

room as such be more expensive to a hospital? Why should sick people be expected to give up their privacy when sick, if they don't have to when healthy? I can see no reason why private rooms, as well-furnished as hotel rooms, should not be the rule in hospitals for all paying customers.

Which brings me to the bill. Granting that modern medicine with all its apparatus is costly, the size of the bill still remains a puzzle. Five factors contribute to inflating the cost. (1) Paperwork. This is largely caused by government regulations and can be reduced only by simplifying them. Meanwhile it is horrendous and costly. (2) Overstaffing and

overpaying. Whereas the professional staff barely is adequate in numbers and is far from overpaid, the nonprofessional staff is overpaid (I think there are too many of them, too). How do I know? There are far more people wanting these jobs than there are jobs to give them. They are paid more than is needed to attract them. (3) Hospitals take care of many people who cannot pay and are not insured. This expense should be borne by the community at large, but is not. So, hospitals shift the cost to paying patients and to their insurance carriers. Morally the practice is unjustifiable. That you happen to be hospitalized and are insured, or able to pay, is no reason to stick you, rather than the community, with the cost for all those

who are not. Yet the hospital must make ends meet somehow. The remedy here is legislation providing full reimbursement by taxpayers for those who cannot pay. (4) Medical care has become expensive because of the high and costly technology available to physicians, which has immensely improved care. Yet it is overdone. Rooms, underequipped for comfort, are medically overequipped. (a) Every bed has a costly electrical motor which permits it to be raised and lowered in segments. It's fun and makes it easier to make up the bed. Everything else could be as readily, and more comfortably, achieved by strategically placing pillows. Less fun but much cheaper. (b) Every room has oxygen outlets. But only a small proportion of patients need them. (c)

There is an intercom with loud-speaker in every room; needlessly, since there is a telephone. (5) The costs of hospitalization are paid largely by third parties now, insurance companies and taxpayers (via Medicare or Medicaid). This is one reason why they are so high. The simplest reform is to make sure that, however insured, the patient (except those below the poverty level) pays a percentage of the costs of hospitalization and thus retains an interest in minimizing the expense which no third party will, or can, pursue as readily as he can. Unless the patient regains an interest in minimizing costs, hospitalization will become ever more expensive—and, in the nature of things, ever more inhospitable. □



MEDIAZATION

by Fred Barnes

Harry Reasoner, who is a correspondent on "60 Minutes," was adamant. "I am certainly not left wing, and I am not a dupe," he told Stephan Leshner. "... I am aware of this new theory that Tet was a disaster for the Communists. I went to Vietnam first in 1953. I know Asia extremely well. I would not [disagree] for a minute that the United States armed forces responded very effectively in terrible circumstances in the Tet offensive. But to say that this was somehow an American *cum* South Vietnamese victory that the press concealed, I think is arrant nonsense."

Poor Reasoner, concludes Leshner in his trenchant new book, *Media Unbound*.^{*} Reasoner suffers from "a classic case of mediaization," which Leshner defines as "the disturbing process by which journalism befores memory and truth." Mediaization began, Leshner insists, with the American press coverage of the Tet attack in 1968 by the Vietcong and North Vietnamese. And for those like Reasoner, there may be no cure. "While characterizing as some 'new theory' the strikingly similar findings

on Tet by a diverse group of historians, Reasoner ascribes unassailable truth to contemporary reportage of those events," Leshner says.

But there is good news: if not for Reasoner, at least for others, the fog is lifting on Vietnam mediaization. And not just on the subject of the Tet offensive, which is now generally

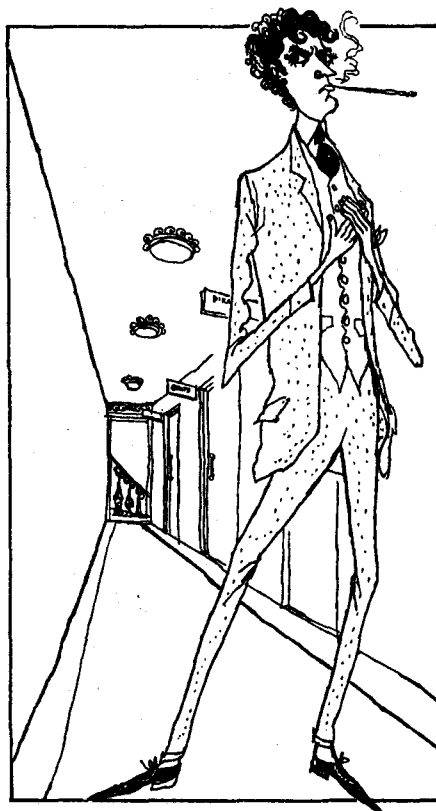
regarded as having been reported with breathtaking inaccuracy and misplaced emphasis. Rather, the quality of the coverage of the entire war itself has now become a matter of intense debate. The discussion, in fact, has already come so far that often the issue is not whether the American coverage was good or bad, but just how bad it really was and what resulted from it.

