

# Introduction

This book is about the mass media, the New Left, and their complex relations in historical time. It tells of one fateful conflict over control of the public cultural space in a society saturated with mass media.

Since the advent of radio broadcasting half a century ago, social movements have organized, campaigned, and formed their social identities on a floodlit social terrain. The economic concentration of the media and their speed and efficiency in spreading news and telling stories have combined to produce a new situation for movements seeking to change the order of society. Yet movements, media, and sociology alike have been slow to explore the meanings of modern cultural surroundings.

People directly know only tiny regions of social life; their beliefs and loyalties lack deep tradition. The modern situation is precisely the common vulnerability to rumor, news, trend, and fashion: lacking the assurances of tradition, or of shared political power, people are pressed to rely on mass media for bearings in an obscure and shifting world. And the process is reciprocal: pervasive mass media help pulverize political community, thereby deepening popular dependence on the media themselves. The media bring a manufactured public world into private space. From within their private crevices, people find themselves relying on the media for concepts, for images of their heroes, for guiding information, for emotional charges, for a recognition of public values, for symbols in general, even for language. Of all the institutions of daily

life, the media specialize in orchestrating everyday consciousness—by virtue of their pervasiveness, their accessibility, their centralized symbolic capacity. They name the world's parts, they certify reality *as* reality—and when their certifications are doubted and opposed, as they surely are, it is those same certifications that limit the terms of effective opposition. To put it simply: the mass media have become core systems for the distribution of ideology.

That is to say, every day, directly or indirectly, by statement and omission, in pictures and words, in entertainment and news and advertisement, the mass media produce fields of definition and association, symbol and rhetoric, through which ideology becomes manifest and concrete. One important task for ideology is to define—and also define away—its opposition. This has always been true, of course. But the omnipresence and centralization of the mass media, and their integration into the dominant economic sector and the web of the State, create new conditions for opposition. The New Left of the 1960s, facing nightly television news, wire service reports, and a journalistic ideology of “objectivity,” inhabited a cultural world vastly different from that of the Populist small farmers’ movement of the 1890s, with its fifteen hundred autonomous weekly newspapers, or that of the worker-based Socialist Party of the early 1900s, with its own newspapers circulating in the millions. By the sixties, American society was dominated by a *consolidated* corporate economy, no longer by a *nascent* one. The dream of Manifest Destiny had become realized in a missile-brandishing national security state. And astonishingly, America was now the first society in the history of the world with more college students than farmers. The social base of radical opposition, accordingly, had shifted—from small farmers and immigrant workers to blacks, students, youth, and women. What was transformed was not only the dominant *structures* of capitalist society, but its *textures*. The whole quality of political movements, their procedures and tones, their cultural commitments, had changed. There was now a mass market culture industry, and opposition movements had to reckon with it—had to operate on its edges, in its interstices, and against it. The New Left, like its Populist and Socialist Party predecessors, had its own scatter of “underground” newspapers, with hundreds of thousands of readers, but every night some twenty million Americans watched Walter Cronkite’s news, an almost equal number watched Chet Huntley’s and David Brinkley’s, and over sixty million bought daily newspapers which purchased most of

their news from one of two international wire services. In a floodlit society, it becomes extremely difficult, perhaps unimaginable, for an opposition movement to define itself and its world view, to build up an infrastructure of self-generated cultural institutions, outside the dominant culture.<sup>1</sup> Truly, the process of making meanings in the world of centralized commercial culture has become comparable to the process of making value in the world through labor. Just as people *as workers* have no voice in what they make, how they make it, or how the product is distributed and used, so do people *as producers of meaning* have no voice in what the media make of what they say or do, or in the context within which the media frame their activity. The resulting meanings, now mediated, acquire an eerie substance in the real world, standing outside their ostensible makers and confronting them as an alien force. The social meanings of intentional action have been deformed beyond recognition.

