

Neglecting and Misrepresenting Latin America:
Foreign Correspondents at the *New York Times* from 1966-1968

By
Christine Huang

Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Department of History of Vanderbilt University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For Honors in History

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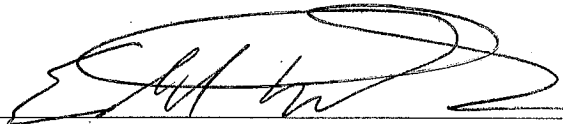
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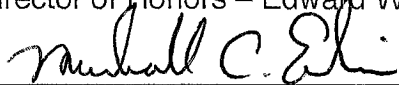
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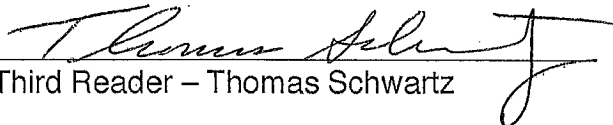
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Director of Honors – Edward Wright-Rios



Faculty Adviser – Marshall Eakin



Third Reader – Thomas Schwartz

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Introduction

The United States' relationship with the Soviet Union constituted a central theme of U.S. foreign policy in the Sixties.¹ The further entrenchment of existing Cold War tensions between the U.S. and the amorphous, yet ever-present, Communist threat occurred in tandem. President Dwight Eisenhower had previously staked out an aggressive containment policy, and leading candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination began staking out increasingly conservative foreign policy especially vis-à-vis the perceived Communist threat.² The eventual victor of the presidential contest, President John F. Kennedy, then brought into office an aggressive perspective on U.S. supremacy in the world; he established the “doctrine of 2.5 wars,” which involved “overkill nuclear superiority vis-à-vis Russia” and the ability to wage conventional warfare all over the globe.³ That Kennedy could eke out a victory on this type of platform points to the general U.S. public's agreement with – or at the very least acquiescence to – a similar world view defined by U.S. expansionism and exceptionalism both economic and geopolitical.⁴

As the U.S. continued to expand the perimeters and harden the terms of its containment policy, the U.S. media changed accordingly. On the one hand, there were the structural changes that occurred in the U.S. media market: print media (i.e., newspapers and news magazines) began fading in popularity as television cemented its role as a prominent and accessible news source.⁵ Newspapers, in turn, then became more commercially-minded than before, always considering how to maintain reader attention. At the same time, journalism adapted to the political climate and developed a distinctive reporting perspective

¹ United States will be referred to with the abbreviation U.S. henceforth.

² Diane B. Kunz, ed., *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade: American Foreign Relations during the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 2.

³ William Appleman Williams, *Americans in a Changing World: A History of the United States in the Twentieth century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 421.

⁴ Williams, *Americans in a Changing World*, 415.

⁵ Vincent Tompkins et al., eds., *American Decades: 1960 - 1969* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1994), 343.

that some media scholars, including Giovanna Dell'Orto and Bernard Cohen, would later on refer to as the Cold War frame. This approach motivated journalists to highlight or underplay news items given their relevance to the U.S.'s Cold War values.⁶ The media also served as an indicator of public opinion, meaning that the content it produced informed both U.S. citizens and policymakers on domestic and international events and on what the public was supposed to have considered important.

This thesis builds on existing studies of the media during the Cold War to understand the limitations of international reporting and how journalists failed to recognize their own incomplete outlook. The Sixties stand out as a period of geopolitical change. The Non-Aligned Movement officially formed in 1961, the Kennedy administration established new foreign aid programs, television news cemented its role, and journalists played a critical role in establishing and perpetuating the concept of a credibility gap. Media representation of Latin America also mattered because it informed how people in the U.S. – both private citizens and policymakers – thought about the region and its peoples. An examination of news production illuminates how and why certain representations and attitudes toward the region were promulgated.

As the U.S. found itself assuming the role of global superpower, its people, press, and government continued nonetheless to maintain a myopic perspective of the world. Much like today, various levels of the U.S. population often had a hard time thinking of other nations as equally complex and instead saw them in terms of the political and/or socioeconomic dynamics of the U.S. The U.S. efforts to export its style of capitalism to Europe (i.e., the Marshall Plan) and Latin America (i.e., the Alliance for Progress) serve as examples of how the U.S. could not look beyond its own economics. The U.S. residents who had traveled

⁶ Giovanna Dell'Orto, *American Journalism and International Relations: Foreign Correspondence from the Early Republic to the Digital Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 115.

“farther south than Mexico in the nineteenth century,” were also horrified because the people they encountered did not share the same fashion and behavior that they considered markers of civilization.⁷ Similarly, the press actively served as the “eyes and ears of America” and reported on the news with a focus on U.S. values like “ethnocentrism, a sense of missionary democracy and capitalism.”⁸ Many of the anxieties of the Cold War similarly centered around a fear that the U.S. way of life would potentially lose out.

The development and entrenchment of the Cold War, as well as its global impacts, have been well-documented. In his book *The Cold War: A New History*, John Lewis Gaddis chronicles the strategic concerns of the Cold War’s two main players – the Soviet Union and the U.S. In doing so, Gaddis convincingly expresses the fears that the two countries and their respective blocs felt about the Cold War. The benefit of hindsight was evidently impossible at the time, and the information asymmetry made each side’s “*apparent* setbacks” come off as very real.⁹ To consider how information about the world was delivered to the U.S. public is then to understand the broader impact of the fears undergirding policymaking.

Perceptions of the extent and the immediacy of the Soviet threat then played a significant role in how U.S. foreign policy was constructed in the time. Diane Kunz argues in her anthology, *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade*, that U.S. fears of countries “[turning] to the Soviet Union for inspiration and leadership” acted as a critical determinant in its foreign policy.¹⁰ In “Mixing the Sweet with the Sour: Kennedy, Johnson, and Latin America,” William O. Walker III highlights the outsized impact of this concern on U.S. relations with Latin America in a time where the U.S. saw an increasing number of Latin American countries as insufficiently modernized and therefore susceptible to the allure of

⁷ Fredrick B. Pike, *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 50–53.

⁸ Dell’Orto, *American Journalism and International Relations*, 114.

⁹ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 35.

¹⁰ Kunz, *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade*, 9.

