

TV-Radio

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Cool Medium

FURTHER national demonstrations against the Vietnam war are scheduled for November and December, and on into next year, and television and radio naturally will cover each of them. Although press accounts of the broadcasters' handling of the October 15 moratorium were generally favorable, my own view is that television, particularly, failed to communicate the essential spirit of a day that searched the nation's conscience.

The failure illustrates the proposition that the degree to which reporters and commentators feel themselves to be personally involved in an event is the crucial factor in their reporting and interpreting of that event. Doing justice to an event, therefore, means taking into account the variable of involvement and consciously making an effort to balance reportage and commentary to compensate for hostility, indifference, or unexpressed sympathy.

In this sense, television collectively did not appear to be involved in V-M Day: it reported and interpreted it, but made no real attempt to get under V-M Day's skin. Television played it cool, objectively, dispassionately, which, as many people feel, is proper for networks to do when they are communicating events that are politically controversial. However, this wasn't the way television treated the moon landing, for example (I make the comparison conscious of the larger order of magnitude of the space event). There, the reporters and commentators were personally involved all the way, not inhibiting their own feelings in the slightest. They were clearly on the side of the space program; they had no qualms about joining the almost universal chorus of support, excitement, and suspense.

In national political campaigns and elections, the network staffs also allow themselves to become personally involved; overtly they do not back any candidates, but they leave no doubt about their enthusiasm for the political game. In covering the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago, reporters and commentators quickly developed a posture that was clearly hostile to the convention managers, although they avoided outright displays of sympathy for the demonstrators in the streets. People may quarrel about what television mirrored in Chicago, but the reflection was vivid.

The October 15 moratorium repre-

sented the kind of event upon which networks do not take positions. In backing off from any show of personal involvement, reporters and interpreters permitted the wine of the event to drain away.

V-M Day had a central stillness about it, nonviolent, unsensational yet dynamic. People felt deeply, their experiences were intimate; yet there was an open sense of sharing. Participants assembled, talked, listened to speakers, voted resolutions, marched, lighted candles. Crowds—of old and of young—behaved as individuals: that was the uniqueness.

Moments of revelation flashed on the TV screen, as when in Duluth, Minnesota, high school students, demonstrating against the war in a city that had never known such a phenomenon, sang "America, the Beautiful." Young war protesters on the Capitol steps in Washington contributed a mix-up of political symbols when they sang "Up With the People," the theme song of a traveling musical show sponsored by members of the radical Right. Georgia's Governor Lester Maddox, at an anti-protest rally in his state, led legionnaires in the singing of "God Bless America"; close-ups of the faces of the singers were grim portraits of super-patriots.

Viewers had to wait until the prime-time, business-as-usual shows were out

of the way, before the CBS and NBC late evening specials came along. The CBS staff triumphed over logistics in assembling film clips from various cities and in lining up important persons; but although the commentators searched for the day's significance, their interpretations lacked both spirit and eloquence. They stayed clinically aloof. Why, on the other hand, could they exult with the spacemen, show excitement with election watchers, and express spontaneous revulsion at convention tyrants? The answer is national consensus—or at least the presumption of it.

The problem, then, is how to catch the true spirit of an event, if no consensus exists. One answer is for the network interpreters to stay cool if they refuse personal involvement, but to invite panels of involved demonstrators to do their own interpreting.

If the networks, however, do choose to be involved and to show it, let them allow panels of the non-involved to express their opinions. More of the spirit of V-M Day, pro and con, could have been communicated had the networks allowed panels of blacks, poor people, students, and John Birchers to express their thoughts about the meaning of the day, not merely in edited excerpts but in sustained conversations, just as the network newsmen did.

As it was, a single viewpoint, which reflected only white, middle-class, corporate America, had the exclusive privilege of selecting and organizing the image of a significant event. In a nation divided, it takes more than one viewpoint to articulate the meaning of social revolution.



"You promised her the sun, the moon, and the stars—but she'll settle for \$100,000."

As Others See Us

LONDON: A Ghastly Tightrope

THE ONLY THING Hanoi and Peking always have worked for is an American loss of control (in Vietnam), leading to a withdrawal and a determination never to set foot anywhere in Asia again.

America might easily abandon European involvements as well, and pull the hard shell of its own natural wealth and interests right down over its eyes and ears. . . . It is, therefore, in all our interests that, however slowly he may appear to be getting out of Vietnam, President Nixon should never lose control. That is what this weird battle of wits is now all about. It is a ghastly tightrope to walk. But before we shake it too hard we might remember that we are all on it with him.

