

n i e m a n

summer 1975



Reporting the Revolution • Alex Keyssar

*“ . . . the inability or refusal of the American press to report
the Portuguese revolution accurately or fairly. . . . ”*

Reflections on Robert Frost • Kathleen Johnston Morrison,
Theodore Morrison

He was a man of two opposites all the time . . .

Leads Grow Longer: Clarity Counts More • Joseph A. Loftus

“The whole language is getting more baroque.”

Adding to Misunderstanding Between

Media and the Law • Robert Yoakum

The press deserves a lot of its lumps.

Associate Nieman Fellows and Louis Stark Fellow •

Book Reviews

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Editorial

On Reporting Revolutions

Something in our intellectual bloodstream seems to make most Americans more comfortable with the status quo abroad, however oppressive, than with nervous-making revolutions, meaning those of a Marxist stripe. This despite our self-satisfied rhetoric about *our* revolution as the father of them all.

Hence our doomed intervention in the Chinese Civil War, our quarter-century effort to thwart Vietnam's revolutionaries, our self-fulfilling fear of Castro's victory in Cuba, and our overt and covert "de-stabilizing" of Allende in Chile—to name only a few instances.

Self-image to the contrary, the U.S. press has usually been an accurate reflection of the country in its approach to revolution abroad—no better, no worse. An Edgar Snow, a Herbert Matthews, the Halberstams, Brownes, and Sheehans could try to fight the homeside tide in their reports from the field. But by and large the national press reflected the conventional wisdom of both citizen and policy-maker.

The Communist Menace was made to loom large; the U.S. "national security" stake in averting a Marxist outcome became a "given;" and the complex subtleties of a revolutionary process were very soon lost to the readers back home.

The late Dr. Salazar, the grand old man of Iberian fascism, was generally ignored or tolerated—even applauded—by nearly two generations of mainstream American editors and reporters. But now that revolution has come to Portugal—a precursor, without doubt, to post-Franco Spain—that old nervous anxiety has surfaced in the national press. Since that syndrome has traditionally accompanied or preceded Washington's itch to intervene, U.S. reporting on Portugal should bear close watching.

Which is what Alex Keyssar is reminding us in his critique of *The New York Times'* reporting of things Portuguese to date.

On Lesser Conflicts

Columnist Robert Yoakum needs no introduction to readers of this journal. Like all serious humorists, he is a moralist—or rather a moralist manqué, the son of a minister.

After Bench, Bar, and journalist types had tangled for several hours in Lakeville, Conn., in June, on the subject of media-law conflicts, it was judged necessary to bring on Mr. Yoakum to restore order and dispel confusion. His message speaks for itself.

(continued on page 21)

Reporting the Revolution: Portugal and the American Press

Early in August, the cover of *Time* carried the banner headline "Lisbon's Troika: Red Threat in Portugal." A yellow hammer and sickle framed drawings of the three generals who were then directing Portugal's government. Apparently, Western Europe was about to acquire its first "Communist nation," and *Time*—which ran a seven-page story—did not want its readers to miss the significance of that event. Generals Goncalves, Carvalho, and Costa Gomes, with the aid of "Communist Boss" Alvaro Cunhal, were leading Portugal towards an exchange of "one dictatorship for another." Evidently, it mattered little to *Time*'s editors that two of the three generals were known opponents of the Portuguese Communist Party or that this incipient dictatorship was doing little to halt the burning of Communist Party offices in northern Portugal. To seriously consider such facts might have had the same effect as mentioning, in the advertising for the movie "Jaws," that very few people have actually been killed by sharks.

By mid-September, of course, General Goncalves (the member of the Directorate closest to the Communist Party) had been removed from power, the "troika" had ceased to function, and the full complexity of Portugal's revolutionary politics had become more visible. The situation remained fluid, with more struggle and drama a virtual certainty, but there was no Stalinist dictatorship in Lisbon. *Time* had cried "wolf" a bit prematurely, and it differed from the rest of the American press—with occasional exceptions—only in being slightly more sensational.

The failure to correctly sense the outcome of this summer's political conflict in Portugal is not in itself a major shortcoming of the media; events moved at a dizzying pace, and key alliances and maneuvers were often made in secrecy. The faulty prognosticating is merely a symptom of a deeper shortcoming, an expression of the inability or refusal

of the American press to report the developments of the Portuguese revolution accurately or fairly. Since the resignation of the conservative President Spínola in September, 1974, and, most markedly, since Spínola's abortive coup attempt in March, 1975, the American press has filtered the Portugal news through a prism of Cold War anti-Communism—and anti-communism. In print and on television, the rapid succession of events has appeared as an ongoing conflict between moderate democrats and a small, ruthless, manipulative, left-wing minority intent on suppressing civil

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liberties. That single polarity, rooted in faulty historical analogies and concealed ideological assumptions, has been the primary analytic category shaping the coverage. Antagonistic to most sectors of the Portuguese left (the Socialists became acceptable only when, after the elections, they appeared to constitute the most viable alternative to a more leftist regime), eager to validate its own model, the press has distorted facts, used cheap stylistic devices, omitted important pieces of information, and failed—when opportune—to penetrate beneath the surface of events. In result, the American public has come to possess a skewed and potentially dangerous image of the political landscape in and around Lisbon.

The following are some examples—taken largely from *The New York Times*, our newspaper of record.

—In early March, 1975, considerable tension existed between the political parties, preparing for Constituent Assembly elections, and the Movement of the Armed Forces

(MFA) which wanted to institutionalize its own guiding role in the revolution. General Spínola's clumsy attempt at a military coup heightened the tensions and, in effect, solidified the position of the left within the MFA. The *Times* responded with a series of articles that attacked the left by suggesting that the coup attempt had been contrived or had never existed. Spínola's maneuver was referred to as a "purported coup," an "alleged coup," and "what was described as" a coup attempt. On March 17, the Sunday *Times* carried a lengthy article detailing some of the actual events of the coup attempt, but "The Week in Review" repeatedly called attention to "speculation that the attack was an invention by the left as an excuse to grab more power." To be sure, the coup attempt was pathetic and the full story of Spínola's botched effort has not emerged, but the *Times*, despite ample evidence, was far readier to believe in anti-democratic actions by the left than in pre-election military moves by the right. During the same period, the *Times* was so anxious to associate the left with violence that it referred to a previous event in which "an extreme leftist" was killed in a demonstration—when, in fact, the person killed, as the reporter must have known, was not a leftist, extreme or otherwise, but rather an innocent bystander shot by the Lisbon police.

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—The same March 17 edition of the *Times*, in a rare attempt to report the social and economic, rather than political, content of the revolution, printed the following sentence from its correspondent: "A majority of the armed forces, together with moderates in the political and economic sectors, managed to keep the economic program from going so far as to dismantle the economy and cause an even deeper economic crisis." The sentence implies both that the left (the non-moderates) sought to "dismantle" the economy and that the left's program would deepen the economic crisis. It is, to say the least, difficult to imagine what a dismantled economy would look like, and the judgment that the left-wing program would deepen the economic crisis was made by the *Times* without evidence or argument.

—In the late spring and early summer of 1975, the *República* affair dominated the news reporting from Portugal. As portrayed by the American press, *República* was the Socialist Party newspaper, one of the last or even the last remaining non-Communist paper in the country; its freedom was threatened by disputes with printers who were controlled by the Communist Party and who demanded a role in the formulation of editorial policy. The implication

of the coverage was that the PCP was maneuvering to snuff out *República's* free editorial voice and that the behavior of the government (closing the paper temporarily and eventually turning it over to the printers) was evidence of the MFA, led by Prime Minister Vasco Gonçalves. However, several of the key facts in that tale are false, and certain inferences drawn from others are subject to serious challenge.

República was not the Socialist Party newspaper but rather a newspaper whose publisher, Raul Rego, happened to be a Socialist. The party's own newspaper has continued pub-

It is . . . difficult to imagine what a dismantled economy would look like. . .

lishing without interruption. Moreover, other non-Communist newspapers, often quite outspoken in their criticisms of the government, did and do exist. Furthermore, it is not clear that *República's* printers were acting under party direction rather than expressing a fairly spontaneous demand for workers' participation in the direction of the newspaper. According to Australian journalist Wilfrid Burchett as well as two reporters from *Win* magazine who visited Portugal during the summer, very few of the printers belonged to the Communist Party, and the union's demands were of a type already granted by most Lisbon newspapers. (The *Times*, in late May, shifted its formulaic description of the printers from "Communist" to "Communist-led.") Finally, it should be noted that the MFA decided, after the first stages of the controversy, to return *República* to its socialist editors; the conflict was renewed when Rego, on the very day that the MFA's decision was to be implemented, insisted on the right to fire some of the workers involved in the dispute.

The complex issue of workers' control over a newspaper surfaced again in early September in a story by the *Times* correspondent, Henry Giniger. Tracing the recent history of the *Diário de Notícias*, Portugal's leading newspaper, as a "case study" illuminating "the struggle in Lisbon," Giniger describes a conflict between Communists ("a nucleus of journalists obedient to the Communist party") and non-Communists on the staff of the paper. Although a majority of the editorial staff was anti-Communist, the struggle was won by the pro-Communists because the crucial vote was taken by an assembly of all personnel at the paper. Without ever discussing the legitimacy or meaning of workers' control, Mr. Giniger concluded that "the excuse for calling in the full staff to decide the editorial fight was that this conformed to democratic principles." But are democratic principles merely an excuse? The idea of typographers voting on editorial policy may seem outlandish to the *Times*, but, to people engaged in building a socialist society, it could be an

entirely reasonable venture. Perhaps convening the full staff was a maneuver for power, but such an assertion should be supported rather than assumed to be true.

—Indeed, the *Times* seems to allow its reporters in Portugal to take remarkable editorial liberties in news stories—as long as those liberties tend to undercut the new regime. Although the social and economic content of the revolution has been covered very sparsely, the *Times*, in early September, 1975, did finally carry a story, by Marvine Howe, about land reform in the Alentejo, the southern interior of Portugal. For years, the Alentejo was the home of landless agricultural laborers working the estates of large and wealthy landowners: the land reform instituted by the new government is one of its major social programs. Ms. Howe, after a tour of the region, concluded that the agrarian reform was “generally justified” but that “the manner in which it is being carried out is often unjust and irrational.” Strong judgments for a news article: could a reporter use the terms “unjust and irrational” to describe President Ford’s energy policy?

As evidence for her criticism, Ms. Howe describes the collectivization of one farm, owned and efficiently managed by an industrious man who began his career as a truck-

. . . Could a reporter use the terms “unjust and irrational” to describe President Ford’s energy policy?

er and, only years later, became a landowner. Despite his labors and his willingness to pay the new minimum wage, his farm is being collectivized. Behind her conclusion that this action is “unjust” is Ms. Howe’s unstated assumption that the farm owner has a greater claim to the land than do his 200 workers. But even aside from such abstruse matters is the fact that her story focuses upon this example rather than upon the collectivization of farms owned by absentee landlords that she herself acknowledges to be typical of the region. Only at the very end of the story is there a description of that type of farm. The reader’s sympathies are directed not to the agricultural laborers who, in season, earned \$1.80 per day but rather to the expropriated trucker-turned-farmer—who, incidentally, will still be allowed to keep 125 irrigated or 1250 unirrigated acres.

Such distortions of the news have been frequent and fairly systematic, but unfortunately they represent only one dimension of the press’s failure in Portugal. The image of political events has also been colored by omissions from the news. Most striking, perhaps, has been the lack of any detailed discussion of the content of the programs offered by different parties and factions. Acres of newsprint have described the support for parliamentary democracy by the

Socialist Party and the Popular Democratic Party as well as the proposals for different governmental institutions offered by the left. But what reader of the dailies and weeklies is familiar with the different economic and social reforms proposed by the various political parties and factions within the military? How, for example, do the Socialist Party and the Communist Party differ in their remedies for high inflation and high unemployment, in their proposals for land reform, nationalization of industry, wage structures, and economic development? Such questions have received scanty attention from the American press, yet it is very likely that they are of great importance to the Portuguese and of great influence in the unfolding of the revolution.

The media have also omitted any discussion of the important role of the extreme left in Portuguese politics and have underplayed the persistent presence of a semi-organized right wing that has other goals in mind besides sheer anti-Communism. On August 31, for example, the *Times* printed an article by John Blair, a London-based writer recently returned from Angola. Mr. Blair referred to a Portuguese refugee from Angola who, when asked what he would do upon arriving home, “complacently replied that he would naturally look for work but if that was not forthcoming he would join the underground fascist army.” Is there an underground fascist army? Why haven’t we heard something about it?

Outright omissions shade into a failure to penetrate beneath the surface of news stories—when such penetration might make the actions of the left seem less manipulative and more comprehensible, even if one still opposed them. For instance, if the right (now organized into a formal movement by General Spínola) has consistently threatened a comeback, then the MFA’s reluctance to surrender power appears in a new light. The refusal to probe beyond immediate events also characterized the press treatment, last

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winter, of a law passed by the military government authorizing Intersindical as the only legal confederation of labor. Individual unions were not obliged to join Intersindical, but they were prohibited from creating any alternate labor confederation. The law was presented as a victory for the Communist Party—which it was—since the PCP controlled Intersindical—which it did. But what the press failed to report was that the Communist demand for a single labor confederation, for a unitary labor movement, echoed desires born of bitter working-class experience. Salazar’s regime kept labor organizationally weak by splintering the move-

ment, by a network of vertical and horizontal divisions that effectively prohibited unified action. The Portuguese also looked warily at the example of France where labor's political clout seemed reduced by the existence of competing labor federations. The presence of different federations, organized by political tendency and fighting one another for member unions, could substantially weaken the labor movement. Giving exclusive legal sanction to Intersindical was both a maneuver for power by the PCP and a comprehensible expression of a desire to give unified political organization to the labor movement. That second element in the story never, to my knowledge, appeared in the American press.

Explanations of this systematic bias must, in part, be guesswork. No doubt, the political preferences of individual reporters do affect the contents of the stories they file, but at least in the case of the *Times*—where editorials about Portugal take the same slant as the news stories—the responsibility seems institutional rather than individual. It also is likely that some of the bias is circumstantial: reporters are assigned to the story who have little experience dealing with left-wing politics, and, like most middle-class Americans in foreign countries, their easiest personal access is to educated, fairly wealthy natives whose politics are

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mainstream American. But beyond and beneath these concrete factors lies a profound and probably unconscious ideological bias that has shaped the transmission of the news.

Briefly stated, the American press has imposed its own liberalism on the Portuguese revolution—both as a source of judgment and as a method of analysis. It defines democracy entirely in terms of political institutions, without regard to the social and economic realities behind them, equates democratic political rights with western-style parliamentary or congressional structures, and perceives political conflict as stemming from individual motivations that are not connected to any underlying historical forces. The press, thus, has focused its attention largely on the debates regarding elections, political procedures, and civil liberties and has portrayed those debates as a simple contest between moderate democrats and authoritarian leftists who are Communists or pro-Communists. All those who disagree with the media's own, limited definition of democracy are lumped together and cast as would-be dictators.

To be sure, there are elements of truth in the caricature. The PCP has sought, in some areas, to attain power through bureaucratic means, and Lisbon has witnessed a steady

tension between quasi-Stalinists and more pluralist and libertarian socialists of several different types. But that struggle is, by no means, the whole story, and the full drama of the Portuguese revolution cannot be captured or understood without some use of the political and conceptual categories that are utilized by many of the actors themselves.

Those categories originate in the unsurprising fact that most of the prime movers in the revolution, both military and civilian, are socialists—of one brand or another. Unlike the American press, they neither analyze their own situation nor make decisions simply in terms of an opposition between maintaining and sacrificing political liberties. They define democracy more broadly, and the fundamental opposition between socialism and capitalism (or monopoly capitalism) is an important element in the grammar of their political thought. As any reading of their public documents reveals, these political figures think in terms of class, social structure, and economic power.

For these men and women, and particularly for the officers of the MFA, safeguarding the revolution means insuring the route to socialism as much as it means insuring democratic political procedures. For many of them, the emergence of conflicts, actual or potential, between political democracy and the construction of socialism must have generated difficult decisions as their desire for democracy collided with the reality of a sizeable rural population strongly influenced by the Church and educated to abhor socialist ideas. The peculiar resolution to that conflict last spring—holding elections for a Constituent Assembly but retaining real power for the MFA—was bound to be unsatisfactory, but it was not simply a grab for power by the left within the MFA or a nod towards democracy on the part of dictators. From the viewpoint of the Portuguese left, it was a reflection of the difficulty of building socialism democratically when power has been seized before the people are organized, when the social revolution begins after a *coup d'etat*.

Indeed, in terms of the intellectual framework utilized by large numbers of Portuguese (a majority of the population voted either Socialist or further left), the ongoing drama can be seen as the strains of a revolutionary process that is lurching towards a democratized economy and polity. Behind particular political struggles are class interests as well as party rivalries, and the social structure generated by a half-century of rightist rule cannot be transformed instantly. Building a socialist democracy is more complex and more fraught with conflict than instituting a parliament. But the ideological template superimposed by the American press masks and simplifies that story: leftists are *a priori* suspected of anti-democratic leanings, and their explanatory notions of class, economic power, and historical process are either ignored or dismissed as camouflage for dictatorial ambitions.

