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 concludes, 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 reemergence 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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ties' effort to curb the rise of civil society."

It may be too much to expect Western reporters to have anticipated developments that also caught Mikhail Gorbachev and U.S. intelligence experts by surprise, as Tismaneanu does. But he warns that they still do not understand that it is the strength of the groups that constitute civil society that will ultimately determine the success or failure of freedom in the nations of Eastern Europe.

A Second is a Terrible Thing To Waste

How can the degradation of American political debate be explained? Fresh evidence is offered in the *New Republic* (May 28, 1990) by Kiku Adatto, who compared television's coverage of the presidential elections of 1968 and 1988.

By 1988 television's tolerance for the languid pace of political discourse, never great, had all but vanished. An analysis of all weekday evening network newscasts (over 280) from Labor Day to Election Day in 1968 and 1988 reveals that the [two candidates'] average "sound bite" fell from 42.3 seconds in 1968 to only 9.8 seconds in 1988. Meanwhile the time the networks devoted to visuals of the candidates, unaccompanied by their words, increased by more than 300 percent.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Mind and Manners

"I Think; Therefore I Thank" by Judith Martin and Gunther S. Stent, in *The American Scholar* (Spring 1990), 1811 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Modern philosophers rarely have anything to say about etiquette, and when they do they seem to make a terrible hash of things. In 1972, for example, Philippa Foot wrote a controversial essay called "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives." In attacking Immanuel Kant's argument that morality is a categorical imperative, she compared morality to the "silly rules" of etiquette. A long debate followed, but not one of Foot's fellow philosophers took issue with her callow comparison.

"Extremely distressed" might be the most polite term for the reaction of Martin, better known as the newspaper columnist Miss Manners, and Stent, a Berkeley biologist. "As heirs of the Greek founders of their discipline," they scold, philosophers should "be expected to remain concerned with the quest for the virtuous life, where 'virtuous' refers to proper behavior in general."

Just as the commands of morality are categorical imperatives for anyone who desires to be moral, so the rules of etiquette flow from the subscription to manners—the belief in communal harmony, individual dignity, and so on. And the evidence from man's earliest history suggests that the embrace of morality and manners is fundamental to human nature. Even today, criminals cling to a belief in manners. During the summer of 1986, the 30 motorists who were arrested for shooting fellow drivers on the freeways of Los Angeles defended themselves by arguing that they were provoked by gross violations of traffic etiquette.

Etiquette has three chief functions, the authors say. First, it is "a system for the codification of ritual in the service of the sacred." By that they mean that it tells one how to behave at weddings and (less and less these days, they lament) funerals. It also has a "symbolic" function: An individual's compliance with the etiquette of, say, diplomacy or professional sports, signifies his adherence to the values of these professions. Finally, etiquette has a "regulative" function; it exists on a continuum with law. Etiquette seeks to avert conflict; law