made some money in real estate but had the business acumen and pertinacity of a carnival tout. Owing to the skyrocketing interest rates of the time, which reached 21 percent, and the perverse but constitutional Arkansas usury law, the Clintons and McDougals borrowed money at highway-robbery rates and, when they could find a buyer at all, carried the note themselves at the sweetheart rate of 10 percent. Clinton and the McDougals parted ways in 1980, and McDougal got himself a tiny bank and finally a small state-regulated savings and loan, which would enable him to get around the banking regulations. McDougal's free-wheeling management of Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan brought the censure of state and federal regulators in 1986 and he was driven from the management. The thrift closed at some cost to the taxpayers in 1989, and McDougal was charged with fraud and acquitted in 1990. The little Whitewater venture had petered out, at a loss of some \$40,000 to the Clintons and much more to the McDougals. But it had been a little more than a financial and political irritant to the Clintons until March 8, 1992. That is when The New York Times published on its front page an article by Jeff Gerth reporting that Clinton, the front-runner for the Democratic presidential nomination, had been involved in a real-estate deal with the operator of an S&L that his



administration regulated. McDougal, sore that Governor Clinton had done nothing to help him or his beleaguered enterprise in the 1980's or even to extend the hand of friendship during his travails, went to Clinton's rival, Arkansas Republican Chairman Sheffield Nelson, who hooked him up with Gerth to tell about his dealings with the governor. The Whitewater "scandal" was off and running. McDougal was rewarded for his tip by being put on trial this spring on an almost identical set of charges as those he beat in 1990.

While Stewart's account of these matters is clearer and far more engrossing than the dribs and drabs of the media reporting and the congressional hearings, "Blood Sport" is much less satisfying on the question of why this Lilliputian episode should vex the national conscience or even why anyone would want to read more about it. The book itself may be the answer. In the

hands of a good story teller armed with narrative license it turns out to be a splendid tale. Stewart tries to explain not only the Clintons's dealings with McDougal and his Arkansas thrift, the details of which, even in a Pulitzer Prize writer's hands, only the hardiest junkie will find fascinating, but also the machinations at the White House to stamp out the grubby little story and two other events that were far more destructive: the firing of the White House travel office staff and the suicide of Vincent R. Foster Jr., the deputy White House counsel. Stewart's probing account of Foster's naive pilgrimage to Washington, disillusionment, depression and suicide is the one worthy testament to his reportorial skills.

Anyone very familiar with Whitewater and particularly with Arkansas will be put off by numerous factual errors in "Blood Sport." As it happened, a clinically detailed and far more verifiable account of the focal Whitewater land transactions and the Clintons' dealings with an ill-fated little state-regulated thrift was extant by the time Simon & Schuster could get "Blood Sport" to the book stalls. It was a series of reports by Pillsbury Madison & Sutro, a San Francisco law firm hired by the Resolution Trust Corp. and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. to investigate Whitewater Development Corp., the Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan Association and the Rose law firm, three of the four central entities in the dealings that have fallen under the rubric "Whitewater." While the Pillsbury lawyers and accountants had access to sources and records that weren't available to Stewart, unlike the former Wall Street Journal editor they do not write fetching prose, they disdain good narrative techniques, they don't enjoy Simon & Schuster's energetic promotion, and they don't wear the immense authority of having won a Pulitzer Prize. The Pillsbury report won scant attention from the media and the authors no talk-show appearances. Pillsbury is the outfit whose hiring for the Whitewater investigation outraged the White House because the lead investigator, Jay Stephens, had been the most bitter of a phalanx of Republican U. S. attorneys

sacked by the new president in 1993.

Interestingly, Stewart and the Pillsbury people reached about the same general conclusions: the Clintons lost money rather than profited from a foolhardy real-estate investment; they never bent the government in Arkansas to favor their partners, and no money was diverted from a failing savings and loan to the Clintons or to their property, which were the questions raised by the early national reporting. Beyond that, the implied or express judgments about the characters are starkly different. Stewart is far less charitable to the Clintons, especially Hillary, than is Jay Stephens.

**I**n the large dramatis personae of "Blood Sport"—politicians, government officials and aides, reporters, cops and right-wing conspiracists—only two come across very consistently as unsympathetic people. They are the president and the First Lady, though the president is sometimes tolerable. Except when goaded by his wife, he never thought a moment about Whitewater or making a penny off it or anything else.

Everyone by now knows the genesis of "Blood Sport." Susan Thomases, a New York lawyer who is a friend of the Clintons, asked Stewart to write a book about Whitewater. Hillary was frustrated with the scandal-mongering and ineptness of the reporting and wanted someone with a reputation of toughness and independence to write the full story. Stewart agreed and arranged to meet once with the First Lady, who subsequently became wary and never saw him again or cooperated in providing records to help his search for the truth.

It is easy to say that the book reflects the Clintons' hostile turn and to explain Hillary's generally pitiless treatment as spite. That may be unfair, but it is nevertheless the most troublesome thing about "Blood Sport." Every reporter's most perilous impulse is to treat the sources who cooperate uncritically and those who don't savagely.

Jim and Susan McDougal cooperated. So did Jeff Gerth of *The Times* and Bernard Nussbaum, the White House

counsel who fell on his sword for the Clintons and resigned for his handling of the search of Foster's office after the suicide. "Blood Sport" is largely their story. They are its heroes. Nussbaum was leery of Stewart but, oddly, was encouraged by the White House to cooperate. He is portrayed as having, almost alone among White House aides, given the Clintons consistently courageous, principled and wise advice, which they almost as consistently ignored.

Almost without exception, those bearing ill accounts of the Clintons are introduced with testaments to their character and humanity. The two troopers who formed the security detail for Clinton for several years in Arkansas and who peddled wild tales of Clinton's womanizing and of Hillary's romancing of Vince Foster to a right-wing journal are described as lawmen of high rectitude who "put a premium on obeying the law," who were deeply offended by Hillary's "unladylike language" and outbursts of temper and by Bill's heedless womanizing. Readers might be interested in knowing that these law-abiding troopers, while night-clubbing with a woman in a State Police car, got drunk, ran the state car into a tree and lied about it to try to collect insurance. Jim Johnson, who was a conduit for Clinton tales to the Clinton-bashing groups, is described merely as a former Democratic Supreme Court justice who became conservative and Republican with age. Johnson, in point of fact, was one of the fathers of the White Citizens Councils in the 1950's and the author of the interposition amendment to the state Constitution, which directed the legislature to thwart all federal court rulings to racially integrate in Arkansas. David Hale, who was convicted of defrauding the federal Small Business Administration of a couple million dollars through 13 dummy companies and who plea-bargained a short sentence with the Republican Whitewater prosecutor with the contention that Governor Clinton urged him to do it, is described glowingly in "Blood Sport" as "a figure of some note in Little Rock, a devout Baptist whose father had been a poor farmer," and a former prosecu-

ing attorney who was appointed municipal judge by Governor Clinton. Actually, Hale was never a prosecuting attorney, and he was appointed municipal judge by Governor Frank White, the Republican who beat Clinton in 1980. As those who followed the Whitewater trial were reminded, Hale arranged to launder Small Business Administration money through a buddy into White's campaign against Clinton in 1986, the period in which he was supposed to be yielding to the importunities of Clinton.

The McDougals, through whose lenses the Clintons of the 1980's are illuminated, are the most sympathetic of all. Stewart actually has McDougal about right—a big talker and dreamer who never met a risk he wouldn't take—but he's clearly mesmerized by the man. Stewart describes McDougal in the early 1970's as a "kingmaker" in Arkansas politics, whose home at little Arkadelphia, where he taught at a little Baptist college, was a mecca for ambitious state politicians. It is a laughable notion. McDougal would not have ranked in the top 500 of the Arkansas's politically influential. Susan McDougal is characterized as an innocent flower dazzled and eventually done in by the world of high finance and fast politics.

What the book offers about the Clintons in the 1980's come from the accounts of the McDougals, principally Susan. Amazingly, she is able to recall scores of conversations with the Clintons verbatim. Hillary is nearly always rude, thoughtless and conniving. Once, Hillary is ruminating about wanting to get pregnant. She says a female is not a real woman until she has a baby. This is supposed to be the same woman who scoffed during the presidential campaign that she was expected to stay home and bake cookies. Stewart often conveys these musings and sometimes Hillary's state of mind omnisciently, as if they are not filtered through the self-serving memories of the McDougals or someone else.

The Clintons' long tug of war with the McDougals over Whitewater is filtered through the same lens. The McDougals acknowledge lying to the Clintons about the status of Whitewater for much of the decade—they never

told the Clintons, for example, that they were using the corporation to funnel money for other land developments—but the deceptions were always to protect the Clintons. At every turn, the McDougals were looking out for the Clintons. Stewart treats that as fact. Stewart reports with astonishment, over and over, that the McDougals offered to take Whitewater off the Clintons' hands for good so that they would be rid of the albatross, but Hillary, out of avarice or mere churlishness apparently, steadfastly and rudely refused to sign the title. The Pillsbury report paints quite a different picture. Had the Clintons deeded the corporation to the McDougals they would have forfeited the assets but remained personally liable for the corporation's bank debt. Far from simply helping the Clintons, McDougal first needed Whitewater's tax loss and then as a legal conduit for land development.

A final example suffices to show the danger of a reporter's suspending his critical faculties based upon who helps you and who does not. While Stewart does not maintain that the Clintons have flatly broken the law, he comes awfully close several times. The book suggests that in filling out a personal financial statement to renew a Whitewater loan at a country bank in 1987, Hillary Clinton seemed to have grossly inflated the value of their real estate investments. It points out that making a false statement on a loan document is a crime. In talk shows, Stewart mentioned the inaccurate loan paper as the central revelation of the book. The loan document was helpfully included in the appendix, on page 444. Joe Conason at *The New York Observer* noticed a line penned at the bottom. It said, "(Both sides of this statement must be complete)." Conason obtained the other page. All the information explaining the entry was there in Hillary Clinton's handwriting.

