

tions, but also provided the Nazis with “a golden opportunity.”

Previously unable to build much popular support, the Nazis during the second half of the 1920s “concentrated on attracting bourgeois ‘joiners’ who had become disillusioned with traditional party politics,” Berman writes. The Nazis reaped a large harvest of “activists who had the skills necessary to spread the party’s message and increase recruitment.” They also used many of the civic associations, occupational organizations, and other social groups as a “fifth column.” By the early 1930s, she says, the Nazis “had infiltrated and captured a wide range of national and local associations.” The 5.6-million-member Reichslandbund and other farm organizations, for instance, became efficient propaganda channels for reaching the rural population. From their base in Germany’s civil society, Hitler and the Nazis launched their *Machtergreifung* (seizure of power), beginning with their strong showing at the polls in 1930.

The Nazis’ success, Berman concludes, shows that without “strong and responsive political institutions,” a vigorous civil society



George Grosz's *The Agitator* (1928) was a comment on the menace of Adolf Hitler.

of the sort championed by neo-Tocquevilleans, far from promoting liberal democracy, can help undermine it.

## PRESS & MEDIA

### *Honey, They've Shrunk the News*

“The Shrinking of Foreign News” by Garrick Utley, in *Foreign Affairs* (Mar.–Apr. 1997), 58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Wearing the obligatory trenchcoat or safari jacket, the foreign correspondent was once a familiar sight on TV’s nightly network newscasts. But no more. Believing that with the Cold War over, the American public has lost interest in events abroad, and facing increased competition from entertainment offerings on cable, the networks have drastically cut back on international coverage. The number of minutes devoted to foreign affairs at ABC News—the only network news division that has kept its overseas operation largely intact—plummeted from 3,733 in 1989 to 1,838 last year. At third-place NBC, it fell even lower, to 1,175.

Paradoxically, notes Utley, former chief foreign correspondent at both of those networks and now a contributor at CNN, this

shrinkage is occurring even as American influence in the world is spreading through increased commerce and exports of American popular culture. More Americans are working and traveling abroad today than ever before.

Economics looms large in the networks’ decisions. Whereas radio or newspaper correspondents are essentially on their own, a TV reporter is accompanied by a field producer, a camera operator, and a sound engineer, plus some 600 pounds of equipment. For satellite transmissions, an editor and 600 more pounds of editing equipment are required. “The cost of this journalistic caravan . . . begins at around \$3,000 a day,” Utley says. “Airfare and excess-baggage charges can easily reach \$12,000.” Currently, the three

## *The Electronic Parrot*

Novelist Gabriel García Márquez, a former reporter as well as a Nobel laureate, writes in *Press/Politics* (Spring 1997) about the tape recorder's pernicious effect on journalism.

*The tape recorder listens, repeats—like a digital parrot—but it does not think; it is loyal, but it does not have a heart; and in the end, the literal version it would have captured would never be as trustworthy as notes taken by the journalist who pays attention to the real words of the interlocutor and at the same time values them with his intelligence and qualifies them with his morality. For radio interviews, the tape recorder has the enormous advantage of providing literal and immediate results, but many of the interviewers do not listen to the answers because they are thinking about the next question.*

*The tape recorder is the guilty party in the vicious magnification of the interview. The radio and television, because of [their] own nature, turned it into the ultimate goal, but now even the print media seem to share the erroneous idea that the voice of truth is not the journalist's voice, but the voice of the interviewee. For many newspaper reporters, the transcription of taped interviews is the proof of the pudding: They confuse the sound of words, trip over semantics, sink in grammar, and have a heart attack because of the syntax. Maybe the solution is to return to the lowly little notebook so the journalist can edit intelligently as he listens, and relegate the tape recorder to its real role of invaluable witness.*

TV network news divisions are spending as much as \$50 million a year on foreign coverage—still a tempting target for network cost-cutters.

At the same time, Utley notes, there is a lot more foreign news aimed at niche audiences. TV offers the all-news channels—CNN, MSNBC, and the fledgling Fox News—and numerous business and financial channels. National Public Radio and Public Radio International also provide extensive international reporting (at a fraction of the cost in television). Daily TV pro-

grams from Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America are transmitted via satellite to niche and ethnic markets in the United States. And then there's the World Wide Web.

So what's the problem? Those people eager to find out about foreign affairs "will be better served" by the new specialized media, Utley says. "Since they will likely be opinion makers—and voters—public discussion of foreign affairs could conceivably improve." But unfortunately, he says, the broader American public will be left out.

## *Surfing the Web for Soul*

"Raising Caen" by William Powers, in *The New Republic* (May 12, 1997),  
1220 19th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Before television stole their breaking news, chain ownership destroyed their local character, and bland, rootless young "professionals" took over their newsrooms, the nation's great metropolitan newspapers were the soul of their cities. Today, they are spiritually dead, asserts Powers, a *New Republic* senior editor and former reporter for the *Washington Post*. Now, some San Francisco journalists are trying to revive that spirit in a high-tech form: a daily "webzine" called *Salon*.

Powers is skeptical.

David Talbot and a handful of other writers and editors left the struggling *San Francisco Examiner* in 1995 to launch the on-line magazine. *Salon* now has about 30 employees and is backed by the Adobe Systems software company and a leading high-tech venture capital firm. In 1996, *Time* tapped *Salon* as the year's best Web site.

Daily newspapers today, says Talbot, formerly the *Examiner's* arts and features edi-