Whether unconscious or deliberate, the *Times*, the newsweeklies, and the television networks have described the Portuguese revolution as a Cold War melodrama. Facts have been distorted, political judgments made in news stories without evidence. Conservative criticism of the left is frequently cited, and sources on the left are rarely consulted. (*Time* implied that leftist General Otelio Saraiva de Carvalho was not very bright by quoting "many Portuguese" and General Spínola, hardly an unbiased source.) The social and economic backdrop to political events is painted in occasional and vague strokes. Key dimensions of the revolution are left unexamined, and crucial documents that suggest the intricacies of political alignments (such as the dissident officers' critique of General Goncalves and a critique, drawn up by supporters of General Carvalho, of Goncalves and of the dissident officers) are not even printed in excerpts. An important, complex, and richly revealing political story has been contorted to fit a preconceived mold.

There have, of course, been exceptions. Several journalists, like Morton Kondracke of the Chicago *Sun-Times*, journeyed to Portugal this summer and found, to their own stated surprise, that there was no Communist dictatorship. And Tom Wicker finally mentioned, in the pages of *The New York Times*, that the analogy between Portugal in 1975 and eastern Europe in the late 1940's lacked one important ingredient: the presence of Soviet troops. But those have been occasional voices. The Portuguese themselves have

frequently complained about the press coverage, and, after seeing *Time's* histrionic cover, one could only grimace when reading that an airport worker had scrawled on the suitcase of *Time's* reporter, "You are a fascist."

More is at stake than simply the reputation, reliability, or partisanship of the media. The press has conjured up an image of political dynamics in Portugal that is ripe for exploitation by our own government. Throughout the year, conservatives have urged that we do something about our pink NATO ally, and, despite Secretary Kissinger's stated worries that the CIA has been hobbled by domestic criticism, there is evidence that the agency has attempted to influence events in Lisbon. The image that has been conveyed to the American public could easily be used to justify and to mobilize support for various forms of U.S. intervention in Portugal—or in the Azores. The press is the public's primary source of information regarding developments abroad, and caricatured understandings of left-wing movements in foreign nations can contribute to deep and far-reaching disasters for everyone involved. A decade of war ought to have taught us that much.

—Alex Keyssar

Mr. Keyssar is writing a dissertation at Harvard University regarding the history of American labor. He visited Portugal a year ago and has written about developments there for The Boston Globe and The New Republic.

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Reflections on Robert Frost

Kathleen Johnston Morrison, long-time assistant to Robert Frost, and **Theodore Morrison**, Professor Emeritus of English, Harvard University, were guest speakers at a Nieman seminar. The following report of Mr. and Mrs. Morrison's talk and conversation with those present was edited from tape by **James Scudder**, Nieman Fellow '75, and Assistant City Editor of the *Arkansas Democrat*, Little Rock.

James Thomson: What we hoped might happen today would be some reflections on Robert Frost—the man, the life, the poetry—led off by Kay Morrison and commented on by her husband. She told me that he's the only one in the family who remembers. I doubt that. And then move on to others among us asking questions. Kay, do you want to lead off?

Kathleen Morrison: All right. Before I begin. (Indicating Bill Pinkerton, Nieman Fellow '41 and Harvard's Bicentennial Coordinator.) Stand up. Here is the man who meant more to Robert than any of the other Niemans of his year and he had many, many Nieman friends. . . . Bill was always guiding people over to 35 Brewster Street. This is something I've never said in public. I put you in my book, you know, but I don't know whether you've seen that, but I did give you slight thanks. Now, a public thank you. All right?

In 1958, Robert Frost was appointed Consultant in Poetry for the Library of Congress. . . . About two weeks after the first press interview, Mary McGrory wrote in *The Washington Post*, "Robert Frost has come to Washington and already he has a slight case of Potomac Fever." . . . Does any of you remember Frost in those Washington days?

Thomson: Didn't he want to run for Senator from Vermont?

K. Morrison: Well, he wanted to take public office, the columnist said. That was the second sentence. He did *not* want to. No, he did not want to run for Senator from Vermont.

Question: Didn't he say that he would like to be appointed by a state government for one full Senate term?

K. Morrison: That's right. . . . When Frost lived in Cambridge he complained, you see, very loudly that he hadn't been consulted by anybody and thus he really thought it was

fun when he went to Washington that he was so unique. All the right people, you know—the people who were thinking and directing policy! Robert had the fun of—and now I'm answering your question—knowing he was going to have the fun of directing them and guiding them a little, see. Anybody any idea how this came about in Frost? Bill?

Pinkerton: I remember him, but I don't understand as you would. . . .

K. Morrison: I was hoping somebody would come up with a really crass remark. All right.

Pinkerton: He really did have a very strong—you might say, political or philosophical—feeling about how things ought to be and how things shouldn't be.

K. Morrison: In the Cleveland campaign—you know all about American history—in 1884. . . . Frost's father was in

(Frost) really did have a very strong . . . political or philosophical feeling about how things ought to be and how things shouldn't be.

California. His mother, a Scot, was out there with him. And Robert, and his sister, Jeannie. His father was dying of tuberculosis and drink, and it was a very difficult time. But his father was very ambitious politically. He was managing one of the important people in the Cleveland campaign. And he also was running for local tax collector, or something like that. So he took Robert—you can't say he took Robert out of school, because Robert never went to school; he got out of that very easily early in life—but he took Robert with him campaigning. Robert's job was to affix posters to the ceiling of the saloons where they went for lunch. I tried, when I was doing my book, to phrase how you affix the posters—I couldn't see it. He said he took a silver dollar, and a tack, and the poster, and the ceiling. And in some magic way, got them together! I couldn't see it, and Ted said, "I don't think it's possible. I got Bailey Aldrich working on it, and Bailey worked it out. What you do—I can't do it—you take the silver dollar and the tack and you slap the whole thing up there and it stays there."

Anyhow, Robert used to have lunch in the saloons. . . . And he rode in the victory campaign as a boy of 10, on top of the fire engine. All right, that was the beginning of his political love, and his wish. He never got over it—he *never* got over it. He always read all the political commentary in the newspapers.

And now, the other thing that made him think that he was capable of guiding people's lives. This is one of the great things about him, but also one of the problems. This wish to direct other people's lives had disastrous consequences. But he was called upon to do so as he was growing up, by the group of ladies that surrounded him . . . his wife, Elinor; his mother-in-law—who was a real, true New Hampshire woman, you know—very intelligent, very bright—and other female in-laws. . . . He used to be called on by all these women, you see, to tell them what to do. It's amazing. And his mother used to say, "That Rob can do anything!" . . .

I am telling you all this to confute people who say that he had a blown-up ego and wanted to take too much platform. He did the same thing to his own family! And if we (the Morrises) hadn't been tough, he would have done it to our children. I could take it. In the garden, he would say to me, "Don't hoe that way! You don't know how to hold a hoe! That's terrible." Well, if he had said that to our son, it would have just devastated him.

Theodore Morrison: I think it's been recognized that the literati in general—not only the poets, though there have been conspicuous poets—have a hankering for power or a hankering to be close to the seats of power, to affect policy. And Robert had some of this hankering. On the other hand, he was a passionate American, believed in this country and loved it, and was a patriot. And as far as I can recall, he never—as some other literary figures in this troubled century, have done—allowed himself to have sympathies for Mussolini or Hitler or what-not, because they were centers of power. I don't recall that Robert ever did that. I think that his really devout Americanism protected him against that. Would you say that, Kay?

. . . Robert never went to school; he got out of that very easily early in life. . . .

K. Morrison: That's right, that's right.

T. Morrison: He wanted to tell Khrushchev what the future between Russia and this country should be, but he didn't fall prey—as some figures we can think of did.

Question: Was this the basis for the kind of shaky relationship between Frost and Ezra Pound? Was it political?

T. Morrison: Well, Frost was uneasy about Pound, I think, from the beginning. He did not admire Pound's poetry. He was shocked and offended by Pound's radio broadcasts in

World War II. I think the root of the tension between them began when Frost was in London, and met Pound, and Frost recognized that Pound had tried to help him and did help him in his early career. But Pound wrote—I haven't got all the facts and dates at my fingertips . . . some public expression in which he said or intimated that Frost had left his country for England . . . because Frost found no reception in this country for his poetry. And this, Frost felt, put Frost in the position of something like an expatriate, and Frost was offended by this and tried to counteract it in letters to people in this country who he thought might help him.

This was at least one of the beginnings of the tension between them. But Frost, especially in the last years, recognized and acknowledged his debt to Ezra Pound, and was one of those who helped get Pound out of St. Elizabeth's Hospital and sent back to Italy.

. . . Frost was uneasy about Pound . . . from the beginning.

There, again—that's a curious thing. I think this, again, bears on Frost's hankering after political power and the kind of Machiavellian manipulation of which he wanted to pride himself. I think Frost claimed a good deal too much credit for it, extricating Pound from St. Elizabeth's Hospital. The ground had been well prepared by Archie MacLeish and Ernest Hemingway and T. S. Eliot. And Frost was able to step in at the last moment, when what was needed was simply a very widely respected American figure to put the right color on this.

K. Morrison: Frost's great contribution was to have the brightness to go straight to Dr. Overholser. . . . And he could say that this was the one thing he added to the thing—because the rest, as Ted said, was all done by Archie and others.

Comment: One of the problems that some of us have with the whole political question that surrounds Frost is that he was such a personal poet. He speaks to the individual, and his insights are profoundly individual insights. It almost runs counter to the profound things about Frost's poetry to make out of Frost a political figure, or for Frost to seem to want to make out of himself a political figure.

K. Morrison: I see what you mean. . . . He was a man of two opposites all the time. . . .

Question: How did you get to know him?

K. Morrison: When I was an undergraduate at college way back in the Dark Ages, we wanted to have somebody come and talk poetry with us. We knew that M. Carey Thomas wasn't going to spend any money unless she wanted to, so we'd end up by ourselves. And we got the money. So we went to her and said we did have the money, and we got that man Frost. . . .

Comment: This was at Bryn Mawr.

K. Morrison: We've known him since then.

Comment: Since 1938.

K. Morrison: Oh, do you want me to come out with the horrid truth! Thirty-eight was when I picked him up, in a professional poet-secretary context.

Question: Were you a student or a teacher in earlier days at Bryn Mawr?

K. Morrison: I was a student! Please! How about it if I sort of turn to his reading and—are we all right, Jim, for time?

Thomson: We're fine.

K. Morrison: His reading and writing habits—all right: You know he lived here at 35 Brewster Street, in Cambridge, in winter, after we met up with him in 1938. He lived in town opposite Louisburg Square for a couple of years, but after that, he was here. They used to call it "Brewster Village," and he had a house there with a great big front

But Frost, especially in the last years, recognized and acknowledged his debt to Ezra Pound. . . .

room just lined with books. Just after Frost's death I went out to dinner and sat next to a very eminent bookseller, and I said to him, "Weren't you lucky to have been the man to be called in to appraise Frost's books? What a privilege!"

"Very bad library," he said. "Why there were almost no first editions and very few inscribed copies!"

"You know"—I heard myself saying—"that would be merely commercial addenda." I thought that.

But he had a terrific library, and he had what we used to call the "outside" library books. And the "inside" were bedroom-suitcase books. I have a list—and I am not going to bore you with it, we haven't the time—but I am going to give you, if you don't mind, a little bit of the catalogue:

As he grew up, his mother read to him. She read all the poets. She read the Bible. She read George MacDonald's *Back of the North Wind*, which is a very important book in Robert's life. . . . And he had Greek myths and stories of the Spanish Conquest; also *Scottish Chiefs* by Jane Porter. These were all read to him.

He had Herrick, and this was very interesting because he wrote in one of his press interviews, "I said when I was 60 that the first book I remember the looks of was a book of verse by Robert Herrick. It was sent for my mother to review in my father's newspaper when I was seven or eight years old." . . . He read Poe, Bryan, Emerson, Thoreau, Wordsworth. These were what his mother read him.

. . . When he couldn't sleep at night . . . he would get up and do a trig problem!

He had a book by James Proctor, *Our Place Among Infinities*. I'll tell you an interesting little thing about that in a moment—what that book did to him. He had, by the time he was in high school, read Bryant, Ossian, Poe, Prescott's *Conquest of Peru*. He read Mark Twain, Josh Billings and Artemus Ward.

Our Place Among Infinities was a great book about astronomy. In that book, there was a chapter called "The Seeming Waste"—you know, waste in Nature—and, if you remember Frost's poems, think of his introduction to his *Collected Poems*: the figure of the great essay, the figure the poem makes—and there it is: *Waste!* I forget how he phrased it. Well, anyhow, it was there, straight from Proctor's book. And his last lecture he gave at Dartmouth was on extravagance, and he went back to Proctor right then and there in that "seeming waste" in the Universe.

He read, by the time he was grown up, all the Latin poets, all the greats, the Greeks. He had the *Odyssey*. He had Greek drama, Latin drama. He had a book on trigonometry. . . . He never travelled without one of his editions of Latin poetry, and his textbook of trigonometry—for when he couldn't sleep at night. He would get up and do a trig problem!

He had *The Arabian Nights* and I have the list of his books that he had in his library. The books from Brewster Street were originally to go to Amherst College. . . . Amherst still has the card catalogue and somebody was good enough to let me have it. The card for *The Arabian Nights* noted a strange white smudge on the spine of each volume. Well, what had happened was that when Frost ordered the set he didn't know it was going to come in as many as five or six volumes. He had it in his guest room but he just didn't want it to be conspicuous. He thought visitors might think

bad things of him. So he took an eraser and wiped off the title on the spines.

Now, shall I go on? . . .

Question: I think probably only the Morrisons could answer this question: Was Frost—you've known him since you were a student, for a longer period than anybody around—was he always aware that he was a great poet? And if not, was there a particular time in his life when it suddenly dawned on him that he was, in fact, Robert Frost?

K. Morrison: To the day of his death, he was upset, ready to believe he was no good. If, in the summertime when he was lecturing, one of our children—my daughter, for instance—would go up to hear him and even when she was little, failed to make some sort of remark, he would say, "I was no good. I didn't do well last night." And he was miserable all day. "Anne did not say anything to me about it. I don't think she liked it. I don't think it was good." . . . He wrote in a letter to Louis Untermeyer one time—this was a published letter: "Sometimes I cry for fear that I am so bad a poet."

Comment: So he never—

K. Morrison: No, he never turned to complete security or self-assurance. . . . When he got the Bollingen Prize in the hospital, a few days before he died, it was the most exciting thing you ever heard of—the best thing that ever happened.

Question: I do wonder what his world view was. Where—?

K. Morrison: I think that he was brought up to believe what his mother said, "That Rob can do anything." And he had done an awful lot of things. And I think he had a great feeling that he really was always telling somebody what his job should be, because he thought about it and worried about it. I don't think it was because he thought he was the king playing with pawns. It was just that there are people, you know, who have a perception about other persons, who—well, for instance I've an awful temptation sometimes when wandering around to think "I wish I'd get a chance to buy her clothes," you know—It's just fun, you know, and I think that's a good deal of what was in Frost, only his was universal. He had an idea of what a government should be. And it was built on classical history, freedom of the individual. He really couldn't take modern socialism for the simple reason that he judged that the individual was crushed. Now, probably he was wrong.

Comment: His would have been a "let-alone" society.

K. Morrison: Very much of a "let-alone" society.

Comment: So the interfering you'd want would be Frost himself and not the government.

K. Morrison: Yes, yes.

Question: What role, then, does his compassion play? I mean, in a "let-alone" society, isn't the "let-alone" society one that's lacking in compassion? And isn't this at war with Frost?

K. Morrison: He was very compassionate, but it wasn't "United Fund" compassion, it was personal charity.

Comment: Yes, that puts it very well.

Comment: There, again, we have a sort of political-personal dichotomy. . . . It's hard for me to understand why he wouldn't want to translate that sort of personal compassion into a political mechanism.

T. Morrison: I think you have to accept the fact that—(to Mrs. Morrison) correct me, if I'm wrong about this—that he simply would not do that.

K. Morrison: No, he would not.

(Frost) really couldn't take modern socialism for . . . he judged that the individual was crushed.

T. Morrison: He had a real and deep skepticism toward large-scale or official or governmental efforts to improve society across the board. He was just skeptical—he didn't think they would work. I think this was a kind of deep-rooted conservatism, which had partly to do with his rural sympathies and the kind of New England he lived in, which doesn't exist any more. I think it was related to all these things, and you can like it or not—you don't have to approve of it—but I think that was the fact. He wasn't like a Shelley. He didn't have that kind of generosity of social hope. Other kinds of generosity, yes! Personal generosity, yes—plenty of it—but not that particular kind. He just didn't have it. Now, you can reject him for this reason if you want, but I wonder whether you wouldn't have to say that the 20th Century experience in America didn't suggest that this skepticism was somewhat justified.

Question: Did Frost travel at all?

Thomson: We suggest that you move on. We could talk all afternoon on this theme. . . .

K. Morrison: Jim, are we overstaying our time intolerably?

Thomson: No, no, no. We already did that!

T. Morrison: I wondered whether we couldn't just—could I read just one poem?

Several: Please! Please, do!