Communism.¹¹ This outlook created a patronizing approach to Latin America, where the U.S. assumed the role of a more mature nation that guided Latin America into the light of capitalism and freedom. A corollary belief in Latin Americans as less-developed than U.S. residents also guided reporters, feeding an abidingly condescending tone as U.S. reporters saw themselves as more civilized. Latin Americans of course found this tone deeply offensive, as countless letters to the editors of various publications demonstrated. As such, the chapter highlights the importance of U.S. relations with Latin America – and the information outlets that shaped the news media.

How the U.S. saw and positioned itself in the world also affected U.S. relations with Latin America. As U.S.'s foreign policy concerns with losing its economic and military edge hinted at, U.S. residents in the Sixties saw themselves as the leading world power and cultural trendsetters justified in its efforts – which were, at the time, imagined as benevolent – to spread capitalism, democracy, and civilization around the world.¹² William Appleman Williams explains the history of this perspective in his college textbook, *Americans in a Changing World*. In the book, he documents the evolution of the U.S. empire and its accompanying economic imperialism, as well as the U.S.' assumptions about the rest of the world that must have undergirded this evolution. The analysis documents the pervasiveness of the U.S.' sense of superiority as well as the extent to which it had infiltrated U.S. thinking.¹³

The U.S. perspective on its position in the world produced a distinct yet foggy lens through which it saw its southern neighbors. The lens placed Americans from the U.S. higher on the ladder of civilization than Americans from countries in South America. It also came

¹¹ Walker O. Walker III, "Mixing the Sweet with the Sour: Kennedy, Johnson, and Latin America," in *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade: American Foreign Relations During the 1960s*, ed. Diane B. Kunz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 49.

¹² Williams, *Americans in a Changing World*, 338.

¹³ See Williams Chapter 6 & Chapter 19.

with a plethora of stereotypes that ran the gamut from childlike innocents in need of uplift to misbehaving miscreants requiring stern discipline to savages who needed to be brought into the fold of the U.S.' vision of civilization.¹⁴ Frederick B. Pike catalogues and traces the development of these stereotypes in his book *the United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature*. He does so by analyzing cultural artifacts, such as songs, studio art products, and newspaper articles, and the discourse of U.S. political, economic, and cultural figures, such as the speeches of Merrill E. Gates, the president of Rutgers and later of Amherst. The stereotypes about Latin America that he documents closely paralleled the U.S. vision of superiority that Williams documents.

The stereotypes fleshed out in Pike's work dominated U.S. thinking about Latin America and continued to present themselves even as alternative ways of thinking emerged after World War II. As Pike explains, even the "adversary culture" – the customs and social institutions of people in the U.S. who rejected mainstream ideals and culture – trafficked in stereotypes and myths, the difference being that U.S. residents participating in the counterculture now veiled their stereotypes about Latin America and the U.S.' southern frontier in a more positive veneer.¹⁵ This time, residents of the U.S. believed that Latin Americans were still less developed and civilized, but also someone the U.S. American could make better through the introduction of "community-development projects" endorsed by Ivy Leaguers and of capitalism as implemented by the U.S.¹⁶ In any case, U.S. residents still considered Latin Americans as part of the Other – fundamentally and even irreconcilably different from the U.S. American. While the prestige of well-established publications – like the *Times* or the *Wall Street Journal* – and of the upper echelons of the academy – like the

¹⁴ Pike, *The United States and Latin America*, 168.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 312.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 314.

Ivy Leaguers Kennedy hired to guide his foreign policy – may lead historians to expect more discerning language and critical analysis, the stereotypes nevertheless persisted.

To understand how the stereotypes demonstrably possessed by policymakers were also present in popular discourse in the Sixties, this thesis examines how two foreign correspondents for the *New York Times* – Barnard Collier and Malcolm Browne – covered Latin America.¹⁷ These two foreign correspondents served successfully in the same Latin America bureau, and their combined tenure conveniently began right as the *Times*' international section began a shift toward a different style of reporting. The shift began in 1966 as Seymour Topping assumed his new role as Foreign Editor and was intended to move the *Times*' international reporting away from general coverage of political events around the world to coverage of how other peoples lived around the world.¹⁸ While not explicitly implemented to combat the U.S.' often contemptuous preconceptions about the world, the new editorial emphasis on the experiences of other peoples nonetheless provided an opportunity for the challenging of the stereotypes present in U.S. thinking. After all, exposure to different ways of living can break down barriers and disprove erroneous assumptions.

The tangible effects that reporting can have on thinking and government policies have also been well-documented. In *The Press and Foreign Policy in the United States*, Bernard Cohen analyzes this relationship between news and policy through two waves of interviews with journalists and government officials in Washington.¹⁹ In it, Cohen describes the agenda-setting power of foreign correspondents and their editors as they single-handedly determine what is considered news. He discovers that events that are dramatic and timely make it into

¹⁷ In keeping with references made by former NYT employees in their own writings, this thesis will refer to the *New York Times* as the *Times* going forward.

¹⁸ Seymour Topping, *On the Front Lines of the Cold War: An American Correspondent's Journal from the Chinese Civil War to the Cuban Missile Crisis and Vietnam*, From Our Own Correspondent (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 318–21.

¹⁹ Bernard C. Cohen, "The Press and Foreign Policy in the United States," *Journal of International Affairs* 10, no. 2 (1956): 128–37.

the news; the political, economic, or social impact of the event does not matter quite as much. Moreover, no formula for deciding what can be considered news was in place, and the lack of systematic reporting left much room for journalists to exercise their own journalistic and creative license. News articles' supposed objectivity also helped the subjective analysis included by the reporter come off as fact. How foreign correspondents covered Latin America in the Sixties then deserves a serious examination.

In addition to the authors previously mentioned, this thesis also draws on the work of media studies scholars to understand how news was and is produced. Their work helps this thesis pin down journalistic norms as well as the work culture of various types of news production. In her book *American Journalism and International Relations*, Giovanna Dell'Orto specifically focuses on the history of international news reporting in the U.S. and on how various news agencies have interpreted the world for their audience since the nineteenth century. Her work also explains how a specific news frame developed during the mid-twentieth century that defined reporting on both domestic and international events during the Cold War. The news frame viewed international political events through the parameter of "democracy versus communism," where all events were somehow boiled down to a fundamental conflict between two political and economic systems.²⁰ In reducing events to a binary ideological conflict, the frame made "[getting] at local realities" difficult because foreign correspondents were compelled to interpret events in terms of a binary conflict. The described news frame plays an important role in understanding journalists' thinking during the time period of this thesis' focus – especially the thinking of Collier and Browne whose writings will be studied in detail.

