

## THE MASS MEDIA OUR OVERPRIVILEGED ELITE

by ALICE WIDENER

When Vice Admiral Joseph Metcalf III barred the press from covering the United States military rescue of Grenada from anarchy, October 25 and 26, 1983, most of our mass media stars, male and female, were so infuriated they bared fangs usually concealed behind smiles artfully constructed for TV-camera close-ups by high-priced cosmetic dentistry.

Hysterically, Helen Thomas of United Press International shrieked, "The White House has lost credibility with the media."

Dan Rather of CBS-TV said, "If the press isn't there, the people aren't there." John Chancellor of NBC-TV said, "The American government is doing whatever it wants to in Grenada without any representative of the American public watching what it's doing."

Obviously, Messrs. Rather and Chancellor exclude civilian and military officials of our government as legitimate representatives of the American people. Fortunately for truth, at the moment of the Grenada crisis, Ray Briem of ABC Talk Radio pointed out coolly and correctly, "The polls show overwhelmingly that the media have lost credibility with the public."

Most media stars were not only way out of touch with the fundamental feelings of the very public whom they profess to protect and respect but also exhibited the kind of conceited fascistic arrogance characteristic of a republic at its time of true crisis when a single group claims immunity from discipline, tradition, loyalty and law.

What happened in Grenada during the rescue operation is that for the first time since 1950 the American people could themselves learn what really was taking place without preclusive censorship BY THE PRESS.

Thus when the rescued American medical students arrived at Kennedy Airport it was impossible to screen from public view the 23-year-old girl who flung herself into her parents' anxiously awaiting arms and cried out, "Those Marines -- they were so strong and brave and kind!"

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Kind? Kind?? That adjective left the media horde dumbstruck, accustomed as most of them are to hearing and reading since 1950 mainly the harshest derogation of our American military.

It was in 1950 that two major events occurred which adversely affected the security of every American and that of our nation and the entire

free world. The first of these events was adoption by President Harry Truman, April 1950, of a top secret overall foreign policy directive, National Security Council Document 68, which was foisted on him by Dean Acheson, George F. Kennan and Averell Harriman. Referred to among the intellectual clique who framed NSC-68 as the "containment of communism" policy, it actually was the formulation of a rigid "no-win" doctrine applied to our country only. NSC-68 urges avoidance of nuclear war through U. S. acceptance of a Soviet first strike and NSC-68 forbids any U. S. action "directly challenging Soviet prestige."

The second major 1950 event adversely affecting our internal and external national security was announcement by The New York Times that it was abandoning our traditional journalistic distinction between straight news and editorial writing in favor of adopting what it described as "interpretive reporting" but in reality was propagandizing. Consequently, Times man Thomas J. Hamilton, newly elected president of the United Nations Correspondents Association, proposed abandonment of objective reporting on the U. N. "for the sake of an ideal."

The full consequences of our no-win foreign policy, which was kept top secret until February 1975, and of our acceptance of "interpretive reporting" which shielded the Communist movement from direct challenges to its prestige, became obvious to the American people only in October 1983 when our "sitting duck" Marines were massacred at Beirut Airport in Lebanon and thereafter the Reagan Administration had the courage to undertake a winning military operation in Grenada.

In vitriolic criticism of the Reagan military policy, Sam Donaldson burst out on the Sunday morning ABC-TV News discussion "I am a believer in the Acheson-Kennan containment policy." Thus he exposed himself, as do almost all our prominent media stars, as an ideologue not an objective newsperson.

The 30th anniversary issue of Playboy magazine, dated January 1984, carries a long exclusive interview with Dan Rather who declares, "The only person I'll listen to in criticism about our [CBS'] coverage of the Soviet Union is Harrison Salisbury. He can lay down aces in terms of his experience of covering it. With everybody else, my attitude on it is 'F--- you.' I don't think other people have a lot to crow about." Informed Americans know that Harrison Salisbury, formerly of the New York Times is as pro-Soviet as Herbert Matthews of the New York Times was pro-Castro.