Stewart said his sources had not provided him with the back page. He suggested that people read his book for its broad portrait of the political world, not for the minutiae.

History is easier to write and a lot more fun to read if you don't attach much importance to the details. ■

## With Foreign Correspondents

### **Love Thy Neighbor, A Story of War**

Peter Maass

Alfred A. Knopf, 305 Pages. \$25.

### **On the Front Lines**

### **Following America's Foreign Correspondents Across the Twentieth Century**

Michael Emery

The American University Press, 356  
Pages. \$24.95.

Reading Peter Maass's book about covering the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina is like eating one of those fiery red candies. The first few sting and bite so you hesitate; the next few bring tears to your eyes, and you pause again. But, you keep dipping into the bag and your mouth is on fire, but you finish them all.

This book is full of graphic word pictures of man's inhumanity to his fellow man and woman. There are enough murderers, rapists and torturers here to people a book twice as long. But this is the Balkans where blood and broken bodies have desecrated the beautiful geography through all modern history.

What drives the graphic, dramatic writing, is the author's remarkable honesty about himself, his trade and the story he was plunged into. Maass from the beginning admits this is a story that troubled him and after a year it overwhelmed him. He may not have been the right kind of reporter to cover this war; he had not covered a war before and was not that knowledgeable about the people that fill this gruesome tale.

Maass tells the story, as he did for *The Washington Post*, from the extreme close-up of Sarajevo and the various smaller towns that were the "front line." He describes the few good guys he met as well as the terrors—like nearly all foreign reporters he convicts the Serbs of the overwhelming proportion of crimes against humanity with the

Croatians and Bosnians committing far fewer felonies.

The former Yugoslavia was once described as "six republics, five regions, four languages, three religions, two alphabets and one Yugoslav—Tito." The major groups speak the same language—Serb-Croat-Slovene-Bosnian—depending where you are. There are no major different physical characteristics among the people.

Like few other regions of Europe, these people are victims of their history. The Croats and Slovenes are Roman Catholics, from their history in the Austro-Hungarian Empire; the Serbs and their junior partners the Montenegrans are Eastern Orthodox from the days of Byzantium, and the Bosnians Muslim from the Ottoman Turks that destroyed the Byzantine Empire.

The Partisans of Tito were the most successful underground army in World War II, but they succeeded only after defeating Serbs who were loyal to their king and Croats who were allied with Nazi Germany. Tito, who was half-Croat and half-Slovene, used the mountains of central Bosnia as his sanctuary. In the postwar period Tito came close to creating a Yugoslav (South Slav) nationality by suppressing all regional chauvinism.

His empire started unraveling soon after his death in 1980. So far, the other major groups in this region—Albanians, Macedonians and Hungarians—have not been drawn into the fighting. But this is the Balkans where memories last forever and no predictions are safe.

Oddly, Maass seems to have learned this crucial history as he went along even though he had been living in central Europe before taking the Bosnian assignment. He appears naive in discovering how the dollar black market operated in Belgrade and in thinking that his interview with Serbian President Milosevic would produce some insights when local journalists warned him he was wasting his time with an Olympic-class liar.

His frustration, anger and disillusionment conglomerated after 12 months on the story when he "realized that the time had come to pull out of Bosnia."

"I was exhausted, I could not escape the war even in my sleep, I was no longer curious about the war and I no longer believed that my reporting could make a difference," Maass writes.

His bitterness boils over in denunciations of President Bill Clinton for his refusal to intervene earlier to protect Bosnia from genocide, but he does not discuss decisions made by the Bush Administration that gave responsibility in the region to the European allies. He is oddly silent about the role of Germany whose premature recognition of the independence of Croatia is blamed by many for setting loose the Serbian monsters.

"Was I too involved in Bosnia, am I biased, extreme in my judgments?" Maass asks. "No. There are many other people, respected and well-known, who came to similar conclusions."

No one can fault Maass's courage and integrity in covering the scene as well as he did, but it is fair to challenge his conclusion that he was not too deeply involved in the story. When a reporter worries that his reporting did not "make a difference" in an event like Bosnia, he is making a very long reach.

Michael Emery, a recently deceased professor of journalism and free-lance journalist, would have had no trouble with Maass's conscience. Emery's odd book is marked by his criticism of foreign correspondents, especially in Central America and the Middle East, who did not fight off the diplomats and military leaders who peddled erroneous, biased information.

This book purports to discuss the work of foreign correspondents through the entire century, but the ambition overreaches the results. Emery has chapters about reporting in 1914 and 1928-29 and then leaps to the beginning of World War II, giving half the century 50 pages. There are then 200 pages on Korea, Vietnam, Nicaragua, El Salvador and the Middle East and none on the Cold War in Asia or Europe.

The early events are researched in an academic way while the second half of the book reflects Emery's personal experiences, especially as a freelance in Central America and the Middle East.

Through everything there is a distinct leftist tinge to his analysis.

Thus, Emery tries to restore the reputation of Walter Duranty, The New York Times correspondent who could find no starving peasants during Stalin's brutal collectivization campaign. He is baffled that the people of Nicaragua could vote out of office the liberating Sandinistas, and he charges that the Arab side of Middle East conflicts is under-reported.

Emery's best contribution is his research into the work of many American foreign correspondents. He grades them by name, giving highest marks to those who "look at the event from a different and probably unpopular angle."

He boasts that an article of his in The Village Voice called for the assignment of United Nations peacekeepers in Bosnia in 1991, a step that Maass considered disastrous. Strangely, Emery does not include Maass in his reportorial pantheon even though they share the dubious view that the work of correspondents on the scene is always superior to judgments made in Washington. ■ MS

### Al Capone And the Press

...the same producers of mass culture who had created the generic gangster ultimately presented Al Capone to the American public... The most important group in the production of this material was big-city newspaper reporters, who not only churned out daily stories but wrote most of the more substantial accounts. Newsmen or former newsmen wrote all in a succession of high-selling Capone books that appeared from 1929 to 1993.—*David E. Ruth in "Inventing the Public Enemy: The Gangster in American Culture, 1918-1934," University of Chicago Press.*

## Real-time TV's Impact on World Affairs

### Lights, Camera, War Is Media Technology Driving International Politics?

Johanna Neuman

St. Martin's Press. 327 Pages. \$23.95.

BY JACQUES A. RIVARD

In the winter 1995 edition of *Nieman Reports*, Lorie Hearn of The San Diego Union reviews the latest book by Michael Schudson, Professor of Communication and Sociology at the University of California. In "The Power of News," Schudson concludes that journalists are not as important as they think they are in the democratic process, that "the press more often follows than leads, that it reinforces more than it challenges conventional wisdom." Interestingly, Schudson's book is followed by "Lights, Camera, War," by Johanna Neuman, the Foreign Editor of *USA Today*, who, albeit in a more focused way, mitigates the impact of real-time journalism, what is called "the CNN Curve," on national and international policy-making.

"In that hangar in the days before that war, there was a feeling that power had shifted to technology, that CNN was driving diplomacy, that governments and newspapers were no longer the guardians of public information." Johanna Neuman begins her book recounting how, on January 11, 1991, from a hangar in Taif, Saudi Arabia, Secretary of State James Baker reiterated the UN ultimatum to leave Kuwait within days, or risk war by a coalition of 34 Western and Arab nations. For Neuman, the remarkable event happening in that hangar in Taif was not that Baker was speaking in front of 400 troops, but that CNN was airing the encounter, which Iraqi president Saddam Hussein could watch in

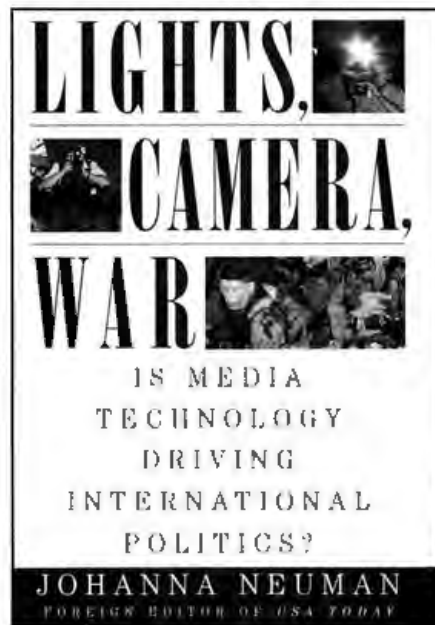
*Jacques A. Rivard, a Montreal-based reporter for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, has just completed his Nieman Fellowship.*

Baghdad "before Baker went to sleep." Neuman recalls Baker's comment: "We didn't send that message through Joe Wilson [top U.S. diplomat in Baghdad]. We sent it through CNN."

To Neuman, there was, "seemingly, a change in the rules of international governance," as "governments were watching history with their publics, losing the luxury of time to deliberate in private before the imperative to do something stood on their doorsteps." Neuman cites independent presidential candidate Ross Perot arguing in 1992 "that new communication technology has made ambassadors obsolete." Neuman admits she was a firm believer that modern communication media, from the fax to E-mail, via CNN, "had revolutionized the way nations interact, had given the media a larger role in foreign policy than ever before." But Neuman's analysis of the situation changed dramatically after she spent months of research at Columbia University, working on this book.

After researching through history about the impact of the discoveries that spread knowledge, always at a faster pace, Neuman concludes that these new means of communicating have had profound consequences on the ways diplomats and journalists had to work. Leaders had to react to a broader, better informed public opinion.

For three centuries the elite feared to lose their powers. In France, there was even a proposal to ban printing. Neuman writes that "the printing press was as powerful to French revolutionaries, the telegraph as remarkable to Civil War generals, the radio as powerful in Edward R. Murrow's hands, as any CNN footage is to our generation."