T. Morrison: Okay . . . this is the one called, "I Could Give All to Time."

K. Morrison: A late poem.

T. Morrison:

To Time it never seems that he is brave
To set himself against the peaks of snow
To lay them level with the running wave,
Nor is he overjoyed when they lie low,
But only grave, contemplative and grave.

What now is inland shall be ocean isle,
Then eddies playing round a sunken reef
Like the curl at the corner of a smile;
And I could share Time's lack of joy or grief
At such a planetary change of style.

I could give all to Time except—except
What I myself have held. But why declare
The things forbidden that while the Customs slept
I have crossed to Safety with? For I am There,
And what I would not part with I have kept.*

Thomson: This is a fine ending. And someone wants to extend the ending! Go ahead.

Question: What are you doing now? Are you writing another book?

K. Morrison: I'm not writing anymore, I'm working on the papers a little. . . . And I'm assembling my picture collection . . . to go to Dartmouth.

Comment: Why can't we mention that it *is* a biography? She has a book—*Robert Frost: A Pictorial Chronicle*, by Kathleen Morrison; Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

K. Morrison: They did a pretty job on it.

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Adding to Misunderstanding Between the Media and the Law

The following address was delivered by Robert Yoakum in Lakeville, Connecticut, at one of the five sub-regional meetings under the New England Conference on Conflicts Between the Media and the Law. See also the editorial, this issue.

I am honored to have been invited to address such a distinguished and well-behaved gathering of the Bar, the Bench, and the Press. This is particularly true when I think of the better-qualified people you must have passed over.

Some of the best sources on the subject of conflicts between the Press and the Law are lawyers who have worked for the federal government. They have had to deal with the Press and have studied it carefully. They have also had secrets to keep in the name of national security.

And many of these experts are now free for speaking engagements: some have served their sentences and others are still out on appeal.

Of course, I have one great advantage over these potential speakers: I'm cheaper.

The views of H. R. Haldeman on this subject—or on any other subject on which he is equally evasive or ill-informed—would have set you back \$50,000 if you had paid at CBS rates.

To obtain the memories and philosophical musings of Ron Ziegler—a man who knows more about conflicts between the Media and the Law than any other former Disneyland guide—would set you back \$3,000. (In what other country could an ordinary lad go from Disneyland to Alice's Wonderland and emerge as a well-paid public speaker?)

Only God and Rabbi Korff know how much it would cost to get Ex-President Nixon's views on this complex subject (although we learned quite a bit from those transcripts) but anyone who can command a \$2-million advance on a book wouldn't be available for peanuts.

Speaking of Nixon—a lifetime habit I'm trying to kick—what lawyer has spent more time in conflict with the Press? And with less reason?

Nixon was given to telling his aides "the Press is the enemy." It would have been more appropriate for him to quote the late Walt Kelly, who had Pogo say: "We have met the enemy, and he is us."

It's odd, this paranoid obsession with the Press. I say paranoid, because most of the Press wasn't hostile.

In 1946, when Nixon ran against six-term incumbent Jerry Voorhis, Nixon was supported by all the papers in his district and all the papers that circulated in his district, including those from Los Angeles and San Diego. The same was true in 1948.

In 1950, when Nixon ran for the Senate against Helen Gahagan Douglas, he received the enthusiastic support of every major newspaper in the state and 90% of the minor papers.

In 1952 and 1956, Eisenhower and Nixon received overwhelming support from the Press.

In 1960 and in 1968, Nixon was supported by about 80% of the nation's newspapers.

In 1972 he reached his peak of popularity with the Press: 93% of the daily newspapers in this nation gave him their editorial backing.

* * * * *

All of which reminds me of a panel at a convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors at which Jack Anderson reviewed these same statistics for the edification of a Department of Justice spokesman. In his best Mormon minister voice Jack then leaned forward, looked down the table at his adversary, and asked, "What do you people want—100 per cent?"

There were other reasons why it was appropriate to invite me in addition to the economic consideration—or, to be more precise, the lack of a consideration.

I have a long history of personal participation in conflicts between the Law and the Media. And it promises to continue, since my wife Alice has just earned her Law degree.

This direct participation goes back to the time I worked for the *International Herald Tribune*. Riots were routine in those days and in my effort to cover one on the Champs-Elysees (by the way, it was caused by the objections of Communist groups to the printing, in *Le Figaro*, of the memoirs of Otto Skorzeny, the famed German SS figure) I stupidly ended up between the cops and the demonstrators, paving stones flying overhead, fleeing charges and counter-charges.

A cop came up behind me and struck me with some force with his leaded stick. I awoke some time later to discover that the demonstrators had re-taken the territory and some were gathered around me. When I started to speak I was a hero: when my identity as an American journalist was

established most of my new admirers were in favor of tossing me back to the police. (The French police, by the way, wouldn't have regretted the error. They enjoy hitting newsmen as much as they enjoy hitting rioters. In France newsmen need real shields as well as a shield law.)

Fortunately, two demonstrators took pity and drove me to the American hospital, where I was soon joined by an Associated Press photographer who had also been clobbered by the police.

Even so, I try to see issues, including conflicts between the Media and the Law, from all sides—except when writing a humor column. Fairness can be fatal to humor. As my friend and former Paris colleague Art Buchwald puts it, "I never let a fact stand in my way."

In our conflicts with the Law, we of the Press have reason to seek speedy solutions—or at least a *modus vivendi*. For do not forget, fellow journalists, that the judge with whom you are breaking bread tonight could have you breaking rocks a month hence.

Do not think that because prosecutors and judges represented here are not hostile—may even be amiable—that they will still be so if you refuse to reveal your sources. These judges and prosecutors will not, on the day you are dragged into court—protesting that the First Amendment prevents you from being there at all—give you the smiles and handshakes from the bench that you have enjoyed here at the bar.

In 1972 (Nixon) reached his peak of popularity with the Press: 93% of the daily newspapers in this nation gave him their editorial backing.

You may be tempted to think that whatever punishment is meted out is because you have occasionally criticized the Bench, or, perhaps, that particular judge. I am told this will not be the case because judges are, like justice, blindfolded. I am told they are always evenhanded.

The Law is just. It is fair to all. As Anatole France wrote, "In its majestic equality, the Law forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread."

Of course, there are a few judges and lawyers who dislike the Press for the same reason Nixon, Agnew, and Mayor Daley do. They would say, as Katherine Hepburn did, "I don't care what is written about me so long as it isn't true."

It is with great reluctance, because of time limitations, that I skip over the men who make the laws by which we must all abide. I was intrigued, for example, with this morning's discussion about whether our lawmakers' drinking habits should be exposed. (As one participant said of his state legislators, "Who can tell?")

Some men in high positions have felt very strongly about this issue. Back in July 1973 one of them referred with disgust to "legislators who totter on to the floor in a condition of at least partial inebriation which would preclude them from making any sort of a sober judgment on the issues that confront this country." This indignant moralist was named John Ehrlichman.

I thought Marty Linsky did an excellent job, by the way, (and I am told by my wife and others that the afternoon session was equally well-directed) but I thought he did miss one obvious question when he asked Jack Conway about all those things he would be willing to do to get a story, including lying, stealing, bugging, bribing, and wiretapping. I wanted to find out whether he also would have been willing to walk over the body of his grandmother.

* * * * *

The Press deserves a lot of its lumps.

It is often timid. A publisher friend of mine who participated in an earlier session in this series said that there was a lot of discussion about deep and daring investigative reporting but that was not, in his opinion, a major source of trouble in the Fourth Estate. "Too many press people are pussycats" is the way he put it.

One might easily get the impression that our editors and reporters are at the barricades, when, in truth, they are really fretting over alienating someone. They are like old Paddy, who was dying. The priest was summoned to administer the final rites. Said the Father, bending low, "Do you renounce the Devil?" "Father," came the reply, "This is no time to antagonize anybody."

The Press sometimes distorts.

If the Press looks upon the judiciary with the suspicion it sometimes deserves, the judiciary looks on the Press with the disgust it sometimes deserves. Lawyers and judges feel like Baudelaire, who said, "I am unable to understand how a man of honor could take a newspaper in his hands without a shudder of disgust."

There is the story of the law lord from Great Britain who arrived in this country and was told that the Press was very hostile. He felt confident, however, that he could handle American reporters.

The first question he was asked on getting off the boat was, "Are you going to visit any nightclubs in New York, Lord Marchbanks?" And, being very clever, he said, "Are there any nightclubs in New York?"

But Lord Marchbanks, like many before him, underestimated the ingenuity of the Press. The headline that appeared the following day was "'Are there any nightclubs in New York?' That was the first question Lord Marchbanks asked reporters when he arrived yesterday."

One continuing issue here and in other forums is whether the public, and in particular the accused in a legal action, needs greater protection from those in the media who are irresponsible.

And a parallel issue is whether the Press should be given legal protection—shield laws—against efforts to extract confidential sources.

In France newsmen need real shields as well as a shield law.

Some efforts at compromise try to draw a line between offenses that would justify subpoenaing a reporter and those that would not. But that's a hard line to draw.

Take the view of Commander G. H. Hatherhill of Scotland Yard in 1954: "There are only about twenty murders a year in London," he said, "And not all are serious—some are just husbands killing their wives."

I regret that time won't permit me to get into another cause of conflict between the Press and the Law: censorship. It is also, by the way, a good source of humor columns.

You have been dealing with hypothetical cases here. But how would you handle the following real one:

The St. Louis suburb of Vinita Park has declared prostitution illegal and also sexual massages—only those sexual massages provided for pay, presumably.

But the police and prosecutors are now faced with an even tougher First Amendment problem: for \$24 an hour a scantily-clad young woman will read a sexy book to a customer. Both sit in straight-back chairs.

The place is called "The Reading Room" and it's doing good business. The bluenoses and busybodies are trying to find an ordinance that covers this emergency in Vinita Park but have so far failed. There are a lot of people who believe that what others do or read or see in private is their business, though. They will probably write an ordinance to wipe out The Reading Room.

But can they do it without wiping out the Christian Scientist Reading Rooms as well? I leave this for your next program.

I won't go on with all the subjects that I can't cover. Let me end with two stories from our next-to-most-recent trip to London:

Although staggering with the effects of jet lag we were whisked off on our first day by our friend, Harold Evans, Editor of *The Sunday Times* of London. He wanted us to witness a libel trial brought against *The Sunday Times*

by one Col. Gayre. The colonel—an amateur anthropologist—was objecting to the *Times'* having put quotation marks around the word *expert* when it referred to him.

The colonel lost and, as the Law commands in Great Britain, had to pay *The Sunday Times'* legal costs, which came to 40,000 pounds, or \$100,000.

On the following day, Harry took us to sit in on the decision in his history-making thalidomide case. Our small group—*The Sunday Times* Editor, the solicitors, and the government solicitors—walked into the House of Lords where the five Law Lords sat in all their majesty.

The Law Lords held against *The Sunday Times*, so even today an article written in 1972 about the causes of that thalidomide tragedy, which began 12 years before that, cannot be published.

In concluding, let me quote from part of Harry Evans' recent speech before the American Society of Newspaper Editors. It dealt with an important difference between our two judicial systems:

Referring to the political nature of certain judicial appointments in the United States, and how they sometimes result in inferior and compromised judges, Harry said that in his country the *independence* of the judiciary is para-

. . . Censorship . . . is a good source of humor columns.

mount. "In Great Britain," he said, "We go to great lengths *independently* to reach the wrong conclusion.

"In the House of Lords, our supreme court arguments may go on for weeks and weeks. In one case that had gone on interminably the Counsel said to Lord Reid, the chairman:

"'But I'm surprised by your comment, my lordship, because in response to a question at the beginning of these proceedings, you took precisely the opposite view.'

"'Ah, yes,' Lord Reid replied, 'But I was a much younger man then.'"

—Robert Yoakum

Mr. Yoakum, one-time city editor of the International Herald Tribune, is now author of the twice-weekly humor column "Another Look." He recently announced the formation of Yoakum Features, Lakeville, Conn., of which he is President, General Manager, and Editor-in-Chief.

A Radical Journalist in the 1950s

(Conclusion)

(This is the second part of a two-part article which began in the Spring issue of Nieman Reports.)

In the eyes of the Cold War establishment the *National Guardian* had committed the unpardonable sin of igniting a world-wide protest in defense of a young couple selected as a sacrificial symbol to warn dissidents to cease their opposition to Cold War policy. Matters reached a breaking point when a staff member discovered the famous missing console table—an alleged gift, with a hollowed-out leg to hide microfilm, from the Russians to the Rosenbergs in gratitude for their turning over to Moscow the secret of atomic implosion.

The Rosenbergs contended that it was an inexpensive table purchased by them at Macy's, and that all the legs were solid. We were able to demonstrate the truth of the Rosenberg's contention, down to Macy's chalk marks on the underside of the table. The defense immediately moved for a reopening of the case on the basis of this new evidence. The move was rejected.

This was in April 1953. A few days later, Cedric Belfrage, as editor, was subpoenaed to appear early in May before the Un-American Activities Committee. Chairman Harold Velde announced in advance that his mission was to expose the subversive nature of the *National Guardian*. A week later, Belfrage and I both were summoned to appear before the McCarthy Committee, purportedly in connection with a senatorial investigation of subsidies by the United States government for the establishment of the new German press—the operation which had brought Belfrage and myself together in 1945.

The hearings—on May 13 and 14, 1953—were a mocking nightmare of the democratic process. Germany was soon dispensed with, and McCarthy turned his considerable talents to the *National Guardian* and the immigration status of British-born Belfrage—alien red corn in the white American harvest. Roy Cohn, at the master's elbow, was in noxious bloom as committee counsel, and young Robert Kennedy sat in baleful silence as an apprentice counsel for the Democratic minority. If anything, some Democrats were more vicious than McCarthy. At the executive session, Henry Jackson, Democrat of Washington, who has since

developed into George Meany's alter ego in the Senate, sought to have me cited on a perjury charge. It was McCarthy himself who balked the move, most likely to prevent Jackson from stealing his thunder. In open session, Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri, a latter-day dove, demonstrated a hawk-like concern about my patriotism. He demanded to know why, if I considered myself a good American (as I had just stated) I was not willing to make a full disclosure of my allegedly crimson career—and he was not referring to my Harvard years. As my session drew to an end, Symington insisted on a "yes or no" answer

The original staff of the National Guardian . . . was gathered without a political litmus test.

to the question whether I felt the Rosenbergs had received a fair trial. When I demurred and sought to elaborate, he cut me off abruptly and I was dismissed.

Belfrage, however, proved more detainable. McCarthy in the private session had demanded the presence at the public session of an Immigration Service representative to hear the grim narration of the manner in which this foreign-born Bolshevik had operated in our midst, enjoying the benefits of American democracy while subverting the unwary to assist him in his plot to overthrow the government of the United States by force and violence. It was an effective scenario, and there was full coverage by the press corps of McCarthy's charges against Belfrage—the same press corps which (except for three reporters) ignored our invitation to a press conference after the hearing at which, we said, we would answer freely questions we had refused to answer at the hearing itself.

On May 15, the day after the hearings, Belfrage was arrested on a deportation warrant at the office of the *National Guardian* in New York, as we were telling the Washington story to the staff, and taken to the Immigration Detention Center on Ellis Island (since closed). He remained in a large cage for three weeks, then was released on a writ of *habeas corpus*. There followed months of deportation hearings and appeals, none of them successful, and Belfrage was rearrested, without charge, in April 1955, and taken to the West Street Federal Prison in New York, where he languished for more than three months. Hope for appeal to the Supreme Court (then presided over by Harry Truman's crony Fred M. Vinson) seemed dim, and McManus and I persuaded Belfrage to accept deportation—in effect to deport himself—and continue to work for the *National Guardian* abroad. He acceded with reluctance, and left aboard the *Nieuw Amsterdam* on Au-

gust 15, 1955, to become the editor-in-exile. (I succeeded him as the editor-in-residence.) He wrote for the *National Guardian* from Britain, China, the Soviet Union, Ghana, India, Cuba, Ceylon—in fact, from dozens of countries except the Dominican Republic, from which he was also deported on arrival, at the behest of an FBI agent installed at the airport immigration desk.

There was a major lesson in the Belfrage affair concerning the freedom of the press: the reality that the First Amendment *was* divisible. When a journalist involved with the general commercial press came under attack by government or congressional committee, he was privileged to be defended by the press on the ground that his First Amendment rights were being violated. But when a person associated with the radical press was attacked by the same elements, he was not so privileged because he had placed himself beyond the pale: opposition to basic Cold War policy was then regarded by government and press as akin to treason, and the victim had to walk in the rain, outside the Cold War umbrella.

Thus, there were few voices raised in the general press on the Belfrage case, and then not so much on the free-press issue as on the fact that Belfrage had been imprisoned without charge (*The New York Times*, for example). The only other editorial expressions of dissent in the daily press appeared in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (largely because of the civil liberties concern of its then editorial page editor, Irving Dilliard), and Jess Gitt's *York Gazette & Daily* (with James Higgins's watchful eye on the editorial page).