On November 30, 1983, Mary Bedell Smith reported in The Times that Peter Jennings of ABC-TV told her "99% of the phone calls I received about barring the press from Grenada were in favor of the [U. S.] government." The Times/CBS poll showed 91% in favor of the Reagan Administration and against the press. Repeatedly, newsmen who had been in World War II referred to their patriotism and trustworthiness during those times in order to try to impress the public with their fitness to guard our secrets, protect American lives and be true to American ideals today in Central America, the Middle East or anywhere else. This media effort at reassurance is totally ineffective because we Americans have learned that things are far different now in political and moral points of view than they were before. Since 1950 our nation has never been in a declared war with the press legally under wartime censorship and legal restraints as in World Wars I and II. Nor have we had an "enemy" but merely an adversary, according to NSC-68. Though we have lost more than 100,000 American military men killed in the Korean United Nations Police Action and the Vietnam Military Advisory Operations, our media representatives were entirely free of legal and social penalties for consorting with or aiding the Communists who were killing us.

Why? Not one in a million Americans is aware that there is only one federal crime in our U. S. Constitution -- treason. And treason is strictly defined as giving aid and comfort to the enemy in time of war. Only Congress can declare war. So the aid and comfort individuals such as Jane Fonda, Daniel Ellsberg and others amply gave to our murderous "adversaries" in

Peking and Hanoi cannot be legally prosecuted as treason and all have been welcomed by our media who have provided them with a reversible all-weather political cloak -- First Amendment absolutism on one side and anti-anti-communism on the other.

As thousands upon thousands of Americans stood in the streets of San Francisco and New York City to welcome home General Douglas MacArthur after his dismissal as commander of our forces in Korea, 1951, they knew in the marrow of their bones that something was wrong, very wrong. Not one in a million Americans knew that the "something" wrong was the secret NSC-68. In May 1951 General MacArthur told me in a long exclusive interview at his office in Manhattan:

"Always in war when I visited my wounded in the hospital, I could look them in the eye, no matter what their condition or how tragic their wounds, knowing that our country had backed them to the hilt.

"But when I went to see my Korean War wounded, I just couldn't look them in the eye, knowing they had been forced to fight with one hand tied behind their backs.

"I went home and walked the floor alone until four o'clock in the morning. I made up my mind what to do and I did it."

The General paused, his eyes full of tears. Then he looked me straight in the eye. "Do you think there is anyone anywhere who can teach me how to shoot down half a bridge?" he said. Again he paused, then said firmly: "I am convinced I was restrained in Korea by some secret Administration policy directive on strategy about which I was not informed."

Under the inexorably intolerant and therefore fascistic intellectual leadership of the Liberal Establishment -- the New York Times, Washington Post, Council on Foreign Relations, Columbia Broadcasting Company and American Civil Liberties Union -- plus the influence of professional pacifist propagandists preaching and teaching American unilateral disarmament at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Chicago, and Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Santa Barbara, California -- our once independent media became a cyclops with a single eye fixed on what they perceived to be American faults and blind to the evils of communism. Our greatest military heroes were vilified and the most brutal Red leaders glorified.

On October 30, 1983, I watched over CNN-TV the very first press interview at Bethesda Naval Hospital of our Grenada wounded. I saw the face of Captain Timothy Howard, USMC, while 40 newsmen crowded around his bed. His right arm had been amputated to the elbow. His left leg had 14 multiple fractures. A grimace of intense pain contorted his face. "Please," he said through clenched teeth, "don't jolt my bed." Someone thrust a microphone into his face. "I said," he said, in a voice so full of agony that I burst into tears, "don't jolt my bed." From somewhere came a stern command "OUT!" Later I learned the order came from a Navy public information officer at the hospital too appalled by the media's brutal conduct to utter another word. Also, I later learned that a United Press International reporter was so ashamed of the media conduct that day he wrote a personal letter of apology to Captain Howard and to the medical staff at Bethesda.

The media brutality toward our military did not surprise me. I had a memorable experience with it during the Vietnam War. In March 1966, I received a telephone call from President Lyndon Johnson (whom I never had met or voted for) to tell me that as the result of a newspaper column by Drew Pearson, the Pentagon and White House were swamped with anguished inquiries from families and friends of our wounded patients in Walter Reed Army Hospital. The column charged that while officers were being coddled in luxury at the hospital, the GI's were being cruelly neglected, denied essential needs and even doses of painkilling drugs. Pearson wrote that conditions were so insanitary that filthy bloodstained bandages were lying everywhere on the floors and heaped high outside the wards to the ceiling. President Johnson asked whether I would be willing to visit Walter Reed and see conditions for myself.