In the late twentieth century, political movements feel called upon to rely on large-scale communications in order to *matter*, to say who they are and what they intend to publics they want to sway; but in the process they become "newsworthy" only by submitting to the implicit rules of newsmaking, by conforming to journalistic notions (themselves embedded in history) of what a "story" is, what an "event" is, what a "protest" is. The processed image then tends to *become* "the movement" for wider publics and institutions who have few alternative sources of information, or none at all, about it; that image has its impact on public policy, and when the movement is being opposed, what is being opposed is in large part a set of mass-mediated images. Mass media define the public significance of movement events or, by blanking them out, actively deprive them of larger significance. Media images also become implicated in a movement's self-image; media certify leaders and officially noteworthy "personalities"; indeed, they are able to convert leadership into *celebrity*, something quite different. The forms of coverage accrete into systematic framing, and this framing, much amplified, helps determine the movement's fate.

For what defines a movement as "good copy" is often flamboyance, often the presence of a media-certified celebrity-leader, and usually a certain fit with whatever frame the newsmakers have

1. This point is made by Walter Adamson, "Beyond Reform and Revolution: Notes on Political Education in Gramsci, Habermas and Arendt," *Theory and Society* 6 (November 1978): 429-460.

construed to be "the story" at a given time; but these qualities of the image are not what movements intend to be their projects, their identities, their goals. Yet while they constrict and deform movements, the media do amplify the issues which fuel these same movements; as I argue at length in Part III, they expose scandal in the State and in the corporations, while reserving to duly constituted authority the legitimate right to remedy evils. The liberal media quietly invoke the need for reform—while disparaging movements that radically oppose the system that needs reforming.

The routines of journalism, set within the economic and political interests of the news organizations, normally and regularly combine to select certain versions of reality over others. Day by day, *normal* organizational procedures define "the story," identify the protagonists and the issues, and suggest appropriate attitudes toward them. Only episodically, in moments of political crisis and large-scale shifts in the overarching hegemonic ideology, do political and economic managers and owners intervene directly to re-gear or reinforce the prevailing journalistic routines. But most of the time the taken-for-granted code of "objectivity" and "balance" presses reporters to seek out scruffy-looking, chanting, "Viet Cong" flag-waving demonstrators and to counterpose them to reasonable-sounding, fact-brandishing authorities. Calm and cautionary tones of voice affirm that all "disturbance" is or should be under control by rational authority; code words like *disturbance* commend the established normality; camera angles and verbal shibboleths ("and that's the way it is") enforce the integrity and authority of the news anchorman and commend the inevitability of the established order. Hotheads carry on, the message connotes, while wiser heads, officials and reporters both, with superb self-control, watch the unenlightened ones make trouble.

Yet these conventions originate, persist, and shift in historical time. The world of news production is not self-enclosed; for commercial as well as professional reasons, it cannot afford to ignore big ideological changes. Yesterday's ignored or ridiculed kook becomes today's respected "consumer activist," while at the same time the mediated image of the wild sixties yields to the image of the laid-back, apathetic, self-satisfied seventies. Yesterday's revolutionary John Froines of the Chicago Seven, who went to Washington in 1971 to shut down the government, goes to work for it in 1977 at a high salary; in 1977, Mark Rudd surfaces from the Weather Underground, and the sturdy meta-father Walter Cron-