So, Neuman concludes, nothing is new with the advent of the "CNN Curve." Each media discovery had social, political and diplomatic impact.

What is new, according to Neuman, is the acceleration of the changes: real-time television, the Internet, and more news in every home. As the saying goes, "a picture is worth a thousand words." First through television and then through satellite, information in the late 20th Century, carries an enormous potential for emotion: the corpse of an American soldier dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, the lone protester in front of Chinese Army tanks in Tiananmen Square, a vulture watching a few feet from a Sudanese girl collapsed from hunger. Neuman concedes the impact of the new media technologies is important, but "rarely as important in the hands of journalists as it is in

the hands of political figures who can summon the talent to exploit the new invention." Neuman adds that, "by contrast, pictures drive diplomacy—as words did in an earlier era—only when there is a vacuum of political leadership."

In her research, Neuman finds a good example of the direct impact of technology on the fate of nations. She goes back to 1875, when French historian Charles Mazade argued that "the just-passed Franco-Prussian War could have been avoided if leaders had sat eye-to-eye instead of sending their ultimatums by telegram." Already in 1889, *The London Spectator* was criticizing the fact that the telegraph, like real-time television now, was rushing journalists and diplomats alike in their time for reflection: "All men are compelled to think of all things, at the same time, on imperfect information, and with too little interval for reflection."

The author talks about what some call the New World Media Order. Says George Stephanopoulos, adviser to President Clinton: "CNN has become a universal intervener....It's an immediate actor. We're often forced to respond to them as much as to actual activity." Even UN Secretary-General Boutros-Boutros Ghali laments that television is often setting the agenda: "The member states never take action on a problem unless the media take up the case." But Neuman cites cases of presidents who used the media as much for their own good as for the public perception of their policies. "At the height of the Cuban missile crisis, the Cold War's most dangerous nuclear confrontation, he [Kennedy] used television adroitly, both to convey messages to Khrushchev and to marshal public opinion."

The same was even more evident in times of war through history, when, for strategic purposes, the press was kept at bay, or used to confound the enemy. For Neuman, "it is still better to win the war even if you lose the press." All in all, Neuman notes that "technology has been a gift to those who learned to exploit its blessings to shape public debate, instead of being driven by the whims of public opinion."

Some leaders have not really done well with new technology. The president who suffered much in the hands of television was Nixon. He lost to Kennedy on television during the first campaign debate, while radio listeners favored Nixon. To me, this is one of the best examples of the power of the media. Without television at that debate, the fate of America, of world politics, could have been dramatically different.

Technology might also have played a more important role than the author seems to admit, when journalists served as go-between, almost as negotiators, in crisis situations. What about the role of Walter Cronkite during the Vietnam War? What about the intervention of that CBS anchor "in the middle of diplomacy in 1977 when he asked Egyptian President Anwar Sadat if he would be willing to visit Jerusalem." These are interventions of the press through new technology that, to me, not only accelerate the pace of relations between countries, but may set them, depending on timing, on different historic courses.

Then there is cyberspace, which already gives the individual the power to communicate with the world, and carve out the desired information. The elite, according to Neuman, "worried that cyberspace would further widen the gap between rich and poor, dividing society along the informed and uninformed." Users who marvel at the potential for choice of information on the Internet will soon encounter police on the computerized superhighways. "A freewheeling, unguarded cyberspace is not likely to be without middlemen for long....Already the U.S. government is looking at ways to inhibit freedom on the Internet, or, at least, to monitor it."

About cyberspace, the author sees the future with optimism: "There is a new day in diplomacy, a novel outlet for public opinion and a steep test for journalism. Above all, there is a challenge to leaders to exploit the new inventions." Marlin Fitzwater, President Bush's press secretary, seems to agree. At a meeting with journalists at Harvard's Institute of Politics this spring, he predicted that these new challenges in

communication "would raise the standards of politicians."

But, in my opinion, the author did not consider the possible impact of newcomers in global TV news. A second real-time CNN-like network is almost ready to roll at NBC; ABC is also contemplating the eventuality of going "round-the-clock-round-the-world" with real-time information.

As a TV journalist I worked as a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reporter for 20 years in Canada and abroad. I think that the possibility that the world be submitted to new "curves," CNN-like, with NBC, and maybe ABC, bombarding the globe with "events as they unfold," will bring about a more important challenge to diplomacy, to the evolution of world affairs, than Johanna Neuman seems to foresee. Past centuries have never known the incredible power of television, which carry pictures that can create "emotional moments" of very high intensity, and now, thanks to satellite technology, at the same time at the four corners of the world.

I, for one, maintain that the multiplication of real-time television outlets could really impact, if not shift, the ways international policies are adopted. Global information at a time of global—even planetary—challenges—could redefine local and national policies, for the good. Unless—and Neuman refers to the possibility at the end of her book—the trend seen in the middle of the 90's accelerates. This trend shows a lack of interest in news, both electronic and print (too many of them, too many negative, or not enough time left to watch). That trend could temper the impact of global news networks on the handling of world affairs.

Apart from this slight divergence of view, I think that the book is a must for anyone interested in a detailed and very interesting analysis of the impact of media technologies through history.

■

## Who Likes the Fellow Exposing the Magician's Tricks?

**They Only Look Dead:  
Why Progressives Will Dominate the Next Political Era**

E.J. Dionne Jr.  
Simon & Schuster. 352 Pages. \$24.

BY WALLACE TURNER

In a nicely turned mix of scholarly research with burned shoe leather, E.J. Dionne Jr. develops his theory that the 1994 Conservative political surge is a blip on history's screen. His reasoning: the conservative movement inherently lacks capacity to find solutions to a constantly changing society's immense problems while progressives by their nature stumble and fumble their way to power through offering solutions that sometimes work.

This is good stuff, important and worthy of wide readership. I chose to draw our text today from his long section labeled "No News Is Good News—Why Americans Hate the Press." When we media hacks are seen as the moral equals of members of Congress, we need to take every opportunity to discuss how that could be and try to get our public image back up alongside the auto repo men.

Dionne states the problem clearly: "Increasingly, all sides in the political debate are ready to stand against the press. Few outside journalism support reporters in times of controversy, and reporters themselves have emerged as their own profession's fiercest critics."

We've sort of fallen between the stools, Dionne suggests, as we left the out-and-out partisan political reporting of the 19th Century and earlier to move into the "objective" reporting adopted by publishers and editors as they hunted wider subscriber bases.

*Wallace Turner, Nieman Fellow 1959 from The Portland Oregonian, worked from San Francisco for The New York Times from 1962 to 1985, and retired as The Times Seattle bureau chief in 1988. His home is in Seattle.*

After a while objective reporting didn't serve the purpose, as Joe McCarthy showed us all with his elastic and totally phony list of State Department Communists. So we became adversarial with all the pols, which helped us get where we are now.

Then we became dissatisfied as merely a mirror of the campaigns and were led by Teddy White to try to let the public see through the mirror into that strange, worrisome area behind the campaigns. Who likes the fellow in the front row who jumps up and explains the magician's tricks?

Dionne lists three lines of criticism. First, the conservatives say we're liberals. How many of us have had the bejeweled lady with the martini breath peer over our shoulder at our notes as we scrawled them? First time it happened to me was in 1966 in the Cow Palace where Ronald Reagan was talking about deserving poor and welfare cheats.

Second big rap on us was that we trivialized the campaign, especially in 1988. Dionne says academics were the heaviest critics in this area. They wanted us to hold the candidates to higher standards than those their campaign consultants dragged them down to.

Dionne lists as his third criticism of the media the feeling that all we look for is bad stories about bad things people in power may have done.

Dionne gives these arguments credence. He responds that journalism needs to draw the public, and the campaigners, into debate on issues and away from bellowing slogans and pointless scandal. He says people who report on politics "have a powerful obligation to worry about their role in the functioning of a democratic republic."

While I've dealt here mostly with

## THEY ONLY LOOK DEAD



WHY PROGRESSIVES WILL DOMINATE  
\* \* THE NEXT POLITICAL ERA \* \*

**E. J. DIONNE JR.**

AUTHOR OF WHY AMERICANS HATE POLITICS

Dionne's thoughtful and provocative treatment of journalism's decline in public esteem, I want to direct you to his excellent chapter on the 1994 congressional elections.

Particularly, I like his chapter title "Why Gingrich Happened." He suggests that Gingrich's ideas put him on the same track with McKinley and Mark Hanna's social Darwinism.

Dionne says that Bush's 1992 loss convinced Gingrich that the Republicans "needed to embrace a radical, mostly libertarian, conservatism that would destroy the liberals' power base...." And he recalls that Gingrich once called Bob Dole "the tax collector for the welfare state" while Dole called Gingrich and his followers in the House "the young hypocrites."

It's a very good chapter in a very good book by The Washington Post columnist. So was his first book, "Why Americans Hate Politics," which won The Los Angeles Times Book Prize and was designated by The New York Times as a Notable Book of the Year. ■

## About the Gentlemen From The New York Times

The Paper's Papers

A Reporter's Journey Through the Archives of The New York Times

Richard F. Shepard

Times Books. 373 Pages. \$30.

BY LOREN GHIGLIONE

For those who believe The New York Times to be a stodgy, shuffling gray lady, Richard F. Shepard's "The Paper's Papers: A Reporter's Journey Through the Archives of The New York Times" provides evidence of her deliberateness.

Change at The Times often takes decades. A crossword puzzle, first suggested for publication in 1923, was skewered by a Times editorial a year later ("a primitive form of mental exercise") and did not appear in The Times until 1942. It took almost 10 years for a proposed Op-Ed page filled with articles by outsiders to debut in 1970.

When Mike Berger died in 1959, Publisher Arthur Hays Sulzberger urged the omission of Berger's About New York column "for the next few weeks as a notice of Mike's passing." Management required 14 years to revive the column.