Other media studies' works used in this thesis include John Maxwell Hamilton's *Roving Eye* and Stephen Hess' study on foreign correspondents from the Seventies. *Roving*

²⁰ Dell'Orto, *American Journalism and International Relations*, 115.

Eye provides a more in-depth history of international reporting in the U.S., with a focus on the interpersonal relationships between prominent figures in foreign reporting as well as the activities of the publications they worked for.²¹ Unlike Dell’Orto’s work, it does not focus on the content of foreign correspondents’ work. Hess’ study, *International News & Foreign Correspondents*, similarly does not look closely at what foreign correspondents wrote. Instead, he provides more of a demographic sketch of foreign correspondents in the U.S. and characterizes the difference between correspondents who started work in the Sixties and those who started later in the Seventies. He finds that foreign correspondents from the Sixties were often part of the upper-middle to upper class and motivated by a desire to explore and travel around the world. Truly understanding other countries was either a secondary or nonexistent priority. Hess also finds that many foreign correspondents lacked relevant language skills. In doing so, his work essentially sketches the type of haughty, yet careless journalist examined here: Brown, Collier, Topping, and their colleagues.

The secondary sources outlined thus far draw mostly look at U.S. foreign relations and international reporting as separate subjects. This thesis connects these two distinct topics to understand how journalists created international news, which affected the U.S. government’s decision making as well as the U.S. public’s thinking about the world. It presents the rationale of individuals who effectively set the agenda for policymakers in the U.S., especially in a time where journalism began to experience changes and backlash from its reporting on Vietnam. In doing so, this thesis bridges a gap in existing literature about how U.S. attitudes about the world self-reinforced through the media’s agenda-setting function. Bridging this gap shows how mainstream cultural values permeated journalism – a supposedly critical and investigative practice.

²¹ John Maxwell Hamilton, *Journalism’s Roving Eye: A History of American Foreign Reporting* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009); Stephen Hess, *International News and Foreign Correspondents* (Brookings Institution Press, 1996).

To supplement the work that has already been conducted on this topic, this thesis examines the correspondence between Browne and Collier, and their editor, Topping. The letters are housed at the New York Public Library in Manhattan, along with other internal records of the *Times*. This thesis also uses Browne and Topping's memoirs to understand their own reflections about their work during the time period. Both the correspondence and the memoirs provide a window into the journalists' contemporary motivations and expectations that may have motivated them to produce the work they did. Interviews with diplomats to South American countries, references to news outlets and reporters supplement the archival documents illuminate policymakers' relationship with the news media. To analyze these sources, this thesis chooses to conduct close readings, as intimate examinations of the language of reporters and policymakers can display how the interpretive structures they invoked generated meaning.

These primary sources provide a glimpse into how foreign correspondents thought about the subjects they reported on, as well as the ongoing thought process behind their reporting. As such, they allow this study to more accurately characterize the work of the two foreign correspondents studied because they describe the correspondents' feelings towards their subjects and allow it to better assign intentionality. That said, the sources only pertain to two foreign correspondents out the several thousand that were active during the Sixties. The *Times* was also exceptional in how seriously they took their foreign reporting. Consequently, the conclusions about Collier and Browne drawn from these sources may not be generalizable to other correspondents, especially those who worked for publications that took their international reporting less seriously. Additionally, these documents cannot definitively establish a relationship between how Browne and Collier wrote and how the U.S. public reacted. Neither do they serve as primary evidence for how all people in the U.S. thought about the world.

Nonetheless, these primary sources provide a glimpse into how foreign correspondents thought about the subjects they reported on, as well as the thought process behind their reporting. When writing to their editors based in New York, Collier and Topping reflected on the challenges they faced and defended the approaches they took. As such, their discourse allows this thesis to more accurately characterize the work of the two foreign correspondents studied; they describe the correspondents' feelings towards their subjects and makes attributing intentionality possible for this thesis. They also help demonstrate the presence of social attitudes at all levels of the *Times'* foreign desk.

This first chapter introduces the state of the print news media in the Sixties through examining the contemporary journalism code of ethics and other materials related to the media's gradual professionalization. It establishes the general code of conduct expected from Topping, Collier, and Browne, which is a necessary basis for an understanding of their reporting. This chapter also characterizes the general Cold War frame adopted by the news and connect that to the history of U.S. thinking about the world. The frame shows the journalists' blind spots, and the connection to existing trends points to the pervasiveness of the frame's underlying values.

The second chapter moves away from broader discussions about news frames and focuses in on the work of a specific correspondent – Collier. It starts with an exploration of historical context: it explains the significance of the emerging non-aligned movement and U.S. attitudes toward these movements. The chapter then illustrates how these attitudes impacted how Collier performed in his job. It also looks the role of editorial changes initiated by Topping. The chapter's evaluation of Topping's responses to Collier's performance shows the *Times'* relative disregard for Latin America as the institution tolerated and overlooked Collier's shortcomings. The same evaluation creates a profile of the typical foreign correspondent of the era.

The final chapter explores how Browne performed in his job given his work in Vietnam. His experience abroad significantly impacted his philosophy on reporting, and yet he did not apply the same ethos to his reportage on Latin America. Accordingly, this chapter attempts to reconcile these different attitudes by looking at how he spoke about his work to his editor. It reveals Browne's complicated relationship his own reporting ideals: despite his attempts to maintain a critical eye when conducting his work, Browne's degrading assumptions about Latin Americans nonetheless blinded him to some of the important political developments occurring around him. In doing so, the chapter explains why challenges to the U.S. perspective and news frames initiated by reporting from the Vietnam War did not yet carry over to reporting on Latin America.

In examining the reflections of foreign correspondents in Latin America, this thesis demonstrates how historical assumptions about Latin America and contemporary concerns about the U.S.' role in the world prevented journalists from providing more nuanced and insightful coverage on the region. It shows that the context of the Cold War, the stereotypes that people in the U.S. had traded in for centuries, and the assumptions of superiority that U.S. Americans held permeated the practice of foreign correspondence. Despite journalists' sense of responsibility and best attempts to maintain a neutral perspective on the events they recorded, their worldview nonetheless obscured their vision. These conclusions speak to the pernicious effects of prejudices, as they defeated even the best reporters' attempts to provide fair coverage.