kite chuckles approvingly as he reports that Mark's father thinks the age of thirty is "too old to be a revolutionary"—these are widely publicized signs of presumably calmer, saner times. Meanwhile, movements for utility rate reform, for unionization in the South, for full employment, for disarmament, and against nuclear power—movements which are not led by "recognized leaders" (those whom the media selectively acknowledged as celebrities in the first place) and which fall outside the prevailing frames ("the New Left is dead," "America is moving to the right")—are routinely neglected or denigrated—until the prevailing frame changes (as it did after the accident at Three Mile Island). An activist against nuclear weapons, released from jail in May 1978 after a series of demonstrations at the Rocky Flats, Colorado, factory that manufactures plutonium triggers for all American H-bombs, telephoned an editor he knew in the *New York Times's* Washington bureau to ask whether the *Times* had been covering these demonstrations and arrests. No, the editor said, adding: "America is tired of protest. America is tired of Daniel Ellsberg." Blackouts do take place; the editorial or executive censor rationalizes his expurgation, condescendingly and disingenuously, as the good shepherd's fair-minded act of professional news judgment, as his service to the benighted, homogenized, presumably sovereign audience. The closer an issue is to the core interests of national political elites, the more likely is a blackout of news that effectively challenges that interest. That there is safety in the country's nuclear weapons program is, to date, a core principle; and so news of its menace is extremely difficult to get reported—far more difficult, for example, than news about dangers of nuclear power after Three Mile Island. But if the issue is contested at an elite level, or if an elite position has not yet crystallized, journalism's more regular approach is to *process* social opposition, to control its image and to diffuse it at the same time, to absorb what can be absorbed into the dominant structure of definitions and images and to push the rest to the margins of social life.

The processed message becomes complex. To take a single example of a news item: on the CBS Evening News of May 8, 1976, Dan Rather reported that the FBI's burglaries and wiretaps began in the thirties and continued through World War II and the Cold War; and he concluded the piece by saying that these activities reached a peak "during the civil disturbances of the sixties." In this piece we can see some of the contradictory workings of broadcast

journalism—and the limits within which contradictory forces play themselves out. First of all, Rather was conveying the information that a once sacrosanct sector of the State had been violating the law for decades. Second, and more subtly—with a clipped, no-nonsense manner and a tough-but-gentle, trustworthy, Watergate-certified voice of technocracy—he was deploring this law-breaking, lending support to those institutions within the State that brought it to the surface and now proposed to stop it, and affirming that the media are integral to this self-correcting system as a whole. Third, he was defining a onetime political opposition *outside* the State as “civil disturbance.” The black and student opposition movements of the sixties, which would look different if they were called, say, “movements for peace and justice,” were reduced to nasty little things. Through his language, Rather was inviting the audience to identify with forces of reason within the State: with the very source of the story, most likely. In a single news item, with (I imagine) no deliberate forethought, Rather was (a) identifying an abuse of government, (b) legitimating reform within the existing institutions, and (c) rendering illegitimate popular or radical opposition outside the State. The news that man has bitten dog carries an unspoken morality: it proposes to coax men to stop biting those particular dogs, so that the world can be restored to its essential soundness. In such quiet fashion, not deliberately, and without calling attention to this spotlighting process, the media divide movements into legitimate main acts and illegitimate sideshows, so that these distinctions appear “natural,” matters of “common sense.”<sup>2</sup>

What makes the world beyond direct experience look natural is a media *frame*.<sup>3</sup> Certainly we cannot take for granted that the world depicted is simply the world that exists. Many things exist. At each moment the world is rife with events. Even within a given event there is an infinity of noticeable details. Frames are principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters. In everyday life, as Erving Goffman has amply demonstrated, we frame reality in order to negotiate it, manage it, comprehend it, and choose

2. For further analysis of the meaning of this and other television news items, see Todd Gitlin, “Spotlights and Shadows: Television and the Culture of Politics,” *College English* 38 (April 1977): 791–796.

3. On media frames, see Gaye Tuchman, *Making News* (New York: The Free Press, 1978); and Stuart Hall, “Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse,” mimeographed paper, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, England, 1973.

appropriate repertoires of cognition and action.<sup>4</sup> *Media frames*, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports. *Media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual.* Frames enable journalists to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely: to recognize it as information, to assign it to cognitive categories, and to package it for efficient relay to their audiences. Thus, for organizational reasons alone, frames are unavoidable, and journalism is organized to regulate their production. Any analytic approach to journalism—indeed, to the production of any mass-mediated content—must ask: What is the frame here? Why this frame and not another? What patterns are shared by the frames clamped over this event and the frames clamped over that one, by frames in different media in different places at different moments? And how does the news-reporting institution regulate these regularities?

And then: What difference do the frames make for the larger world?