The *New York Post*, whose editor James Wechsler had preceded Belfrage and myself to the McCarthy Committee by two weeks, published not one word of reportage or edi-

The middle 1950s formed a kind of demarcation line for oppression in both the United States and the socialist countries of Europe.

torial comment about our appearance, although it had only days before issued an alarm to all good Americans to come to the aid of the press against congressional witch-hunting. Wechsler himself turned over to McCarthy the names of 60 persons who, he said, had been in the Young Communist League with him in the 1930s. The price of the submission, ironically, was a promise by McCarthy that a transcript of the Wechsler hearings would be delivered to the American Society of Newspaper Editors for their determination whether the freedom of the press had been trespassed in the Wechsler questioning (they came to no conclusion). Wechsler's apology for his action was that McCarthy really wanted him to remain silent, and that he therefore had outwitted his executioner by delivering to him a list of candidates for the guillotine.

In his book, *The Age of Suspicion*, written soon after his testimony before McCarthy, Wechsler explicated further. Silence, he said, was "no answer" in that time of suspicion because its "misuse" by the Communists had deprived it of any eloquence. Further, it was the American tradition that a man "who has nothing to conceal will speak up when spoken to; muteness has not often been equated with valor." The Wechsler book was aptly titled: it is likely that the persons named by Wechsler regarded his self-proclaimed valorous volubility with considerable suspicion.

The middle 1950s formed a kind of demarcation line for oppression in both the United States and the socialist countries of Europe. Belfrage's departure in a way marked the end of conspicuous excess in the domestic witch-hunt. It would no longer be necessary to be so blatant because McCarthyism (as it was misnamed) was becoming institutionalized, and the transmission belt in the process—McCarthy himself—was becoming an embarrassment. So he was dumped by the same forces in government and media which had harnessed his power in the first place. (There is

This was the time also of the Silent Generation . . . a vacuum on the campuses, and a sterility of thought and incentive among the faculties.

a full discussion of the making and un-making of Joe McCarthy in my book, *The Press and the Cold War*, published by Bobbs-Merrill in 1970 and issued as a paperback by Beacon Press in 1973.)

Stalin had died in 1953, and in 1955, at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, came the thunderbolt revelations of the atrocities of the Stalin era by his successor, Nikita Khrushchev. This was followed by the upheavals within the socialist countries, particularly in Poland and in Hungary, and considerable soul-searching and defection in the Communist parties of the west. Few radicals were left untouched or unmoved by the revelations.

The *National Guardian* reported fully the Khrushchev disclosures and their implications, and information, to the extent that it was available, from the other socialist countries. We were fortunate then to have a roving correspondent in Europe—Ursula Wasserman, a German-born, naturalized American who had given up her American citizenship in protest against Washington's Cold War policies, and had returned to live in Europe. She filed some remarkable dispatches from both Poland and Hungary predicting accurately rumblings against Communist Party bureaucracy in both countries. The subsequent events therefore were less of a jolt for our readers than for readers of other Left

newspapers. On the Hungarian events of 1956, the *National Guardian* was highly critical of the Soviet intervention, and especially of Soviet overlordship which had permitted the situation in Hungary to fester as long as it had.

The events in Eastern Europe had deepgoing repercussions in all sectors of the American Left, including the staff of the *National Guardian*. The first serious staff changes began to occur in the latter years of the 1950s, and the reasons were in part the disillusionment of staff members who had been Communist Party members, or close to the party position. They left the staff not in search of a new ideology, but rather disenchanted with activism to find their way quietly back into establishment security. They did not give up their long-held political philosophy, but became inactive and silent. What they did give up was commitment.

This was the time also of the Silent Generation, the young people whose college years had been lived in an atmosphere of stifling repression. The result was a vacuum on the campuses, and a sterility of thought and incentive among the faculties. The end products for the most part were junior executives in shiny steel suits and technicians whose philosophy was calculated by computer. It was a time on the Left to hold the line, to study survival rather than programs for change.

Replacements for departing members of the staff were difficult to find, and this situation persisted until the first stirrings of the university movement against the war at the turn of the 1960s, and the rise of the black freedom movement led by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

I will not attempt to examine the role of the *National Guardian* in the 1960s in this article except to note that the paper understood and encouraged these movements to the fullest extent of its ability and resources. The bound volumes of the *National Guardian* through these years provide the most valuable record in print. I have written about this

Why still do not radicals in the United States examine the past critically, and especially their own role in the shaping of this past?

time in considerable detail in a later book, *Deadline for the Media* (Bobbs-Merrill 1973), and intend to write at greater length about it in a history of the *National Guardian* and its time, to be undertaken with Cedric Belfrage.

It is important, however, at this juncture to look back on the 1950s through the eyes of younger radicals, particularly journalists, seeking enlightenment as to why certain positions were taken by an independent radical publication, and why certain lines of inquiry perhaps were not. The

questions come primarily from serious-minded intellectual workers—as I prefer to call them—who were in college (and for the most part stayed to graduate) in the first years of the 1960s. They were among the leaders of the Students for a Democratic Society and other groups that followed out of the SDS. They are white, mostly of middle-class origin, and many have since gone into newer phases of radical activity such as the women's liberation movement, the gay activists, and the groups seeking to develop a socialist political alternative based on an American perspective.

Why, some of them ask, did we not criticize the Communist Party when our disagreement with the Party was so clear? Why was there so much uncritical acceptance of the Soviet Union's positions, so much "overzealously favorable portrayal of the socialist nations under Stalinism," as one put it?

Many of the questioners come from persons whose parents were Communist Party members, and there is implied in their questions a sense of betrayal. They were weaned, they seem to be saying, on the belief that Stalin could do

"The so-called democratic socialists . . . believed neither in democracy for dissenters nor in socialism for the country. . . ."

no wrong, and the Communist Party U.S.A. encouraged this feeling. Then came the disclosures of the horrible things that went on in the Soviet Union, and elsewhere. Why were these things not reported earlier? Why still do not radicals in the United States examine the past critically, and especially their own role in the shaping of this past?

There is of course validity in some of these questions and they must be confronted. Some can be answered fully only by persons who were in the Communist Party leadership at that time, or who were informed members; and since those of us who comprised the management of the *National Guardian* did not fall into this category, I can attempt less full answers to some questions than to others.

Let me say first, however, that some of the questions bear the mark of what I call the scapegoat theory of history—the need to assess blame on one group, or several groups, for events in history which were beyond the control of these groups. They also tend to deny the continuity of history. The questioners, in this sense, stand apart from the history of events except where they are immediately and currently involved. They view past events from a perspective not in accordance with the reality in which these events occurred, but rather from hindsight influenced by subsequent events and current conditions. It cannot work.

Conditions in the 1950s for the American Left were quite different from those of the 1970s. Take first the matter of the Soviet Union.

The clear aim of American foreign policy in the 1950s was to destroy the Soviet Union and prevent the self-determination of any people anywhere in the world if such determination interfered with the functions of the capitalist system. The obligation of a radical newspaper was to defend the right of the Soviet Union to exist—that is, the right of *any* socialist nation to exist—without fear of destruction, and the right of any country to adopt a system of socialism.

The most serviceable way to do this, we believed, was to focus the attention of as many Americans as possible on the policies and goals of the government of the United States. The goal of Soviet foreign policy, as we observed it, was peaceful coexistence with other nations, including the capitalist nations. The Russians did not seek to emulate the Dulles policy, in reverse fashion, and attempt to contain capitalism. They had their hands full trying to repair the devastation of World War II. They sought rather to fashion a protective belt around the perimeters of the Soviet Union to prevent another invasion. This, we felt, was both reasonable and sensible.

Most of those who attacked Soviet foreign policy in those years did not do so as friends of socialism. They did it to give aid and comfort to American policy. In *The Press and the Cold War*, I said of Soviet critics on the Left (it is perhaps a distortion to place them on the Left): “The so-

The internal problems of the Soviet Union were and are more complex, and they post a challenge to all radicals. . . .

called democratic socialists . . . believed neither in democracy for dissenters nor in socialism for the country. So firmly were they in thrall to anti-communism that their press at times was a virtual propaganda arm of Washington foreign policy.”

This is not to say that we regarded Soviet policy as flawless. Of course it was not. But by and large we held with Anna Louise Strong that the Soviet Union carried the hope of mankind, with stress on the word *hope*.

Today I am critical of many aspects of Soviet policy, particularly its relationship to China, its aggressive economic competition with the United States in many parts of the world, and its opportunistic support of unsavory regimes in some parts of the world. At the same time, I applaud its vital assistance to the North Vietnamese and the Liberation

Front of South Vietnam, and its crucial assistance—as I have seen first hand—to Cuba, assistance which I have determined to my satisfaction is given without strings. I believe the Cubans would refuse to deal with any country except on terms of equality.

The internal problems of the Soviet Union were and are more complex, and they pose a challenge to all radicals—Communists and non-Communists—to explore with utmost seriousness, both for understanding the past and for the sake of the future. To say that the facts about the ugliness of the Stalin era were not available may sound like a subterfuge, but it is to a large extent a fair statement. Non-adulatory information from inside the Soviet Union was hard to come by. There were numerous occasions when Belfrage and I sought to impress upon Soviet journalists in the United States that news from the Soviet Union was virtually unusable because of its extreme propagandistic nature. Many of them agreed and said they would discuss it when they returned home; but nothing changed.

Reports of repression within the Soviet Union were current, but their sources were almost always virulently anti-Soviet and anti-Communist, and much of the information they offered was patently contrived and easily disproved. The chief channels were persons who had been Communists and had become professional anti-Communists. They were in effect in the business of peddling hate, and they sought not only the destruction of the Soviet Union but of any dissenting movement in the United States.

Nonetheless, I believe it was wrong to dismiss without proper investigation—however difficult such inquiry might be—reports of grievous miscarriages of justice and terror inside the Soviet Union. If the reports could have been verified, and protests made by sympathizers of socialism, some of the horror might have been prevented or ameliorated, as was the case with our persistence in the mistreatment of Anna Louise Strong. Injustice, wherever it occurs, must be investigated and exposed. If radical Americans sought assistance throughout the world—including the Soviet Union—in the case of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, then Soviet dissidents who are victims of Soviet injustice should be able to turn to American radicals for support. Fortright response to injustice is a service to the cause of socialism, as well as of democracy.

The relationship of an independent radical publication to the Communist Party of the United States was more tangible and therefore more manageable. It was clear to us in the pre-publication stages of the *National Guardian* that the leaders of the Communist Party looked with suspicion on our plans. We were independent, untested, and unpredictable. There was no overt hostility, but the non-availability of certain financial assistance was eloquent. Individual Communists, however, welcomed the new paper and

were among our earliest subscribers. They found refreshing the absence of sectarianism and cliché in our coverage of news and expression of opinion.

A founding principle of the *National Guardian* was that we would not be the organ of any existing party, nor would we espouse the cause of any one segment of the radical movement, or any one socialist nation to the exclusion of others. We insisted that we had no enemies on the Left, however great the disagreement on certain tactics or policy. We felt that the history of the Left had been marked by divisive polemic which had rendered it almost useless as a political force through critical periods of history. We considered the Communist Party as part of the Left. They were not our enemy.

When the Smith Act was reactivated and the leaders of the Communist Party were being arrested and put on show trial as the "witches" of Salem had been, we saw the role of the *National Guardian* clearly: to defend the Communist Party against a power establishment whose purpose was not, as stated, to smash the American wing of the International Communist Conspiracy (the wing had already been broken as a political factor in the life of the nation), but to create a climate of fear and discourage opposition everywhere. Representative Vito Marcantonio, perhaps the only courageous voice in the Congress at the time, and himself often at odds with the Communists on political strategy, expressed it with economy and simplicity. He said in 1949: "The first line of defense of civil liberties in America is the defense of the Communist Party."

We not only supported the Communists on trial in the early 1950s but helped through the pages of the paper to raise thousands of dollars to enable the families of Smith Act victims to visit their husbands and fathers after they went to prison. It was a matter of both politics and civil liberties and, specifically, the indivisibility of the Bill of Rights.

Our major disagreement with the Communists, as I noted earlier, was on electoral politics and our insistence on seeking to lay the groundwork for an independent radical political movement. The most positive way we could demonstrate our disagreement with the Party, we felt, was not in denunciatory debate, but to present our point of view and our differences as constructively and effectively as possible.

It is significant that in 1974 the leadership of the Communist Party seemed to be abandoning its 20-year "mainstream" theory of politics in favor of an independent socialist alternative. Unfortunately its shift in strategy was being made without a frank analysis of its electoral role in the last two decades—a study which could be of singular service both to the Party and to all radicals.

One young radical friend has suggested to me that the *National Guardian* refused to attack the Communists be-

cause 99 per cent of the press was already doing so. While the percentage estimate was accurate, the reason was not. We refused to attack the Communists as a matter of principle. It was an easy way to buy respectability, but that was not what we were after. We sought rather to demonstrate to the American public that it is respectable, in the best American tradition, to be a radical, and that included the right to be a Communist.

We applied this principle generally. We published advertising submitted by the Socialist Workers Party and news of the SWP's activities, as well as those of the Communists and other groups on the Left. While it may seem absurd to younger radicals that this statement even need be made, it was a fact that intolerance on the Left in the 1950s had reached a point where publication of such news and advertisements often was met with criticism.

Intolerance? I can recall an episode early in the life of the *National Guardian* when some staff members protested acceptance of advertisements from an organic orange grower simply because he grew his oranges in Florida, a state notorious for discriminating against blacks. The grower, incidentally, was a devoted radical who placed subscription blanks for the *National Guardian* in every crate he shipped out.

There were also protests (from righteous whites) against using in print such phrases as "dark as night" or "black as coal." That campaign was ridiculed almost out of existence by our publication of a stinging satiric appeal to common sense from Eslanda Goode Robeson, whose militance in the black freedom struggle matched that of her husband Paul.

Intolerance and absolutism, to my mind, are twin enemies of the Left, pernicious, draining, and demoralizing. They render impossible the harmony and collaboration without which radical movements cannot exist, let alone grow. I read much of the radical press today with a sense of dismay. The sects continue to proclaim themselves the true and singular heirs of Marx, Lenin and Mao, in varying order. Having elevated to godhood three thoroughly human beings not able to protest in person their elevation, these sects then become preoccupied with jockeying for the vanguard role of the most faithful. Meanwhile, the most faithful enemy, finance capitalism, goes about its work almost unchallenged, except by those radicals who apply their Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism without theology. The theists are of no concern or danger to the imperialists because they so rarely leave the cathedral.

An American radical newspaper can transmit the experiences of the Chinese revolution without making Maoist theory sound like the Talmud. It is, in fact, a disservice to the American radical movement *not* to translate the Chinese experience in terms applicable to American conditions. One can criticise the medievalism of Soviet attitudes toward

some of its cultural figures without becoming an enemy of the Bolshevik revolution. Not to be critical is a disservice to the principles of revolutionary freedom.

For American radicals who are in a sense a colonized group within their own imperial country, there is much to be learned from the revolutionary experience of the peoples of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Republic of Cuba. There revolutionaries have resisted and defeated American colonialism and imperialism *with* the assistance of the large socialist countries but without loss of sovereignty or socialist independence.

A radical newspaper dedicated to the cause of revolutionary change in this country can be an articulate instrument for such change. If it acts in the interest of unity and coherence, it serves the cause of revolutionary change. If it pursues a divisive course, it becomes counterrevolutionary.

Above all, a radical American newspaper must regard as its primary obligation to fix its attention not on the merits or demerits of revolution abroad but on the enemy of revolution at home.

—James Aronson

Mr. Aronson, *associate professor of communications at Hunter College, is the winner of a Columbia Journalism Alumni Award for 1975.*

On Reporting Revolutions

(continued from page 2)

The Lakeville gathering was one of five sub-regional meetings to be held in 1975 under the New England Conference on Conflicts Between the Media and the Law, as a sequel to the large regional meeting at Chatham, Mass., in June 1974 (see *NR*, Winter 1974, for a re-play of the Chatham approach at the October Nieman Assembly). Other sub-regional conferences have been held in Durham, N.H., Brookline, Mass., Amherst, Mass., and Newport, R.I.

These meetings are funded, in part, by a grant from the Ford Foundation. They are held under the co-sponsorship of the Director of Harvard's Kennedy Institute of Politics and the Curator of the Nieman Foundation.

At a minimum these efforts have raised the consciousness and mutual understanding—or else confirmed the preconceptions—of their participants. It is the co-sponsors' hope that something more may still emerge. Perhaps a report? Perhaps, further, a proposal for some voluntary, and unenforceable, guidelines for a mutual muting of conflicts within the New England region?

But among journalists in this part of the country even such a small step as the latter still seems a highly distasteful thought. At least that has been one persistent theme at these meetings.

—J. C. T. Jr.

Leads Grow Longer: Clarity Counts More

This critical newspaper scanner had long ago put out of mind the struggle for shorter leads, a deadly serious participation sport 30 years ago.

Now comes Max Hall, friend and colleague, with the news that leads grow longer (Spring issue, 1975). He has been counting words, a research project as unglamorous as one can imagine. Looking back, decade by decade, he finds a creep. Will it sneakily overcome us (the editorial "us" that includes "we" retirees) while we are diverted by other threats such as the "delayed action" leads? These may be the next irritant to demand campaign-style attack.

Today's rising stars may not even be aware that the old journalism demanded for openers that you tell the

Worship of brevity sometimes went to extremes.

readers in the first paragraph, if not in the first sentence, who, what, where, when, how, and, if possible, why such a story was fit to print.

