

CHANNELS:

Comments on TV

MARYA MANNES

WHAT can you get out of the McCarthy investigations on TV that you can't get in the papers? The answer is: "Plenty." The telephoto lens, bringing each human element close to the eye, makes it an experience probably more intense and disturbing than actual presence in the committee room.

For in these hour-long glimpses of the Senate subcommittee investigating the Voice of America, the viewer is privy to a defective court—judge and prosecutor rolled into one, no defense counsel, and a parade of witnesses whose mere presence may strip them of their jobs and their reputations. It is indecent enough to expose the convicted before the public eye. It is even more indecent that millions, by turning a switch, can see these unconvicted in their nakedness.

For it is transparently clear from the faces and voices of McCarthy and his counsel (Roy Cohn is a study in corrupt precocity) that the chairman, if not the rest of the committee, is out to "get" and not to learn. In hunting for Reds, the investigation appears to ignore or deliberately to obscure the basic issues: What is the goal and function of propaganda and is the Voice conducting it successfully?

Instead, any hint—however tenuous—of Communist sympathy is greeted with a sort of savage triumph; any testimony that hesitates to condemn or involve is cause for irritation against the witness. A witness like Howard Fast, whose overt Communist attachments and sympathies understandably arouse the contempt and anger of patriotic men, can put McCarthy into a good humor by testifying that he once lunched at the White House with the Roosevelts. Having thus proved again to his satisfaction the infamy

of previous Administrations, McCarthy obscures the reason for Fast's appearance, which was to testify whether certain of his books had been used for propaganda purposes and whether, in view of further testimony, it was a good or a bad idea to have used for broadcasting to "certain selected areas" passages from these books in which Fast was extolling the American past. This was at no time clarified. All that remained was the Senatorial anger at Fast's abuse of the Fifth Amendment and the impression, greatly magnified by the chairman, that the Voice was full of Reds.

Subsequent witnesses at the earlier TV sessions may not have inspired anger, but they hardly inspired confidence. There was a Mr. Fulling, who thought there was "softness toward Communism" in his South American section because someone changed the adjective "anti-communist" in a script to "democratic." There was a Mr. Caldwell, a nice-looking, very American type who likes birds. He had been in China and felt there was a strong current of antagonism in the State Department personnel toward General MacArthur and Chiang Kai-shek, and that anybody who criticized the Communists was not only viewed with disfavor but apt to lose his job. He named a Mr. Connors as typical of this attitude, and admitted freely that he did not get along with Connors at all. At the end of his testimony, McCarthy beamed at Mr. Caldwell and there was a Senatorial chuckle about the birds.

Mr. Connors, the next witness, made Mr. Caldwell's criticisms easy to understand. What was not easy to understand was how Mr. Connors had ever become "top policy planner for the U.S. Information Program." Heavy-faced, hard-eyed, he made a

series of statements which seemed to betray an appalling ignorance of both administration and propaganda. Chewing gum the whole time (a contempt of court as blatant as his composure), Mr. Connors admitted on Senator McCarthy's questioning that he had never studied the Communist movement, had never read Marx, Engels, or Lenin, and relied for knowledge on his research staff, who "knew all these things." He admitted having signed a directive permitting "certain books" of Howard Fast to be used in certain selected areas, and had the brief spurt of courage (lionlike in this situation) to say in answer to McCarthy's questioning that he thought yes, it was all right to use them in very special circumstances. He thought people with Communist sympathies would be inclined to take the word of a pro-Communist more seriously, even if he praised America.

Subsequently his courage ebbed away and he said, on further questioning, that he agreed it was a bad idea to use any material at all written by controversial individuals. Anyway, there was a new directive out to that effect.

The Art of Wooing

Then there was a Miss Nancy Lenkeith, a piquant Ph.D. who spoke in the precise, slightly exotic accent that is usually the product of multilingualism. She believed that she had been fired from the Voice of America French desk because she had insisted on using Whittaker Chambers's book *Witness* on one of her book-review broadcasts in French. She quoted one of her ex-superiors, Mr. Auberjonois, as saying, "Chambers is a psychopath. Don't touch it with a ten-foot pole." Another man said it was "tricky." All this pleased McCarthy very much. He was even more gratified when Miss Lenkeith said that her boss, a Mr. Mathews, believed in "collective groups" (a euphemism for free-love colonies), and had suggested that she join one. One could almost hear the chairman tsk-tsk-ing.

These were mostly the disgruntled, these earlier witnesses—content, it seemed, to air their grievances against an organization which had not done them justice. Their testi-

mony indeed made the Voice appear confused, maladministered, wasteful, politically unreliable if not dangerously warped.

DUE TO Senator Symington's insistence on the right of speedy rebuttal, they were followed quickly by those accused, and one could finally hear a voice of dignity and incisiveness like that of Reed Harris, Acting Director of the Voice, who—whatever crimes may subsequently be laid to him—spoke with that deep anger which the chairman's tactics must arouse in men of courage and justice.

Yet, up to the time of writing, there was no one to tell the committee not what McCarthy wanted to hear but what all should know: that propaganda is the art of wooing, and that you cannot woo anyone by telling them that you are always right and they are always wrong; and that any propaganda or intelligence

agency worth its salt must include some who—by origin, contact, and, above all, empathy—are equipped to understand and appeal to the enemy mind.

But empathy—"the imaginative projection of one's own consciousness into another being"—is a quality conspicuously absent both in the Soviet and in men like McCarthy, who appear to believe that propaganda should be an exercise in self-congratulation performed by the pure in blood.

The viewing audience is given no such criteria and no such definitions. To them, these hearings, like any peep show, are a degrading experience—degrading to themselves, degrading to justice, degrading to government. Since they confuse instead of clarify and prejudice instead of inform, it is hard to see what service they perform for the American public or for good government.

Bill Mauldin Writes to Joe

I took my family down South to get away from the flu bug and we ended up on a big sand bar, with palm trees sticking out of it, called Florida. We rented a cottage facing one of those inland waterways where three or four million dollars' worth of yachts parade past on any given afternoon. To listen to the owners, you wouldn't have guessed there was that much money left after taxes. You remember the old highway signs, "Watch the Fords Go By"? Down here you can sit on your porch and watch the Ford dealers go by on their Chris-Crafts. I saw one forty-foot job with an old Ike sticker on the pilot house. I guess the fellow thought it was time for a change.

A Cadillac with an Ike sticker is looked down on in these parts, not because of its owner's politics but because it shows he's driving last year's model. According to the pro-

prietor of the local liquor store, most of the flashy dough down here was made since the Second World War by people who, he says, come in and buy the most expensive Scotch in the place and then take it home and mix it with Pepsi-Cola.

Caddies are the only socially accepted cars and the preferred style is the ersatz convertible, or "hard-top." To me the hardtop is the supreme example of a cheap thrill. Owning one of those things is like marrying a dress-shop dummy; it's cute to look at, but it'll never give you any honest goose bumps on the back of your neck. Even the Jaguar sports cars have hard tops, and anybody who would drive one would carry a parasol on a race horse. I'm what Willie calls a snob in reverse—a purist with a Plymouth.

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