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THE U.S. MASS MEDIA AND THE NEAR EAST

by

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There is a well known story -- originally based on an American cartoon, I believe -- that has circulated widely in the Near East. It tells of the American tourist arriving for the first time in Istanbul's picturesque harbor. The tourist gazes about him at the striking skyline pierced by dozens of minarets and mutters in wonder to his companion, "My God, these Turks sure are way ahead of us in missiles!"

Apocryphal or not, in exaggerated form the story is revealing of the approach to the Near East that an American, dependent on the run-of-the-mill mass media of this country, might well bring to his first direct encounter with that remote region. There is a certain ring of plausibility even in the obviously caricatured anecdote. At the same time, contrary examples of relative enlightenment emanating from unexpected sources within the U.S. mass media could also be cited. For instance, we just received in the mail a very effective "Study Guide" for school children to be used in conjunction with the recent film "Lawrence of Arabia" for interesting American youth in the history and culture of the Near East. Which of these items, the joke or the "Study Guide," more accurately reflects the treatment of the Near East in the U.S. mass media? In this brief essay we shall attempt at least a tentative and initial answer to that question. We shall present an exploratory evaluation of the coverage of the Near East in the mass media of this country, particularly the printed media, while simultaneously insisting that the task is most complex and that a truly adequate evaluation would demand more space and more research than we have been able to command.

### The Evidence Obtained

The evidential foundations which support the conclusions of this essay must be revealed for appraisal at the outset. First of all, much of what we shall have to say is based on the subjective impressions of the author acquired in the course of studying Near Eastern affairs -- particularly those of Turkey, Iran and Egypt -- over a number of years. Turkish events have been followed in the Turkish press, in the European press and in the American press. Egyptian and Iranian events have been followed in the European and American mass media but not in the indigenous media. All these mass media products have been evaluated against a backdrop of the academic literature on the same topic, against personal travel, residential experience and political research in the Near East, against direct, unpublished reports from other observers, and against governmental summaries and findings. Hence, a substantial portion of the justification for the observations made herein must rest on the author's personal judgment and on the face plausibility of what he says.

The other evidential stanchion supporting our conclusions is more objective (though, we inmodestly trust, not necessarily more accurate). It consists of a series of comparative content analyses of selected U.S. mass media.<sup>1</sup> Three types of media were involved: 1) newspapers (The New York Times, New York Herald Tribune, Christian Science Monitor, San Francisco Examiner, San Francisco Chronicle, St. Paul Pioneer Press, Minneapolis Star, Boston Globe, and Boston Herald), 2) magazines (Time, Life, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report, The Nation, The New Republic, The National Review, and The Reporter), and 3) television news programs (CBS Network news and the local NBC station's news program in Boston). The individual content analysis compared two or more sources within a given media-type.

The reporting in each of these media was examined in terms of a series of matched pairs of events, one from Western Europe and one from the Near East. The events were matched intuitively in terms of their general "gravity" or world importance. Such an evaluation is obviously difficult to make, but it is equally obviously essential if we are to assess the relative effectiveness of the coverage of the two areas. The mere fact that, for example, Western Europe is more extensively covered than the Near East conveys little in the absence of some judgment about the relative importance of what there was to be covered in the two regions. It was felt that the best way to make this judgment was through the technique of selecting pairs of events of presumably equal "gravity", one from each region, and then comparing the treatment accorded these events in the U.S. mass media.

Suspecting that Near Eastern affairs would be more inadequately covered according to several standards, an attempt was made to resolve any doubts in the matching of events in a fashion that was unfavorable to our basic assumption. In other words, an attempt was made to be sure that the selected European event was never more important -- never of greater "gravity" -- than the matched Near Eastern event. If an error was to be made it should be in the direction of having the Near Eastern occurrence be greater in importance, though intuitive equality of importance was the goal. Thus, the research procedure would not increase the likelihood of the anticipated finding of poorer reporting of Near Eastern affairs.

One particular pair of events was examined in every content analysis. All studies drew a comparison between the media's handling of the Iraqi coup of February, 1963, and the French rejection of Britain's bid to enter the Common Market in late January, 1963. Both were deliberately selected as extremely important occurrences. The former event, at the time, possibly betokened a

momentous revision of the balance of power in the Near East which could affect the entire world while the latter incident seemingly engendered severe problems for the Western Alliance.