The acceptance of the term Ms. also involved decade-plus dawdling. In a letter to Gloria Steinem, a Times executive—Shepard does not identify him—justified the newspaper's refusal to use Ms. in place of Miss or Mrs.: "We don't want to do that because it really is not part of the language yet and because an awful lot of people would object." The Times also would be pushed by others, the editor contended, to be addressed by honorifics they preferred. Finally, giving in to usage introduced elsewhere in the 1960's, The Times accepted Ms. in 1986.

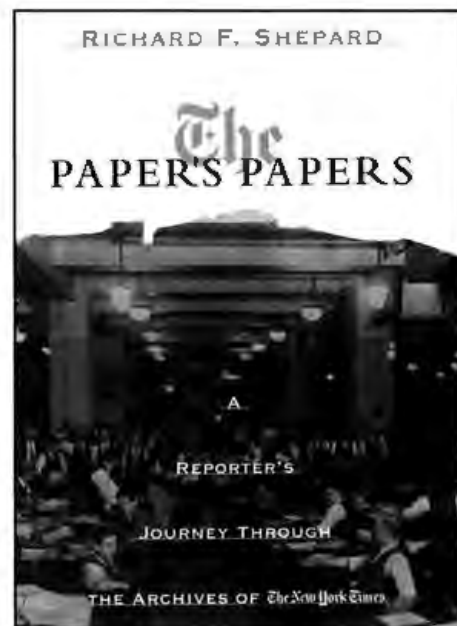
Poking through the 421 cubic feet of letters and memos in The Times ar-

chives and recalling his half-century at The Times, Shepard, who worked for The Times for 45 years, much of the time as a cultural news reporter, illuminates changes at The Times in areas that are, he acknowledges, his personal favorites. He ignores changes in financial, science and sports coverage, focusing on foreign, cityside and society coverage.

The womb-to-tomb society news desk reports births, weddings and deaths (hatch, match and snatch, in press patois), soft news that causes hard feelings among readers. "The society page is, in effect, snobbish," Arthur Hays Sulzberger admitted in 1949. The marriage of an upper-crust white woman to an African-American man caused Managing Editor Edwin L. James to write to Sulzberger a year later: "I am very confident that so long as we run society news we must do it on the selective basis, and that basis would certainly bar weddings in which Negroes were involved."

A generation earlier, Publisher Adolph Ochs, a Jew, received a letter from a rabbi who complained that "there did not appear a single Jewish name nor any reference to any social happening in any Jewish family." The rabbi spoke of Times anti-Semitism. That must have hurt Ochs. After purchasing The Times in 1896 he wrote back to his wife and daughter in Tennessee about an invitation to join the Hardware Club: "I do not believe Jews are admitted in that club, and I am not going to join any club where Jews are prohibited even though I myself can be admitted."

Shepard implies that Arthur Hays Sulzberger, the next publisher of The Times, might have missed an opportunity to speak out against local anti-Semitism. In early 1944, Frank S. Adams,



assigned to cover anti-Semitism in New York, sent a thorough report on its increase directly to Sulzberger. The study never appeared in The Times.

But that anecdote and other opportunities to second-guess publishers and editors clearly do not diminish Shepard's admiration for The Times's leadership. He writes lovingly and lyrically about The Times under the Adolph S. Ochs family: "[T]his is not an account riddled with scandal," Shepard says. "The sins uncovered tend to emphasize how otherwise clean the operation as a whole has been." His book accompanies one of four New York exhibits this year honoring Ochs and the paper's past century.

The book makes clear the continuing devotion of the Ochs family to first-rate journalism and high moral tone (the Ochs motto of "All the News That's Fit to Print" echoes the vision of Henry Raymond, who founded The Times in 1851: the editor must "take care that

*Loren Ghiglione, professional in residence at The Newseum, is Curator of an exhibit about the history of New York journalism to open next year.*



nothing immoral should get into any part of the paper"). The Ochs statement of principles promised to present the news "impartially without fear or favor in language that is parliamentary in good society."

Each generation of the Ochs family has justifiably reveled in the public's response to the newspaper's pursuit of those principles. In 1942 a Chattanooga family member wrote to Publisher Arthur Hays Sulzberger about the description of *The Times* by the visiting British ambassador at large: of the seven wonder of America, No. 4 was "The New York Times on Sunday." A *Times* editor reported to Sulzberger the description of *The Times* by E.A. Bacon, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army: "Too big to read, too important not to."

The importance comes primarily from the quality of the reporting. Shepard notes, "As with crime ('When *The Times* reports on it, it's sociology'), so it is with food—when *The Times* writes about it, it's not cooking but gastronomy." Editors and the publisher also encourage quality coverage, questioning everything. Clifton Daniel, when Assistant Managing Editor, dissected an article's description of a connoisseur's taste in caviar by devoting a memo to the difference between pressed caviar, unsalted caviar and malossol, caviar with little salt. Food news editor Craig Claiborne's front-page feature on a \$4,000 dinner for two at *Chez Denis* in Paris prompted Publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, reminded by readers of the prevalence worldwide of hunger, to suggest that "\$4,000 for two, even without a tip, is going a bit too far."

But sometimes the drive to improve coverage appears to degenerate into old fogyism. In 1954 Arthur Hays Sulzberger attacked film critic Bosley Crowther's reference to Susan Hayward as "beautiful and exciting as she inadequately is." Sulzberger said: "I think the word 'inadequately' is plainly insulting...it's extremely bad taste." Sulzberger, who hated modern art, responded to a photo of a Paul Klee drawing and Dore Ashton's intelligent review of Klee's art with one of many attacks on her reviews: "I don't generally get this positive about things that I

don't understand, but I think I am going to say now definitely that I don't want anything of this kind in *The New York Times* again." Ashton left *The Times* within two years.

Shepard comes across as a gentle, generous loyalist who refuses to take himself too seriously. But even he also brings to mind a different mythical reporter. Shepard describes himself as a "Timesman" (and how do the *Timeswomen* feel about that?), a noun of not only gender but also journalistic gentility, assuming that is not an oxymoron. The mythical *Timesman* plays bridge between deadlines, completes *The Sunday Times* crossword puzzle in 30 minutes using only the horizontal clues, sprinkles his writing with \$10-words (Shepard stoops to postprandial, sans-culottes and vade mecum) and lives on the plane of potentates. Shepard describes that plane: "When I was new at *The Times*, a clerk on the Foreign Desk assured me, straight-faced, that C. L. Sulzberger, an influential and eminent foreign affairs columnist for many years, never spoke to anyone below the rank of prime minister unless it was to tell them where to put his luggage."

Shepard masterfully describes the evolving ethical standards of *The Times*, avoiding the temptation to judge earlier generations' behavior by late-20th Century beliefs:

- In 1908, on the advice of Theodore Roosevelt, *The Times* suppressed the interview of William B. Hale with the outspoken Kaiser Wilhelm II in which he was "exceedingly bitter against England and full of the yellow peril...Japan and America will fight within 10 years." More than three decades later, on the eve of World War II, Arthur H. Sulzberger allowed the interview's publication.

- In 1921, during an arms race, Lord Lee of England hoped to persuade President Warren G. Harding of his genuine interest in avoiding competition between the two nations. At Lee's request, Ochs served as an unofficial communicator of the United Kingdom's position; Ochs, in turn, relayed the message to *The Times*'s London correspondent, who met with the secretary

of the navy. Harding soon organized a Washington disarmament conference.

- In the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, *The Times* competed with the checkbooks of other newspapers to buy exclusive coverage of scientific explorations and globe-trotting adventures. Ochs rejoiced in *The Times* scoop on Robert E. Peary's arrival at the North Pole in 1909 ("We are the exclusive publishers"). In 1927, a \$35,000 payment gave *The Times* syndication and New York rights to Charles Lindbergh's solo flight from New York to Paris.

- The acceptance of Christmas gifts, though outlawed by *The Times*, continued in the ship news department and other sections of the paper well into the second half of the 20th Century. Shepard recalls carrying gifts through the newsroom to the ship news cubicle. "How do you keep honest, taking all that?" one reporter harrumphed. Shepard quipped, "Easy, we throw the cards away without looking at them."

Shepard's book is not flawless. Sometimes he quotes conflicting bosses without explaining which one won. Famous fights within *The Times*—for example, the 1970's lawsuit against the paper by women staffers—receive little if any mention. Abe Rosenthal and other complex individuals are treated as one-dimensional heroes (Rosenthal is described as a "prolific and dynamic executive").

Shepard chooses, instead, to focus the chapter on the coverage of shipping news, dead at *The Times* for a generation, but entertainingly remembered. He recounts the make-believe news reports of T. Walter "Skipper" Williams, the ship news editor whose tall tales were published, despite *The Times* insistence on just-the-facts-ma'am journalism.

If only other major newspapers would create their own archives and invite writers with Shepard's story-telling ability to mine the materials. They reveal as much as newspapers themselves about journalism. ■

# Which Way Out of the Media Morass?

BY MURRAY SEEGER

The surgeons and faith healers are hovering over the body of journalism. From all angles, these observers and practitioners are flooding the book market with prescriptions, therapies and formulae for curing the perceived problems of the print and electronic media.

For those of us trained in the thesis that "reporters do not make news," this intense debate over the current status and future of journalism is somewhat bewildering. Much of the talk is reminiscent of beefy bull sessions among reporters and editors. Now it is elevated to sociological research and theorizing by people who have never met a deadline but make a living talking and writing about people who have.