However, as recently as 1961, Columbia's F. Fraser Bond recorded in *An Introduction to Journalism*, with apparent approval, a city editor's shouted answer to an inquiring cub reporter:

"Spill the whole story in the first paragraph, and maintain the interest for the rest of the column."

Bond was not quite ready to advocate strongly, or even fully accept, the short lead story as a permanent characteristic, though he acknowledged in a casual way that "today the practice on outstanding dailies throughout the nation indicates that the average lead should not be more than 30 words."

Actually the revolution for shorter leads had begun more than 15 years before that 1961 edition.

"Shorten those leads!" editors cried. Who led the revolution is murky history but surely heavy credit must go to the AP, which had hired Rudolf Flesch (*The Art of Plain Talk*) as a consultant. Flesch journeyed to Washington and probably to other AP bureaus to show writers how to cuddle up to their readers.

Some staff members resisted. What was wrong with the old system which had worked so long? One, a woman, thinking of Flesch as a mere textbook writer with plenty of

time, wondered out loud whether Flesch could perform as he preached if he had to work on the "deadline-a-minute" grind of a wire service reporter.

Other services and newspapers got caught up in the campaign. Worship of brevity sometimes went to extremes. Bill Kovach, now news editor of *The New York Times* Washington bureau, recalls that *The Tennessean* imposed a ten-word limit on leads.

In *The New York Times* city room, an amiable, persistent reporter named Myer (Mike) Berger, who had few peers, knocked out an obituary of more than routine interest. A minor editor bounced it back with a reminder of the campaign for short leads. Mike, a gentle man, rewrote the lead and returned it to the desk without complaint. A fellow

The reader . . . can absorb without confusion more than one idea in a paragraph.

staffer discovered later how Mike had discharged his feelings toward the editor. Mike's first rewrite was this:

Died.

That's what Dr. John W. Fellowstring did yesterday.

Mike didn't turn in that lead, but a fellow staffer found it on Mike's desk and nailed it to the bulletin board.

Paul Miller, AP chairman now, was Washington bureau chief of the AP in the early forties. Miller's goal, some now recall, was no more than 30 words to a lead and "orchids to those who make it in less." Maggie Kernodle, an AP staffer then on the war industries beat, got into the spirit of the drive. Her first contribution was a telephoned bulletin:

Road oil is back period paragraph. . . The brownie crowd today may wonder what kind of news that was, but at the time it needed little amplification.

A young (very young) woman on *The Star*, assigned to cover the multiplicity of inaugural festivities, was moved to open her story thus: Balls, balls, balls!

Turner Catledge, managing editor of *The New York Times*, was also a leader in the drive to shorten leads. In the early fifties he took off on a tour of the foreign bureaus. In Moscow, he picked up a story and filed it by way of the West Coast. The story was relayed in Chicago over a *Times'* leased wire. Dick Johnston, then manning the Chicago bureau, looked over the Catledge opus and was struck by the length of the lead as well as the length of the story. About that time a junior editor in New York was on the phone to Chicago and Johnston remarked about the Catledge opus. "A 64-word lead—wow!" exclaimed Johnston. Nobody will take an oath today to the preciseness of 64, but the central point of the anecdote is accurate. Catledge's success as a newspaperman derived from several characteristics, but brevity was not one of them.

This is not a tale of *The New York Times* but it leans that way because, as Max Hall recalls from his part in a Nieman project in 1950, the Fellows figured that if the *Times*, which had been noted for its aversion to changes in style, had shortened its own leads, the movement must be more than a fad. So Max started his word count of Page One leads (actually first sentences). He is still at it, without benefit of computer.

Hall reported the average wordage of Page One leads in the *Times* in January, 1940, as about 39. A drop to about 21 words was achieved in the late 1950's. This average has crept back to about 34 words in 1975, meaning that the leads are back to where they were in the late 1940s.

So I did a little interviewing, in and out of the *Times*. One finding I thought interesting was that none of the interviewees, save one, challenged Max Hall's figures. Another finding was that word counts were not on the top of the editors' minds at all until my questions put them there.

The theme that ran through most answers was not word-count but "clarity."

Typical was Lew Jordan, *New York Times* news editor, whose response was: "I think what we are more interested in, in general, is the clarity of the leads. It is my idea that the shorter lead is clearer, but not always. . . . There is some danger in imposing formulas."

That reminded me of a *New Yorker* item that ran about a full column in the magazine without a period, probably without a semicolon. Memory also says that the item was printed while newspaper editors were fussing about long leads. Further, it was my thought that the *New Yorker* was indulging in another of its didactical exercises. The *New Yorker* seldom missed an opportunity to tell newspapers that if they wanted to improve their English, do it the way the *New Yorker* did it. Its fillers, jabbing the press for errors, typographical or otherwise, were supposed to be rollicking examples of newspaper inferiority, never acknowledging that *Editor & Publisher's* feature, "Slips that Pass in the Night," had long been acknowledging with good humor the hazards of daily journalism, hazards that obviously do not confront the once-a-week deadline of the *New Yorker*. I must acknowledge that the column-long sentence just referred to did come off with clarity. Teacher, of course, had better be right.

Editors at the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Washington Post* agreed that long leads were generally undesirable but they had long ago quit counting words. The *L.A. Times* uses a six-column format which they feel gives them a bit more flexibility in extended leads without sacrificing clarity.

"Is it unreadable?" is the test applied by Dennis Britton, Washington news editor of the *L.A. Times*. With the six-column format, Britton says four lines of copybook type equals about one inch of type in the newspaper. "Obvious-

ly," he said, "when it gets a little unwieldy we try to clean it up before we send it out." The lesson seemed to be that the reader, given a larger spread, can absorb without confusion more than one idea in a paragraph.

Lee Lescaze, national editor of the *Post*, said a hard and fast rule on the word count of leads no longer exists: "Obviously," Lescaze said, "we wouldn't want them as a general practice, but there are cases where long leads would be fairly effective."

Marvin Arrowsmith, AP's Washington bureau chief, well remembers the AP's push for lead compression and says "there's an awareness on our desk of the desirability of short leads—the general aim is 30 words—but there are exceptions to everything."

A *New York Times* Washington source suggested that "layering" may be one explanation for longer leads. After the 5:15 daily news conference in New York; Washington and presumably other bureaus may hear from one to three editors, each of whom feels that some facet of a story has been unwisely subordinated. The effect frequently is to add a layer to the first paragraph to keep New York happy. Maybe something else is subordinated, maybe not. If not, the lead is longer.

Kovach, David Jones, the national news editor, Jerry Gold, of the foreign desk, and E. Clifton Daniel, the Washington correspondent of *The New York Times*, agreed that leads had been growing but that the word count had been de-emphasized almost out of existence.

"The whole language is getting more baroque," John Herbers (Nieman Fellow '61) analyzed. "The Hemingway style of simplicity is disappearing."

Jones' observation was that "subjects are more complicated and have to be approached in a different way."

So who's the dissenter from Max Hall's thesis that "Leads Grow Longer?" None but Ted Bernstein, the wordmaster who for years put *The New York Times* to bed five or six nights a week and still found time to write books on good writing and turn out a good-humored sheet citing bloopers and blossoms in the *Times*. Ted has retired from his old job but still has a *Times* hideaway where he is "as busy as ever, maybe busier." The latter must have been true at the moment. He didn't have time for chitchat of any kind.

"I hadn't noticed at all that leads have been getting longer," he said, indicating he was scanning Page One at his end of the telephone just then. "My general impression is leads are not longer at all. . . . The test is not the length but the clarity. Even the count doesn't argue with my impression."

So Bernstein was talking not about statistics, but impressions, which tells me that the true objective of the short lead campaign has been achieved without enforcement of the word-count rigidity that often appeared in the early stages of the campaign.

Bernstein changed the subject once to reject vehemently the remark of Richard Wald (page 7, Spring issue), president of NBC News, that he had checked the *Times* and found 141 grammatical errors. Wald didn't say whether he was reading a nine-pound Sunday edition of the *Times* or whether he included the classified section. In any event, Wald might as well have challenged the Bernstein family legitimacy.

"I don't believe that at all," I think the word master shouted. My ball point must have dried up at that point. My notes show nothing of the subject, but forget it I won't.

Nearly all *The New York Times* interviewees agreed that the paper was running more features and "situationers" than it did years ago, but Bernstein did not see why that should necessarily make leads longer. At any rate, I did a smidgeon of counting myself and found that in January, 1940, twelve roundup stories appeared on Page One. In January, 1970, the total was 16. That, a consensus said, is partly an answer to television which, with a few exceptions like "Sixty Minutes," does not deal with situations in depth.

Meanwhile, (to use a well known bridge), alert editors are wary of the delayed action lead. Maybe this technique is an escape from the strictures on clarity and short leads. You start out with an anecdote, or a description of a room, or a building, where some non-event took place.

"That can be overdone"—an understatement that belongs to Washington correspondent Daniel.

"We have a fourth paragraph rule," said John Herbers. The rule is "tell the reader by then why we're writing the story." Herbers admitted the rule is not rigidly enforced, but he said you have to watch out. "Anecdotes can go on forever."

Jerry Gold, of the foreign desk, says, "We don't go for long scene setters."

Here is a horror example from a sectional Page One of a newspaper that shall be nameless:

"For openers it had almost been prophetic.

"'This is the end of a beautiful friendship,' she sang, the staccato phrasing that made her famous in the 40's hitting the crowd like ricocheting memories. . . ."

The headline did not help at all: "In P.G., it's the C. of C." The accompanying art didn't help much, either. Helen O'Connell, the singer, appeared in one picture, and presumably the story was about Helen. Whether it was an exercise in nostalgia, or had some other purpose, I don't know. I never turned the page.

—Joseph A. Loftus

Mr. Loftus, Nieman Fellow '61, was with the Washington bureau of The New York Times for 25 years. Before retiring in 1974, he served as special assistant to George P. Shultz, Secretary of Labor and Secretary of the Treasury.

Associate Nieman Fellows Louis Stark Fellow

Five journalists from abroad have been appointed to join the 38th class of Nieman Fellows, announced last June. In addition one American Fellow, whose appointment was previously announced, has been awarded a Louis Stark Fellowship for the duration of her Nieman year.

The Associate Nieman Fellows from overseas who will study at Harvard University in 1975-76 are:

Robert G. Fiess, 38, general editor, *L'Express*, Paris, France. Mr. Fiess will specialize in studies in sociology, and in psychology and social relations. His appointment is funded in part by the Franco-American Commission for Educational Exchange.

Yoichi Funabashi, 31, economics reporter, *Asahi Shimbun*, Tokyo, Japan. Mr. Funabashi is a graduate of Tokyo University and will concentrate on economics, international relations and foreign policy. His appointment is partially funded by a grant from the Council for International Exchange of Scholars under the Fulbright-Hays program.

Gunter R. Haaf, 29, science editor, *Stern* magazine, Hamburg, West Germany. Mr. Haaf will study the way in which specialized science information is communicated to the press, and will concentrate on physical and chemical sources of energy, the economics and politics of energy supply, and biochemistry. Mr. Haaf is the holder of a Harkness Fellowship of the Commonwealth Fund.

Janos Horvat, 31, television journalist with Hungarian

Television, Budapest. Mr. Horvat holds an M.A. degree from Budapest University, and plans to study the sociology and psychology of mass communication, and international relations. He is the second Nieman recipient of a German Marshall Fund Fellowship.

Percy P. Qoboza, 37, editor of the *Daily World* and of the *Weekend World*, Johannesburg, South Africa. Mr. Qoboza attended Pius XI University in Lesotho, and will concentrate on the history of Asia and Africa, international relations, and sociology. His appointment is funded by the United States-South Africa Leader Exchange Program, Inc.

In addition, this year's recipient of a Louis Stark Fellowship will be Visiting Nieman Fellow *Margaret K. (Maggie) Scarf*, 43, free-lance writer, Hamden, Connecticut. The fourth Nieman Fellow to be supported by the Louis Stark Memorial Fund, Ms. Scarf's research will focus in part on physiological, sociological and psychological impediments to the employability of women as a portion of the work force. This Fellowship, created in 1959, honors Louis Stark, a pioneer in labor reporting, and is awarded from time to time to journalists specializing in that field.

The Nieman Fellowships were established in 1937 through a bequest by Agnes Wahl Nieman in memory of her husband, Lucius W. Nieman, founder of *The Milwaukee Journal*. The Fellows come to Harvard for a sabbatical year of study in any part of the University.

“Write and Pray”

Two Chicago Daily News foreign correspondents, Pulitzer Prize-winner Keyes Beech and Bob Tamarkin, were among the last reporters evacuated from Saigon, yet they were able to file their reports well before others. How they worked to get stories to their newspaper, which were then distributed to more than 100 subscribers to the Chicago Daily News/Sun-Times News Service, is told in the following narrative by Beech.

As to how we did it, I can only attribute our success to complete lack of planning, vacillation, dogged persistence in the face of adversity; and divine intervention.

We were also assisted by the fact that neither of us knew what the other was doing. For example, both of us had to scale the walls of the American Embassy to escape from Saigon, but we did this at different times and places.

The result was that the *Daily News* was probably the only paper in the country with wall-to-wall coverage.

Things moved so fast that time blurs. When I last talked to Tamarkin by phone in Saigon at about 11 a.m., Tuesday, April 29, the day of the evacuation, he was still trying to make up his mind whether to stay behind and take his chances with the Vietcong.

Until we ran into each other in the passageway of the Navy communications ship *Blue Ridge* at 2 a.m., Thursday, I had assumed that Tamarkin was still in Saigon.

“You chickened out,” I said accusingly.

Never has vacillation paid off so handsomely. . .

“I just changed my mind at the last minute,” Bob said.

Tamarkin had been a very busy man. Failing to get inside the embassy compound on the first try, he went back to his hotel room and filed a vivid account via the AP, courtesy of George Esper, the Saigon bureau chief and indisputably the most renowned telephone artist of our time.

Once safely inside the embassy compound, Tamarkin still couldn't make up his mind whether to stay behind. The result of this masterful display of indecision was that he ended up being the last correspondent out of Saigon—with a superb and exclusive account of the last hours inside the American Embassy.

Never has vacillation paid off so handsomely; and if I fail to do Tamarkin justice it is only because he is in Hong Kong and I am in Tokyo as this is written.

More than 25 years of experience with U.S. Navy communications has taught me to expect the worst. Once aboard the *Blue Ridge*, my worst fears were confirmed. None of the more than 100 newsmen aboard the *Blue Ridge* wrote with any confidence that what, for many of them, was the most important story of their lives would ever see print.

Some correspondents, zombie-like with fatigue, sat at their typewriters for hours before the words would come. A semi-hysterical chief petty officer who kept bypassing a lieutenant commander didn't help. Nor did the special forms with the gibberish headings on which we were required to write our copy.

When a much younger colleague asked me what to do in a situation like this, I advised him to keep on writing and pause at decent intervals for prayer.

More than 25 years of experience with U.S. Navy communications has taught me to expect the worst.

Tamarkin and I kept on writing and hoping that what we wrote would reach the *Daily News*. We wrote all night and all day, and we were not alone. But each take we filed was accompanied by the awful feeling that we might as well have stuffed it into a bottle and tossed it over the side with the hope that it would float ashore into friendly hands.

Now that I know that Tamarkin and I fared so well, I would like to recall some of the uncharitable thoughts I held about navy communications.

If Tamarkin and I had an edge on some other correspondents, it was only because we seldom left our typewriters. There was so much to tell. But then other correspondents seldom left their typewriters.

So far as I know, neither of us received any special favors. In my own case I would like to qualify that statement. I owe a debt to Kate Webb of UPI for relaying the first three takes of a story I wrote from the carrier *Hancock* before I boarded the *Blue Ridge*.

Also, a friendly Marine major may have had something to do with expediting my splendidly long first person account of the evacuation.

Tamarkin wrote 4,000 words about his experiences. When he expressed misgivings about writing so much, I urged him on. “Remember,” I said, “South Vietnam falls only once; at least I hope so.”

Once the first torrent of words was spent, the communications problem eased. Tamarkin remained aboard the *Blue Ridge* while I transferred to the carrier *Okinawa*.

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PLEASE WRITE
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For the next few days, en route from the South China Sea to Subic Naval Base in the Philippines, we continued our relentless flow of copy. It wasn't until we reached Clark Air Force Base, clearing house for all copy from the U.S. 7th Fleet, that we began to get some clue as to whether our stories had gotten through.

I will never forget the look of numb resignation on the face of an old friend when he was told that his office had received only the last 5 takes of a 10-take lead story on the evacuation.

That's the way to break a man's heart.

(Reprinted with permission of Editor and Publisher)

Mr. Beech, Pulitzer prize winning journalist and an old Asia hand, was a Nieman Fellow in the Class of 1953.

News on the Wing

(continued from page 39)

suspected it had either been killed by hawks while tarrying along the way, or had been lured by a lady pigeon into some one else's loft. Our latter suspicions sometimes were borne out by reports from pigeon fanciers.

Notice of a bird's arrival was flashed from roof to city room by a Rube Goldberg arrangement. Small, moveable metal bars partially obstructed the entrance to the bird loft. When the pigeon pushed his way between the bars he closed a switch and a light blinked on the city desk. The next job was getting film from the capsule and deciphering what I had written on the rice paper.