In addition to these two events, each of the various content analyses also examined one other pair of events dealt with in the sources under investigation. These second pairs of events, however, were purposely varied so as to increase the different kinds of occurrences being reported. The following are the additional pairs of events examined in one or another of the content analyses:<sup>2</sup>

1. The Iraqi coup of July, 1958, and DeGaulle's accession to power in France in late May, 1958.
2. The Suez crisis of November, 1956, and the Hungarian revolt of October, 1956.
3. The formation of the United Arab Republic and the Italian elections, both in 1958.
4. The UN intercession in Yemen and the French miners' strike, both in 1963.
5. The uprising against Kassim in Iraq in March, 1959, and Chancellor Adenauer's announcement on 8 April, 1959, of his decision (never implemented) to leave the Chancellorship and run for President.
6. The Syrian coup and the riot of the unemployed in London, respectively in February and March of 1963.

Finally, in addition to these specific content analyses, a survey of the New York Times Index for the year 1961 was made in an effort to obtain more comprehensive information about the volume and main categories of the coverage received by selected regions of the world in that august newspaper.

### Characteristics of Coverage

What then seem to be the distinctive features of the coverage of comparable events in Europe and the Near East by the American mass media? Are there any salient variations in the ways in which the U.S. mass media discover and handle the news emanating from the two areas? The general answer to these questions is that there do emerge regular and revealing differences in the treatment of events transpiring in the two regions -- differences along many dimensions which we shall try to make clear.

Let us look, initially, at the relative amount of space devoted to our matched pairs of happenings (which, we must assume throughout, should be equally well reported). We find that in the press and magazines of this country, more words contained in more articles were devoted to the European occurrences. The actual ratio of the amounts of space given to the events in the two areas varied from newspaper to newspaper and from magazine to magazine. However, the magnitude of the ratio was almost always such that the European event received several times the amount of space accorded the paired Near Eastern event. The only significant exception to this imbalance was the Suez crisis, which, by a small margin, garnered more space in the two San Francisco papers examined than did the Hungarian revolt. This would seem to be something of a rule-proving exception, though, for the Suez crisis was the one Near Eastern event inspected that directly involved major European powers. And, typically enough, the reporting of the Suez eruption concerned itself disproportionately with the British and French roles in the crisis and dealt far less with its internal Near Eastern repercussions.

Still viewing the grosser aspects of coverage, we note that the news-life of Near Eastern events was appreciably shorter than that of their European counterparts. The Near Eastern happening would flicker for a day or so in the

American mass media and then would fade from sight much more quickly than the matched European event. This greater ephemerality relates, as we shall see in a moment, to a broader tendency towards markedly more superficial treatment of the Near Eastern items. The secondary levels of the mass media do not pick up the Near Eastern events with anything near the same alacrity and expertise with which they seize and explain the European developments.

Another striking aspect of the treatment of European news is its relative continuity. Reports of European affairs are a ubiquitous feature of our newspapers and magazines, whereas the Near East is much more likely to be handled via the sporadic "special issue or occasional report." As a result, it is quite difficult even for the attentive audience to develop a feeling for the flow and progression of happenings in the Near East. The accurate impression of relative political instability in that area is thereby corrupted into an artificially created image of nothing but ceaseless "crises."

Discussion of the respective positions within a given newspaper of writing on the two areas will lead to further illustration of the points just made regarding continuity and depth of coverage. Actually, the differences between the matched events in their tendency to reach the front page and make headlines was not too great. Though the European events did in fact display a slightly higher probability of being "Page One" news, the ratio of front page to inner and back page placement was usually less extreme for the European stories than for the Near Eastern. The reason for this was essentially that there were many more supporting pieces elaborating and interpreting the European leads than there were for the Near Eastern articles. When we add to this fact the finding that the editorial and columnar attention granted to the Near East was sharply

less than that devoted to Europe, we begin to get a truer conception of one general and crucial difference in treatment. The analytical, supportive, secondary levels of the mass media slight Near Eastern developments even more acutely than do the straight news reports. In fact, from the viewpoint of this study, the mass media can be likened to a gigantic amplifier that gets signals of equal intensity from two different directions but is presently constructed so that it relays the signals from one direction more constantly, more intensely and more accurately (in the sense of supplying more overtones) than the other signals. The reader will note as we proceed how the additional evidence herein accumulated reinforces this conclusion. At the moment, however, one is tempted tentatively to generalize the present observation beyond its immediate context by hypothesizing as follows: if a particular category of events is slighted in the front-line, straight news coverage of the mass media it will be even more slighted in the secondary, analytical, interpretive sectors of the media. If this hypothesis is true, it is interesting to contemplate the probable consequences of this tendency for the formation of public opinion.

