

PUBLIC AFFAIRS: The Military and the Media, 1962–1968. By William M. Hammond. U.S. Army. 413 pp. \$23

This candid, well-knit official Army chronicle of the military and the media in Vietnam supplies a cautionary tale for policymakers today—a lesson about politics as public relations. Perhaps never before the Vietnam War, suggests author Hammond, had an American military venture depended so much on the cooperation of the media. Unwilling to jeopardize his beloved Great Society social programs, President Lyndon Johnson refused to mobilize the country behind a decisive plan to win in Vietnam. Instead, he hoped that a carefully orchestrated public relations campaign would convince Americans that “U.S. forces could win in the end without a major sacrifice of lives and treasure.” Disregarding the advice of his own officers, U.S. Army Chief of Staff General Earle Wheeler decided the military should distort its press releases to help “sell” the war to American voters. When the sheer size of North Vietnam’s offensive actions in 1968 disproved the official, optimistic U.S. propaganda, the credibility of the military fell sharply. Increasingly, however, the military tended to blame the press for its credibility problems. But Hammond, an historian at the U.S. Army Center of Military History, cites figures and statistics to prove that it was not news coverage but the rising casualty rate which alienated the American public during the Vietnam War. This is an official history that indicts the officials: Press reports, says Hammond, were more accurate than the administration’s statements in portraying the situation in Vietnam.

Arts & Letters

GOLDWYN: A Biography. By A. Scott Berg. Knopf. 579 pp. \$24.95

AN EMPIRE OF THEIR OWN: How the Jews Invented Hollywood. By Neal Gabler. Crown. 502 pp. \$24.95

Berg’s biography of flinty, independent filmmaker Samuel Goldwyn (1879–1974) has all the ingredients of a movie blockbuster. Eight years in the making, with a cast of the famous,

Goldwyn is the success story: An immigrant rises from poverty to become a tycoon in the most glamorous of industries. Because Goldwyn’s career coincided with the creation of the studio system, Berg, author of *Max Perkins: Editor of Genius* (1978), hopes to make his biography of Goldwyn the story of Hollywood itself. But as *Goldwyn* piles up details, it becomes clear that Berg is not telling that larger story. The “Goldwyn touch” had to do with public relations, not film making: Goldwyn only made a handful of good films (*The Best Years of Our Lives*, *Wuthering Heights*, *The Little Foxes*), and to them his contribution principally consisted in buying good material and talent.

Film historian Neal Gabler’s *An Empire of their Own* finds the social context that Berg’s *Goldwyn* lacks. For the founders of all the major Hollywood studios—Louis B. Mayer (Metro), Harry Cohn (Columbia), Carl Laemmle (Universal), Jack and Harry Warner (Warner Bros.), and Adolph Zukor (Paramount)—were all Jews who had emigrated from the ghettos of Eastern Europe. They detested their humble Jewish origins, and their “ferocious, even pathological, embrace of America . . . drove them to deny whatever they had been before settling here.” They created in their films a sanitized American Dream—an Andy Hardy America of white clapboard houses, gleaming clean streets, and quaint town squares—which during the Depression had almost as little to do with the new country they hoped to embrace as with the old country they wished to forget. The irony, as Gabler points out, is that the America they invented has become more “real” than the historical America in much of the popular imagination.



THE LETTERS OF HENRY ADAMS, VOLUMES IV–VI, 1892–1918. Edited by J. C. Levenson, Ernest Samuels, Charles Vandersee, Viola Hopkins Winner, Jayne N. Samuels, and Eleanor Pearre Abbot. Harvard. 2,400 pp. \$150

In 1900, Henry Adams wrote to Elizabeth Cameron, “I am the drollest little, peppery, irritable,