A few recent titles and authors: "Breaking News," James Fallows; "Existential Journalism," John C. Merrill; "When Should the Watchdogs Bark?," Larry J. Sabato and S. Robert Lichter; "Good Intentions Make Bad News," Lichter and Richard E. Noyes; "Going Negative: How Political Advertisements Shrink and Polarize the Electorate," Stephen Ansolabehere and Shanto Iyengar; "On the Front Lines," Michael Emery; "Hot Air: All Talk All the Time," Howard Kurtz; "Market Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware," John H. McManus; "The Menace of the Corporate Newspaper: Fact or Fiction," David Pearce Demers; "News Values," Jack Fuller.

This publishing orgy set off an echoing round of commentary and book reviews (like this one). With the press so open to criticism, politicians and public figures are emboldened to level their rifles at reporters, editors and broadcasters, willing to risk a journalistic backlash to get coverage and public sympathy. There is, in addition, plenty of money to sponsor attacks on the "liberal" press.

Adding to this circus atmosphere, the country was treated to two of the great ego trips of the era by media figures when Pat Buchanan, the populist polemicist, and Steve Forbes, the plutocratic publisher, ran for the Republican presidential nomination and the spectacle of Washington journalists making fools of themselves.

The once secret Gridiron Club dinner of insider journalists and politicians was described by two Washington Post reporters as "a big slobbery, social-climbing love night for the press and pols." Another ritual, the Radio-Television Correspondents' Dinner, became another tawdry display when the hosts were shocked—shocked!—to see and hear Don Imus, today's fad in radio commentators, insult people in person. While President and Mrs. Clinton were targets, some of the prime insultees were members of the media inner sanctum.

No wonder the public is confused by the posturing of journalists who try to hide their failings behind the First Amendment. Richard C. Harwood, one of the most respected

opinion analysts, found this attitude in focus groups organized for the Pew Center for Civic Journalism:

"People felt betrayed and bewildered by the news media. They said that too much of what the news media convey is endless dirt and gossip, sensationalized coverage and confused and polarized public discourse. Group participants asserted that these practices undermine the very fabric of the union."

The books illustrate the problems: too many journalists being paid high fees to say ridiculous things on television; trying to make complex issues into questions of left and right with nothing in between; taking big fees for appearances with self-interested organizations; dipping into and out of politics; running in herds with no concern for individuals' rights to privacy and propriety; covering too many official stories and not enough stories about people's problems.

For the public, journalists look pretty much all alike. The fact that the TV and radio talk shows are dominated by second and third-rate professionals makes no difference to the public. First-class journalists who will not cheapen their coin to please broadcast directors are known to their cohorts and their sources, but not necessarily to broadcast audiences.

The public also has trouble sorting opinion from fact, especially when ideas are transmitted orally. Journalists are supposed to know more than most people about current events; when reporters issue glib conclusions and distorted judgments, many listeners think they are getting inside information.

There is little new in these indictments and the prescriptions offering recipes for better behavior and performance miss the important points. Of this group, Fuller's book is the most important for journalists.

A former Editor and now Publisher of The Chicago Tribune, Fuller preaches the traditional verities of sound reporting and the virtues of providing readers with the material for making decisions. There are no quantitative analyses here, no sociological babble.

The recent New York Times series on the downsizing of America is a more valuable example of what a responsible press can do than is offered by all of these other books. Anyone who wants another example of fine reporting disguised as a book review should take 30 minutes to read Garry Wills's examination of the Whitewater story in the April 18 issue of The New York Review of Books.

American journalism is really in trouble when a historian does better reporting on a contemporary story than the entire gaggle of so-called investigative reporters who have been chasing Whitewater. ■

*Murray Seeger is Special Advisor to the Nieman Curator.*

## 21 Named to 59th Class of Nieman Fellows

**T**welve American journalists and nine from abroad have been appointed to the 59th class of Nieman Fellows.

### The 12 Americans and their areas of interest are:

**Robert Blau**, 36, editor/reporter, The Chicago Tribune. He will survey urban problems.

**Lori Cohen**, 39, producer/editor, WGBH-TV, Boston. She will study cultural, historic and theoretical factors in economic development.

**Mark Jaffe**, 47, environment reporter, The Philadelphia Inquirer. He will study government, science, economics and philosophy as they relate to environmental policies. His fellowship is financed by a grant awarded to the university in 1993 by the V. Kann Rasmussen Foundation.

**Laura King**, 40, News Editor for Asia, The Associated Press Tokyo Bureau. She plans to study linguistics and translation of Asian languages.

**Felicia R. Lee**, 39, reporter, The New York Times. She will study American history, religion and black culture.

**Terri Lichstein**, 35, producer, ABC News, PrimeTime Live. She will study history and politics of the Middle East and countries of the former Soviet Union.

**Myra Ming**, 41, senior news producer, KTTV, Los Angeles. She plans to study issues of newsroom management and urban affairs.

**Richard Read**, 38, international business writer, The Oregonian, Portland. He will study international politics, trade and finance.

**Deborah Seward**, 39, News Editor, The Associated Press Moscow Bureau. She plans a program of study on issues of nuclear proliferation and nuclear energy damage to the environment.

**Marjorie Valbrun**, 33, staff writer, The Philadelphia Inquirer. She will examine factors in producing a culture of poverty.

**Robert Vare**, 50, articles editor, The New Yorker. He will study American

history, economics and politics.

**Paige Williams**, 29, reporter, The Charlotte Observer. He will examine issues of race and social problems of youth.

### The nine journalists from other country are:

**Maria Cristina Caballero**, 33, Special Investigations Editor/National Editor, Cambio 16, Bogota, Colombia. She will study political corruption and U.S.-Colombia relations. Her fellowship is supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

**Gab-je Cho**, 49, Editor The Choosun Monthly, Seoul, Korea. He will concentrate on his country's development in world terms. His fellowship is supported by The Asia Foundation and the Sungkok Foundation for Journalism.

**Dragan Cicic**, 32, reporter, Nin magazine, Belgrade, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. He will examine differences between authoritarian and totalitarian governments and populism.

**Pilita Clark**, 35, Washington correspondent, The Sydney (Australia) Morning Herald. She is interested in the implications of the fast-growing Asian countries on the Pacific Rim.

**Suvendrini Kakuchi**, 42, correspondent in Tokyo, Inter Press Service. She is the recipient of the 1996-97 Chiba-Nieman Fellowship in memory of Japanese journalist Atsuko Chiba, late columnist for the Yomiuri Shimbun and Nieman Fellow '68. Funding for the fellowship is provided by The Atsuko Chiba Foundation, Inc. She will study the impact of civil war on children.

**Bonnie Lafave**, 37, producer, CBC Television ("The National") Toronto. She is the recipient of the 1996-97 Martin Wise Goodman Canadian Nieman Fellowship in memory of the late president of Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. and Nieman Fellow '62; funding is from the U.S. and Canada. Her field is the environment and public policy.

**Verónica López**, 50, Editor-in-Chief, Caras magazine, Santiago, Chile, will study enterprise management and the

impact of modern communications technology on Latin America. Her fellowship is supported by Editorial Andina S.A.

**Mathatha Tsedu**, 43, Political Editor, The Sowetan, Johannesburg, South Africa. His fellowship is supported by the United States-South Africa Leadership Development Program.

**Josef Tucek**, 35, columnist/editorial writer, Mladá fronta Dnes, Prague, Czech Republic. As an Environmental Nieman Fellow, his fellowship is supported through a grant awarded to the University by the V. Kann Rasmussen Foundation. ■

## Letter

Finding fault with Nieman Reports isn't easy, especially with winners like the Spring '96 edition. But picky, picky: when are you going to quit torturing Roman numerals, as in "Vol. XLX?"

I have it on unimpeachable authority—i.e., a grade-school teacher who pounded it into me many decades ago, to say nothing of recent editions of the World Book encyclopedia and the American Heritage Dictionary—that the ancient Roman system of numeration made X equal to 10 and I equal to 50. And if it is still true that XL (by the rule of subtraction) equals 40, whereas LX (by the rule of addition) equals 60, then XLX must be the scenic route to 50; if you want to get there quicker, just go to L.

Granted, the numerical value of XLX is calculable, but even the Caesars must have been hard put to figure out that "Vol. XLVIX" last year was meant to denote volume 49 (a presumption based on 1994's "Vol. XLVIII," clearly 48).

As the noblest Roman of them all might have told you, II would have made a neat 49 and LI is a sure thing for 51.

Jim Montgomery

NF MCMLXVI

OK, OK. We give up. Starting next year it will be Vol. 51—Ed.

# NIEMAN NOTES

COMPILED BY LOIS FIORE

## How We Let Smoke Get in Our Eyes

BY PHILIP J. HILTS

I smoked cigarettes for 10 years, and have on occasion over the past three decades written stories about tobacco at various newspapers where I worked. But it was only in recent days that I began to realize that tobacco is a mysterious topic, and that what makes it mysterious is that it is so obvious.

I spent roughly three years covering tobacco issues for *The New York Times*; I wrote more than 80 stories, including more than 20 for the front page. I cannot recall a single one of those stories on which one editor or another did not say, "So what's new here? Don't we already know tobacco kills people and is addictive? Don't we already know the companies are bad actors? We may have internal documents showing something about what they knew, but so what?" Tobacco is boring. Everyone knows smoking is bad, the tobacco companies are covering up, what else needs to be said?

This, of course, is the trouble with daily journalism—the long picture is hard to construct from daily bits and pieces. I think the tale of tobacco is the best story of business and public health in this century. But it opens up only in small increments, so becomes difficult to tackle daily.

If an anthropologist from Mars, to use Oliver Sacks' way of stepping back for the long view, were to arrive and ask us what is this odd behavior in which a quarter of the entire population stuffs burning leaves into their mouths 200 times per day, it would be difficult to give an adequate explanation.

If you then had to explain that this behavior is not only very unpleasant and takes a good deal of time to get used to, but it is also fatal, killing one of three people who take it up (smoking kills more people than all drug abuse, all car accidents, and all homicides and suicides combined) *and* that the government spends much money and effort rooting out diseases that kill a tenth or a hundredth as many people, but refuses to police this epidemic, then the Martian anthropologist might be excused for believing that we were not being honest with him. He might suspect the story is a cover for a population-control program.