While there appeared to be scant difference between the paired regional reports in the inclination to use maps to buttress narrative treatment (even though the Near Eastern stories surely more required this geographical aid), pictures and, particularly, cartoons were much more likely to be found accompanying European news. Or, to take another indicator of the tendency toward relative superficiality, the actors who were specifically mentioned in accounts of Near Eastern affairs tended almost entirely to be crowned heads, potentates and premiers -- Hussein, Nasser, Saud and Feisal, Kassim, Nuri, the Shah, Musaddiq and Menderes. Mentions of the next echelon of political figures like Serraj, Baghdadi, Eghbal, Zorlu, al Rifai, et al., were much rarer than references to Couve de Murville, Willie Brandt, Pietro Nenni, Lord Home, and the like.



Scrutiny of the actual topics that were covered in the individual articles on Europe and the Near East discloses a clearly related weakness. Relatively little on the domestic level from the Near East appeared in the American mass media -- that is, on cultural matters (other than touristic advice and the fascinating exploits of Western archeologists), on sports, on personalities and on purely internal matters of human interest. Crises and calamities so dominated the news that, in contrast to Europe, hardly a glimmering of the lives of the people as people -- confronting problems not altogether different from the earnest worries that assail you and me and delighting in friendships and entertainment much as we -- penetrated the important but one-sided chronicle of national political woes.

Many publications here in this country seem to fasten onto the Near East only for two main purposes -- Cold War concern or locally related exotica. A Turkish coup occurs which redirects that country's political momentum and fundamentally alters its chances for successful development. But even the best of our journalists are inclined to react to this through articles revealingly entitled "Turkey Remains a Staunch Ally of the West." That the State Department for long was obsessed with the "unsinkable aircraft carrier" approach to this and other nations whose significance to us and the world is far more than that of short-run military advantage is no excuse for the mass media's easy adoption of the same limited view; quite the contrary.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, toward the other end of the scale of journalistic excellence, many an urban paper's interest in the Near East appears to be well summarized in the "Marblehead Man Witnesses Iraqi Coup: 'It Was Terrible,' Says Arthur P. Kewtikul" type of story in which one learns far more about the vicissitudes of the local standard bearer than about the vicissitudes of the distant nation.

Contemplation of the types of imagery used in stories on the Near East indicates, above all else, a preoccupation with violence and instability. Much of this may well be dictated by the presumably greater incidence of such phenomena in that area. Our content analyses are of little detailed help here because most of the examined events from the Near East relate to violence. This very fact, however, is itself significant in a larger and less rigorous sense. We found that in matching the Near Eastern and European events we were almost completely restricted to violent occurrences for the Near East if we were to secure items that were widely reported in many segments of the U.S. mass media. Non-violent items of considerable importance were all too frequently treated only in the New York Times and one or two other papers at best, whereas there was an ample supply of non-violent European items.

In any event, impressionistic surveillance would seem to bring out the inordinate use of terms such as "bloody," "violent," "fanatic," "rivalrous," "warring," "volatile," etc. There are too many occasions when these terms must be used in complete accuracy; hence the tendency to apply them to any and all situations is unfortunate. When there is no "blood" to be found, that fact becomes the focus of discussion, and the reporting of a situation which should help destroy the prevailing stereotype actually reinforces it. The Turkish coup in 1960, widely known in the Near East as the "gentle" or "well-mannered" coup emerged over here most commonly as the "bloodless" coup. When the Turkish military junta hanged Menderes, Zorlu and Polatkan no less eminent a commentator than C.L. Sulzberger chose to caption his otherwise temperate article, "The Stain of Blood in Turkey" -- metaphoric, no doubt, but it is the constant choice of the same bloody metaphor by writer after writer that we are pointing out.<sup>4</sup>