Chapter One: Evolution of the Media

The press has consistently played an important role in American society. Newspapers facilitated political expression prior to the Revolutionary War, and both the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists used print media as a platform for persuasion. Thomas Jefferson, a Founding Father and author of the Declaration of Independence, even said in a letter to a delegate at the Continental Congress that “were it left to [him] to decide” between “a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, [he] should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.”¹ His preference for the paper clearly demonstrates the significant role the press plays in facilitating just governance in American politics and society.

The Founding Fathers did not misplace their values when they framed a free press as a cornerstone of American democracy. As communications scholars have identified, the press wears multiple hats in society – all of which are critical to maintaining a well-functioning democracy. These roles include that of the government watchdog, the objective informant, the interpretive journalist, and so on. In performing these roles, the press ensures that the people are informed, and helps keep those in elected office accountable.

However, though the media has clearly played an important role from the very beginning of American history, the exact characteristics of the role have not remained the same. Rather, they have changed as the newspaper industry grew, and as technological developments changed the media landscape. This chapter synthesizes the works of scholars of media and communication studies and documents from journalists’ professional organizations to trace the media’s place in society evolved through the twentieth century, up until the Sixties. It prefaces the history of media in the twentieth century with a discussion of

¹ Jefferson Thomas, “Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Edward Carrington,” January 16, 1787, Jefferson Papers, Founders Online, National Archives. [Add URL for letter]

the media's general roles in society and concludes with a discussion of media perspectives in the Cold War.

Media Roles

Fourth Estate

One of the most recognized roles that the media plays is that of the “fourth estate.” First used in 1787, the label of “fourth estate” identifies the press as an entity that exists outside of the established political powers. In the case of the U.S. government, the first three estates refer to the judicial, executive, and legislative branches of government, and the press sit outside of those formal roles. This location of the press as outside of the formal branches of government essentially grants it the status of an observer. As an observer, the press is distanced from the actual decision-making that occurs in the government and can instead more objectively collect information and report on the formal government institutions’ every move.² Its detachment from actual government operations gives its analyses of the government more clout. It would thus serve as a check on the three branches of government.

Provider of Information

As an extension of the model of press as the fourth estate, the press also plays the role of information giver. The public possesses a right to know, and for the public to provide the knowledge it deserves to know, it must first see the press as a worthwhile source of information and be receptive to the writing that the press produces.³ Otherwise, the articles appearing in newspapers and segments airing on television would be of no significance and the press would be a toothless watchdog. Consequently, the press must also serve in the role of information provider. In the case of international reporting, for the press’ writings to serve

² L. A. Scot Powe, *The Fourth Estate and the Constitution: Freedom of the Press in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 233–34.

³ *Ibid.*, 53.

as a way for readers to learn about the world is the logical extension of this vision of the press as a source of information.

Such an understanding of press as information source is evident in the early twentieth century. As prominent American writer Walter Lippmann wrote in his 1922 book, *Public Opinion*, the public expects “the newspaper to serve [it] the truth” and to “present [it] with a true picture of all the outer world in which [the public is] interested.”⁴ The public, in other words, relied on the press to be a mediator between it and the world; it needed the press to gather information about the events it could not immediately experience firsthand. That Lippmann – at that time a newspaper commentator himself – so characterized the press in the early twentieth century demonstrates that the understanding of the press as an information giver was widely established by that time.

To perform its role as information provider, the press had two options: it could present its readers with just the facts and details from various events, or it could describe then analyze events for its readers in an attempt to elicit maximum understanding. The former, considered descriptive reporting, relied on journalists who, as political scientist Thomas E. Patterson described, “did not ordinarily delve into why” events happened or certain things were said.⁵ Instead, descriptive journalists were cautious about entering “the realm of subjectivity,” and “took the pains to separate the facts of an event from [their] interpretation of it.”⁶ This was the main type of reporting that occurred for the majority of the twentieth century until the introduction of television news started and the role of the media in the Vietnam War and Watergate increased the demand for a different type of journalism.

A 1954 news article about then-Chilean president General Carlos Ibanez’s affirmation of positive U.S.-Chilean relations evinces journalists’ desire to produce the most objective

⁴ Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1922), 320.

⁵ Thomas E. Patterson, *Out of Order: An Incisive and Boldly Original Critique of the News Media’s Domination of America* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011), 66.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

news piece they could. In the article written for the *New York Herald Tribune*, the reporter breaks the article into short paragraphs comprised of one or two simple sentences. Many of the sentences have a simple subject-verb-object construction, with an actor in Chile being the subject, a form of “to say” as the verb, and a quote as the object. The first paragraph, for example, begins with the sentence “Gen. Carlos Ibanez... has declared... that he considers relations between Chile and the U.S. to be ‘very satisfactory.’” The simple syntax and the subject’s human identity grant agency to the actors that experienced the event firsthand and make it clear that the journalist is simply serving as recorder of what happened. Other paragraphs similarly rely on synonyms of the neutral verb “to say” and create the impression that the article is a simply a record of words that were said and actions that were performed. No attempt at interpretation is made, and objectivity stands out as the guiding principle.

However, as television and radio were introduced to the scene in the middle of the twentieth century, the emphasis in reporting shifted away from description and towards interpretation. This interpretive style of reporting focuses more on the “why” of news stories than the “what,” and parallels television and radio news’ “need for tightly structured stories.”⁷ The facts that the descriptive journalists focused on became ingredients for the journalists’ chosen narrative or theme. As political scientist Bernard Cohen wrote in his 1956 journal article “The Press and Foreign Policy in the United States,” interpretive reporting is not always an inferior or corrupted version of “true” descriptive reporting. Rather, interpretive reporting is sometimes necessary for encouraging readers’ complete understanding of news stories established in unfamiliar contexts. News stories set abroad, which occurred among political and cultural contexts unfamiliar to readers in the U.S., especially benefitted from interpretive reporting. Having journalists who could provide the

⁷ *Ibid.*, 80.

necessary context made understanding foreign events easier.⁸ Distinguished economist Robert Lekachman similarly wrote in that same year that analysis and interpretation needed to accompany complex news – especially economic news, he argued.⁹ More analytical reporting focused on explaining how and why a news story happened was thought to improve the public affairs literacy of the public.

Another article on Chile, this time from 1969, illustrates how the press shifted to a more analytical style of reporting after the mid-twentieth century. In the article – which is about Chile requesting U.S. presidential envoy Governor Nelson Rockefeller postpone his visit – there are more references to prior events, and the sentence structures move away from the simple “he said, she said” structure of descriptive reporting. The reporter writes, for example, about events from “last Sunday,” and references the “further demonstrations” that the “students had vowed.”¹⁰ Mentioning prior events establishes the context of the main news story and requires the journalists to make judgment calls about how the events should be framed. The level of choice introduced to the writer thereby makes the writing more subjective and more interpretive.