Heydays for the pigeons were in 1936, '37 and '38. I went to the Far East in 1939 and haven't seen a pigeon since.

—W. H. McDougall, Jr.

The above is excerpted from an article in NR, April, 1947. The author was using carrier pigeons on plane crash stories when he was with the Salt Lake City Telegram in the 30s. During World War II he was a correspondent in Japan and China for the United Press, and was torpedoed and captured off Java where for three years he was a prisoner of the Japanese.

After sixteen years of news experience and a year at Harvard as a Nieman Fellow (1946-47), he made his decision to become a priest in the Roman Catholic Church. He was ordained in 1952, and is rector of the Cathedral of the Madeleine in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Coming

Stuart Keate

A Strange Case of Libel

International Press Institute: Special Reports on the State of the Press

Editor's Note: The 24th Assembly of the IPI was held in May at Zurich, Switzerland. Present were 150 members from 34 countries. Among the observers of the two-day proceedings was NR's executive editor, Tenney K. Lehman.

The following is excerpted from the special reports on the state of the press and is printed with the permission of the IPI.

Independent Black Africa

Frank Barton, Africa Director of IPI, reporting to the Assembly on the state of press freedom in all independent Black Africa.

When I last spoke at an Assembly in Hong Kong five years ago I said it was no better than even money that press freedom would survive in Africa. In any event those odds proved to be much too generous, for in Black Africa today there is no press freedom in any recognisable form.

The unpalatable fact—and this is something that sticks in the throat of every self-respecting African who will face it—is that there is more press freedom in South Africa than in the rest of Africa put together.

The cant and hypocrisy with which most African politicians talk about the press is in the best traditions of the colonialists, whose rule was largely based upon these qualities. Perhaps the worst thing about this, certainly the thing that gets the gall of the many, many decent African journalists all over the continent, is that as the politicians grind the media deeper and deeper into the dust, they will at the same time proclaim how free their media are.

The complete picture of the media in Africa varies only in its degrees: from Uganda, where editors are beaten or burned to death, to the slap-happy—with a very hard slap—military junta of Africa's largest nation, Nigeria, whose engaging bag of tricks for the media ranges from horse-whipping to stripping and head-shaving.

But at least in Nigeria there is one freedom left the journalist, and a very real one it is, too. He is allowed to sue the government when they beat him up.

But it would be wrong to give a widespread impression of physical cruelty against Africa's journalists. Thuggery is on the whole reserved for those who step out of line, and more and more that is a rare event. Africa's newspapermen have accepted the situation. The fight for freedom, which was never much of a contest, has been fought and lost.

Scores of journalists have left the media. Some have left the continent. More would if they could. The question I most get asked by African journalists is: "How do I get out?"

Others, with wives and children to feed, keep their heads down and their noses out of trouble. They accept that they have now become extensions of the ruling establishment. Nobody should point a finger at them. They are decent men who want the best for their countries and their fellow-countrymen even if they are not allowed to contribute in any way more meaningful than as cyphers.

Is it all bad then? No rays of light in the gloom? There aren't many if you are talking about freedom, but there are some if you are talking about realities.

For in a few, but a growing number of places throughout the continent, a move is beginning by the press to perform a function which is arguably more important than the preservation of freedom, and that is the availability of information.

There are heartening developments in the rural areas of a number of states to reach the mass of the peoples, rather

than the five or 10 per cent of people who live in the towns which the present papers cater to.

I think that the best one can hope for in so far as the written media of Africa are concerned—radio and television, all government owned, have always been a lost cause in the freedom stakes—is that at least some written voice will spread through the vast hinterland of Africa hitherto unreached and, though it will not be bringing any message of democratic inspiration, its news of which are the best cash crops to plant and how a simple irrigation system can be constructed may not be the worst substitutes in the world.

If this movement towards a rural press grows to the point where most of Africa's peoples have some sort of newspaper within reach of their pockets and their minds, I think it may be a fair exchange for the loss of a never more than superficial freedom of the urban press.

Spain

Antonio Fontan, Madrid, Vice Chairman IPI Spanish National Committee.

The Spanish Government's restrictions on the freedom of the press have increased alarmingly over the past few months. Formerly they consisted in starting proceedings because of published articles—for which the government demands responsibility.

The procedure has now changed. The practice is now seizure of the publication, with the government putting pressure on and making semi-official enquiries near the publishing houses and editors to prevent publication of certain news.

The opinion of journalists and legal experts is that only those articles of news which constitute an offence should be liable to seizure and not those termed as mere "administrative faults." While the legal proceedings to which these seizures give rise are sorted out, enough time goes by to cause the death of the issue in question.

The financial damage suffered by the seized publication is much higher than what it would be if a fine were imposed. Several such seizures can be fatal for many magazines or newspapers.

All this is connected with the recent fast growth of magazines of a political nature in Spain and with the increased information and opinion-forming activities by journalists. The government is intending to put a stop to or to channel this publishing movement, which owes its success to the eagerness of the Spanish public for political information.

In large newspapers and news agencies there is a system of self-censorship imposed through official pressure. However, readers are better informed than in any other period of contemporary Spain.

The most encouraging sign for the cause of press freedom is the tenacity shown by many professionals struggling to do their job in adverse circumstances.

Press freedom in Spain has to deal with other difficulties of a sociological nature because the press enjoys a wider margin of freedom than all the other

Spanish society and politicians who are not integrated in the present system try to express themselves through the press. . . .

political activities of an ideological character. People have spoken about a "paper parliament" and this literary image is representative of reality.

Spanish society and politicians who are not integrated in the present system try to express themselves through the press since they have no other channel open to them to promote their ideas in connection with public life. As a result the press suffers from a political overload which is alien to its specific professional function.

Nevertheless, it seems obvious that the positions reached are irreversible and unless a sudden and unthinkable re-establishment of prior censorship takes place, the Spanish press will continue to be more open.

Chile

Roberto Pulido, *Que Pasa*, Santiago, Chile.

Speaking through an interpreter, Mr. Pulido was closely questioned on his statements that journalists were free to criticise the government in Chile.

The military junta imposed pre-censorship for newspapers lasting 40 days because, said the government, the country had been on the edge of civil war. Magazines have had pre-censorship for a year. Radio and television have never been controlled.

Newspapers are critical of the government. A magazine that was critical of the government can now circulate freely. Foreign agency representatives can work freely in Chile.

Question: Unless there have been dramatic changes in Chile I don't see how the report of our colleague corresponds with a resolution on press freedom of IPI's only three months ago ("There is no longer a vestige of press freedom in Chile . . ." See IPI Report, February/March). Are you in a position to say that such far-reaching changes have taken place?

Pulido: IAPA said in a recent statement that there were favourable changes in the press field in Chile. There are some journalists in jail but not for journalistic crimes—and some were committed before the junta took over.

Question: Are you saying there is no censorship in Chile?

Pulido: There is no pre-censorship in Chile for newspapers, magazines, TV and radio.

Argentina

John Fercsey, *Interco* (New York correspondent), Argentine.

The work of independent journalists becomes "mission impossible" in several Latin American countries and in some of them, the profession of journalism is a dangerous mission. Not only governments put pressure on journalists, but also extremist groups from both the left and the right menace and kill editors and columnists.

John Fercsey summarized recent IAPA reports on the changes in state of press freedom in certain South American states over the past year. He went on:

"In many countries of Latin America there is no freedom of the press and in some of them there are journalists in prison, serving long sentences. In Cuba, for instance, there are still 30 journalists held.

"In only a few countries like Columbia, Venezuela, El Salvador, Costa Rica, is there freedom of the press."

Peru

Alejandro Miro Quesada, *El Comercio*, Lima, Peru.

Miro Quesada outlined the repressive measures taken by the government against the press up to the end of July last year, and then went on:

"From July 27, 1974, until today, the national circulation newspapers remain under the dictatorship of functionaries appointed by government. As to the future transfer of the newspapers to the "organised sector," I must mention that until now there is no appropriately organized sector ready to receive the transferred newspapers.

The following events have happened since August.

September 5: A group of people not belonging to the Peruvian Federation of Journalists assaults and occupies its premises. A few days earlier the Federation had issued a communique criticising the law decrees on journalism.

September 26: The editor of *Caretas* is sentenced to 12 months in prison and fined.

November 11: Government closes the English-language *Peruvian Times*.

November 19: Government closes *Oiga* and the weekly *Opinion Libre*, 10 of the staff journalists exiled including editors Francisco Igartua and Guido Chirinos respectively.

March 20: *Caretas*, which had been permitted to reappear, was finally closed and the editor exiled.

I believe these facts fully demonstrate that my country totally lacks freedom of expression."

The press laws have not only affected journalistic firms but the journalists working in them. Quoting the president of the Peruvian Federation of Journalists, Dr. Arturo Salazar Larraín, now in exile, Miro Quesada said:

"The expropriation decree also affected the workers who had participation in the property and direction of the dailies through their Industrial Community, whose shares were also expropriated.

"There are now a number of Federation journalists who have been forced to abandon their jobs, have been fired or displaced. Some have still not received their social benefits. They have been replaced by people without professional title, with neither experience nor time in journalistic work, and in every case with much higher salaries and positions."

Sri Lanka

Esmond Wickremesinghe, *Cosmos Economic News, Colombo*.

Mr. Wickremesinghe outlined the moves of the Sri Lanka Government against the press—nationalisation of some papers, one closed down, another taken by a shareholder supporting the ruling party who walked in one day and drove off the managing director and took possession of the premises. . . .

The vast number of journalists were displaced.

They found that points of view other than the government's were not being expressed so they set up a form of trust with which the main opposition parties are connected, but which do not interfere in any way with the running of the newspapers.

I agreed to act as chairman of that (trust) and we started publishing three papers in the three different languages of the country. They turned out to be a great success, particularly financially.

They are run on a very simple formula—publishing all the news the government wants to hide.

So far they have managed to carry on, though I don't know how permanent this structure is. By its very nature it has an element of fragility about it. It is something in the nature of a guerrilla activity rather than anything more substantial. It has so far lasted a year.

In practice much of the legislation against freedom of expression has been negated. But we have to play the situation by ear.

Portugal

Nuno Rocha, *Diario de Lisboa, Lisbon*.

There are definite signs that my country is reaching its democratic majority as far as the press is concerned and one ought to point out the recent appearance of two independent newspapers—a daily entitled *Jornal Novo* and a weekly, *O Jornal*. I am myself just a few days away from finally seeing the publication of my independent newspaper, *Tempo*.

Portuguese journalists still face many pressures and they struggle in the middle of varied political plots, which make the press a field of obscure activities and strange coups. Nevertheless the situation improves, thanks to the efforts of the government . . . where it continues to be affirmed that the press must be free, independent and without control either from political power or from economic power.

Our "law of the press," which is being fully applied, is a security for all of us. There, is consecrated the freedom for the creation of newspapers. It incriminates those who, in any way, boycott the making or distribution of newspapers and it guarantees the journalist the right to professional secrecy.

The press is free, having only to find the paths which will lead it to place itself above the political battles.

On the day the banks were nationalised, out of 10 daily newspapers only two were not the property of the banks. The Provisional Government assumed a complex task because, without wishing it, it suddenly found itself controlling eight daily newspapers of large circulation.

There is worry among journalists because it is not known what the government will do about the newspapers in deficit and now directly under its control. According to the measures proposed it is thought that those papers might be handed to commissions of administration, in which journalists and other workers would participate, and in such a way as to guarantee the independence of each of them.

Philippines

L. G. (Juan) Quijano, *Philippine lawyer, now living in San Francisco, U.S.* Referring to the rule of President Marcos as the "most ruthless type of its kind," **Juan Quijano described its political effects on the country's people, his political opponents and on foreign State relations. On the press, he said:**

Press control in the Philippines is more oppressive than in the other military dictatorship in Southeast Asia. . . . To our knowledge there are no less than 93 secret decrees issued by Mr. Marcos, each with a notation which reads: "not available for general circulation."

Germany

Brigitte Weyl, *Sudkurier, Constance*.

The press is suffering from the increase of important costs and a decrease in advertising revenue. Important rising costs are on postage, telex fees and newspaper postage.

To balance things, publishers would have had to reduce editorial activity and lay off employees. They did not do so to sufficient extent. The result is that in the third-quarter of 1974 more than half of the dailies had run into debt.

There have been newspaper shutdowns and mergers and partial co-operation moves have increased.

The newspaper companies had expected some support from the government, for example granting German newspapers the same tax privileges as in other countries—exemption of sales from value-added-tax. Both the German Asso-

ciation of Newspaper Publishers and the Federal Union of journalists expressed the idea of a solidarity fund to be fed by the amounts of the value-added-tax not paid as VAT.

But our government is in no hurry to help the press, and one cannot help getting the impression that the press is not one of its beloved children.

In the field of media politics a law for press statistics was recently passed, compelling publishing companies to disclose certain economic data each year. Still under consideration are others concerning the press. One is a law controlling mergers. If passed, mergers involving 80,000 copies will be supervised.

The bill most discussed is one stating the rights of the press. It has not yet been finally drafted, but it is intended to regulate the internal relationship within publishing houses, in particular relationship between newsroom and management.

The German Press Council (10 journalists and 10 editors) is going through a difficult phase. Firstly, for financial reasons; and secondly because its very existence has recently been questioned by the journalists' union. However, the Press Council has been used increasingly by the public as a complaints office.

New forms of journalist training are being discussed. There is a strong tendency towards replacement of the classical German volunteer system with special university studies.

France

Pierre-Maurice Dessinges, *Le Journal du Dimanche, Paris*.

The French press is facing one of the worst crises of its history. Since autumn there has been a steep rise in costs—newsprint up 80 per cent in six months, salaries up 20 per cent over a year, postal rates up 40 to 130 per cent—and inflation overall.

Advertising income is down 30 to 40 per cent, mainly the classified advertisements which represent 60 per cent in the average Paris daily.

To avoid bankruptcy we have been obliged to increase the sale price of the papers 50 per cent over the past 18 months—and it is not enough to maintain equilibrium. Circulation has been hit.

The government is considering giving us financial help through a subsidy on newsprint. But it could not be enough, and it would be too late. We have been obliged to cut expenses. More than 20 per cent of the journalists' corps is now jobless, and we expect worse.

The press is ill-adapted to the changes in our civilization. To survive it should transform its whole structure—but that is another story.

Letters to the Editor

To the Editors:

I'd heard that Henry Luce was a man of many talents, but I never knew that clairvoyance was one. (See review of Thomas Griffith's *How True: A Skeptic's Guide to Believing the News*, Spring 1975, *Nieman Reports*: "Luce told me with a grin that out in Arizona he had found *Time* unexpectedly admired by Los Alamos scientific types who wondered what had come over *Time*...")

Oh Henry, now that we need you, where are you?

Melvin Mencher NF '53

Columbia University
New York

To the Editors:

Before my old New Deal friends and associates hand me my head for not being able to tell the difference between Harold Laski and Harold Ickes, I *did* say Ickes, not Laski (see page 6, column 2, seventh line of the second quotation from me—in the Spring 1975 *Nieman Reports*).

Richard Salant

CBS News
New York

The Editors reply:

The transcription of the tape from the Type and Tube evening identified the gentleman in question as Harold Leakey. An anthropologist was inappropriate to the text; the original tape was unavailable; and research yielded the more logical surname of the political scientist, Harold Laski. We regret the error and are glad to have Mr. Salant set the record straight: the author of the book on the one-party press is Harold Ickes.

To the Editors:

I worked for *The Gazette and Daily* as a reporter during the summer after high school and the summer after my first year of college (*The Gazette* was sold the following October). And, what a way it was to start a newspaper career! The ideas and ideals of Josiah William Gitt, the guiding forces for all activity at *The Gazette and Daily*, softened my Pennsylvania-Dutch hard-headedness and even today influence the course of my meager amount of serious thinking. I learned more about newspapering and about life in general during those six months than I did during four years of college and two years of graduate school. Would that every newspaperman could start his career on such a newspaper.

More should be written about Gitt and *The Gazette*, if for no other reason than to record for students of journalism history the story of a maverick editor—an editor who was a liberal in a conservative business during its most conservative times. No other newspaper and no other editor during the years 1915-1970 were like *The Gazette and Daily* and J. W. Gitt. And, unfortunately for America, no future paper or editor will be either.

Philip M. Klinedinst
News Editor

The Citizen Register
Ossining, New York

To the Editors:

I found the James Higgins article in Winter 1974 *Nieman Reports* a very fine and true article about J. W. Gitt and the York *Gazette and Daily* and my only regret was that Higgins ended the article saying "J.W." would have said "b--- s---" when as a matter of fact he hated that kind of gutter talk. As I said before Jess (J.W.) said plenty of hells and damns but *not* four-letter gutter words and I hate to see him go down in print as having said those words.

Elizabeth M. Gitt (Mrs. J. W. Gitt)
Hanover, Pennsylvania

To the Editors:

Let me take the opportunity to felicitate you and whomever else for the present high quality and pertinence of *NR* (no invidious comparisons intended!). With the *Columbia Journalism Review* gone slick and [*More*] become [less], it's about the only thing left (worth) reading about the trade. I especially like the Nieman seminar verbatims. Thanks again.