To understand how we arrived at this pass, in which we have a public health catastrophe and a simultaneous attitude of boredom when the subject comes up, we need to step back a bit to recall what we knew and did not know about smoking and its effects to help understand the current situation.

One story told by the Winnebago of Southern Michigan goes like this:

The god called Earthmaker came and sat with the people one day. "He told us if we offered him a pipeful of tobacco...he would grant us whatever we asked of him. Now, all the spirits come to long for this tobacco as intensely as they longed for anything in creation, and for that reason, if at any time we make our cry to the spirits with tobacco, they will take pity on us." In native American society, even the Gods were addicted, and would do anything for a smoke.

James I of England wrote about the hazards in 1604, delivering a line about the health and social effects of smoking which would be difficult to match today: smoking, he said, is "A custome loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, dangerous to the lungs, and in the black, stinking fume thereof, nearest resembles the horrible Stygian smoke of the pit that is bottomless."

So over the centuries we have known about the weed and its effects, in some detail. People have understood in anecdotal terms, but until relatively recently, we did not have the details in hand.

In the normal course of science, health and policy—if there is a normal course for these issues—knowledge appears gradually, and as it becomes more certain, that knowledge becomes integrated into thought and discussion, then proposals and debate, and finally policy and the social landscape. Facts, if they can be established, can become features of the landscape as much as roads and buildings.

But in this case, when the scientific data showing the carnage caused by cigarettes was first published in 1952 and 1953, they were not debated and absorbed as such data usually are. (This, despite the fact that the studies were striking and much more dramatic than the usual daily stories about discovered hazards: lung cancer had risen to 50 times higher in heavy smokers than non-smokers. More damning, the rate of disease in smokers was directly pro-

portional to the number of cigarettes per day they smoked. In animals, cigarette smoke induced not a few cancers, but tumors on the skin of 44 percent of the animals tested, a huge number by experimental standards.)

In this case, there was an unusual intervening event. The top executives of the major companies met on December 15, 1953, at the Plaza Hotel in New York, days after the worst reports from the scientific labs appeared in newspapers, and agreed to run a large-scale public relations campaign to prevent the information on health from taking hold.

At the same time, they began secret research on tobacco hazards, even as they were denying the hazards publicly. They hoped they could secretly eliminate the hazards before the government came down on them. But eventually it became clear that burning tobacco created so many toxic compounds that they could never make a safer cigarette, short of making a radical cigarette such as one that does not burn. They were left with decades of detailed scientific work and papers laying out the dangers and addictive potential of smoking. It became a mountain of damning, untapped documents. They began to leak only in the late 1980's, 30 years after the secret work began.

It was not until 1994 that this whole tale began to emerge publicly.

The revelations started when one whistleblower, an unemployed Ph.D., a half-crazed individual who had divorced and had no apparent future, made a decision to commit himself to the utterly inconvenient truth. He was a paralegal worker at the Brown and Williamson Tobacco Corporation in Louisville, and over a period of several years, he copied and brought out of the secret files about 4,000 pages of documents.

I had done half a dozen stories for The Times on tobacco when the whistleblower's documents made their way toward Washington. I got a call late one afternoon, and that night drove out into the suburbs to see the first of the great cache of documents.

I began reporting their contents on May 7, 1994, and wrote a solo series on

the history unearthed in these papers, beginning June 16, 1994. These papers and thousands of other pages which I received from other whistleblowers, were eventually made fully public, introduced into the Congressional Record, made available to lawyers who were suing the tobacco companies, and given to the Justice Department, which began work to consider indictments of tobacco company executives for fraud and perjury. The documents have also been used by the F.D.A. in making its case that tobacco must be regulated as a drug.

**I**n all of this, note the peculiar sequence of events: it took a whistleblower willing to risk his freedom and commit possibly illegal acts to obtain the damning papers for the public. Then, the papers were first offered, not to The New York Times but to ABC News. Lawyers for the news division confiscated them and ordered reporters not to work on the story. When I was offered the story, there was significant resistance to running it, and it was in the end the Science Department that pressed ahead with it. It is chastening to think how close we came to missing the story again in 1994, after decades of missing it one way or another since the 1950's.

Out of all this I wrote the book titled "Smokescreen: The Truth Behind the Tobacco Industry Cover-up." As it is published, I feel a curious sense of worry. Stories, I think I have learned in pursuing this one, do not automatically emerge in the press, even if they are very large and important, and even when major parts of their outline are known by many who could tell what happened. We often speak of the importance of a free press in the maintenance of a civilized society; but there is more required than a free press. Perhaps it is better as we try to justify our place in society as journalists, that we replace the phrase "free press" with "free and vigilant" press to take note of our own limitations. ■

*Philip Hiltz, a 1985 Nieman Fellow, reports from Boston part time for The New York Times.*

—1949—

**Grady Clay** was honored in March by the Board of Directors of the Louisville Community Design Center in Kentucky. Clay, described as a "Writer, Critic, Editor, Commentator, Crusader, Advocate, Gardener & Teacher," was also called an "urbanist" by Barry Alberts, the Executive Director of the Louisville Development Authority. Alberts defined "urbanist" as "someone who has a great understanding and passion for cities....somebody who understands the complexities of what cities mean to our society."

Clay was a reporter and then Urban Affairs Editor at The Courier-Journal before becoming Editor of Landscape Architecture, an international magazine, where he remained for 23 years. Since 1984 he has also been a radio commentator on "Crossing the American Grain with Grady Clay." He is the author of "Close-Up: How To Read the American City," and "Real Places: An Unconventional Guide to America's Generic Landscape."

—1950—

**Donald Gonzales**, former Senior Vice President of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, died January 24.

Gonzales worked as a reporter to put himself through the University of Nebraska and spent most of his journalism career at United Press, covering the Navy and State Departments, the White House and the United Nations.

Gonzales spent 25 years at Colonial Williamsburg and retired in 1983. He wrote "Travel and the Arts" and the book "The Rockefellers and Colonial Williamsburg."

Mary Gonzales, who married Don in 1940, lives in Williamsburg, Virginia.

—1953—

**Melvin Mencher** has designed "The Reporter's Checklist and Notebook":

"For years I had been sending out my students at Columbia to gather material about the infant mortality rates in

various New York City neighborhoods. They were able to make correlations between the rates and race and class that were revealing. As the years wore on, I found that I had to prepare students for the assignment. I had to explain what a rate is, how it is calculated, how rates differ from raw numbers and why they are more useful than these totals. I realized that my students came to graduate school with almost no college mathematics and a year or two at most of high school math....

"When I asked some students, what's with you and numbers? The unanimous reply: 'We chose journalism because we don't have to deal with numbers. We want to write.' ...

"About this time I was reading proof on an idea I had developed into a book of sorts, *The Reporter's Checklist and Notebook*. I had taken checklists I devised for my reporting and writing textbooks and put them into the standard reporter's spiral notebook. Thus, a city hall reporter impressed into covering a fire downtown could flip his notebook to the page with the essential elements of a fire story....

"I had just heard on television something about "a majority of two to one" and I realized that the *Notebook* would be the appropriate place for a section on some basics in math. Faster than the speed of light, I drew up the section on percentages, averages, rates and ratios. We squeezed in the copy and 'Useful Math for Reporters' is the result."

—1954—

**Barry Brown** died on July 3 at Arlington (Va.) Hospital after surgery for an aortic aneurysm. Brown was a retired columnist and news analyst for the U.S. Information Agency.

Brown came from a journalistic family: in 1940 he worked at *The Providence Journal Bulletin* where his father, Sevellon Brown, was Editor and Publisher and his brother Sevellon Brown III, was later Editor. His maternal grandfather, David S. Barry, had been the Editor of *The Journal-Bulletin*.

During World War II, Mr. Brown served in the Army Air Forces and spent

six months in Greenland with the Air Transport Command. He also did duty in Iceland, England and France.

Following his Nieman year Brown returned to *The Journal Bulletin* until 1962, when he moved to Washington to become columnist and news analyst for the Voice of America and later the USIA. He retired in 1980.

He leaves his wife, Roberta Baldwin Brown of Arlington, four children, and four grandchildren.

—1955—

**Albert Kraus**, who had Parkinson's disease, died on March 29 at his home in Westfield, New Jersey. Kraus was Editor Emeritus of *The Journal of Commerce* and was a former Editor and financial reporter at *The New York Times*. He joined the *Times* in 1956 to cover banking, edited the Sunday financial section as Financial Editor, and for a time wrote a weekly economics column.

Kraus left *The Times* in 1972 to become Editor of all publications of the Bond Buyer Inc. In 1978 he joined *The Journal of Commerce* as chief editorial writer and was named Editor in 1981. He retired in 1987.

Kraus leaves his wife, Patricia, three daughters, one son, and a granddaughter.

—1964—

**Morton Mintz** received the 1996 Hugh M. Hefner First Amendment Award at a ceremony in New York City in April. Mintz, a former Washington Post investigative reporter, was honored in the category of lifetime achievement "for his principled service to the freedom of the press." The awards were established in 1979 by the Playboy Foundation to honor individuals who have made significant contributions to uphold First Amendment rights.

Mintz, a freelance since retiring eight years ago, spent 30 of his 50 years as a journalist at *The Post*. He has written a number of books, including "The Therapeutic Nightmare," "The Pill: An Alarming Report," "Power, Inc.: Public and Private Rulers and How to Make Them Accountable," and "At Any Cost: Corpo-

rate Greed, Women and the Dalkon Shield." Mintz has also received, among others, the Columbia Journalism and George Polk Memorial awards.