Though the expert is discouraged by occasional gaffe's which seem to reflect inadequate training in the history and culture of the Near East, the particular factual accuracy of American reporting there is probably its best feature. Very little, if any, of the deliberate distortion, misquoting, and failure to check out stories that plague the press of many nations is discoverable in the U.S. mass media. The more egregious reportorial imperfections are of a different order. One has the strong impression that a smaller number of sources are consulted for any given article than is true in Europe. There are fewer direct interviews and those that are obtained are with a more limited range of people (often primarily those who speak a Western language). Certainly, there is less sifting and winnowing of the news, less insightful evaluation and interpretive comment, even within the confines of a standard article. The content analyses demonstrated the fact that grammatical refinement and modification through the use of adjectives and adverbs tended to be employed significantly less in the Near Eastern reports than in the European reports. More subjectively, it is hard not to sense nuances of greater cynicism and superciliousness as well as patronization in much of the comment on the Near East, though the Near Easterner himself may exaggerate these. Perhaps not surprisingly, even after allowance has been made for inequalities of media output, there is a concomitant disinclination openly to express editorial approval or disapproval of Near Eastern happenings.<sup>5</sup>

#### Differences Between Media

Our comparison of the coverage of European and Near Eastern affairs in the American mass media has led us to a relative characterization of the Near Eastern reporting as less extensive, more ephemeral, less continuous, more superficial and more supercilious. Though we should argue that this description is applicable to almost all mass media in this country — that is, the European event is universally given greater play than the seemingly equally important Near Eastern

incident -- we do not want to suggest that the U.S. mass media are otherwise identical or even similar in the coverage they give to happenings in the Near East. The differences between media are frequently quite striking and we shall discuss a few such differences.

The television news programs analyzed awarded as much time to the Near Eastern items from our matched pairs as they did to the European items. There was no gross difference in the extent of the coverage of the two areas corresponding to that found in the preferential space allotments of the printed media. Part of this more equal treatment may be due to the much more limited format within which television operates. All news items are covered in a more condensed and limited manner, thereby reducing the chances for inter-item variation. But regional divergence in the number of news briefs dealing with somewhat prolonged happenings could have occurred and did not. Moreover, one of our analyses also included an examination of the longer, more interpretive news "roundups" that are broadcast on Sunday afternoons, and there, too, no appreciable differences in coverage appeared. Nevertheless, were we to include in our analyses the gamut of quasi-news programs like Meet the Press, Open Mind, Starring the Editors, Court of Reason, etc., and the news "commentators" as well as the straight news programs, one suspects that the results might be considerably altered.

In the newspaper sector, pronounced and discouraging differences between sources came to light. Dean Barrett of the Columbia School of Journalism has recently "chided" the U.S. press about the lack of first-rate newspapers, opining that there are but eighteen good products among the 200 major papers in this country. The present analysis would certainly support Dean Barrett's judgment. There is a chasm separating the coverage conferred on the Near East in the dozen and a half first quality newspapers and that of the remaining major newspaper

group. The important but less than earthshaking incidents, such as the UN intercession in Yemen, do not get reported at all in the press of most of the country. The wire-service dispatches describing tremors below the catastrophic level, such as the recent second abortive coup of Col. Talat Aydemir in Turkey or the Nasserite-Baathist maneuverings in Syria, seemingly get chopped down to half or less their original size. Only the shattering upheavals receive relatively full coverage in the ordinary press. The person interested in keeping well-informed about matters Near Eastern, while being dependent on any of the majority of American newspapers for his information, soon finds himself inclined to make use of the "wasteland" metaphor that has been applied to other U.S. media.

The diminished analytical and evaluative comment generally found in U.S. media coverage of the Near East is sharply outlined in the comparison between the reportorial and the interpretive news magazines -- between Time, Newsweek and U.S. News, on the one hand, and The New Republic, The Nation, The National Review and The Reporter, on the other. Time and Newsweek do a rather good job of keeping their readers posted on Near Eastern happenings -- especially if one has learned to allow for the pervasive and clever bias of Time. The more interpretive publications, however, are far more one-sided in their coverage, often slighting the Near East in extreme fashion. The rather stolid New York Times Magazine is a good example. It seems that for every discussion of Near Eastern developments, several articles appear by names such as Arnold Toynbee or Barbara Ward rehashing the same generalities regarding the Cold War or the "problems of the West." The interpretive news magazines of this country appear to be far more limited in their coverage of world events than are the regular news magazines. Furthermore, since the regular news magazines are middle-of-the-road or strongly conservative in their political outlook while the interpretive news magazines

tend on the whole to be more liberal, the absence of comment in the latter on Near Eastern developments means that these events are being relayed to the American public primarily from one point of view -- at least insofar as domestic political slants are carried over into the coverage of foreign affairs.