Alexander Kendrick NF '41
New York City

To the Editors:

Congratulations on your spring issue, one of the best yet. I especially enjoy the transcripts of discussions with the Fellows.

Would I be able to get another set of the 1974-75 issues? I am not going to part with mine (which have already been circulated in my office) and I would like to have them available to the class I am going to teach at the University of Rochester this fall.

John L. Dougherty NF '56
Managing Editor
The Times-Union
Rochester, New York

Book Reviews

Perspectives of the Black Press: 1974

Edited by Henry LaBrie III
(Mercer House Press; \$12.00)

Occasionally a book comes along which at once offers interesting and entertaining reading as well as a vital source of historical and statistical information. LaBrie, a scholar of black journalism who has spent much of his time in the past five years researching the twists and turns of the black press since its inception in the early 1800s, provides us with such a book in *Perspectives*.

LaBrie has pulled together a series of 18 excellent articles written by himself and 15 other professors and newsmen—a group he fondly refers to as the Pulitzers and Hearsts of the newspaper business. Drawing primarily on the personal experiences and research of the authors, the book begins with a valuable preface-commentary on the genesis of the black press in 1827, the year blacks founded *Freedom's Journal*, a crusading newspaper established to fight slavery.

In the final essay, Carlton B. Goodlett, publisher of the San Francisco *Sun-Reporter* and the San Francisco *Metro* weeklies, discusses the potential of the black press to be a powerful catalyst of social change and have even greater impact in today's black community.

William O. Walker, editor and publisher of the *Call* and *Post* newspapers of Cleveland, Ohio, also provides an interesting insight into the role of the black press in his article, "Fifty-five Years with the Black Press." After highlighting some of his journalistic experiences over the last half century, Walker concludes by saying that the black press is still sustained by the support of the inner city masses who buy the papers and support their advertisers. Walker maintains that the black community must continue to have a "strong, militant, independent black press, for it is still that 'small voice crying in the wilderness' of racism for freedom."

In the article, "World War II and the Black Press," John D. Stevens, associate professor of journalism at the University of Michigan and head of the History Division of the Association for Education in Journalism, talks about black newspapers in their heyday, when circu-

lations were large; their editorials were read and quoted in the highest circles; their correspondents wrote compelling stories from the battlefields; and reporters at home exposed and campaigned against racial discrimination.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, as some racial hurdles were cleared, a few black journalists who had received their training in the hard-knocks school of the black press, were given opportunities to work in the white, establishment news world.

In "A Graduate of the Black Press Looks Back," Thomas A. Johnson plots his career from the lean years he spent working for a failing black public relations firm to his current post as *The New York Times* bureau chief for West Africa. Johnson emphasizes the importance of an active black press working in conjunction with black journalists who have chosen to pursue careers in the establishment press.

Ethel L. Payne, who worked in Washington for 20 years as a correspondent for the Sengstacke newspapers, currently is associate editor for the newspaper group in Chicago. But in "Loneliness in the Capital: The Black National Correspondent," she recounts

the head-to-head combat she waged with other news agents during her two decades in the Capital City. In addition to her work for Sengstacke, Ms. Payne appears frequently as a commentator on the CBS News network's Spectrum series.

The remaining articles in this significant anthology of writings on the black press cover areas ranging from the discussion of black newspapers as an outlet for black poets, fiction writers and cartoonists, to an essay by Columbia University journalism professor Phyl Garland on the problems and rewards of staying with the black press.

Perspectives should be listed as required reading for all students of journalism who are seeking a wide-ranging and balanced commentary on the history and role of the black press from 1827 to 1974. The book also has value as a bicentennial document, in that it sketches much of the history—with its triumphs and tragedies—of blacks in the United States during the past two centuries.

—Joseph Whitaker

Captive Voices: The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into High School Journalism in America

Edited by Jack Nelson
(Schocken Books; \$1.45)

For too many of us, "high school journalism" evokes images of cookie sales, blurred photographs of prom decorations, empty suggestion boxes, and a handful of earnest staff members—cousins to the library elves who stayed after school to shelve books and sort magazines—led by one or two junior executive types bent on adding a title to the list of activities which they would submit to "the college of their choice."

Sophistication was photo offset printing; controversial topics included the ratio of coleslaw to pizza in the cafeteria menus; editorials carped about the loss of "school spirit" or were firmly supportive of UNICEF drives.

That high school newspapers should be the object of a blue ribbon commission of inquiry funded by the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial and an assortment of religious and educational foundations, that its membership should include the likes of Sander Vanocur and John Seigenthaler NF '59 and that the commission's findings should be published in paperback for national distribution is as unthinkable as a proposal that the cheerleading squad should dance Swan Lake at Lincoln Center.

Such attitudes are widely shared. Commission member Jean Grambs reports that "the administration in most cases views the school paper as an unfortunate necessity; if funds disappear, it is not even that." And professional journalists are only slightly more tepid in their enthusiasm.

Yet the Commission, in undertaking a year-long examination of the worst and best—or least worst—of high school journalism and in finding it sadly wanting, has given it a dignity which its achievements have failed to earn.

Nor is this all. *Captive Voices* gives ample coverage to court decisions which go far toward granting the right of high school journalists to do for schools what the best of their older professional brothers have occasionally done for government.

The Supreme Court, for example, in *Tinker vs. Des Moines Independent School System*, held that high school journalists have the same rights to First Amendment protection as do professionals. Students may publish without prior restraint; if dissatisfied with the Established press, they can print and distribute underground publications; they are subject to no more stringent legal restrictions than those imposed on other media.

Why, then, does high school journalism fall so short of realizing its potential? To some extent, the answer lies in the nature of public schools and their priorities. A majority of journalism teachers have had little or no journalism background—only 32% have requested their assignments, which explains the 60% annual turnover in some states. Budgets are small and tightly controlled by administrators who see student newspapers as little more than "house organs subject to the organization paying the bills." Generally, production is an after-school affair, another club activity, which the harried advisor, who generally teaches a full load of mainstream classes, supervises with his left hand.

But, even so, high school journalism need not be the disaster it is. The Commission asserts that "even a skimpy budget does not preclude a publication of substance if the administration supports the principle of a free student press and there is an enlightened teacher . . . who [gives] the highest priority to teaching students to express themselves on issues of substance."

Yet the average high school newspaper is "exactly what most administrators and teachers want it to be—a house organ reporting only those things that give the school a favorable image."

Still, the priorities of public school functionaries are not alone to blame nor do they exist in a vacuum. As the Commission reports details of the issues of censorship, minority participation, and journalism education, it refers from time to time to the response of professional journalists when quizzed on these issues.

Only 35% of the professional editors responding to the Commission's questionnaire would say unequivocally that First Amendment rights should apply to high school journalists. Indeed, 52% of them sounded very much like the high school principals who favor First Amendment rights "only under certain conditions." Less than 1% of all

professional journalists in the U.S. are non-white—an even lower percentage than one finds in public schools, where the school paper is usually a club for college-bound Anglos, even in ghetto schools.

In short, one is forced to the conclusion that high school journalism is but professional journalism writ small. The priorities of the school administration are not unlike those of City Halls and Chambers of Commerce everywhere. The goulash of sports and tittle-tattle of which the average paper is composed may be realistic preparation for the newspapers students will encounter in adult life. The hesitancy to deal with "issues of substance" is an inhibition found in professional press rooms as well as in their high school counterparts.

Captive Voices is clear as to the state of high school journalism. But one can hardly fault its failure to achieve a standard which is so uncertainly supported and so infrequently demonstrated in the professional press.

—Bruce Mac Donald

Lobbying for Freedom

by Kenneth P. Norwick
(St. Martin's Press; \$8.95)

This book carries a subtitle, and it proves to be accurate: "A citizen's guide to fighting censorship at the state level." Norwick, a lawyer and legislative director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, has put together what amounts to a recipe book for citizen lobbyists. He is concerned specifically with censorship, but the plan of attack he maps out on state legislatures could be employed equally well by the Right-to-Life movement, anti-vivisectionists, or Humane Slaughter supporters.

Norwick takes little for granted. He begins with the assumption that the reader knows nothing about state government. The melancholy fact is that

he is probably right; with the possible exception of county surrogates, the people who represent us in the legislatures do what they do in unequalled freedom from public scrutiny, much less comprehension.

A great deal of the information laid out in this little book (the text runs only 117 pages) will seem elementary to the League of Women Voters or, for that matter, to any recent graduate of a seventh-grade civics class. Some legislators are bright, some are dumb; some are liberal, some are conservative; most are honest, a few can be bought. Legislators usually want to do the right thing. As the author counsels his compatriots in the battle to stamp out obscenity laws, persuade your legislator that what you want is the right thing. Elementary.

Well, yes, it is elementary, but then, so is $E=mc^2$. Like most theoretical formulations, the utility of the statement lies in the use to which it is put. The use Norwick proposes is the elimination of all laws banning pornography, a campaign that recent Supreme Court decisions indicate will take place in the legislatures, rather than in the courts or the Congress.

Readers of Nieman Reports will be relieved to learn that Norwick attaches great importance to good relations with the press; that he counsels his right-to-read battalions never, never to lie to or mislead a reporter; and that he says newsmen should be approached with circumspection. "Most reporters," he advises, "work under constant deadline pressure, and they should never be interrupted or distracted from their work unless there are important reasons to do so." I expect that the Guild negotiators will be citing Kenneth P. Norwick in coming contract talks.

The book closes with a collection of anti-censorship material: sample testimony to be offered to a legislative committee, a sample right-to-read petition, and, damn it, a sample letter to the editor. Editorial page editors are hereby alerted that any missive beginning,

"The recent Supreme Court decisions on obscenity and pornography do not require any state to continue to try to define and censor such materials," is likely to be lifted in toto from *Lobbying for Freedom*.

The first section of the book is a summary of those decisions, with copious quotations, usable by newsmen as background material. The writing throughout is serviceable but pedestrian—law-speak. Not a single line sings. The same week I read *Lobbying for Freedom*, I happened to be rummaging through Bartlett's in search of a quotable line on some unrelated matter, and chanced on something Joseph Henry Jackson wrote for the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1953: "Did you ever hear anyone say 'That work had better be banned because I might read it and it might be very damaging to me'?" That sums up, as well as anyone is going to, the case for intellectual freedom, against suppression.

—James Ahearn

Stop the Presses, I Want to Get Off!

Edited by Richard Pollak
(Random House; \$8.95)

Bitching, as Richard Pollak observes in the introduction to this book, is a universal pastime—indeed, a passion—of journalists. I wouldn't attribute this solely to our well-cultivated cynicism. Like artists compelled to work in handcuffs, all too often reporters find themselves portraying the faults of the world while themselves enduring maddening encumbrances. As newspapers provide notoriously poor coverage of themselves, reporters end up describing their own woes only to each other and usually in the dim and soothing atmosphere of a neighborhood bar.

[*MORE*] magazine, from which the articles in this book are drawn, has been a successful effort by journalists to give

each other a Page One forum for grievances, dragging them from the dark recesses of gripe sessions into the broad daylight of publicity which, if it does not enlighten editors and publishers, may at least make them sweat a little.

This book takes a look at some of our most influential publications, prominent journalists, and most irritating practices, including our prayerful attitudes towards such sacred cows as department stores. *The Wall Street Journal*, the Pulitzer Prize, and James Reston all get theirs in articles which are pointed—if not barbed—and brightly-written, although I must confess I couldn't understand Richard Schickel's article on McLuhan any better than I understood McLuhan himself.

Occasionally, these articles are also profound, as in Taylor Branch's analysis of why the bombing of Cambodia never made the grade as a full-fledged scandal: it bored people.

Some articles have weathered the years since their original publication better than others. The portraits of journalists, in my opinion, have fared best. I especially enjoyed the pieces on Hunter Thompson, Neil Sheehan, Paul Harvey, and Hank Greenspun, although that might be because I don't know any of them. The between-the-lines pieces, however, have not held up well enough to merit inclusion in a book. The step-by-step account of how Willie Morris left *Harper's*, for example, was as interesting to me as watching grass grow, although maybe it was dynamite the first time around. I might have been more interested if the article had been reworked to say what those events have meant, if anything, to the character of *Harper's* and other magazines like it. The chapter on how *Saturday Review* blundered its way down the tube is another non-enlightening chapter. The only interesting question was raised, but never answered, by author Bob Kuttner: Why does the West Coast turn writers' brains to bananas?

It's ironic that this book, as a book, suffers from the same faults it finds in

some of the newspapers it examines. A. Kent MacDougall said it in his piece about *The Wall Street Journal*: a newspaper may do a reasonable job of finding rotten apples in the barrel, but it never questions the shape of the barrel itself. In this book, we hear a lot about the rotten apples, especially in the Big Apple. But the craft itself is splaying and cracking today under the stress of issues that aren't mentioned at all.

I confess, at this point, that I wanted more from [MORE] than an anthology of old articles. I wished they had socked some publisher for a big advance for a book of fresh articles examining the state of the art, with space to examine at length some issues that I, as a working journalist, want to read more about. I'd like to read, for example, a full examination of newspaper chains and how they affect the cities they buy into—for good or for evil. I want to know what progress has been made in opening our profession to minorities and women, and what difference it has made. For once and for all, I would like to see the issue of sources hashed out. And I'd like to know why the coverage of some fields—and I'll pick on two of my own for starters, labor and organized crime—is generally so rotten and inadequate.

I like reading about media stars, but I'd enjoy it more if someone told me more about why they *are* stars and how they do it. I loved *All the President's Men* not only because it was a behind-the-scenes gossip thriller, but also because it gave me a couple of new ideas.

Maybe next time, we'll get more. In the meantime, I want to bitch about this book. It could have—and should have—been better.

—Jo Thomas

Coming

Anthony Lewis

The Press:

Cantankerous, Obstinate, Ubiquitous

Read All About It! Fifty Years of the American Society of Newspaper Editors

by Alice Fox Pitts

(The American Society of Newspaper Editors; \$7.50)

Incensed by an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* entitled "Newspapers and the Truth," Casper S. Yost, editor of the editorial page of the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, called a meeting in 1922 that led to the formation of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. His hope was that the Society would combat such attacks on newspapers. Instead, it resulted in a heap of self-inflicted criticism that makes the offending article pale by comparison.

Much of the criticism occurs during the ASNE's annual conventions, which are, as this official history of the organization says, its mainstay.

Each convention has its own character, partly reflecting the personality of the president, but inevitably each returns to that theme of self-criticism. And, inevitably, members complain in large numbers: A. M. Rosenthal of *The New York Times* observed in 1971 that the ASNE seemed to have become "excessively guilt-ridden"; a decade earlier, A. H. Kirchhofer of the *Buffalo Evening News* wrote that the ASNE's periodical, *The Bulletin*, reads "like the wailing wall of Scripture." (He of course published his criticism in *The Bulletin*.)

Criticism, however abundant, never was allowed to reach the level of censure. Members from the beginning have rejected, sometimes after long and anguished debate, any attempt to establish a grievance committee that would pass judgment on an errant editor. Only one case came close to stirring such action;

F. G. Bonfils of the *Denver Post*, accused of blackmailing oil magnate Harry Sinclair during the Teapot Dome incident, offered to resign from ASNE if it would agree not to censure him.

In 1927, William Allen White headed a committee that struggled with the question of ethics and came up with the conclusion that "... after a year's study, the committee has no report because it has no idea of what the ethics of this business is." Finally, in the Society's 49th year, members voted 306 to 89 against formation of a grievance committee, and 344 to 61 against formation of any outside organization, such as a press council. (This vote was taken shortly before the Twentieth Century Foundation announced its intention to set up a national press council.)

If the ASNE sounds like a debating society, the makeup of its membership dictates some of this. It is a mixed bag of editors, managing editors and editors of editorial pages. When convention programs please the editorial page editors from metropolitan dailies, they are apt to displease the more task-oriented managing editors from smaller dailies.

The ASNE is committed to activism in the areas of freedom of information and journalism education, and has provided leadership both nationally and internationally. A series of 10 brief essays and excerpts from ASNE's voluminous records describes its involvement in freedom of information, dating from 1929.

Two of its more ambitious early efforts didn't work. The first was a trip around the world by three editors charged with spreading the doctrine of freedom of information, which resulted only in fruitless interviews with bemused editors in such places as Ankara, Istanbul, Teheran and Moscow, and in an 18,000-word report. The second was a vigorous but hopeless effort to persuade the United Nations to guarantee all people free access to information.

The ASNE began to taste victory,

however, in about 1950 when Basil L. (Stuffy) Walters of the Knight Newspapers aggressively took hold of his FoI committee. In one report, he told of the successful defense of a libel suit against a young editor who'd run afoul of some county bureaucrats. Stuffy ended up paying for the lawyer himself, a gesture that an Internal Revenue Service auditor later said was "commendable, but not deductible."

The late Harold Cross joined ASNE in 1952 as its legal counsel, and under his determined direction the potency of ASNE's efforts increased sharply.

The ASNE has been deeply involved during its entire 50 years in efforts to strengthen journalism education. Among its other accomplishments are the spawning of such organizations as the American Press Institute, which conducts a highly regarded program of seminars for newspaper people; the International Press Institute, an association of newspaper editors in countries where there is no official government control of the press; the Federation Internationale des Editeurs de Journaux et Publications, an association of 15 national newspaper publishing groups; and the Inter American Press Association, which has saved the newspaper—and the life—of more than one Latin editor.