—1969—

**Paul Hemphill** has a new book out, "The Heart of the Game: The Education of a Minor League Ballplayer." Hemphill spent the 1994 baseball season following Marty Malloy, a second baseman for the Durham Bulls, a Class A farm team for the Atlanta Braves. Simon & Schuster is the publisher.

—1976—

**Ron Javers** joined *Newsweek International* in January as Assistant Managing Editor for special editions and Executive Editor of the magazine's Japanese-language edition, *Newsweek Nihon Ban*. He is responsible for all of *Newsweek's* international editions and he helps develop new foreign-language and special editions worldwide. In February Javers visited the Asian editions and then went to Moscow, where *Newsweek's* most recent foreign edition, *Itogi*, was announced. In March he was in Miami working on the launch of *Newsweek en Espanol*.

For the last two years Javers was an Associate Professor at Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Public Communications and was a regular op-ed columnist for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. He was a consultant at Time in the summer of 1995, where he worked on new-magazine development.

Previously, Javers was Editor-in-Chief of *Town and Country* magazine from 1991-92 and Vice President and Editor-in-Chief of *Metrocorp Magazines* from 1983-91, overseeing Atlanta, Philadelphia, Boston and Manhattan inc. During his time at *Metrocorp.*, all four magazines won National Magazine Awards.

Javers's book "A Change of Mind: A Decade of American School Reform" was published by the Rockefeller Foundation in 1995.

Javers lives in New York City with his wife, Eileen, a management consultant,

and their son Quinn. Their older son, Eamon, is a reporter for *The Hill*, a Washington weekly.

—1977—

**M.G.G. Pillai** is appealing a \$800,000 (U.S.) libel judgment in a suit that is testing press freedom in Malaysia. A Malaysian businessman was awarded the damages by the High Court for an article Pillai wrote for a magazine. Pillai refused to apologize; instead, he obtained leave to appeal to the Federal Court, which is expected to hear the case this year. Six other defendants did apologize; nevertheless they were ordered to pay a total of \$3.2 million.

On a happier note, Pillai's two sons have graduated. The elder received his degree in political science from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Va. and now works as a reporter with *The Star*, a Malaysian daily. The younger son was awarded a law degree by the University of London and is seeking a certificate in legal practice, which would enable him to hang out his shingle next year.

—1980—

**Michael Kirk** has won broadcasting's most prestigious award, the George Foster Peabody, for "Waco—The Inside Story," an account of the 51-day siege of the Branch Dividian compound that ended in 75 deaths. Kirk directed and co-produced the documentary, which was shown nationally last fall on Frontline.

Working with correspondent Peter Boyer of *The New Yorker* magazine, Kirk focused on the internal struggles at the FBI between its elite Hostage Rescue Team and its negotiators, and on the decisions made within the FBI's command center in Waco and at the Justice Department in Washington. The investigation uncovered never-before reported government files—thousands of pages of documents, hours of FBI videotapes, autopsy photographs, and audio-taped conversations between David Koresh, the leader of the cult, and federal negotiators.

Kirk said: "Despite a lengthy Justice Department review, congressional hear-

ings, and numerous television and newspaper stories, Waco is a story with remarkable staying power. While many of the inquiries have answered important questions, they have raised others that are no less important."

The program has apparently had an impact. It was screened before a Senate Investigation Committee and internally at the FBI. Since last fall, FBI procedures have changed. Referring to the standoff with the Freemen in Montana, Kirk says: "What we're seeing in Montana now is sort of a validation of our thesis, that the FBI acted too rough, too tough and too gruff" in the Waco incident.

The Waco documentary was also the subject of Frontline's first web site on the Internet, and the site was "hit" by over 145,000 users in the first week alone. In addition to receiving the Peabody award, Kirk's documentary was selected as one of nine U.S. films (and 80 international films) presented in Mexico in May at Input '96. The film was also chosen for screening at the Banff Film Festival in Canada in June. Kirk's other recent documentary, "The Kevorkian File," received a national Emmy award (his sixth) last fall. He is currently working on another film about Jack Kevorkian due out this spring as well as a film about Ross Perot for the fall.

Kirk and his wife, Marina Kalb, work as a producing team and own the Kirk Documentary Group in Boston. Their productions regularly air on Frontline and television networks worldwide.

—1990—

**Dave Denison** has been named Editor of *CommonWealth* magazine. Here is his account of how that came about:

"Ever since I came to Massachusetts for the Nieman Fellowship in 1989, and then moved back in 1991 for romantic fellowship (in other words, to get married), I had been wondering about the surprising dearth of political publications in this very political state.

"In Texas, where I had spent much of the 1980's, we had the bi-weekly gadfly journal, *The Texas Observer* (that was where I worked), and we had *Texas Monthly*, and at various times there

were decent city magazines in Austin, Dallas and Houston. Massachusetts seemed journalistically somnolent by comparison. The political conversation has been dominated by *The Boston Globe*. For a while in the 1980's, there was good magazine journalism in *The New England Monthly*. And for four years in the early part of that decade *The Boston Observer* tried to play a similar role here that *The Texas Observer* has played in Texas. But both those publications were gone.

"Last year I got wind that I wasn't the only one in Massachusetts who thought there could be room for a new political magazine. A software executive named Mitchell Kertzman had hired two people to set up a new public policy think-tank, and they were planning to create a quarterly magazine on Massachusetts politics and government.

"So I campaigned for the job over several months and was hired last August to be the Editor of what has become *CommonWealth* magazine.

"We got our first issue out in March and the second will be out this summer. There are all kinds of challenges in putting out a quarterly magazine that is about 'politics, ideas, and civic life in Massachusetts,' not the least of which is finding the few thousand subscribers we will need—people who are interested enough to read what is really a public policy journal, although we're doing our best to gussy it up as a lively and intelligent magazine.

"Anyway, it has been a rare opportunity—to create a new magazine from start to finish, and to write about politics in a way that is free of that corrosive and tiresome cynicism that, I think, prevents useful work being done by citizens and journalists alike. In reviewing our first issue, *The Boston Globe* media critic praised 'the kind of meaty grass-roots journalism that would bring joy to James Fallows—and that is far too rare.' That's pretty good press, despite the question it raises about meaty grass roots. My own feeling is that we've got the makings of a pretty interesting stew.

"All Nieman's, in Massachusetts and otherwise, are welcome to subscribe!"

—1991—

**Katherine M. Skiba** won two Milwaukee Press Club awards in May in its annual statewide competition. She won best news story of 1995 for coverage of the Oklahoma City bombing and best feature story of 1995 for a look at Alabama's prison chain gangs.

She reports "loving" being national correspondent for *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, and was going farther afield in May to write stories from Germany in advance of Helmut Kohl's planned meeting in Milwaukee with President Bill Clinton.

This letter from **Tony Eluemunor** arrived in March:

"After my Nieman year I served as the American correspondent for *African Concord Magazine*. In 1993 the publisher, MKO Abiola won Nigeria's presidential election which was annulled by the military and the publisher was detained and all his businesses (including the five publications in the Concord stable) were shut. He is still in detention.

"I came back [to Nigeria] in April 1995 and met not just a brutalized nation where detention without trial happens on a daily basis but in which a war has been declared on journalists.

"Closure of media houses has since been the sport of security agencies and we've learned to survive by floating another publication as soon as one is outlawed or moving to another of identical persuasion—pro-democracy. Or a journalist would go underground if he is being hunted by security agencies. Thus, the term guerrilla journalism was born.

"Recently, the soldiers have turned deadlier. In January 1996 arsonists in uniform torched *The Guardian* newspaper building. The following month, its publisher was shot 13 times as he drove home from work....By the way, Olatunji Dare, the 1995 Lyons Award winner was *The Guardian's* Editorial Board chairman. When the paper reopened late last year Dare resigned in protest of the watering down of the paper's independence. I heard he is

planning a new newspaper.

"Other media houses have been burnt; at least two journalists are currently serving 15 years jail terms for daring to write stories which appeared favorable to alleged coup plotters. They were consequently dragged before a military tribunal and found guilty.

"That is the climate I met on my return. For the past year I have worked on three publications (moving on as they were closed). For the past month, I have gone underground, sleeping in different houses every night, wearing disguises—on the run like a common criminal. If I'm lucky within two months the military will soon lose interest in me. If not, I'll end up like Nosa Igiebur, *Tell* magazine Editor-in-Chief, who eluded the security agents for about a year. He is in his third month of detention now, his whereabouts unknown.

"For now, I'm enjoying my freedom and enduring the criticism of friends and family members who can't understand why I don't want to leave journalism."

—1993—

**Rick Bragg**, a domestic correspondent in *The New York Times's* Atlanta office, won a Pulitzer Prize for feature writing this spring. Writing mostly about the South, Bragg was singled out for "his elegantly written stories about contemporary America." According to *The Times* Bragg, a native of Piedmont, Alabama, "has long said his life's ambition was to write about the South."

Before joining *The Times* in 1994, Bragg worked briefly for *The Los Angeles Times* on the magazine and as a metropolitan reporter. From 1989 to 1993 he was the Miami bureau chief for *The St. Petersburg Times*. He also was a reporter at *The Birmingham News* and *The Anniston (Alabama) Star* before moving to Florida.

Bragg received the American Society of Newspaper Editors' Distinguished Writing Award in 1990 and 1996 and 31 other national, regional and state writing awards. His stories have been included in "Best Newspaper Writing 1991," "Best of the Press 1988," and in other journalism textbooks.

Bragg recently signed a book con-

tract with Random House to write the story of his mother and his childhood.

**Katherine Fulton** has taken a job as a senior consultant at the Global Business Network (GBN), a San Francisco Bay-based think tank and consulting firm that specializes in collaborative learning about the future.