The articles’ section on a report by the Latin American Special Coordination Committee is equally interpretive, as the reporter judges the report as Latin American countries’ “first” attempt “to deal collectively with the U.S.” The adjective “first” is a judgment representing the reporter’s evaluation of previous efforts and political movements. As such, the 1969 article relies more heavily on context, adjectives, and reporters’ judgments than did the article from 1954, thus demonstrating the change from descriptive to more interpretive reporting. In drawing relationships between the various events in the article and

⁸ Cohen, “The Press and Foreign Policy in the United States,” 131.

⁹ Robert Lekachman, “The Changing Shape of Occupations,” *Challenge* 4, no. 6 (March 1, 1956): 47–50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/05775132.1956.11468240>.

¹⁰ News Dispatches, “Chile Is Third to Cancel Visit by Rockefeller .: Chile Asks Rockefeller To Skip Visit First Such Step Protest in Santiago,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald* (1959-1973); *Washington, D.C.*, June 5, 1969, sec. General.

evaluating prior events, the article on international news also helped the reader better grasp the significance of the event.

Window and Gatekeeper

On top of serving as the public's source of information about the world – both in terms of international, foreign events and domestic events happening outside of one's immediate purview – the media serves as a gatekeeper for the public. As the public's window, the press is positioned to choose what information can be let through, and what must be filtered out. Also referred to as agenda setting, the gatekeeping function of the press tells the public not *how* to think, but *what* to think about. The effect is especially prominent in interpretive reporting, as the reporter makes calls about what to include and exclude as part of the main story's context. In the case of the 1969 article, the reporter decided to connect President Frei's request to Peru's cancellation of Gov. Rockefeller's visit, and to the Latin American Special Coordination Committee's actions. Connecting the main news story to these events encourages the reader to think about the events in tandem with each other. The resulting effect is an agenda of thoughts set in the reader's mind and established by the reporters.

Politicians saw the news reporting as a way to better understand public opinion on political issues, so setting the agenda in the readers' minds also indirectly affected the political agenda. President Truman, for example, once referred to the press as “prostitutes of the mind.” In a longhand note he wrote to himself in 1952, Truman expressed his frustration towards how the press sometimes twisted the facts and reported on events in a way that he disagreed with. He also made clear that he “never let... a sewer press in any way influence his actions.”¹¹ In this case, Truman may not have agreed with the media's interpretation of

¹¹ Harry S. Truman, “Longhand Note of President Harry S. Truman,” 1952, President's Secretary's Files, Truman Papers, Harry S. Truman Library & Museum, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/trumanpapers/psf/longhand/index.php?documentVersion=both&documentid=hst-psf_naid735292-01.

certain events, but his note at least acknowledged that he saw the press as representation of some portion of public opinion. His conscious effort to remain uninfluenced by the media also demonstrated that news reports had some effect on politicians' thought processes and agendas.

Truman was of course correct, to some extent. The press values having an angle on events because of commercial pressures to keep the public interested, and the angle encourages newsmen to fit facts into stories and not the other way around. Because of their penchant for angles, journalists can choose to tell the news story from a certain angle and highlight or downplay certain details. In doing so, journalists shape how the public think of certain events. This is especially obvious in interpretive reporting where journalists make conscious choices to place stories within certain contexts.¹² The frame of the Soviet bloc versus the Western bloc placed around the Cold War, for example, was partially the result of the need to create momentum for the public's interest. Journalists then sought to attribute every international political development of during the Cold War to a fundamental tension between the two political spheres, thereby creating an overarching narrative that facts were twisted into.¹³

Print Media in Crisis

As the role that the press played in U.S. society progressed from descriptor to interpreter, journalists also changed how they thought of themselves and elevated the importance of journalists' personal characteristics. As people who transcribed details of events, earlier journalists' own prejudices did not play as large of a role in their work. They were not called on to make as many judgment calls as their successors would when writing more interpretive articles. Conversely, journalists conducting interpretive reporting had more

¹² David L. Altheide and Robert P. Snow, *Media Worlds in the Postjournalism Era* (Transaction Publishers, 1991), 62.

¹³ Pippa Norris, "The Restless Searchlight: Network News Framing of the Post-Cold War World," *Political Communication* 12, no. 4 (October 1, 1995): 357–70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.1995.9963084>.

room to include their own opinions, so their own opinions on the world logically became more significant. This section explores how the media industry and journalists' perceptions of their own roles changed across the twentieth century.

At the beginning of the century, only print news in the style of tabloids existed. Muckraking – a type of reporting characterized by digging up dirt on important people – had become too much for the public, and people were growing tired of coverage driven by heavy issues of morality and respectability. As a result, popular demand pushed the media towards coverage focused on covering the lifestyles of the rich and famous, with the rise of a set of magazines known as the “Smart Magazines.” Including Condé Nast’s *Vanity Fair*, these magazines “catered to an elite audience” with the intent of being “the fodder of conversation at parties.”¹⁴ The *New York Daily News* emerged alongside these “Smart Magazines,” covering “titillating and grisly crimes and sex scandals.”¹⁵ Together, the two new types of print media – the high society magazine and the daily tabloid – illustrated the early twentieth century’s shift away from fact- and morality-driven reporting. The commercial interests behind the shift clearly show through as the new mediums tried to appeal to readers with light-hearted content and scintillating gossip.

The idea of the media becoming an institution of professionalized authority also emerged as news became less serious. Prior to the Teens, the only way for someone to become a journalist was to pick up experience as they worked at a news agency. However, as educator Philander Claxton wrote in a bulletin in 1918, more public interests (e.g., politics) started relying on the public press for information, and “the need for systematic instruction in [journalism became] greater and more apparent.” Journalists were beginning to recognize that journalism had the potential to become an academic subject, and that journalistic behavior

¹⁴ Vincent Tompkins, *American Decades: 1910-1919*, 1 edition (Detroit: Gale, 1996), 362.

¹⁵ Tompkins, *American Decades: 1910-1919*, 357.

could be codified and passed down to pupils. More institutions of higher education thus started establishing programs intended to teach journalism, indicating the beginning of a more formal press. Under this new system, journalists saw their occupation taken more seriously, and they developed a stronger sense of responsibility.