The ASNE was in on the ground floor of another notable journalistic enterprise, the Pulitzer Prizes, but dropped out as supplier of jurors after 25 years in 1950, when a series of controversies culminated in a falling out with the Pulitzer board.

The jacket blurb of *Read All About It* advises the reader to be selective: "... read what interests you and skip the rest." This advice is meant to be taken. The author, who was executive secretary of ASNE from 1933 until her retirement in 1963, wrote only about a fourth of the book. The rest is a collection of essays, reminiscences, summaries of convention proceedings and reprints from *The Bulletin*, written by editors who are members of ASNE. Because

editors are not always facile writers, because there is a certain lack of transition among the many pieces, and because Mrs. Pitts' style is that of an insider recalling those years for the pleasure of other insiders, this book is not going to be read from cover to cover by many outsiders. Its value is to members, would-be members and some students and teachers. It is, unfortunately for a book about editors, not tightly edited nor perfectly proof-read.

But a member who recognizes names and remembers incidents will find much of it a pleasure, especially some of the reprints from *The Bulletin* and the accounts of editors' trips to the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. For others, there at least is the history of freedom of information struggles and press-bar conflict; some entertaining anecdotes; some insight—mostly unintended, perhaps—into the minds and character of people who edit newspapers; and an honest account of the many accomplishments (and self-criticism) of the nation's most prestigious society of newspaper editors.

—Larry Allison

Printer's Abecedarium

by John O. C. McCrillis

(David R. Godine; \$8.95)

Lettering, like architecture, reflects the spirit of an age.

In the curves and serifs of letters and in the patterns they carve out on a page are hints of how a society perceives space and form; how it treats the relationship between functionalism and esthetics; how much it cares about setting the mind to work by tantalizing the eye.

Look, for example, at the richly gilded lettering of the medieval manuscript illuminators. The fanciful foliage and animal forms that swirl about those letters suggest that if the illuminators

had one eye focused dutifully on the cosmos, the other was trained lovingly on the physical richness of the earth.

By contrast, much of contemporary lettering speaks to the joylessness of our own age: sleek and utilitarian, it gets the job done but affords us little visual pleasure.

An unabashed love of printing as a mirror of history shines through *Printer's Abecedarium*, a little gem of a book by John O. C. McCrillis, senior designer and typographer for the Yale University Press.

McCrillis has put together an alphabet book for typophiles, or anyone, for that matter, who treasures fine book printing.

He uses letters derived from Gutenberg's *Catholicon* (1460) to illustrate the history of printing from Aldus Manutius, a typographer of the Venetian Renaissance who is thought by some to be the father of modern book design, to Gunther Zainer, who in 1476 produced one of the first printed illustrated Bibles and at one point found himself the victim of the muscle of the early printers' unions. (They insisted that the woodcuts he wanted to use for illustrations had to be produced by members of the woodcutters' guild.)

At the midpoint in the McCrillis *Abecedarium* is Anton Koberger of Nuremberg, with his pre-Madison Avenue flair for self-merchandising. Koberger, whose flourishing printing trade extended throughout Europe by the late 15th century, made canny use of the advertising circular to hawk his wares; if you wanted to buy the theological tomes touted in his ads, you could contact his agent at a local inn.

As intriguing as the information it provides is the design of this slim volume of 58 (unnumbered) pages. Facing each page of historical material is McCrillis' red and blue adaptation of the appropriate Gutenberg letter, with its elegant, Gothic linearity and its interior spaces embroidered with geometric shapes and curls. The body type, which the author has set by hand, is just the

right marriage of the medieval and the modern.

The book is an affirmation of the beauty of letters in their own right, and an homage to the men who have produced them.

—Whitney Gould

Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary

Edited by Edward T. James,
Janet Wilson James and
Paul S. Boyer

(The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press; \$25.)

Feminist scholars and history buffs, whose numbers are steadily increasing, will be aided by and deeply interested in *Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary*. As a reference work it is the worthy product of careful research, conducted by over 700 writers during a ten-year period, digging into a variety of sources, both obvious and obscure, under the capable direction of Radcliffe College's Women's Archives project. The personal histories of more than 1300 American women prominent from colonial times to 1950 are related, each one followed by an annotated bibliography. The new paperback three-volume edition follows a 1971 hardcover version. It will be of value to anyone who wants to learn about exceptional American women and the societal pressures that helped or hindered both traditional and non-traditional careers.

The totality of the contribution this biographical dictionary makes contains a significant comment on the history itself. The editors were not satisfied with the usual dry, elliptical, "Who's Who" routine. The difference between notable men and notable women had everything to do with the style of the personal histories. "Few women," the editors point

out, "began adult life with long-range plans or ambitions, or followed career patterns similar to those of men." A number of different factors played roles in the super achievement of women in the United States in the 350 years covered by *NAW*. Editors Edward T. James and Janet Wilson James explain that that is why each biography became a monograph (sometimes quite lengthy—Mary Baker Eddy's is 7,000 words long, for example).

To be notable, women had to experience, the editors infer, the optimum in "upbringing and social environment;" and to have the approval, or survive the disapproval, of parents and husbands. Then, of course, responsibilities as wives and mothers played an important part in the extent to which women used their intelligence and talents. A woman doctor in mid-19th century America, for example, took years away from her medical education to spend with her dying daughter while her physician husband continued with his practice. To this must be added what is described as the "vagaries of pure chance"—even this vague variable had greater influence it seems in a woman's life than in a man's.

The editors have only taken a few short steps to interpret the mound of raw data the biographies constitute about the role of women during the lengthy period covered. An appendix attempts to sort out the careers followed and to list appropriate names under each category. Traditional careers *then* were sometimes different from what they are now. Fifty-nine women altogether could afford to be philanthropists. Thirty-seven women qualified as religious founders and leaders. In addition to Mrs. Eddy there was Evangeline Cory Booth who was the general in charge of the Salvation Army throughout the world for five years. Then there were those Roman Catholic nuns who came from Europe to establish religious orders and schools—one was to be canonized by her church. Women were traditionally social reformers attempting (primarily as vol-

unteers) to humanize institutional practices during wars and depressions and in the ever-present slums. Non-traditional then was sometimes the same as non-traditional now. There are only five chemists and physicists altogether, one photographer of prominence, five biologists and only one mathematician.

Forty-four women are listed as newspaperwomen and 20 as magazine editors. (The journalist and muckraker Ida Tarbell, known especially for her treatise *The History of the Standard Oil Company*, published in 1904, appears in the appendix under lecturers and orators.) However, these women, as those in other fields, cannot be categorized easily. To enumerate, the two lists include printers, publishers, women's page columnists, novelists, historians, businesswomen, lecturers, political and social reformers, suffragists and feminists. Several women were printers and publishers as early as the 18th century. Anne Newport Royall (1769-1854), "traveler, author and eccentric" is considered by some sources to be the first American newspaperwoman. An interesting fact—numbers of women, to protect their privacy, published under a pseudonym ("Annie Laurie," "Nellie Bly," "Olivia," "Beatrice Fairfax"); some but not all of these wrote for the "women's page." Agnes Smedley, Rheta Childe Dorr and Margherita Arlina Hamm performed as foreign correspondents, writing respectively on revolutionary China, World War I and the Sino-Japanese War of 1894. Ida Bell Wells-Barnett, journalist and editor whose parents were born slaves, became a crusader against lynching and an ally of W. E. B. DuBois.

The editing staff deserves praise for a concept that turns dry facts into interesting, and sometimes engrossing, accounts of women who had to be more controversial, more aggressive, have greater energy and be more brilliant overall to earn a place in this biographical dictionary. Under their basic guidelines, you are certain to know about the

woman's family background, where she was born, how educated, and whom she married. We are told about her major career achievements and about her final illness. Beyond that, we may learn the color of her eyes, if she was obese, and if she took drugs. (Mrs. Eddy was a slave to morphine, begun when she suffered severe illnesses in her youth; and Aimee Semple McPherson died of an overdose of sleeping pills.) Revealing anecdotes are told. One has the feeling that a fine balance has been struck between the factually informative and interpretations of lifestyles and cultural contributions. This is the result of sensitive and intensively intelligent editing. A monumental job has been very well done, indeed.

Attempts to draw quick conclusions from the data should be resisted, however, as Janet Wilson James' introductory history demonstrates. She suggests that "biographies have brought together enough information about the activities and concerns of American women in the world of affairs to make possible a synthesis" in this area. She highlights the need for synthesis without in any way satisfying it. Her tendency is to state hypotheses as if they were conclusions, forgetting that one or two examples of a phenomenon are not necessarily conclusive proof of trends.

There is perhaps a natural tendency to base conclusions about achievements on a handful of achievers' experiences. Emphasis on the one to two percent of women who excelled in non-traditional careers ignores the social forces that excluded so many brilliant women from achievements of any kind.

The myths about women folk heroes need to be more critically examined, as an example, than they are in the introduction to *NAW*. Priscilla Alden married her hero and bore him eleven children. Her function in role education was to supply a powerful example of the worthiness of women who subjugated all for the romantic love of a stereotyped male leader. Molly Pitcher's real name, as her biographer tells us, was Mary McCauley. She was called "Pitcher" because her function in the Revolutionary War was to carry water to male troops. She took over for her warrior husband when he suffered heat prostration in battle. She *loaded*, but did not *fire*, cannon until he recovered. Pocahontas (whose name in her Indian tongue meant "frolicsome") was an ingenious, super-feminine kind of heroine. She saved the lives of dashing English heroes and eventually became the devoted wife of one of them. The legend served to diminish the stature of a group that became a minority in order to build the reputation of their often savage victors.

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As for Betsy Ross, the only one who might be credited with playing a non-traditional role in early folklore (she was rumored to own a flag factory)—it seems certain that she has survived in the school books more for her needlework than her entrepreneurship.

The introduction is perhaps weakest on the subject of the suffrage movement. The movement is described as moving, after the 1890s, inexorably toward a successful conclusion, partly because "with the passing of its veteran leaders at the turn of the century, the movement lost much of its aura of feminism, became acceptable to many more women and less offensive to men, on whose votes that change in constitutional law depended." Carrie Chapman Catt's sophisticated political sense is credited with bringing about a drive which proceeded "steadily after 1911 toward the passage of a federal amendment." The author is either overlooking or unaware of the effectiveness of and need for the dramatic and persistent presence of Alice

Paul and others who suffered intense abuse from crowds and policemen in the nation's Capital. There are many who believe that the more radical phase of the movement was as important as the political strategies pursued by Catt and others.

Women in medicine may have had their troubles, in the view of Ms. James, "with their weak professional connections, establishing a private practice was . . . perhaps more difficult. . . . This condition seems, however, to have worked to society's advantage by turning the energies of many able women physicians into public health work at a time of dire need in the spreading city slums." One wonders if it would not also have been to society's advantage to permit able women to become specialists of all kinds.

Ms. James has paid a penalty for attempting the synthesis which must await a great deal more data gathering and analyses than presently exist. She and other leaders of the project can take

great comfort from the substantial body of data they have gathered and the entertaining and interesting way in which it has been presented. Steady reading of these volumes for any length of time will give present-day feminists much on which to reflect. There is a certain poignancy about the difficulties encountered—and all without benefit of the "sisterhood" one can find everywhere today. There will be many who will ponder on lessons contained in these histories—and who will await with interest the large amounts of other data that have yet to be uncovered and explored. We shall have then a truer picture of the role of women in the development of our society and our polity, as revealed by the lives not only of the great, but the near great, and all of the rest. Women's place in history has too long been submerged in a "no-woman's land" of myth and ignorance.

—Irene L. Murphy

Notes on Book Reviewers

Joseph Whitaker, a reporter for *The Washington Post*, was a Nieman Fellow in the Class of '75.

Bruce Mac Donald is a former member of the College Board Committee on English Examinations and author of the *Atlantic Monthly Study Guide*. He is a Curriculum Director in the public schools of Weston, Massachusetts.

James Ahern is an editorial writer with *The Record*, Hackensack, New Jersey.

Jo Thomas writes on behavioral science for the *Detroit Free Press*. **Ms. Thomas** and **Mr. Ahern** were fellow Fellows in the Nieman Class of '71.

Larry Allison, managing editor of the *Independent, Press-Telegram*, Long Beach, California, was a Nieman Fellow in the Class of '69.

Whitney Gould, Nieman Fellow '74, is an environmental reporter for the *Capital Times*, Madison, Wisconsin. She has long been interested in printing and lettering and is an accomplished calligrapher.

Irene L. Murphy is Executive Director of the Federation of Organizations for Professional Women in Wellesley, Massachusetts, a professional lecturer at George Washington University, and the author of *Public Policy on the Status of Women*.

Reminiscing: News on the Wing

If I ever own a newspaper it will have a loft of carrier pigeons on the roof. The birds will be a nuisance. They may be used only once a year; but when that one story breaks and my newspaper blankets the Opposition they will be justified.

My experience with carrier—or homing—pigeons was while on the *Salt Lake Telegram* in the 1930s. They sold themselves to me on their value as transmitters of news and pictures, especially pictures. Time and again the *Telegram* scored major beats because the birds arrived with capsule loads of stories and negatives from scenes of major news breaks, such as airplane crashes, in isolated areas.

Pigeons even were used to fly pictures from football games—because they did not get snarled up in traffic; from automobile speed runs on the Utah salt flats—because they covered the 120 miles to the city desk faster than automobiles; and once from a mine labor strike because reporters temporarily were marooned inside picket battle lines.

Ever since those days carrier pigeons have had a special place in my affections because (a) using them was so much fun, (b) the beats were so numerous, (c) the by-lines so terrific.

What sweeter music to a reporter's soul than this three column spread: By Bill McDougall Via Carrier Pigeon. Copyright *Salt Lake Telegram*, 1937 (and the date line) On Chipman Peak, June 2, 2 p.m.

The most fun, beats and by-lines on any story where pigeons were used was the search for a passenger plane which disappeared in December, 1936, while enroute from Los Angeles to Salt Lake City and was not found until mountain snows melted in the following June. The mystery of its disappearance, the extensiveness of the search and colorful circumstances of its discovery made a running Page One story in most U.S. newspapers of the time.

Wherever clues developed I took the pigeons and sent back stories and pictures when other means of communication were lacking. The pigeon which carried the most stories the quickest was christened "News Flight" and had his picture in the news reels.

When the plane finally was found and reached it was among ten thousand foot peaks at the end of a five hour journey by foot and pack horses from the nearest road. But by pigeon-line it was less than 30 miles and about as many minutes from the *Telegram* roof. My stories and pictures were in print and on the street before rival reporters even had reached the highway.

Mothering a flock of carrier pigeons on the road between stories had its drawbacks. Hotel chamber maids resented my freeing the birds in the bathroom for exercise. They would go stale and not fly if caged up too long. Sometimes I had to stay awake nights to prevent rival reporters from releasing the birds. They had to be fed, watered and generally watched over with loving care. They were headaches but they paid off.

While traveling I carried the pigeons in a wicker hamper large enough to hold a dozen birds. When hiking on foot, which was frequently necessary, I could carry four birds—one day's supply—in a fishing creel slung over my shoulder.

The first bird would be released so he could reach the paper in time for the noon edition, the second and third in time for later editions. The fourth bird served as a back stop in case of emergency. On a major news break, in order to play safe, I would send duplicate sets of stories and pictures by two different birds.

The paper worked out a delivery system to keep me supplied with pigeons—there were about 50 in the home loft—when I was away for more than three days at a time. One expedition lasted nearly four weeks. On that occasion birds were relayed first by automobile then by pack horse to a base camp in

the mountains which served as search headquarters.

Photographic equipment included a miniature camera producing a 1¼ by 1⅝ negative and a light proof, rubberized "changing bag" in which to process the film for transportation. The amount of film was limited by the size of the aluminum capsule which fitted on the pigeon's back. A still smaller capsule was fastened to one leg and carried the story, written on a six inch by eight inch sheet of rice paper. The picture capsule would hold only one half of a 127 size roll from which the spool and protective paper had been removed and the negative cut to size. The changing bag served as a portable dark room in which the stripping, cutting and capsuling was done. The bag, specially made for the purpose, had sleeves into which the user inserted his arms to the elbow and worked on the film by the sense of touch.

Practice reduced the operation time to only a few minutes. The next crucial steps were: extracting one bird from the creel without allowing the others to escape, holding the bird with one hand while loading him with the other; arranging the bands holding the capsule on his back so they neither choked him nor interfered with his tail assembly; finally, keeping him calm so that when released he would fly away instead of roosting and sulking just out of reach.

I got so I could almost look a pigeon in the eye and tell whether he was going to fly or roost. If he appeared belligerent I would choose another bird—if I still had another bird. A well disposed pigeon would flutter aloft, rise in ever widening circles then head for home. A stubborn one would light nearby, ruffling his feathers, gurgling angrily and keeping just out of reach. I chased one recalcitrant bird for an hour before he took off. Incidentally, only poorly trained or young birds proved balky. Every one which had been thoroughly trained fulfilled its mission.

If a pigeon never arrived home we

(continued on page 26)

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