

chant-farmer Hardy Bell, and St. Louis tobaccoist William Deaderick.

The Civil War ruined many of the Deep South's prosperous blacks, just as it did many white plantation owners. The Upper South's black elite prospered. "More self-confident, able to mix more easily with

former slaves, and viewing the formerly dominant class with suspicion and skepticism," Schweningen writes, "they could more easily build on their past experiences during the postwar era to advance not only their own cause but the cause of freedmen as well."

PRESS & TELEVISION

*The Atom Bomb
And the Press*

"The Office of Censorship's Attempt to Control Press Coverage of the Atomic Bomb During World War II" by Patrick S. Washburn, in *Journalism Monographs* (April 1990), 1621 College St., Univ. of S.C., Columbia, S.C. 29208-0251.

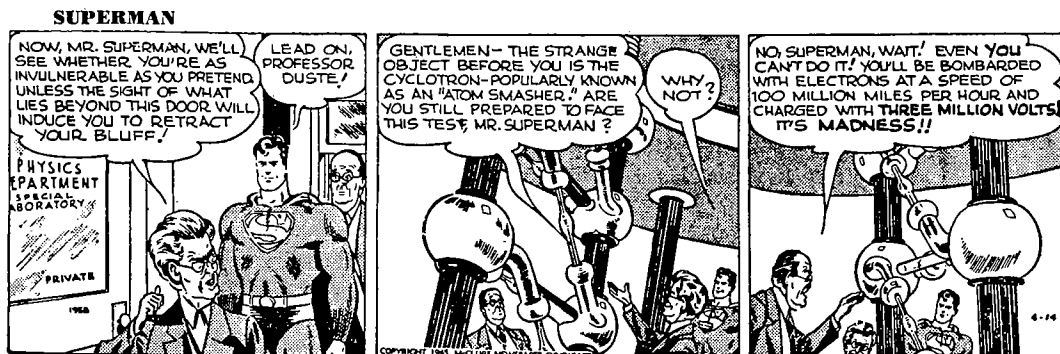
A month after the first atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, Gen. H. H. Arnold of the Army Air Force wrote a glowing letter to the head of the U.S. Office of Censorship thanking him for suppressing "any mention" of the new weapon in the press until it was used. Arnold wrote that it "shall go down in history as the best-kept secret of any war."

What is interesting, notes Washburn, a professor of journalism at Ohio University, is not the fact that Arnold was wrong but why he was wrong. Despite the patriotic cooperation of newspaper, magazine, and radio editors, there were dozens of references to atomic energy and weaponry in the press during World War II.

Until 1943, even the Office of Censorship was kept in the dark about atomic research. In June, it asked editors (volun-

tarily) to avoid all mention even of the element uranium. Almost immediately, problems appeared. On Halloween Day, for example, the *Washington Post* ran a lighthearted feature story which began: "A young fellow who has been studying much of his life on the matter of blowing up nations with an atom would like to get a wage increase from the War Labor Board." In December, the *Cleveland Press* published a vague story about the "Forbidden City" at Los Alamos, New Mexico.

In some cases, Washburn says, editors simply were not aware of the guidelines; in others, they did not think that the rules applied to their story. Other leaks slipped through because of carelessness, often the result of wartime labor shortages. On more than one occasion, public officials themselves were responsible for uninten-



This 1945 "Superman" comic strip was the most bizarre breach of wartime secrecy. Censors complained, but it took seven more strips to extricate Superman from the atomic theme.

tional "busts" of the secrecy code. During a Pentagon press briefing in 1944, Brig. Gen. Frederick H. Smith, Jr., told reporters that the Germans were probably working on an "atomic explosive," and remarked that he was "not long-haired enough to know exactly where we stand in working on atomic explosive force, but I believe there are many technical difficulties to overcome." By the time Smith's blunder was discovered, the story had already gone out over the news wires.

Despite leaks like this, Washburn con-

cludes, the story of the atom bomb remained "reasonably quiet." He believes that much of the credit belongs to Byron Price, the ex-newsman who directed the Office of Censorship. Price resisted the army's call to impose a total news blackout on atomic (and other) news, opting instead for a voluntary approach. Total censorship, he insisted, would have pushed the press into open revolt. The success of his policies, Washburn concludes, proved that government and a free press can cooperate in times of grave national peril.

Missing the Freedom Beat

"The Media's One and Only Freedom Story" by Lawrence Weschler, in *Columbia Journalism Review* (March-April 1990), 700 Journalism Bldg., Columbia Univ., New York, N.Y. 10027, and "Eastern Europe: The Story the Media Missed" by Vladimir Tismaneanu in *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (March 1990), 6042 S. Kimbark, Chicago, Ill. 60637.

"A remarkable upwelling of democratic spirit occurred simultaneously on two continents. Can you name the second one?"

If you can't, writes Weschler, a staff reporter for the *New Yorker*, it is because the U.S. news media virtually ignored the re-emergence of democracy in Latin America last year. During a two-week period in December 1989, Chile and Brazil held their first free presidential elections in 16 and 25 years, respectively, but you might not have known about these landmark events if you relied on Dan Rather for your news. He never mentioned the election in Brazil, the world's sixth most populous nation, and he briefly mentioned Chile once, in a reference that was dropped from the West Coast edition of the *CBS Evening News*. Meanwhile, CBS managed to find time for three reports from Bulgaria.

This is only the most extreme case of neglect that Weschler discovered in his survey of the nation's major news media. But even the best performer, *Time*, did poorly: It had only 6.65 pages of Latin American coverage between November 6, 1989 and January 1, 1990, versus 98 pages devoted to Eastern Europe.

The news executives Weschler interviewed pleaded lack of time, space, and

money, explanations he dismisses. Latin America deserves coverage not only on its own merits, he argues, but because "the sorts of economic dilemmas Eastern Europeans seem likely to face in the decades ahead as they attempt the transition to a wide-open free market . . . are precisely the sort that Latin Americans have been struggling with."

And, apparently, editors and TV news producers deserve no congratulations for their coverage of Eastern Europe, either. Tismaneanu, a resident scholar at Philadelphia's Foreign Policy Research Institute, contends that they even got that story wrong. During the last four years, he observes, "Eastern Europe has been dominated by these two processes: the dramatic loss of authority and credibility of the ruling elites . . . and the rise of a parallel civil society in which patterns of conduct are different from, and even opposed to, the official sanctioned code of social success. The Western mass media reported the story incompletely. They observed and even analyzed the rise of civil society without naming it or identifying it as the single most important challenge to the communist status quo. It is one thing to report on the trial of the Jazz Section in Prague and another to present it as part of the authori-

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