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chain, Gannett, began the year with 50 dailies and ended with 73; Thomson grew from 51 to 57. Now that most of the independent dailies have been acquired, the bigger chains have begun to buy up the smaller chains. Last year, the 30-paper Newhouse organization purchased the eight Booth papers for an estimated \$305 million, the largest newspaper deal in history.

Why this furious acquisition pace? Because virtually all (more than 97 percent) of the nation's 1,500 daily newspapers have no local competition. Investors are attracted by the stable, high annual profits (up to 25 percent of sales). But, particularly when controlled by large conglomerates, Bagdikian warns, the newspaper may become little more than just another manufactured product. Worse, objective reporting may become the casualty of conflicts of interest. The New York Times Company, for instance, recently was threatened with the loss of 260 pages of trade advertising in one of its properties, the journal *Modern Medicine*, after the appearance of articles on medical incompetence in another property, the daily *Times*. (The company sold *Modern Medicine* shortly thereafter.)

Bagdikian proposes two steps to insulate news operations from "business side" intervention. First, disclosure of newspapers' owners and their holdings should be required by the Postal Service. Second, as is the practice on several European newspapers, notably Paris's *Le Monde*, editorial staffs should be given the right to choose the editor in chief, to send a delegate to board meetings, and to participate in the budget process. Such staff autonomy runs counter to U.S. traditions, Bagdikian concludes, but it is preferable to control by "empire builders concerned with business in other places."

### *Making Reality Seem Worse*

"TV Violence Profile No. 8: The Highlights" by George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Michael F. Eeley, Marilyn Jackson-Beeck, Suzanne Jeffries-Fox, and Nancy Signorelli, in *Journal of Communication* (Spring 1977), P.O. Box 13358, Philadelphia, Pa. 19101.

The Violence Index, measuring the prevalence, rate, and character of violent behavior on television, registered an unprecedented jump in 1976. All three networks increased their scores, with NBC still the highest, followed by ABC and CBS. The most dramatic increases occurred in the "family hour" (8-9 P.M. EST) and children's daytime programming, thereby boosting the cumulative index to the highest level since Gerbner and the Communications Research Team at Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications first began keeping records in 1967.

The researchers' analysis, based on a broad sample of fall 1976 TV programming, shows that 9 out of 10 TV shows contained violence, up from 78 percent in 1975. "Frequency" also rose, from 8 to 9.5 violent

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actions per hour. On average, there were 1.06 victims for every violent person; women, the young, the poor, the nonwhite, and the "good" suffered the most.

One consequence, argue the Annenberg researchers, is a tendency among TV audiences to overestimate actual levels of violent crime in the United States. They found that most adult heavy viewers surveyed believe that 25 percent of all crimes are violent (real life: 10 percent; TV: 77 percent), that they have a 10 percent chance of being involved in a violent situation (real life: 0.41 percent; TV: 64 percent), and that most fatal crimes occur between strangers (real life: 16 percent; TV: 58 percent).

### *Pravda's View of Watergate*

"Watergate and Détente: A Content Analysis of Five Communist Newspapers" by Leon Hurwitz, in *Studies in Comparative Communism* (Autumn 1976), School of Politics and International Relations, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, Calif. 90007.

Three Communist newspapers in the West—New York's *Daily World*, Paris's *l'Humanité*, and Rome's *l'Unità*—provided "reasonably accurate and complete" accounts of the Watergate affair in 1974. Indeed, their coverage compared favorably with that of local non-Communist newspapers during the three weeks preceding Nixon's resignation and the week following the Ford pardon. But the two "official" Soviet dailies, *Izvestiia* and *Pravda*, either ignored the story or ran accounts that were "incomplete, misleading, or both."

One inhibition on the behavior of the Soviet press, writes Hurwitz, a Cleveland State University political scientist, was the then blooming "détente" policy (and its political imperatives). Reports critical of the Kremlin's American partner in détente were to be avoided. *Pravda* persistently referred to the "so-called Watergate affair," commenting that "certain circles" in the United States wanted to use Watergate to "dampen" relations with Moscow. Both newspapers refrained from printing criticism of Nixon. At the time, Hurwitz recalls, the Soviets were trying to weaken support for the Jackson Amendment in Congress. Moscow's implicit suggestion: If the U.S.S.R. did not take sides in an American domestic controversy, the United States should behave in like fashion regarding Soviet treatment of dissident intellectuals and Jewish émigrés.

But the basic Soviet attitude, suggests Hurwitz, stems from the deeper meaning of Watergate as a victory for constitutionality, the rule of law, and the importance of the individual vis-à-vis the state. Such themes do not match Soviet notions of "state security" and jurisprudence. "Extended commentary and moralizing [on Watergate] by *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*," Hurwitz comments, might well "have led their readers to question Soviet political behavior."