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Having paid my own way to Washington, I was met next day by an Army officer who drove me to Walter Reed . . . No official escorted me or made the slightest suggestion about what I should write.

At first glance, outside the amputees' wards, No. 35 and 36, it did seem as if repulsive bandages were heaped on the floor. The sight was sickening. At second glance, I saw the bandages were in huge transparent plastic bags. The driver of a hospital garbage pickup truck who made the rounds through the hospital halls every 30 minutes said, "Clear plastic is cheaper than opaque." Inside wards 35 and 36, I talked with 93 amputees. I found out the truth about the pain killers. These mutilated suffering young men were on "THE THING." What was that? A voluntary self-organized pact among them to try to refrain from taking pain pills as "chicken" because it seems the drugs act as a depressant and thus retard recovery.

On March 11, 1966, a GI gestured with his right shoulder toward the TV next to his bed in Ward 35 at Walter Reed Hospital. He couldn't gesture with hand and forearm. They had been amputated. "Sometimes," he said scornfully, "while I'm watching and listening to this thing, I get to wondering whether some of the characters on it wouldn't be more with us if we were fighting alongside the Vietcong for the Vietcong."

His remark chilled my blood. Only a couple of weeks earlier I had been at a meeting in Manhattan where Professor Eugene Genovese of Rutgers University, who had publicly proclaimed he would "welcome a Vietcong victory", said the Leftwing intelligentsia in our country "must achieve a Marxist revolution and that is why there exists now in this country the necessity for open advocacy of socialism." To accomplish this, he said, the Leftwing must achieve "cultural hegemony."

As everyone knows, "hegemony" is preponderant authority. There is no doubt that over the years since 1950, with NSC-68 and "interpretive reporting," an elite among the Leftists gained cultural hegemony over our media and this sad situation became more and more evident to the people. Overnight in October 1983 the media found out that though some of the people can indeed be fooled for some of the time, all cannot be fooled all the time. Though the media immediately sought to convert the Grenada rescue into a bitter struggle between the media and the U. S. Government, it has become an open struggle between the media and the people.

On November 20, 1983, New York Times reporter Jonathan Friendly twisted his article into a story about a "feud between the military and the press" and declared, "The debate about restriction of news coverage of combat in Grenada has brought into the open military suspicions about the press and its patriotism." Jonathan Friendly then referred to the "apparently heartless" media interviews with the families of Marines killed or missing in the Beirut barracks.

What does Friendly mean by "apparently" heartless? Doesn't he know the difference in definition between "obviously" and "apparently"? Obviously he doesn't, but the entire American TV-viewing public did and they found the interviews sadistically intrusive. So did the friends and relatives of the dead or missing Marines who found out that the media at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, bribed taxi drivers to reveal the addresses to which they had driven Army and Navy chaplains on condolence missions to bereaved, desperately anxious and heartsore parents, grandparents, sisters, brothers and wives.

On November 4, 1983, the Wall Street Journal carried a truly enlightening letter to the editor from Major General John E. Murray, USA Ret. which goes to the vitally important core of our present political, intellectual and moral plight concerning the relationship between the media and the people. General Murray says that the wailing of the press because it was denied advanced briefing and immediate access to the Grenada rescue operation is like that of a child

denied a stick of candy unaware it was a stick of dynamite . "Surprise, celerity and concentration are the quintessence of military success," Gen. Murray writes. "A commander has a hole in his head and a hole in his plan if he sacrifices secrecy."

The media say they maintained utmost secrecy in World Wars I and II. So they did. BUT -- they were operating under total wartime censorship which never has been put into practice by our country since 1945. If it had, several of our leading media pets would now be serving long prison terms for treasonable aid and comfort to the enemy.