The issue of the influence of mass media on larger political currents does not, of course, emerge only with the rise of broadcasting. In the Paris of a century and a half ago, when the commercial press was young, a journalistic novice and *littérateur*-around-town named Honoré de Balzac was already fascinated by the force of commercialized images. Central to his vivid semiautobiographical novel, *Lost Illusions*, was the giddy, corroded career of the journalist. Balzac saw that the press degraded writers into purveyors of commodities. Writing in 1839 about the wild and miserable spectacle of "A Provincial Great Man in Paris," Balzac in one snatch of dinner-party dialogue picked up the dispute aborning over political consequences of a mass press; he was alert to the fears of reactionaries and the hopes of Enlightenment liberals alike:

"The power and influence of the press are only at their dawn," said Finot. "Journalism is in its infancy, it will grow and grow. Ten years hence everything will be subjected to publicity. Thought will enlighten everything, it—"

4. Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp. 10–11 and *passim*.

"Will blight everything," interposed Blondet.

"That's a *bon mot*," said Claude Vignon.

"It will make kings," said Lousteau.

"It will unmake monarchies," said the diplomat.

"If the press did not exist," said Blondet, "we could get along without it; but it's here, so we live on it."

"You will die of it," said the diplomat. "Don't you see that the superiority of the masses, assuming that you enlighten them, would make individual greatness the more difficult of attainment; that, if you sow reasoning power in the heart of the lower classes, you will reap revolution, and that you will be the first victims?"<sup>5</sup>

Balzac's ear for hopes and fears and new social tensions was acute; he was present at the making of a new institution in a new social era. Since then, of course, radio and now television have become standard home furnishings. And in considerable measure broadcast content has become part of the popular ideological furniture as well. But while researchers debate the exact "effects" of mass media on the popularity of presidential candidates and presidents, or the "effects" on specific patterns of voting or the salience of issues, evidence quietly accumulates that the texture of political life has changed since broadcasting became a central feature of American life. Media certainly help set the agendas for political discourse; although they are far from autonomous, they do not passively reflect the agendas of the State, the parties, the corporations, or "public opinion."<sup>6</sup> The centralization and commercialization of the mass media of communication make them instruments of cultural dominance on a scale unimagined even by Balzac. In some ways the very ubiquity of the mass media removes media *as a whole system* from the scope of positivist social analysis; for how may we "measure" the "impact" of a social force which is omnipresent within social life and which has a great deal to do with

5. Honoré de Balzac, *Lost Illusions*, trans. G. Burnham Ives (Philadelphia: George Barrie, 1898), Vol. 2, p. 112.

6. Least of all, public opinion. Evidence is accumulating that the priorities conveyed by the media in their treatment of political issues lead public opinion rather than following it. See Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36 (1972): 176-187; Jack M. McLeod, Lee B. Becker, and James E. Byrnes, "Another Look at the Agenda-Setting Function of the Press," *Communication Research* 1 (April 1974): 131-166; Lee B. Becker, Maxwell E. McCombs, and Jack M. McLeod, "The Development of Political Cognitions," in Steven H. Chaffee, ed., *Political Communication* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1975), pp. 21-63, especially pp. 38-53; and Jay G. Blumler and Denis McQuail, *Television in Politics: Its Uses and Influence* (London: Faber, 1968).



constituting it? I work from the assumption that the mass media are, to say the least, a significant social force in the forming and delimiting of public assumptions, attitudes, and moods—of ideology, in short. They sometimes generate, sometimes amplify a field of legitimate discourse that shapes the public's "definitions of its situations," and they work through selections and omissions, through emphases and tones, through all their forms of treatment.