That, for instance, was the crux of the argument recently between Robert Elegant, the novelist and former Asian correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*, and Peter Braestrup, who reported from Vietnam for the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* and has written a devastating critique, *Big Story*, of the press treatment of the Tet offensive. Elegant touched off the argument with his 1981 article in *Encounter* that unhesitatingly blamed the press for the American and South Vietnamese defeat. "Never before Vietnam had the collective policy of the media—no less stringent term will serve—sought by graphic and unremitting distortion the victory of the enemies of the correspondents' own side," Elegant wrote.

The American press, he said, "somehow felt obliged to be less objective than partisan, to take sides,

for it was inspired by the *engagé* 'investigative' reporting that burgeoned in the U.S. in these impassioned years. The press was instinctively 'agin the Government'—and, at least reflexively, for Saigon's enemies." And press hostility endured after American troops began to withdraw. "Political pressures built up by the media had made it quite impossible for Washington to maintain even the minimum material and moral support that would have enabled the Saigon regime to continue effective resistance," he wrote. In short, "for the first time in modern history, the outcome of a war was determined not on the battlefield, but on the printed page and, above all, on the television screen."

Braestrup, now the editor of the *Wilson Quarterly*, conceded that there were "gaping holes and changing fads" in the coverage of the war. "As Elegant states, many of the American newsmen in Vietnam—and their bosses at home—were singularly unprepared to cope with the complexities of the long, ever-changing Indo-China experience," Braestrup wrote. But "there was no consistent bias in the Saigon reporting... During my years in Vietnam, I found few reporters who, even as they criticized allied performance (or, more often, quarrelled with U.S.



^{*}Houghton-Mifflin, \$13.95.

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officialdom), saw the Vietnamese Communists, however impressive as fighters, as the 'good guys.' Such sentiments were strong only among Western pundits and academics far from the scene."

On the larger matter of blaming the press for the defeat, Braestrup also demurred. "This is a strong claim," he wrote. "It echoes the past claims of some champions of network television, who argue that CBS, NBC and ABC brought the realities of the war into the living room, and thereby turned America against it. Yet, there is no empirical evidence that shows any firm link between media coverage and trends in public opinion . . . In my view, much of the confusion in the press at home stemmed from chronic confusion in Washington. Lyndon Johnson refused to design or support a decisive strategy for winning the war. Peace, not victory, became his goal. This ambiguity led to 'credibility gaps,' policy contradictions, and easy opportunities for LBJ's foes."

Don't get Braestrup's role in this debate wrong, though. More than anyone else, he is responsible for the reassessment of the performance by the press in Vietnam. In 1978, *Big Story* was published in two volumes, a rigorous and irrefutable examination of how the American press—newspapers, wires, newsmagazines, TV networks—misreported the Tet offensive. Since then, it has assumed a place as one of the most celebrated critiques of the press ever, and now it has been published in a one volume, abridged edition.†

Braestrup characterizes the message conveyed by American reporters during the Tet attack as "Disaster in Vietnam." Rarely, he writes, "has contemporary crisis-journalism turned out, in retrospective, to have veered so widely from reality. Essentially, the dominant themes of the words and film from Vietnam (re-broadcast in commentary, editorials, and much political rhetoric at home) added up to a portrait of defeat for the allies. Historians, on the contrary, have concluded that the Tet offensive resulted in a severe military-political setback for Hanoi in the South. To have portrayed such a setback for one side as a defeat for the other—in a major crisis abroad—cannot be counted as a triumph for American journalism."

It takes Braestrup 600 pages, in the abridged version, to recount all the press blunders, inaccuracies, and distortions. At the start of the

offensive, he notes, it was wrongly reported that the supposedly impregnable American embassy in Saigon had been penetrated by Vietcong: it hadn't been, but the correction was slow to catch up with the story. Then, "American newsmen were quick to award Hanoi a major 'psychological' triumph here, if only because they—the newsmen—and Lyndon B. Johnson had been taken by surprise.

It was a portent of journalistic reactions to come."

Next, reporters decided incorrectly that the offensive was a psychological downer for the Vietnamese citizenry and had given the Vietcong the "initiative" on the battlefield. Statements to the contrary by American officials were ignored or downplayed. Among the most egregious media offenders was Walter Cronkite of

CBS, who concluded after one week in South Vietnam that the "real meaning" of the Tet attack was that discord would deepen in Saigon and the war would be prolonged. Two weeks after that, Cronkite declared the offensive a victory for the Vietcong and concluded that "the only rational way out" was negotiations.

(continued on page 37)

AT LAST, A JOURNAL OF OPINION THAT'S DECIDEDLY NON-LIBERAL

"IT HAS BEEN A PLEASURE TO WATCH LEOPOLD TYRMAND AND THE CHRONICLES OF CULTURE CONFRONT—A LA ORWELL—THE SMELLY LITTLE ORTHODOXIES OF OUR TIME."—TOM WOLFE

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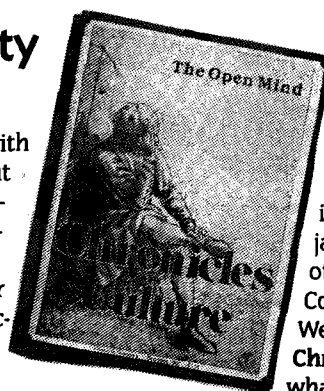
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Chronicles of Culture
NON-LIBERAL CRITICISM AT ITS BEST.