Another aspect of our media overprivilege is their total freedom from any kind of professional disciplinary control. Every other profession is under some kind of disciplinary scrutiny or regulation --the police by civilian boards, physicians by state boards of medicine on charges of malpractice, lawyers by the American Bar Association, etc. However, our media do exactly as they please without fear of professional discipline and much of what they please to do 'is' crude, brutal, immoral and degrading.

General Murray writes what every military man who fought in Vietnam and Southeast Asia knows: "Among them [the press] there are what can only be charitably termed criminal inclinations. The media, unlike the soldiery, do not come under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Why weren't the culprits among them tried in Vietnam for illicit money involvement and drug activities? There were those among the media in Vietnam who had it better than Jesse James. They were outlaws with no law to punish them. Then there is that pitiless commonplace invasion of a soldier's and his family's privacy in what may be his last pains by TV and photographic pimps -- an arrogance in another's agony that is beyond forgiving. Contrary to presumption, Last Rites do not grant last picture rights to blood-thirsty media Draculas."

On November 30, the Wall Street Journal carried an extremely revealing report "Returning State Department Files" by staff reporter Jonathan Kwitny who recounted the story of what happened at Channel 5 in Washington, D. C. after newscaster James Adams received a call from inmates at District of Columbia prison, Lorton, Virginia, that they were in possession of confidential U.S. Government files accidentally left in a cabinet sent there for refurbishing. Mr. Adams and Channel 5 news director Betty Endicott notified the State Department, broadcast an announcement of what had happened and turned the documents over to U.S. Senator Charles Matthias because, they said, "he is a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he is cleared to read classified material and he is in a position where he can provide oversight on security breakdowns."

Immediately there came a vociferous outburst of indignation from media bigwigs Jack Anderson and Seymour Hersh, both professionals being anti-U. S. authorities and anti-U. S. military muckrakers. Their representatives and other media characters, says Mr. Kwitny, hounded Mr. Adams and Mrs. Endicott for copies of the classified papers! "You're giving away gold!" they complained. There was indeed a fortune to be made out of the secret U. S. Government documents and their fingers itched for part or all of it. Equally appalled at the lost opportunity at whatever cost to our country's success and prestige was Robert MacNeil of the Public Broadcasting MacNeil-Lehrer Report. What these mercenary careerists appear to want above all else is the chance to place "a smoking gun" in the hands of any public or private individual holding views or taking action which the media elite oppose.

Reporter Jonathan Kwitny interviewed the heads of two influential American schools of journalism about the ethics of James Adams' and Betty Endicott's situation. Naturally, Dean Osborn Elliot of Columbia University School of Journalism said, "A reporter's duty is to report. . . ." Dean James Atwater of the University of Missouri School of Journalism said he would have returned the documents to the State Department without even reading them.

On December 2, 1983, Richard M. Clurman, board chairman of Media and Society Seminars, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, wrote an op-ed piece entitled "The Media Learn a Lesson" for the New York Times. Too many journalists, he wrote, "decided that their primary function was to act as adversaries to all the powers that be. Moreover, reporters sometimes are often too poorly prepared for the complex subjects they must cover; others lack training in standards of ethical judgment and conduct. Many, from their bunkers often fail to distinguish between junk and important information. . . . For their own welfare and for the good of our democracy, the media need to start making their case, in words and conduct, better than they have. For now, they are plainly exasperating the public, whose support they need to preserve their protected and crucial vigor."

The key word in Mr. Clurman's statement, in my opinion, is "protected." Assiduously, since 1950, our media have used secrecy -- the very means they profess to reject --in order to hide, discredit or keep away from the public the advocacy of domestic and foreign policies which they oppose ideologically. This is how they obtained their overprivileged status. Thus, for example, they were able to censor or suppress exceptionally important books by authorities and experts such as General Thomas Power, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Strategic Air Command and by General Albert C. Wedemeyer.

Through misuse of our First Amendment the media have flung open doors shutting out libel and vilest obscenity. They have used the "docudrama" to blot out the distinction between fact and fiction.

Worst of all, most of the overprivileged media elite have sought to ridicule and undermine the traditional ideals of our individual citizen's devotion to duty, honor and country, ideals which have brought out the best in most of us cherishing our Republic of the United States of America.

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