Such ideological force is central to the continuation of the established order. While I defer a fuller statement of this position until Part III, I take it for now that the central command structures of this order are an oligopolized, privately controlled corporate economy and its intimate ally, the bureaucratic national security state, together embedded within a capitalist world complex of nation-states. But the economic and political powers of twentieth-century capitalist society, while formidable, do not by themselves account for the society's persistence, do not secure the dominant institutions against the radical consequences of the system's deep and enduring conflicts. In the language of present-day social theory, why does the population accord legitimacy to the prevailing institutions? The goods are delivered, true; but why do citizens agree to identify themselves and to behave as consumers, devoting themselves to labor in a deteriorating environment in order to acquire private possessions and services as emblems of satisfaction? The answers are by no means self-evident. But however we approach these questions, the answers will have to be found in the realm of ideology, of culture in the broadest sense. Society is not a machine or a thing; it is a coexistence of human beings who do what they do (including maintaining or changing a social structure) as sentient, reasoning, moral, and active beings who experience the world, who are not simply "caused" by it. The patterned experiencing of the world takes place in the realm of what we call ideology. And any social theory of ideology asks two interlocking questions: How and where are ideas generated in society? And why are certain ideas accepted or rejected in varying degrees at different times?

In the version of Marxist theory inaugurated by Antonio Gramsci, *hegemony* is the name given to a ruling class's domination through ideology, through the shaping of popular consent.<sup>7</sup> More recently, Raymond Williams has transcended the classical Marxist

7. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International, 1971).

base-superstructure dichotomy (in which the "material base" of "forces and relations of production" "gives rise" to the ideological "superstructure"). Williams has proposed a notion of hegemony as "not only the articulate upper level of 'ideology,'" but "a whole body of practices and expectations" which "constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society."<sup>8</sup> The main economic structures, or "relations of production," set limits on the ideologies and commonsense understandings that circulate as ways of making sense of the world—without mechanically "determining" them. The fact that the networks are capitalist corporations, for example, does not automatically decree the precise frame of a report on socialism, but it does preclude continuing, emphatic reports that would embrace socialism as the most reasonable framework for the solution of social problems. One need not accept all of Gramsci's analytic baggage to see the penetrating importance of the notion of hegemony—uniting persuasion from above with consent from below—for comprehending the endurance of advanced capitalist society. In particular, one need not accept a strictly Marxist premise that the "material base" of "forces of production" in *any* sense (even "ultimately") precedes culture.<sup>9</sup> But I retain Gramsci's core conception: those who rule the dominant institutions secure their power in large measure directly *and indirectly*, by impressing their definitions of the situation upon those they rule and, if not usurping the whole of ideological space, still significantly limiting what is thought throughout the society. The notion of hegemony that I am working with is an active one: hegemony operating through a complex web of social activities and institutional procedures. Hegemony is done by the dominant and collaborated in by the dominated.

Hegemonic ideology enters into everything people do and think is "natural"—making a living, loving, playing, believing, knowing, even rebelling. In every sphere of social activity, it meshes with the "common sense" through which people make the world seem intelligible; it tries to *become* that common sense. Yet, at the same time, people only partially and unevenly accept the he-

8. Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," *New Left Review*, No. 82 (1973), pp. 3–16. See also Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), especially pp. 108–114.

9. For a brilliant demonstration of ways in which culture helps *constitute* a given society's "material base," and in particular the way in which the bourgeois concept of utility conditions capitalism's claims to efficiency, see Marshall Sahlins, *Culture and Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), Part 2.

gemonic terms; they stretch, dispute, and sometimes struggle to transform the hegemonic ideology. Indeed, its contents shift to a certain degree, as the desires and strategies of the top institutions shift, and as different coalitions form among the dominant social groups; in turn, these desires and strategies are modified, moderated by popular currents. In corporate capitalist society (and in state socialism as well), the schools and the mass media specialize in formulating and conveying national ideology. At the same time, indirectly, the media—at least in liberal capitalist society—take account of certain popular currents and pressures, symbolically incorporating them, repackaging and distributing them throughout the society. That is to say, groups out of power—radical students, farm workers, feminists, environmentalists, or homeowners groaning under the property tax—can contest the prevailing structures of power and definitions of reality. One strategy which insurgent social movements adopt is to make “news events.”

