

that such developments succeed can we hope to see media that are free and independent." Yet the prescriptions include greater control of the media by grass-root organizations and more public (i.e., government-sponsored) television and radio. The resulting paradox reflects an important philosophical orientation of the book, namely that the authors are not genuinely critical of media control *per se*, but instead, the specific configuration of interests that presently control the system.

Secondly, the authors frequently speak of the actions of "the" media, implying a monolithic media system and uniformity of journalistic action. It is certainly true that a few central news organizations dominate in terms of providing frames and facts to secondary news organizations, political decisionmakers and other news consumers. However, publications such as *The Nation*, *The Guardian*, *The National Review* and *The American Spectator* exist specifically to provide competing frames and facts. Although these publications may have relatively little direct influence on public policy because of their limited readership and delegitimized status as "alternative" media, they serve an important function by mobilizing politically active and efficacious groups which, in turn, may be able to attract the attention of the mainstream media to a cause by "creating" news.

Third, the data used to substantiate various aspects of the model are not consistently strong. The authors' reliance on content-analytic data and anecdotal evidence is reminiscent of the media bias critiques by Edith Efron and Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, who take a right rather than left perspective. Coding categories and selection of examples necessarily reflect researchers' filters and frames, and nowhere is this more evident than in the coding categories selected by Herman and Chomsky to summarize New York *Times* coverage of 1984 elections in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

A final minor criticism stems from the authors' apparent unfamiliarity with some rather important work in the field of mass communication. For example, Herman and Chomsky describe how the centralization of media power has been partially offset by the counterforces of decentralization, and yet do not mention James Carey's seminal work on centripetal and centrifugal forces. In addition, the authors construct an elaborate model of structural influences on media content but do not acknowledge the work of Phillip Tichenor, George Donohue and Clarice Olien on structural influences on news.

Despite these and other concerns, Herman and Chomsky's work represents a milestone in

the burgeoning literature on the political economy. It will, no doubt, ascend to the position of a mandatory source of ideas and insight for advanced students and scholars in that area, as well as communication and public opinion, and media and society.

CHARLES T. SALMON

Assistant Professor of Mass Communication
University of Wisconsin-Madison

HERTSGAARD, MARK. *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux. 408 pp., \$22.50.

► In the steady debate over media bias, a few points can be granted: the big media are influential, staffed with journalists who don't resemble the average American, and who get defensive when attacked. From there, left and right critiques diverge along different value-based paths toward their conclusions. Conservatives think journalists are hopelessly biased and antagonistic toward mainstream values and legitimate power-holders, attributing it more to the liberal "culture" than to organizational imperatives.

The left position grants that the press may be at times reformist, but, in the larger picture, rarely critical of establishment values. Through ownership, interlocking directorates, and other symbiotic links, the press stands with rather than apart from the power structure. As such, the mainstream media are said to represent no independent power base and voice, which might serve as a useful corrective and counter-weight to the establishment. This book's title leaves no doubt that the author takes the latter view, and he single-mindedly presents his evidence accordingly.

Mark Hertsgaard, a former fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, assumes that an adversarial position produces better news content: "It is the job of the press to find and present the truth, despite officially erected obstacles" (p. 8). In his view, the press abdicated its responsibility during the Reagan years, giving the president little critical coverage. This book is among the recent attempts to come to grips with the success of the Reagan model of press management (see also Herman and Chomsky, reviewed above). The 1988 campaign only intensified this issue, as the Bush "spin doctors" easily handled reporters at their own game. Indeed, many journalists Hertsgaard interviewed, perhaps uneasy at these developments, seemed rather defensive. Many in the mainstream press have a right to feel embattled, knowing they are under attack from both the left and right simultaneously.

To make his case, Hertsgaard relies mostly on interviews (175 he says), background biographies of key Reagan media players (Gergen, Deaver, etc.), and a review of, by now, familiar administration PR techniques: attractive visuals, "line of the day," regulating the flow of information to reporters, and coordinating local media markets. His somewhat prosecutorial approach includes the use of Q & A, and rebuttal quotes. He notes that even administration figures liked their first-term coverage, uncharacteristic for presidential staffs over the years.

The author cites a few academic sources, but otherwise does little theorizing. However, readers familiar with more scholarly treatments may enjoy, as I did, the book's many revealing anecdotes, which help color in and confirm the theoretical frameworks developed elsewhere (e.g., Warren Breed, Herbert Gans, Oscar Gandy, and Todd Gitlin). In particular, what Gaye Tuchmann calls the "strategic ritual" of objectivity is employed by many journalists—defensive over their performance during Reagan's terms—to get themselves off the hook ("They said what Reagan said"). Yet, Hertsgaard finds this "objectivity," being satisfied to report administration statements at face value, at odds with desirable adversary journalism.

Although his arguments are not very novel, Hertsgaard has written a useful book by relating them, in an accessible way, to press performance under Reagan. The media critiques in *The Nation* and *Mother Jones* don't find their way into the public debate as often, and Marxist-style analysis by scholars like Michael Parenti is not very accessible to the general public. In fact, already the *Columbia Journalism Review* has noticed Hertsgaard, citing him as making a case against the more familiar liberal-bias critique (which seems to get the mainstream press's attention more often).

The lack of a clear theoretical base sometimes muddies the water. For example, the author lapses into a contradictory conception of power in his final prescriptions. Having spent the entire book pointing out the imbalance of power between government and the press, he concludes that press power is increasing with few checks and balances. Thus, I presume he means it could take on the government were it of a mind to. This, of course, ignores the fact that the press derives much of its power from its interdependence with government, and doesn't specify how independent power could be developed.

Their political stance aside, books like this one do help fill in some of the record about press performance, particularly relating to such

foreign policy issues as Central America. Why weren't certain facts brought out? Why didn't other media pick up stories, as they often do, from the *New York Times* disputing administration positions on Grenada and Iran-Contra? Why did the press keep referring to Reagan's popularity during his first two years, when his approval ratings showed he was one of the least popular presidents in the post-World War II era? The press was fond of noting that Reagan was personally more popular than his programs, although that has been true of all modern presidents.

Although different premises will yield different conclusions about media coverage, a thorough documentation of that coverage and underlying conditions helps assure that the facts are clear and available in any case.

STEPHEN D. REESE

Associate Professor of Journalism
University of Texas at Austin

RACHLIN, ALLAN, *News as Hegemonic Reality: American Political Culture and the Framing of News Accounts*. New York: Praeger, 1988. 168 pp. \$37.95 cloth.

► The basic question posed in this book by Rachlin, an assistant professor of sociology at Bradford College, is whether American news coverage "undermines" democratic society. The thrust of his argument is that the dominant world view of the American political establishment constrains news discourse, reinforcing the political order. Rachlin's study of hegemony focuses on two cases for illustration—the KAL 007 incident and the Polish Solidarity trade union.

Rachlin reviews news coverage of the downing of KAL 007 in *Time*, *Newsweek*, the *New York Times* and *The Nation* from the U.S., *Maclean's* and *The Globe and Mail* from Canada, and *The Granma Weekly Review* from Cuba. The news frames used by the American publications were consistent with the U.S. government's official position that the plane had inadvertently veered over Soviet territory and the Soviets knowingly shot down the passenger jet. One exception in the American coverage was *The Nation*, which argued that the plane might have been on a spy mission.

The two Canadian publications, while adopting the mainstream American frames, provided an additional context—the political struggle between the two superpowers. *Granma* presented the issue from the Soviet perspective. Rachlin's ultimate conclusion was that the news coverage in American media and the state-controlled *Granma* ultimately achieve the same

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