#### Underlying Problems in the Coverage of Near Eastern Events

So far we have stressed the inadequacies of the treatment of the Near East in most of the U.S. mass media. To be just, however, it must be recognized that the American media confront a number of special problems when they attempt to inform our citizens of incidents in these remote lands. The obstacles to coverage as effective as that achieved for Europe are much greater and should be taken into account in any honest assessment of media performance.

First of all, the cultural gulf between the United States and any of the nations of the Near East is many times deeper and broader than that separating us from Europe. Recognition of the persistent significance of a fact of this sort is the basis for today's constant distinction between West and non-West. Our American heritage is primarily European and Western, and though the too ready assumption of similarities between American and European cultures occasionally obscures and inhibits our mutual understanding, there is no doubt that the common cultural background contributes enormously to our joint respect and informed comprehension of one another.

In reporting on the Near East, the American mass media obviously cannot rely on this community of culture. Little knowledge can be assumed on the part of the audience of the geography, history, political structure, religion, language, and prominent actors of the Near East. The mass media in many ways are dependent upon the American educational system for the provision of that background which enables the public to grasp, absorb and relate the current

happenings which the media report. The typical American high school graduate, however, encounters only American and European history in his sail through school, so that his capacity to handle information about other cultural areas is relatively feeble. The mass media must operate within this drastic limitation in reporting on the Near East to such an audience.

As a matter of fact, the situation is actually worse than this, for there are many indications that the prevailing American stereotypes regarding the Near East are not merely the minimal simplistic notions of deserts and camels, harems, oil wells and palm trees, mosques and minarets, and inhabitants that are 99 and 44/100 per cent Bedouin Arabs. The religious strife between Christian and Muslim historically led to much propaganda by each about the other, resulting in stereotypes that have a high negative content. Since well before the times of Machiavelli and Shakespeare, epithets of "infidel," "heathen," "Terrible Turk," "circumcised dog," and "assassin," have clanged back and forth between antagonists on both sides. In more modern days, as statesmen famous as Gladstone ground partisan advantage from verbally flaying the Turk, Arab, or Persian, the elements of laziness, weakness, "sickness" and stupidity have been added to the pernicious, "cruel infidel" picture of the Near Easterner. Consequently, for example, the sociologist Bogardus, studying the opinions of American college students in the 'Thirties' regarding the "social distance" from themselves of various groups, found the (physiologically Alpine) Turks grouped far below any Southern European or Slavic nation and relegated to a position among the "people of other races" at the very bottom of the pyramid of prejudice. Not until the Korean War was this image revised. In short, mass media coverage of the Near East must, even today, function against not merely a simplistic and innocuous vision of the area and its people, but against a stereotypical image

that has strongly negative vestigial components to it. This is why the "bloody" and "violent" cliches are so unfortunate if used indiscriminantly. They reinforce the existing prejudicial set.

Profound cultural differences between America and the Near East do not act only to produce a more naive or uninformed audience for which all Arabic names sound alike and for which Cairo lies, if anywhere, on the Mississippi rather than on the Nile. American journalists must also be drawn from this same culture. Securing a correspondent with a reasonable background in European affairs and languages is relatively easy. But one can imagine that locating a prospective Near Eastern correspondent similarly familiar with a language of the area and its general culture is a bit more difficult. It is also <sup>an</sup> especially formidable task for a journalist to "pick up" the requisite linguistic and cultural competence after he arrives in the Near East. Thus, even with the best of will, the mass media are forced to depend upon many representatives whose training for their posts is, in an absolute sense, much less effective than that of their colleagues working in Europe. The correspondent laboring in the Near East who does not speak the language well becomes doubly dependent on his native "stringer," who in turn may be less trained as a journalist than his European counterpart. In this manner and in others, the general cultural dissimilarity between the United States and the Near East acts to impede American mass media coverage of the area.