The media create and relay images of order. Yet the social reality is enormously complex, fluid, and self-contradictory, even in its own terms. Movements constantly boil up out of the everyday suffering and grievance of dominated groups. From their sense of injury and their desire for justice, movements assert their interests, mobilize their resources, make their demands for reform, and try to find space to live their alternative “lifestyles.” These *alternative* visions are not yet *oppositional*—not until they challenge the main structures and ideas of the existing order: the preeminence of the corporate economy, the militarized State, and authoritarian social relations as a whole. In liberal capitalist society, movements embody and exploit the fact that the dominant ideology enfolded contradictory values: liberty versus equality, democracy versus hierarchy, public rights versus property rights, rational claims to truth versus the arrogations and mystifications of power.<sup>10</sup> Then how does enduring ideology find its way into the news, absorbing and ironing out contradictions with relative consistency? How, in particular, are rather standardized frames clamped onto the reporting of insurgent movements? For the most part, through journalists’ routines.

These routines are structured in the ways journalists are socialized from childhood, and then trained, recruited, assigned, edited, rewarded, and promoted on the job; they decisively shape the

10. I adapt this argument from my “Prime Time Ideology: The Hegemonic Process in Television Entertainment,” *Social Problems* 26 (February 1979): 264–265.

ways in which news is defined, events are considered newsworthy, and "objectivity" is secured. News is managed routinely, automatically, as reporters import definitions of newsworthiness from editors and institutional beats, as they accept the analytical frameworks of officials even while taking up adversary positions. When reporters make decisions about what to cover and how, rarely do they deliberate about ideological assumptions or political consequences.<sup>11</sup> Simply by doing their jobs, journalists tend to serve the political and economic elite definitions of reality.

But there are disruptive moments, critical times when the routines no longer serve a coherent hegemonic interest. The routines produce news that no longer harmonizes with the hegemonic ideology, or with important elite interests as the elites construe them; or the elites are themselves so divided as to quarrel over the content of the news. (In the extreme case, as in Chile in 1973, the hegemonic ideology is pushed to the extremity of its self-contradiction, and snaps; the dominant frame then shifts dramatically, in that case toward the Right.) At these critical moments, political and economic elites (including owners and executives of media corporations) are more likely to intervene directly in journalistic routine, attempting to keep journalism within harness. To put it another way, the cultural apparatus normally maintains its own momentum, its own standards and procedures, which grant it a certain independence from top political and economic elites. In a liberal capitalist society, this bounded but real independence helps legitimate the institutional order as a whole and the news in particular. But the elites prefer not to let such independence stretch "too far." It serves the interests of the elites as long as it is "relative," as long as it does not violate core hegemonic values or contribute too heavily to radical critique or social unrest. (It is the elites who determine, or establish routines to determine, what goes "too far.") Yet when elites are themselves at odds in important ways, and when core values are deeply disputed—as happened in the sixties—journalism itself becomes contested. Opposition groups pressing for social and political change can exploit self-contradictions in hegemonic ideology, including its journalistic codes. Society-wide

11. As Gaye Tuchman writes, "news both draws upon and reproduces institutional structures" (*Making News*, p. 210). For particulars, see Leon V. Sigal, *Reporters and Officials: The Organization and Politics of Newsmaking* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1973); Bernard Roshco, *Newsmaking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); and most fully, Herbert Gans, *Deciding What's News* (New York: Pantheon, 1979).

conflict is then carried into the cultural institutions, though in muted and sanitized forms. And then ideological domestication plays an important part—along with the less visible activities of the police<sup>12</sup>—in taming and isolating ideological threats to the system.