The institutionalization of the press was also in part a response to the new criticisms that were beginning to be leveraged against the press. Such concerns are evident in editor of the *New York Evening Post* Oswald Garrison Villard's 1914 address to a conference of newspaper editors. In it, he explains that "the charge of conspiracy [against the press] to suppress the truth is rife on every hand," especially charges linking the press to Wall Street and moneyed interests. While some of these accusations were unjustified knee-jerk reactions to having their dirty laundry aired in the press, there was also some truth behind them. As Villard explains, the press at that time often refused to "right a wrong done editorially," would "[suppress]... news for profit," lacked accuracy in its reporting, and occasionally manufactured facts in the style of "the Hearst brand of yellow journalism." In response to these flaws in early-twentieth-century journalism, there was a move towards developing a code of conduct for reporters – a move that would best be accomplished through establishing "a special department in a university for instruction in journalism." While education "would no more make a journalist than West Point makes a soldier," it would, concerned journalists thought, at least lay the necessary foundations.¹⁶ The new education programs were therefore to strengthen the interpretive accuracy of reporter's analyses and thus protect the media against unfair accusations from the public. In doing so, journalists developed an image of arguably superficial objectivity as they claimed impartiality even as reporting constituted an act of representation that necessarily obscured the original truth.¹⁷

¹⁶ Oswald Garrison Villard, *Some Weaknesses of Modern Journalism* (Lawrence, Kansas: Dept. of Journalism Press, University of Kansas, 1914).

¹⁷ Stephen J. A. Ward, *The Invention of Journalism Ethics, Second Edition: The Path to Objectivity and Beyond* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press - MQUP, 2015), 236–41.

Journalists' growing concern about professional conduct continued into the Twenties even as the trend of tabloid reporting also continued. Newspaper chains like those of the Hearst media empire continued developing. These chains had the same interest in profit-making and similar – if not the same – pools of news events to report on. This created a fairly homogeneous media landscape with little demand for variation and/or creativity. Accompanying the monotonous media landscape were articles with increasingly lower word counts. Newspapers were increasingly concerned about having to keep people's attention and accordingly made their articles shorter.¹⁸ The reduced length made fitting more articles into each newspaper editor more convenient and ensured that readers would not get distracted before reaching the end of the article. Combined with the content of the news becoming more entertainment based and less serious, the shortening article lengths point to a sector of less reputable reporting.

Other journalists clearly understood the problems that the Hearst brand of journalism created because the introduction of more tabloid-esque journalists. They continued their sustained efforts to create an educational pathway to a career in journalism, and to codify the “esprit de corps.” This is clear with the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), and its adoption of a code of ethics. One of the founders, Moorfield Storey, clearly stated in an article titled “The Daily Press” that “the public demand for certain kinds of news ought not to be a guide” for what editors choose to include in their publications.¹⁹ The ASNE thus appropriately adopted a code of ethics a year after their 1922 founding. The code emphasized the press's responsibility to “public welfare,” going so far to identify “considerations of public welfare” as the only reason why newspapers should even be able “to attract and hold readers.” It also denounces the publication of “unofficial charges affecting reputation or

¹⁸ Judith Baughman, *American Decades: 1920-1929*, 1 edition (Detroit: Gale, 1995).

¹⁹ Moorefield Storey, “The Daily Press,” in *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 129 (Atlantic Monthly Company, 1922), 41.

moral character,” and makes an important distinction between public curiosity and the public right to know.²⁰ The code received positive feedback, with local press associations such as the University Press Club of Michigan adopting the ASNE’s national code. The professional journalist fraternity Sigma Delta Chi also adopted the code for themselves three years after the ASNE code of ethics was established.²¹ The warm reception indicates the presence of widespread discontent with the contemporary state of journalism, and that a significant portion of journalists recognized the need for a better press. Having a code that standardized objectivity also helped the news media project an image of impartiality, which further contributed to journalists’ reputations as unbiased information providers.

The backlash against the Depression-era concerns of entertainment-based reporting continued into the Thirties with the growth of mass media. Mass media is understood as forms of widely circulated media with the capability to reach large audiences.²² As radio joined print magazines and newspapers as a medium for information, information became more accessible, and catering to “the lowest... common denominator of the American public” became the media’s primary focus. Entertainment thus continued to be the main purpose of the media despite the development of common journalism ethics in the Twenties. Accompanying this less sophisticated type of media were criticisms about how “the mass media created a mass human – unserious, superstitious, disrespectful of tradition and authority.”²³ These critics recognized the media’s potential to affect public opinion and possessed an appropriate wariness of a media owned by commercial interests.

In response to concerns about media ownership, the New Deal politicians running the government began to regulate the media. They understood the potential impact that large

²⁰ American Society of Newspaper Editors, “Code of Ethics or Canons of Journalism,” 1923, CSEP Library.

²¹ Ward, *The Invention of Journalism Ethics*, Second Edition, 237.

²² Siciliano Michael and Gruys Kjerstin, “Mass Media,” *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Consumption and Consumer Studies*, Major Reference Works, March 24, 2015, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118989463.wbeccs165>.

²³ Victor Bondi, *American Decades: 1930-1939*, 1 edition (Detroit: Gale, 1995), 345.

media conglomerates such as the Hearst industries could have on public opinion and recognized the chaos of unregulated radio airwaves. To combat these two phenomena, the administration created the Federal Communications Commission, which appropriated radio frequencies to different localities and capped “the number of media outlets an individual could own in a single market.” Federal action that interfered with media markets point to the significant potential impact that messages from the media had on politics and society at large.

On the other hand, the introduction of the radio also made the media more pluralistic even as politicians began to consciously manipulate the media. The new radio technology made it easier for the previously-underrepresented to have a voice, and some lauded the mass media for its potential for “[inspiring] political action.”²⁴ This perspective of the press as an equalizing force is reflected in the writing of C. P. Scott, editor of the *Guardian*. He says in his 1931 article “The Function of the Press,” that the newspaper “must overleap all barriers,” and to equalize differences.²⁵ The newspaper also facilitates sympathy among people, as it conveys news from other parts of the world and creates a pathway to understanding otherwise foreign peoples. The resulting sense of compassion then inspires political action. As the radio invited news into people’s homes, the press became less elite, and news consumers ostensibly became more educated about the world as news streamed into their lives.

