

The Media Strive to Control Us Completely

Decades before the electronic media giants rose to their dizzying heights of power and began canceling those whom they decided to bully, a man named Leopold Tyrmand, the future founder of *Chronicles* magazine, exposed the false self-image of the media as they claimed to defend our freedoms, when they were really aiming for absolute social control. Today, Tyrmand's remarks in his widely noted *American Scholar* essay, "[The Media Shangri-la](#): Where Everyone is Free, but some are Freer," stand out as masterful satirical commentary conveying self-evident criticisms.

Taking his title from the Himalayan utopia depicted in James Hilton's bestselling novel [Lost Horizon](#), the name for this imaginary place eventually came to denote a secure and serene environment, which, according to Tyrmand, is what the media oligarchs presently enjoy.

Leopold Tyrmand was a renowned satirist, novelist, and outspoken anti-Communist in Poland until he emigrated to the U.S. in 1966. Settling in this country, he continued to write and publish in the Polish language, his works a valued form of underground literature in Communist Poland. "The Media Shangri-la," in which Tyrmand unloads on the mendacity and hypocrisy of the American media of 1975, shows that he was able to write just as arrestingly in English as in his native tongue.

Although familiar with his subject, Tyrmand's essay on the media deliberately gives the impression of one who is an outsider looking in on a ridiculous spectacle. It is an enterprise, we are told, in which "disruptive triviality became natural or social process, gawky permissiveness became nonconformity, vulgarity became health, faddishness humanism,

exploitative smartness revolutionary change.” He further notes:

With a power to create something out of nothing, the media began, not long ago, to forge their own image—that of a weak, harassed entity whose performance of lawful service to the public is endangered by a brutal, omnipresent government. Exactly the opposite is true.

Tyrmand, who listened to the media attentively after arriving on these shores, was particularly struck by how cavalierly but also self-righteously they stretched the truth. He spoke about the “totalitarian gimmick” seemingly perfected by the Nazis and Communists, but which the American media further developed. These masters of deceit repeated lies with such frequency that the public could no longer tell “the true from the untrue.” Worse, the American media did not simply repeat untruths, but they “produce... endless versions” of their invented narratives, while striking the mock “heroic stance taken by those dedicated to fighting for unpopular causes.”

Although Tyrmand’s censures about the American media—which by now have reproduced themselves in almost every Western country—are as valid today as when he wrote them 45 years ago, certain circumstances have changed, and it would be remiss of me not to mention what they are. The lies that aroused Tyrmand’s concern and anger most intensely were those related to the concerted effort by our journalists and TV commentators to whitewash Communist aggressions and atrocities and blame the U.S. for all clashes with the Soviets, Red Chinese, or their proxies. Far-left journalists like Daniel Schorr and Carl Bernstein, some of whom had intergenerational Communist family associations, were lionized by their colleagues as fearless investigative reporters, and anything embarrassing to the American side during the Vietnam War or helpful to our Communist enemies became a news story in the national press, most conspicuously on CBS and in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

Tyrmand's references to the mock heroics of those who leaked the Pentagon Papers, a classified report on the Vietnam War prepared by the Department of Defense under Secretary Robert McNamara in 1967, show us the mindset of the media even then. Tyrmand notes that while those who leaked classified information expected others to pat them on their backs for being brave, what their experiences really taught was "the more powerful the institution, the more hypocrisy." Daniel Schorr in a rare moment of candor admitted that an FBI investigation to which he may have been subject made him more "saleable." In any case, noted Schorr, "I had a big corporation behind me," namely CBS.

Other priorities of the media elite have changed since Tyrmand penned his memorable essay. Today the media no longer boasts of being a counterforce to the military and secret service. Instead they are an integral part of the same power structure. There is no distance between these wielders of power; all of them are closely allied to the Democratic Party and woke politics.

But even here Tyrmand may not be entirely out of step. He argues again and again in his essay that the media have placed themselves "**beyond** the practical reach of anyone." Furthermore, "Deciding who stays on the stage and who leaves, while they keep the stage gives them an air of invincibility that seems unpardonable to all those to whom democracy is instinct, intuition and an elusive promise of something better." Even if onetime political rivals have become their closest allies, the media, whatever the technical form in which they operate, have not given up their efforts to control us completely.

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