The test of such a line of argument, of course, is whether it makes sense of evidence, whether it comprehends historical truth. Most of this book sorts out evidence in the course of telling the particular story of major media and the New Left in the 1960s. One set of questions I ask addresses *the nature of media coverage*. Just how did major media respond to the emergence of student radicalism? Which events and rhetorical gestures were considered newsworthy, and what were the reasons? What were the major themes and tones of this coverage, and how did they shift over time? To what extent were these shifts determined by shifts in the actual policies and actions of the movement? (Methodological difficulties notwithstanding, there is no avoiding the attempt to discover and describe *what actually happened*.) I try first to locate the central emphases in coverage of the movement, and then to reach behind them to grasp the media's central—usually unspoken—assumptions about the political world and about political opposition in particular.<sup>13</sup> For

12. Very little has been written on direct relations between police agencies and the mass media. Gans (*Deciding What's News*, p. 121) makes the valuable point that "perhaps the most able sources are organizations that carry out the equivalent of investigative reporting, offer the results of their work as 'exclusives,' and can afford to do so anonymously, foregoing the rewards of publicity." For a survey of the FBI's COINTELPRO media operations, especially active in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Milwaukee, at least between 1956 and 1971, and a few extant details of direct cooperation between the FBI and reporters, see Chip Berlet, "COINTELPRO: What the (Deleted) Was It? Media Op," *The Public Eye* 1 (April 1978): 28–38. I know of no evidence of cooperation between the FBI and either CBS News or the *New York Times*, but this entire field is *terra incognita*.

13. A fine precedent for thematically analyzing media coverage of a movement's activities, and the sources of this coverage in the organizational activities and assumptions of news-gatherers, is James D. Halloran, Philip Elliott, and Graham Murdock, *Demonstrations and Communication: A Case Study* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1970), which closely follows British newspaper and television coverage of the giant October 1968 anti-Vietnam War demonstration in London. Also relevant is Stanley Cohen's study of the media-aided "social construction" of Mod and Rocker teenage gangs in the early sixties, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1972). Several of the essays in Stanley Cohen and Jock Young, eds., *The Manufacture of News: A Reader* (London: Constable, 1973; and Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1973) give useful informal textual analyses of media frames for deviant activities; see also Charles Winick, ed., *Deviance and Mass Media* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1978). The existence of systematic news frames for political events is demonstrated empirically in Harvey

before messages can have "effects" on audiences, they must emanate outward from message-producers and then into the audience's minds, there to be interpreted. The recent flurry of concern with "the effects of television" selects out certain aspects of the message (violence, say) as *the* content, then masks this selectivity with the trappings of quantitative methodology. Since the media aim at least to influence, condition, and reproduce the activity of audiences by reaching into the symbolic organization of thought, the student of mass media must pay attention to the symbolic content of media messages before the question of effects can even be sensibly posed. These questions about how the media treated the movement constitute the agenda of Part I, tested on the case of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)—and, for comparison, other segments of the antiwar movement—in the year SDS first became public, 1965. I organize this discussion chronologically to call attention to both regularities and shifts of journalistic frame.

But the movement was far from the passive object of media attentions. The study of mass communications effects has had quite enough of Pavlovian stimulus-response psychology, along with its pluralist opposite. Although I may sometimes adopt the convenient language of a single cause producing a single effect, I am talking not about determined objects "having impacts" on each other, as if movements and media were billiard balls, but about an *active* movement and *active* media pressing on each other, sometimes deliberately, sometimes not, in a process rich with contradiction and self-contradiction, a process developing in historical time.

A second set of questions, then, concerns *what the New Left did*

---

Molotch and Marilyn Lester, "News as Purposive Behavior: On the Strategic Use of Routine Events, Scandals, and Rumors," *American Sociological Review* 39 (1974): 101–112, and is extended to media treatment of opposition movements in Molotch's "Media and Movements," unpublished paper, 1977. Several essays by Stuart Hall also contain rich semiological "readings" of media programs, especially in television; see especially his "Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse," and Stuart Hall, Ian Connell, and Lidia Curti, "The 'Unity' of Public Affairs Television," *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* 9 (Spring 1976): 51–93, both forthcoming in Stuart Hall, *Reproducing Ideologies* (London: Macmillan). An attempt at a more systematic interpretive scheme for television programs may be found in John Fiske and John Hartley, *Reading Television* (London: Methuen, 1978); see also my review in *Theory and Society*, forthcoming. My earlier discussions of television's frames for the New Left may be found in Gitlin, "Fourteen Notes on Television and the Movement," *Leviathan* 1 (July–August 1969): 3–9; "Sixteen Notes on Television and the Movement," in George Abbott White and Charles Newman, eds., *Literature in Revolution* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972) pp. 335–366; and "Spotlights and Shadows" (note 2, above).