Fulton says: "During our Nieman year, we talked a lot about the need for new economic models to support public interest journalism. In a variety of different ways, I've been in quest of them ever since. I worked with Bill [Kovach] to design a couple of major conferences on the future of journalism, held in Cambridge in 1994 and 1995. I taught about new communications technologies at Duke. And I've written a number of major pieces, most recently a cover story for the *Columbia Journalism Review* called 'http://www.journalism.now, A Tour of Our Uncertain Future.'

"So here I am, living in Berkeley, where it is impossible to get a bad meal.

"There's an old Spanish proverb: You make the path by walking. I have no idea where this is going to lead me. I'm just taking one step at a time. I'm on E-mail as [fulton@gbn.org](mailto:fulton@gbn.org). Let me know if you're headed this way."

**Arben Kallamata** and computer programmer Stefan Kochi have developed ANIS (Albanian News Internet Service), an independent, non-governmental and nonpartisan organization designed to distribute news exclusively from Albania via the Internet. The first of its kind, ANIS is distributed twice a week and has two editions, one in English and one in Albanian. Kallamata is based in Tirana, Albania, and has worked as an editor for *Drita*, a broadcast executive for *Radio Tirana*, and a journalism instructor at Tirana University. The E-mail address of the service is: [ANIS76245.757@compuserve.com](mailto:ANIS76245.757@compuserve.com)

**Dori Maynard** reports that she is hard at work on the next two books for the Maynard Memorial Project. One is a writing textbook for young writers. It uses her father's journals, columns, and early work from *The Washington Post*. The other is a book on social theory



also based on his writings. Her father, **Robert Maynard**, a 1966 Nieman Fellow, died in 1993.

Maynard says that working on the books are not that much of a departure from daily journalism, since the material emphasizes the events of the day and she still gets to interview people.

Dori adds: "I am proud to say that my mother, Nancy Hicks Maynard, has been named the Chair of the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center in New York." Hicks Maynard, former Deputy Publisher and co-owner of The Oakland Tribune, will speak and write about media issues and help with strategic planning for the Media Studies Center and The Freedom Forum.

**Francis Pisani** moved to San Francisco in mid-January:

"I moved here to work as a freelance journalist covering new information technologies for several European and Latin American media.

"Although it's a lot of work (I write an average of six stories a week, more than 100 since the beginning of the year) it is not yet enough to make a living and have my family here (I hope to have them coming by August).

"My Nieman year was critical in making me realize how important information technology was becoming for us journalists and for the society in general. I tried unsuccessfully for three years to convince the media I was in touch with what they had to cover. Something began to move in the middle of last year. I thought the moment had come and decided to move to San Francisco and the Bay Area where much of the activity in that field is going on. It's not easy and things are coming slowly, but I am hopeful and convinced it's a good decision."

Pisani can be reached by E-mail at 76164.751@compuserve.com

—1994—

Most fellows try new things when they go back to work after a Nieman year, but **Melanie Sill's** buddies from the class of '94 weren't sure exactly what to think when she told them about the big story she was chasing after her return to The News & Observer of Ra-

leigh, N.C. The subject was pork: not political pork, but pork on the hoof. Hogs. Pigs.

"It's a great story!" she told classmates **Terry Gilbert** (Calgary Herald), **Katie King** (Reuters NewMedia Ingenius), **Maria Henson** (Charlotte Observer) and Danica Kombol (affiliate and film/video producer) during a Niemen women reunion in December 1994.

"Uh huh," they said.

Sill and two reporters at The News & Observer spent eight months pursuing and producing an investigative series that detailed how the hog industry, led by a handful of homegrown millionaires, had expanded rapidly in a rural, impoverished stretch of the North Carolina coastal plain east of the capital city of Raleigh. They found that a new kind of big-scale, high-density hog production had doubled the swine population almost overnight. They learned that politicians all the way to the U.S. Senate had paved the way for that expansion by allowing the industry to literally write some of the rules, and to violate other regulations without fear of penalty.

And they learned that, with no one watching, this new growth industry was polluting the air and water.

On April 9, the Pulitzer board awarded the 1996 gold medal for public service to The News & Observer for the series called "Boss Hog: N.C.'s Pork Revolution." It was one of several national awards, including the National Headliner for public service, the John Oakes Award for environmental reporting, the Meeman Award from Scripps Howard for environmental reporting, and the Edgar A. Poe Award from the White House Correspondents Association for national and regional reporting.

The awards recognized the series itself as well as aggressive follow-up reporting through the year. After the series was published in late February and early March of 1995, legislators and N.C. Gov. Jim Hunt responded with promises of studies and investigations. But pork producers flexed their political muscle successfully and stalled most of the proposals by summer. In June, however, a series of heavy rains caused massive spills of animal waste—exposing the same problems reported in the

"Boss Hog" series months earlier. Finally, state regulators launched the first inspections of hog operations, and public outrage prompted the first serious proposals for true regulation of the new agribusiness giant.

The "Boss Hog" coverage, also posted on the World Wide Web, has drawn international interest. Some N. C. companies are expanding in the Midwest, Southwest, Canada and Europe. Their style of hog production is taking hold everywhere, sparking fights between independent producers and corporate interests in Iowa (where the issue came up during the Republican presidential primaries), Missouri and Nebraska. The N&O has sent reprint copies all over the world and answered questions via E-mail from farmers, rural residents and journalists across the U.S. and as far beyond as Ireland and Denmark.

Sill, incidentally, also edited a narrative series on a dairy farm family's decision to sell their 200-year-old homestead for a subdivision. And she helped edit The N&O's fall 1994 series on the decline of Atlantic fisheries. Cows, pigs, fish...

Her next project, she claims, includes no animals.

**Larry Tye**, a reporter for The Boston Globe, finished first in enterprise writing in the Associated Press Sports Editors 1995 contest:

"The award was...for a series on widespread forgery and fraud in the sports autograph industry. The series looked at how today, kids lining up for their favorite player's signature often sell them to dealers, who resell them for \$100 or more. And how million-dollar players often use clubhouse kids—or machines—to sign for them."

Tye is spending 1996 on a year's leave from The Globe, writing a biography of Edward L. Bernays, often called the father of public relations. He spent all winter and spring in Washington, poring through the nearly 1,000 boxes of papers Bernays left to the Library of Congress and returned to Cambridge in June to start writing. "It's almost like having another Nieman," he reports, "minus the camaraderie and the drinking and, of course, having to produce something in the end." ■

## What Makes Yossi Run

BY YOSSI MELMAN

When Moses Tanui of Kenya crossed the finish line and stopped the electronic clock at 2 hours, 9 minutes and 16 seconds, I was only passing my 17th mile. But the last 9 miles, usually the toughest, which I still had to cross, could not weaken my sense of elation. I was one of the 34,700 "official and qualified" runners, and a few more thousand "pirates," the unauthorized participants, who were lucky to take part in the 100th anniversary of the Boston Marathon. People were anxious, almost mad to qualify. One runner from Michigan wrote to the organizing committee that he was "temporarily spending his time" in jail but would be out on race day. A young female runner from Californian who did not qualify promised to run naked if they enroll her.

From the starting point in Hopkinton, 42.2 K or 26.1 miles to the finish, next to the Boston Public Library in downtown Boston, it was a hell of a celebration. The event was dubbed by the organizers and the media as the "Woodstock of the Road Runners." The atmosphere during the race was friendly and familial. The runners were smiling, encouraging and had kind words for each other before, during and after the competition. Even the weather smiled at us. A few days earlier it was snowing and cold. But on race day the sun came out and we met cloudless, blue skies. The roads were dry and temperatures were in the upper 50's. The conditions were perfect for a marathon. And so were the technical and logistical arrangements. Imagine what a headache it could have been for the organizers. To ferry all of us from Boston to Hopkinton in hundreds of school buses. To place each runner in his or her right location at the starting line according to our age and previous results. To organize the traditional pre-race "carbohydrates loading" pasta party—four tons of pasta—for all the participants and their guests. To close the roads and highways for traffic and practically bring Boston to halt. Amazingly it all went smoothly with no major hitches reported. The Bostonians, it seemed, love their annual ritual. 1.5 million spectators, young and old, male and female, entire families gathered along the course which runs from the sleepy village of Hopkinton through Wellesley, Newton, near Cambridge to Boston. They were cheering, boosting and wonderfully noisy, giving each of us, not only the elite runners, the feeling that we were also champions.

There are dozens of marathons organized annually in major cities all over the world in five continents. But the Boston Marathon tops the list. Since its establishment in April 1897—with only 15 participants and 10 finishers—it has progressed to become the "creme de la creme" of its kind.



That's Melman, far left, in the 1995 New York Marathon.

With its long history and rich tradition it is the most prestigious race in this field.

Boston was my fifth marathon. I had started running casually with no great expectations exactly two years earlier. I did it for medical reasons. During my Nieman year, it was discovered that I had a high level of cholesterol. Since then I could not lower it significantly. Why not? Frankly, because I was cheating my dietician. So one day I decided I would start exercising. I went to a health club but didn't like the environment. It seemed to me to be too formal, trendy and stiff. So I hit the road. At the beginning I couldn't finish a mile. I breathed heavily and every time I returned home from my run my wife, Billie, thought I was on the verge of passing away. Yet, with discipline and devotion I continued running. Each week, each month increasing the distance. Eventually, after five months I was capable of running 10 miles, and more importantly, I liked doing it. I discovered that running became for me a daily habit. Like brushing my teeth. Running has become part of myself. At that moment I took more professional advice and started preparing myself for the marathon, which I eventually—seven months after my first mile—conquered.

It was in October 1994 in Jerusalem. I ran it in four hours and more than 13 minutes. At Boston my time was three hours and twenty minutes—I shaved off nearly 45 minutes. I was the 8,730 finisher. Not bad for a 45 year old aging journalist. And if I can do it, I really believe that anyone of us can do it also. ■

*Yossi Melman, a 1990 Nieman Fellow, while in the U.S. on business, ran the Boston Marathon, then flew back to Tel Aviv.*



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