The foreign correspondent attempting to understand and relate to an American audience events transpiring in the Near East suffers from another major disadvantage, namely, the lack of supplementary materials. All sorts



of aids and supports which contribute to the effectiveness of the journalist in this country or in Europe are lacking. There is frequently no census so that basic descriptive information about the indigenous population is lacking. Pictures and press releases are distressingly few. Polls and surveys are not available. The assemblage of foreign correspondents from other U.S. and European media is much smaller in size, which means that the journalist has fewer professional cronies and critics to act as whetstones for his ideas, to contribute to the general fund of information, to help find ways to overcome difficulties, and to correct him should he meander from the standards of his profession. Similarly, the support given by the academic profession to the journalist working in the Near East is appreciably reduced from that given the European correspondent. The books and monographs reflecting years of trained study of Near Eastern affairs are very few. If a reporter wants to mention the electoral system in Turkey, the types of people recruited to the bureaucracy in Iran, or the history of labor unions in Egypt, for example, and seeks expert literature on the subject, he is more likely than not to be frustrated. Many of the fundamental, professional working aids on which the conscientious journalist relies are reduced or entirely lacking in the Near East.

Another factor contributing to the relatively impoverished working resources of the Near Eastern correspondent is that of the state of the indigenous media. Though we cannot go into the details, the press in many countries of the Near East does not display high professional standards and is frequently under state control, so that the American journalist cannot place the same reliance on it that he can invest in the "prestige papers" of Western Europe. Radio and television are almost always governmental agents, often emitting more propaganda than news. When we realize that journalists depend on the mass media as much or more than anyone else, we can understand how hampered the Near Eastern correspondent of an American medium is by the relative inadequacy of the Near Eastern

Discussion of the shortcomings of the media in the Near East leads us to a final illustration of the difficulties under which the American correspondent in the area toils. Partly as a result of observations of the workings of their own media, the politicians and the publics in the Near East have formed an impression of the reporter which is at times even less favorable than that sometimes found in this country. Insensitivity to human feelings, intent to exploit every situation for its "news value" alone, inaccuracy, untrustworthiness, and the like, are vivid and common components of this impression. Since the local Near Eastern press, when it is not under governmental control, is likely to be a party press, there are added grounds for this image which are not found in the United States. In any event, the American correspondent in the area is also afflicted by this generalized notion of the character of the journalist largely based upon the activities of the local media.

The hyper-cautious reaction to the journalist that is so prominent in the Near East is unfortunately not simply a result of faulty performance by the media of the area. If it were, the remedy would be easier. A prime factor compounding the difficulties of the foreign correspondent is the extreme political sensitivity of the governments and parties in the region. Bad as the local media often are, this sensitivity has not been produced merely by bitter experiences in dealing with local reporters. Most Near Eastern societies are going through deep, dangerous and delicate periods of change which create issues that are literally life and death matters for the men concerned. The price of political failure is usually extremely high so that the actors desire to minimize all possible extraneous factors. The foreign (and local) media are often viewed as just such a factor. The aim of the politician in power is therefore to keep the foreign media minimally content but to prevent their acquiring any information that could be truly disturbing. This goal is significantly strengthened by a

lingering xenophobia that has uncomfortably many historical justifications. It is further augmented by the Near Eastern politician's awareness of our Cold War orientation to many facts which he thinks should be viewed primarily in domestic perspective. The upshot of these and many other considerations is that it is particularly difficult for the American journalist in the Near East to get access to important types of information and influential viewpoints. The job of the foreign correspondent from this country in the Near East is complex, arduous and frequently dangerous. It calls for great professional and personal skill in the face of extraordinary obstacles, and these facts must be given full weight in forming any judgment of the caliber of the job done by the U.S. mass media in covering this vital region.

Standards of Evaluation -- What to Expect?

We have tried to provide a description of the types of coverage that our media are giving the Near East, of the differences between media, and of the special problems that confront the American mass media in performing their reportorial role in that part of the world. A final question that arises is that of the standards by which the work of the U.S. mass media in the Near East is to be judged. What are the expectations that seem legitimately applicable to the performance of American media in their treatment of this widely misunderstood region? Can we realistically expect more than we are receiving? What difference does it make if the Near East is poorly covered in the American news channels?

Let us confess, first of all, that we have somewhat misled the reader up to now. We have implied that the coverage of "European" events was substantially superior to the coverage of matched Near Eastern events. The term "European," however, was not strictly accurate, for we were referring only to the United Kingdom, France, West Germany and Italy. To extend our examination we also