*about media treatment.* Once floodlit, from 1965 on, the New Left found it necessary to take the media into account in planning actions, choosing leaders, responding to those leaders, and articulating positions. What tensions developed within the movement about how to approach the media, and how were they resolved or surpassed? How did the New Left's approach to the media change over time, and from leadership generation to leadership generation?

And here we fade into a third set of questions. *What were the consequences of media coverage for the movement—for its structure, its leadership, its politics, its strategy and tactics—for the history, the texture, and the feeling tone of the New Left?* This second and third set of questions, applied mostly to SDS between 1965 and 1970, constitute the agenda for Part II.

Two general questions hover beneath the surface of these particular accounts. First, *why did the media do what they did?* In reporting the movement, how important were routine journalistic practices, organizational arrangements, the specific (and changing) institutional interests of the news media, the society's wider (and also changing) political and economic structures, and the ideological surroundings, needs, and consequences of those structures? How was the media treatment of movements like, and how unlike, their treatment of any other social happening accorded the dignity of a continuing story? These issues filter back into the question of structure: What is the place of the cultural apparatus and its ideological constructions among the major social institutions in ensemble?

And no less important: *Why did the movement do what it did?* Just how important was media treatment in turning the movement in this or that political direction, and how important were class identity, ideology, organizational structure, State repression, and the play of political events and deliberate choices? All these shaped the New Left, and each mattered in the context of the others. I am most emphatically not propounding a new single-factor political analysis; but I am scrutinizing one feature of a whole history in order to cast light on the whole. I want to ask, finally: How far can the SDS experience with the media be generalized to other movements at other times? These questions are the business of Part III.

This is a study of the nature, sources, and consequences of news. It is also one point of entry into a rethinking of the New

Left's moment in history. I aim to contribute to a new reckoning with the much-mythologized sixties, already fast receding either into oblivion or into convenient distortion. For neo-conservative historiography and the unreconstructed Nixonian Right, the New Left was a catastrophic upsurge of adversary culture gone anti-American and wild. For fashionable popular writers, it was a moment of puerility, adolescent enthusiasm, and naivete, a fad at last discarded. For the current generation of Marxist-Leninists, it was a petit bourgeois adventure needing to be purged of its "moralistic," "idealist," "reformist" elements before the true road to revolution could emerge into clean, hard, twentieth-century light. For many who participated, and their younger brothers and sisters, it was perhaps a noble crusade that failed, perhaps a vaguely interesting or dangerous tumult. For the younger still, nothing remains but the shadow of a reputation, a rumor conditioned by media images of something that mysteriously came, made trouble, and went. Without writing a memoir, a collective biography, or a political chronicle, I hope to show something of the New Left as a movement, a motion in history: that is, a coherent process wherein organizations and individuals, making choices in specific situations, mattered. I approach this history as the story of a movement in its lived richness; at the same time, I distill from this story analytic categories which extend beyond the particular events of a particular decade.

I cannot do justice to the whole of the movement. Since my point of entry is the movement's collision with the large-scale commercial media, there are very important dimensions of the movement's history and cultural identity which I do not discuss at all. Not least, there are the movement's *own* media, the hundreds of weekly photo-offset "underground" papers that sprang up in the later sixties and early seventies. Nor do I discuss the role of other cultural and communication institutions that served the movement: its own internal newspapers and magazines; political weeklies like *The Guardian*; monthlies like *Ramparts*; the Liberation News Service; or Newsreel filmmaking and film distributing collectives. I do not trace the movement's ideological career in much detail, nor many of its political choices and settings, nor the contingencies of political developments outside the largely white, largely youthful sector of the New Left. *I never mean to suggest that the movement's interior culture was purely the creature of media images, or that movement people were wholly or even largely dependent on them for information and*