To supplement the development of a more accessible press, the trend towards more interpretive reporting continued. Journalists became aware that “there are cases in which nothing is so misleading as the bald fact,” and that a news story “must be seen in its whole connection, as part of a process, not merely as an incident” for it to be properly understood.²⁶ Consequently, the press also began to see itself “as interpreter,” responsible for “[entering]

²⁴ Bondi, *American Decades: 1930-1939*, 346.

²⁵ C.P. Scott, “The Function of the Press,” *The Political Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (January 1931): 69, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.1931.tb00313.x>.

²⁶ Scott, “The Function of the Press,” 60.

into the mind of a man of another nation” and explaining distant events to the public. As a result, the role of the journalist grew to encompass more than just a scribe for public events and became “trained interpreter of men and affairs.”²⁷ Reportage focused on explaining, and not just recording, events became the new journalistic standard. The development of interpretive reporting as the new default dovetailed with the heightened impression of journalism as objective, meaning that even interpretive reporting was now seen as free of subjective personal judgments.

The government also became aware of the importance of public image management. The first political public relations team – Clem Whitaker and Leone Baxter’s Campaigns, Inc. – began in 1933. Previously public relations firms and experts had catered to corporations, and their emergence marked the beginning of a new relationship between politicians and the media. The development of popular press and mass media “undercut the [political] boss, the machine, and the lobbyist,” so instead of communicating with lobbies representing people’s interests, post-Campaigns, Inc. politicians focused on “[dealing] directly with the people and not their representatives.”²⁸ Campaign, Inc.’s wire service California Feature Service, for example, circulated its own free “weekly political clip-sheet” among local newspapers and “thought leaders.”²⁹ The recipients then reprinted, or at the very least read, the information presented in the news brief. As a result, the information that the political consulting firm – and thus the political clients – wanted the public to know was directly circulated amongst the target audience, affecting public opinion. The development of mass media thus changed the way that politicians interacted with the public.

The transition to an institution dedicated to informing the public continued into the Forties. The emphasis moved beyond instilling professional skills and added a component of

²⁷ Scott, “The Function of the Press,” 61.

²⁸ Carey McWilliams, “Government by Whitaker and Baxter, III,” *Nation* 172, no. 18 (May 5, 1951): 420.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 367.

a moral education. Previously, education had been focused on how journalists should carry themselves; now they looked at the virtues and moral judgments needed to guide journalists' work. As accreditation standards issued by the Association of Schools and Departments of Journalism (AASDJ) stated, aspiring journalists of the Forties needed to be educated "for service to the public," and Dean Carl W. Ackerman of Columbia University's School of Journalism also stated in the 1939-1940 journalism school catalogue that journalism's responsibility was increasing "as journalism [was] becoming more and more of a public service."³⁰ That journalism schools would focus not just on writing mechanics or editorial skills but also on the moral responsibilities that journalists had to the public demonstrates the press' recognition of the significant role it had in society. The press knew that it could influence politics through affecting public opinion and that its power should not be abused.

To better serve their important function in society, journalists further systematized their profession. Journalism education – an effort that had begun in the 1900s – had previously been criticized as overly vocational, and the Forties saw an effort to improve the reputation of journalism schools. Part of this effort was the AASDJ's new Revised Standards "necessary for Group A rating" established in 1941, and the National Council on Professional Education for Journalism – created at the end of the Thirties – work on more rigorously studying, evaluating, and raising standards for journalistic education. As a result of the studies on how to improve journalism programs, journalism schools shifted towards curriculums that created an "equal balance between practical and cultural training."³¹ These curriculums valued a liberal arts education and saw the social sciences "as an almost essential part of the professional preparation and also as providing general background."³² The

³⁰ Albert Alton Sutton, *Education for Journalism in the United States from Its Beginning to 1940* (Evanston, 1945), 28, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015011934901>; *Ibid.*, 43.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

³² Paul L. Dressel, *Liberal Education and Journalism* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1960), 28, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015069810409>.

inclusion of subjects outside of ones like writing and composition were necessary for developing the skills needed for interpreting news stories. The evolution of mass media thus encouraged journalists to pursue both a practical and theoretical education where they learned both the skills needed for write and also the ethics that guide their work.³³

During the next decade of the Fifties, traditional print media faced a new challenge: the commercial pressure from television news. “Television supplanted radio as the primary source of entertainment,” and the success of other news outlets like the newspaper “was measured by how well the withstood the challenge television presented.”³⁴ The changing postwar structure of the economy also raised the costs of production for newspapers, as the growth of labor unions led to demands for higher wages, which in turn increased newspapers’ overhead. This development, on top of the pressure of “investing in new technology” and the rising prices of newsprint – from \$44/ton in the Thirties to \$134/ton in 1958, drove many newspapers to closure, or to merge with other publications at the very least.³⁵ In response to these economic challenges, newspapers felt pressured “to print more features to meet the competition,” and to change their delivery times to precede families’ “evening television viewing.”³⁶ These changes made clear that, despite journalists’ and journalism schools’ gestures towards social responsibility and a greater moral calling, a profit motive fundamentally underlay newspaper activity.

The rise of television also forced journalists to change how they thought of their own profession. As Dressel writes, “the development of... television... required either an expansion of the conception of journalism or the acceptance of the existence of a number of different though related professions.”³⁷ As a new breed of television broadcasters developed,

³³ Dressel, *Liberal Education and Journalism*, 37.

³⁴ Richard Layman, *American Decades: 1950-1959*, 1 edition (Detroit: Gale, 1994), 297.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 306.

³⁶ David Randall Davies, *The Postwar Decline of American Newspapers, 1945-1965* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 58.

³⁷ Dressel, *Liberal Education and Journalism*, 31.

the immediacy and accessibility of television broadcasts challenged newspapers' dominance as people's main source of news. Television's technological edge quickly gave it a wide audience, and more people started considering news transmitted through the television as "real" news. Broadcast news thus continued to shrink newspaper circulation and the number of publications in existence. It also forced print journalists to either change how they defined journalistic responsibilities, or to transition to other forms of journalism – like television news. In other words, the emergence of other popular forms of reporting challenged earlier efforts to make journalism a professional, objective, and morally laudable profession. The shifting media landscape also made agreeing on solid journalism standards in the Fifties more difficult.

The threat of television only continued to lower the quality of newspapers. As the pressure to be both entertaining and immediate in its reporting continued, the content of newspapers focused more on popular culture and leisure. A study of Sunday papers from 1939 to 1959 in fact showed that later editions placed a heavier "emphasis on television, gardening, do-it-yourself activities, travel and vacations, and other family and home oriented activities."³⁸ News articles, on the other hand, were far less common, and the last two decades' progress away from tabloid-like gossip and towards socially-responsible information seemed to undo itself.

