

Continued from page 22

these empires were converted to the religion and thus inherited the culture.

It also helps if an empire is the only civilizing force in a region. As Issawi points out, "Rome was dealing with relatively primitive peoples and Greece with highly civilized ones, strongly tenacious of their old cultures." Likewise, it was easier for Portugal and Spain to persuade the natives

of the New World to adopt their culture than it was for the French to supplant the peoples' powerful ties to Islam in their North African colonies.

In almost every case that Issawi studied "it was the culturally less creative people that imprinted a large area." Good fortune, not merit, he believes, is the stuff of which lasting legacies are made.

---

## PRESS & TELEVISION

---

### *TV's Critics*

"Real and Perceived Effects of 'Amerika'" by Dominic L. Lasorsa, in *Journalism Quarterly* (Summer 1989), Univ. of S.C., 1621 College St., College of Journalism, Columbia, S.C. 29208-0251.

Liberal critics were hopping mad in 1987 when ABC broadcast its tedious seven-part miniseries, *Amerika*. The miniseries' grim depiction of life in a Soviet-occupied United States, they exclaimed, would turn the American people into raving anti-Soviet Rambos. Although Lasorsa, a professor of journalism at the University of Texas at Austin, does not mention it, ABC aired the miniseries partly to mollify conservative critics, who were hopping mad over ABC's broadcast of *The Day After* in 1983. These critics were convinced that ABC's dire portrait of life in the United States after a nuclear war would turn the American public into pacifist sheep.

As we all know, Americans became neither Rambos nor wimps, and Lasorsa has the opinion poll data to prove it, at least in the case of *Amerika*. But the controversies do raise an interesting question: Why do critics who consider themselves immune

to the influence of television assume that others are such utterly helpless prey to it?

Lasorsa suggests an answer. Of the 523 people he surveyed about *Amerika*, 31 percent felt that the program had much greater impact on others than on themselves. Social scientists call this the "third person effect." What was the distinguishing characteristic of this group? Lasorsa found that many thought of themselves as "political experts." But when he tested all 523 respondents for "real" political knowledge, he found that only 22.5 percent of those "high" in real knowledge exhibited the "third person effect" while 34.7 of those who were "low" in knowledge did.

Lasorsa is rather polite in his conclusion: "Perceived political knowledge rather than real political knowledge fuels the third-person effect." In other words, when it comes to television, those who know least criticize most.

### *No More Deep Throats?*

"When Unnamed Sources Are Banned" by Felix Winternitz, in *The Quill* (Oct. 1989), 53 W. Jackson Blvd., Ste. 731, Chicago, Ill. 60604-3610.

In 1988, George Blake, editor of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, voiced the anxiety of many news executives when he criticized the widespread use of anonymous sources—the ubiquitous "high administration official" or the mysterious "source

close to the investigation." News stories that rely on anonymous sources, Blake said, are "trust-me" pieces that make it "difficult, if not impossible, for the reader to evaluate the accuracy of the information presented." Unlike his peers, how-