T838

†Yale University Press, \$25/\$9.95 paper.

Stanley Rothman and S. Robert Lichter, authors of some of the most imaginative and important public-opinion studies undertaken in recent years, have made an ambitious effort to analyze the etiology of the student upheavals of the 1960s.

The authors do a superb job in demolishing the series of studies that portrayed the radical students as "the best and the brightest" of their generation. Virtually hundreds of studies, employing survey and psychological techniques, supposedly proved, as Rothman and Lichter note, "that radical students were democratic rather than authoritarian, humanitarian and humanistic rather than pragmatic and self-interested, and generally psychologically healthy and morally advanced." Rothman and Lichter show that the instruments and research methods which produced the data were contaminated by the socio-political perspective of liberal social science.

The questionnaires were constructed in such a manner as to ascribe praiseworthy attributes to radical students almost by definition. For example, belief in civil liberties was generally tested by asking about the rights of atheists, Communists, homosexuals, and others whose rights have been favored by the Left. The students were rarely asked about the rights of fascists, racists, or others, although it is in such cases that their tolerance for deviance would have been better tested. (Lichter and Rothman note that even positive responses to questions on tolerance for right-wing groups do not seem to have reflected deep-seated commitments or to have been predictive of behavior. Belief in civil liberties did not hinder many New Leftists from interfering with the speech of people they disagreed with or disrupting the classes of professors whose opinions they disliked. They note that at Harvard in 1971 New Leftists shouted down a group of students who tried to organize a pro-Administration Vietnam policy teach-in, explaining the right to free speech included the right to shout people down.)

Sometimes studies supposedly measuring personality actually

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**ROOTS OF RADICALISM:
JEWS, CHRISTIANS, AND THE NEW LEFT**
Stanley Rothman and S. Robert Lichter / Oxford University Press / \$27.95

Erich Isaac and Rael Jean Isaac

measured political opinions. A study by Richard Flacks, one of the many New Left founders-turned-social-science-professors, characterized radical activists as "humanitarian." Flacks defined this attribute as "a concern with the plight of others in society; a desire to help others—value on compassion and sympathy—desire to alleviate suffering." The definition of radicals as "humanitarian" seemed therefore to refer to a personality trait. But the questions designed to tap this trait asked students to agree or disagree with such statements as "I intend to dedicate myself to doing something about eliminating poverty and inequality." Those who answered "with an affirmation of their desire to help the 'poor' and the 'weak' were scored for humanitarianism." As Rothman and Lichter point out, "The scale was so constructed that radicals would emerge as humanitarians by definition, given their overt ideological leanings."

The students, moreover, many of them from upper-middle-class backgrounds, knew the "right" answers even to less obvious questions. Student radicals were the ideological children—sometimes actually the biological offspring—of those who studied them. Everett Ladd and Seymour Martin Lipset in a 1968 study found that 50 percent of social and clinical psychologists with children of college age reported that their children had participated in campus demonstrations.

The authors are unsparing in their criticism of the work of such influential students of the New Left as Kenneth Keniston, Lawrence Kohlberg, and Haan, Block, and Smith. The widely quoted work of Kenneth Keniston was based on interviews with only 14 people, with whom he admitted he strongly sympathized. Rothman and Lichter point out that while the Kohlberg scoring system was widely praised on the ground that moral reasoning scores were

derived not from the substance of the individual's conclusions but from the structure of his moral argumentation, in fact what Kohlberg did was to transform ideological stances into psychological categories. In short, the authors show that the so-called scientific studies that established the public's image of student radicals treated left-wing political beliefs as manifestations of psychological health.

Rothman and Lichter also point out that the studies of New Left activists have failed to emphasize an obvious fact: the students were mostly Jews. Comparisons of radical and nonradical youth were thus to a considerable extent unintentionally comparisons of Jewish and non-Jewish family styles. In attempting to explain why Jewish families produced the American New Left, the authors provide an informative survey of the factors leading the Old Left to exercise an enormous attraction for East European Jews in particular. They treat historical marginality as the single most important factor in explaining the prominent role Jews have taken in radical movements, although they point out that once established Jewish radicalism is perpetuated by straightforward parental socialization.

Up to this point the book has internal consistency. A brief but lucid history of the rise and decline of the student Left has been followed by an analysis of the defects in the conventional social-scientific wisdom on the New Left. The hitherto insufficiently noted role of Jews has been convincingly documented, with explanations for the phenomenon sought in the social and cultural experience of Jews, especially in Eastern Europe. We are on page 145 of a 400-page book.

Since the New Left was not wholly Jewish even at the outset—roughly 30 percent of the initial group seem to have been Protestant—and became progressively less Jewish over time, the authors might have gone on to examine the social-psychological and historical factors that explain why Protestants and Catholics from the Midwest and South took over the leadership role and stamped quite a different character upon the radical student movement.

Rothman and Lichter do not do this. Instead they embark on a new kind of study. And while they have