—*The Sunday Telegraph.*

Honorable Settlement

IT IS ALWAYS possible that the South Vietnamese will prove capable of holding the Vietcong. If they do, then the United States will have won a great victory. It would be the honorable settlement that the American administration wants and is what they are working toward. Unfortunately, it is not the most likely result of an American withdrawal, and it may be that the best President Nixon can hope for is that the Communists will, in return for a settlement, allow the Americans to withdraw peacefully. It would undoubtedly be highly embarrassing if the Communists seized control shortly afterward, but it would be less humiliating than a retreat under fire.

—*The Times.*

EDINBURGH: The President and the Judge

JUDGE HAYNSWORTH is not, it would appear from his past record, in sympathy with the Supreme Court's views about the desirability or a rapid and at times painful breakdown of barriers between the races. Probably Mr. Nixon is trying to follow a middle-of-the-road approach, not seeking to turn the Supreme Court into a bastion of reaction, but instead wanting to inject a more staid, more conservative element into it, to balance the radicalism that it was noted for. Mr. Nixon is not, judging from his proposals to put the nation's welfare services on a more efficient footing, setting out to please the Right. Yet those who placed their faith in Senator Edward Kennedy will tend to see the appointment of Judge Hayns-

worth as evidence of the need to dislodge President Nixon in 1972. At the moment, however, he is riding high, and the Democrats find themselves in disarray.

—*The Scotsman.*

PARIS: Web of Contradictions

EACH DAY, the web of contradictions surrounding Washington's Vietnam policy grows tighter. Not the least of these is the attempt to reconcile negotiations with the enemy, the "Vietnamization" of the war and support of President Thieu. During his Saigon visit, which seems to have been rather hastily decided upon, Mr. Nixon pompously described the South Vietnamese head of state as one of the world's five great political leaders.

The American troop withdrawals, the second of which was delayed for a time by pressure from military leaders dubious about Vietnamization, bear little weight in the light of statements claiming U.S. policy is directed at showing the enemy he has no other choice but to negotiate. The word "capitulation" conveys the same idea. It may not reflect the President's thinking, but after five years of Mr. Johnson's policies Mr. Nixon will be hard put to convince the enemy otherwise. In the Vietcong's experience, all that is proposed in exchange for a thirty-year struggle is defeat. . . .

—*Le Monde.*

MOSCOW: In the Warmongers' Camp

THE DECISIONS reached at the eighth AFL-CIO congress [in Atlantic City] show that the developments in the United States and throughout the world have taught nothing to the U.S. trade union bureaucrats. They show quite openly that they remain in the warmongers' camp and oppose all working people of the world who want to achieve peace, progress, and justice on our planet. The reluctance of the trade union bosses to meet the demands of the working class halfway will undoubtedly lead to a still deeper crisis in which the AFL-CIO has found itself as a result of its leaders' betrayal of the interests of the working people.

—*Trud.*

FRANKFURT: No More World Sheriff

ASIAN GOVERNMENTS cooperate with the United States in looking ahead to the

time when the Vietnam war will no longer be an American war. Some of the governments in this part of the world have been only too willing to rely upon the permanent presence of the United States. Unrest arises when the United States is unwilling to continue its role of world sheriff with the same enthusiasm.

—*Frankfurter Rundschau.*

BUDAPEST: How Big a Leap?

SUCCESS! Man has been on the moon. The myth of the ancient world, Kepler's dream, Verne's fantastic fiction have come to pass. Certainly we cannot appreciate as yet just how big that leap has been. The significance for scientific and technological progress of the new phase of space research opened by man's trip to the moon will be determined in the decades to come. However, we know one thing: success became possible because not only the three Apollo II astronauts but tens of thousands of scientists and technicians had worked self-sacrificingly and arduously to attain the great goal. This has been an example of operation, selfless mutual assistance, and efforts directed toward the common objective that is no less enchanting than the technical achievement itself.

—*Magyar Radio.*

TAIPEI: Security and not Chaos

PRESIDENT NIXON has said his new strategy for peace means maintaining defense forces strong enough to keep the peace while not allowing wasteful expenditures to drain away resources needed for U.S. domestic programs. He said the United States would help other free nations maintain their security but would not rush in to do for them what they can and should do for themselves. The new peace strategy is based on a long-range concept of global significance.

In carrying out the new strategy, the United States should take firm steps to end the Vietnam war honorably. Ranking U.S. generals oppose continued withdrawals but the doves in the U.S. Congress want a pullout. It is up to President Nixon to show courage and determination in this instance.

In limiting commitments abroad, the United States should first help establish a collective security structure in Asia. If the United States is to continue withdrawing forces from Vietnam and Thailand, Peking will take advantage of the vacuum to cause more trouble. Nixon's new strategy for peace should lead to an increase of security and not to more chaos.

—*New Life Daily.*