looked into the treatment accorded happenings in another portion of Europe, Scandinavia, during the year 1961 and we compared this with the handling of Near Eastern affairs. From that altered perspective the Near East fared not badly at all. The space, number of articles, location, and subject of New York Times pieces on Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and the United Arab Republic were compared with the same aspects of Times pieces on the four Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden). If we exclude general articles on "the Near East" and "Scandinavia" and consider only those articles specifically involving the countries mentioned, we learn that in 1961 the Times had one third more separate articles on the Near Eastern countries than it had on the Scandinavian countries (191-142). The Scandinavian reports were more likely to appear on the front page (14-6), and the Near Eastern pieces of course were the only ones to mention violence (28-0). Were we to add the Times items referring to the Near East and Scandinavia in general, rather than to the specific nations enumerated, the cited imbalances would become even more striking. It seems a plausible inference from this and other evidence that the New York Times, at least, offers more material on the Near East than it does on the four Scandinavian countries, though once again some event-matching technique or its analytical substitute is necessary to discount differences in the occurrence of events of true international significance. Along these lines, it would be useful to know how the coverage of the Near East compares with the coverage of many other non-European regions throughout the world -- regions such as Africa, the Far East, Australasia, and Latin America. Such an inquiry was unfortunately beyond the scope of the present study. Hence, we simply issue here the caveat that while the coverage of the Near East in the mass media of the United States is decidedly inferior to that afforded the major nations of Western Europe on a

matched events basis, it may well be that the coverage of all other non-European nations is similarly weak. The Near Eastern reporting may not be so deficient when compared with that granted the other developing areas of the world. Resorting to the unsatisfying pronouncement of the academic, we solemnly declare that "further research on the subject seems necessary."

A widely known categorization of the sorts of standards that are used in judging the performance of the press emphasizes two dominant norms: the press as an instrument of information and instruction in a democratic society, and the press as an economically competitive industry.<sup>6</sup> Wielding the former criterion, we should pronounce most of the U.S. mass media sadly remiss in the performance of their duty. The attentive citizen, to say nothing of the avid expert, cannot keep himself well informed about Near Eastern events through the American mass media -- referring particularly to the press, radio and television, and excluding the specialized journals. From this viewpoint, the public is being badly served.

If, on the other hand, we regard the press and other mass media as a commercial industry striving to remain solvent by catering to the wants of the public -- wants expressed through the purchase of periodicals and time spent attending to the electronic media -- we find that it is hard to fault media performance. There is a sense in which "the public gets the mass media it deserves" as surely as it "gets the government it deserves." Nevertheless, though such a condemnation satisfies one's indignation at the American public's failure to demand more of our mass media, it is hardly constructive. The mass media have a crucial leadership function to perform in this country as well as a vital duty to service, disproportionately, opinion-leading elements. They must take it upon themselves to discharge these tasks. When they fall short, it is the equal responsibility of the academic community to suggest their shortcomings to them. Such is the spirit in which this article has been written.

## FOOTNOTES

1. The content analyses were performed by Nancy Arnone, Howard Banow, Richard Barringer, Arthur Blackman, Marcia Koth, Catherine McArdle, Robert Melson, Thomas Perrone, Leslie Roos, and Rosemary Straussnig. I am most grateful to all of these able people for permitting me to use the results of their labor.
2. Turkish and Iranian events were not included among the content analyses in order to concentrate on those areas where the author's personal knowledge was least adequate.
3. It sometimes seems to me, on comparing the U.S. and British press, that one conspicuous void among our newspapers is that of the counterpart of The Manchester Guardian. We have a generally admirable quasi-official paper corresponding to The Time's in our New York Times. But an equally prestigious, less "official" newspaper is unfortunately lacking.
4. New York Times, September 18, 1961. And even Sulzberger, who is usually judicious, sometimes succumbs to the dominant biases with highly misleading statements like, "Kemal persecuted Kurds and Armenians; Inom<sup>a</sup> persecuted Greeks, Armenians and Jews; and Menderes briefly persecuted Greeks." New York Times, May 4, 1960.
5. A important underlying reason for some of these imperfections undoubtedly lies in the very meager resources devoted to the Near East by the U.S. media. The New York Times usually seems to have only one or two men covering the entire area. Consequently, it is forced to rely, in its coverage of Turkey, for example, on the dispatches of The Times of London, which maintains a permanent correspondent in Ankara. One man, stationed in Cairo and given Occasional assistance during crises, can hardly be expected to do a first-rate job on so many diverse notions.
6. Report of the Royal Commission on the Press, 1947-49, pp. 100-106, reprinted in Bernard Berelson and Morris Janowitz (eds.), Reader in Public Opinion and Communication, (Glencoe: The Free Press, enlarged edition 1953), pp. 489-496.