In addition to the quality problems introduced by the heightened competition, the changes in media ownership also created trust problems for print media. The concentration of media ownership made it easier for mass media messaging, and the private interests of media owners became more important. The public also became more aware of government influence in the media. In the words of journalist, historian, and writer John Tebbel, "the

³⁸ William A. Hachten, "The Changing U.S. Sunday Newspaper," *Journalism Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (September 1, 1961): 281, <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769906103800301>.

same papers that [deplored] management of the news would not hesitate to use a planted story by the White House or a government agency if they were guaranteed an exclusive.”³⁹

This example makes clear commercial interests’ corruption of the quality and integrity of print media.

Cold War Influences

As journalists soul searched and attempted to identify the most appropriate and commercially viable medium for their reporting, the political context of the Cold War also impacted their work. Media scholars have explained the war’s effect in terms of media frames, and this section draws on political scientist Pippa Norris’ scholarship to break down this concept. In doing so, this section introduces vocabulary and ideas that the following chapters will draw on in their examination of Barnard Collier and Malcolm Browne’s work.

A news frame, as scholars who study mass communication understand the concept, refer to “an interpretive structure that sets particular events within a broader context.” The structure can be comprised of values, preconceptions, and/or narratives, and essentially creates an overarching narrative that all events can fit into. These frames are used by both journalists, and people in general, to understand events that occur around them. For journalists specifically, the interpretive categories that news frames consist of help provide a formula for their stories, making it easier to “prioritize, and structure the narrative flow of events.”⁴⁰ In interpreting news about domestic political developments, for example, journalists can draw on a “black-white racial conflict frame” that portrays all challenges occurring in the U.S. as a function of tension between two races. Having this existing frame to draw on minimizes the interpretive work that they have to perform themselves.

³⁹ John Tebbel, “Journalism: Public Enlightenment or Private Interest?,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 363, no. 1 (January 1, 1966): 82, <https://doi.org/10.1177/000271626636300112>.

⁴⁰ Pippa Norris, “The Restless Searchlight: Network News Framing of the Post-Cold War World,” *Political Communication* 12, no. 4 (October 1, 1995): 357, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.1995.9963084>.

Within the context of the Cold War, the political situation created an interpretive frame that emphasized a fundamental conflict between two mutually exclusive ways of life, each led by their own superpower. What constituted these two ways of life differed from interpretation to interpretation, but the binary nature of the conflict appeared in every iteration of the frame. For example, the conflict sometimes appeared to be between capitalism and communism – two ways of organizing an economy, and other times the conflict appeared to exist between democracy and authoritarianism – two ways of organizing political power in a society. Certainly, other frames existed in U.S. reporting of international events, but the Cold War frame nevertheless “ran like a red thread through most coverage of international news... because it dominated [U.S.] foreign policy.”⁴¹ This is to say that the Cold War fundamentally shaped how U.S. newspeople thought about their reporting and provided a way to simplify and prioritize how they wrote. As the following chapters demonstrate, the frame at the very least permeated the work of Collier and Browne.

Of course, referring to an interpretive perspective as a frame appears to suggest a certain rigidity that is not always present. The usage of the word “frame” evokes an image of a collection of syllogisms that are set in stone, where journalists who draw on a Cold War frame only stick to established interpretations. This is certainly an unrealistic image, as journalists and people inevitably draw on other values or stereotypes that exist in cultural discourse when interpreting events. It also provides a sanitized term to refer to the cultural stereotypes that the interpretive structures often draw on. In the case of the Cold War frame, for example, viewing U.S. residents’ cultural supremacy as part of a frame may give the entitlement a sense of naturalness that obscures the prejudices undergirding the sentiment. The concept of a news frame as presented in the following chapters thus attempts to be a

⁴¹ Norris, "The Restless Searchlight," 359.

more flexible one. It recognizes that many of the values journalists marshal in their frames often rest on racist or imperialist views of other people.

Journalism evolved into a more formal enterprise through the early half of the twentieth century. Universities developed separate schools to teach journalistic writing and social responsibility to prospective journalists. Yet, commercial pressures from television simultaneously eroded the quality and length of some journalistic enterprises and newspapers needed to compete with the more entertaining form of broadcast news. Consequently, news media from at the start of the Sixties existed in a state of tension where it needed to serve as watchdog and the Fourth Estate but also maintain commercially viable. Contemporary political developments also shaped the media as the Cold War established an interpretive news frame that journalists could draw from. These news frames encouraged journalists to see events in terms of a fundamental conflict between two world superpowers. The following chapter characterizes the significance and shortcomings of journalism among this political situation through a case study of a *Times* journalist working in Latin America.

Chapter Two: Low Expectations at the *New York Times*

By the beginning of the Sixties – which would turn out to be one of the most significant decades for change in the U.S. media, news from U.S. reporters abroad played an indispensable role in the formation of foreign policy. As political scholar Bernard Cohen wrote in 1965, while the direction of the relationship between the press and politics was difficult to parse out, there certainly existed “an inescapable connection between the world of the press and the world of foreign policy.”¹ The press at times “[created] or [shaped] the outlines of foreign policy issues in the minds of the general public,” and also helped “provide policy-makers with some image of ‘public opinion’ on the issues.”² Policymakers then, in turn, acted on the issues made politically significant by the press even as the media continued to scrutinize federal actions, thereby creating a reciprocal relationship between the two entities.

In other words, the work of foreign correspondents acted not as a source of facts for policymakers, but as a gauge for the political significance of events and a thermometer for the public’s attitudes toward specific issues. In showing politicians what their constituents thought, foreign reporting then served as a critical agenda-setter; it created focal points for news consumers and demonstrated to policymakers what they should focus on. So though foreign reporting did not necessarily act as “an automatic transmission belt which [*sic*] can be counted on to carry ‘all’ information from political sources to the public,” it nonetheless influenced how makers of foreign policy thought about and formed their policy proposals.³

A brief glance at the recollections of the time period’s ambassadors and makers of foreign policy confirms that policymakers saw news as an instrument of public opinion. In an

¹ Cohen, “The Press and Foreign Policy in the United States,” 128.

² *Ibid.*, 130.

³ *Ibid.*, 134.

interview with a State Department official, former ambassador to various South American countries, such as Costa Rica and Chile, and Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Robert F. Woodward referred to newspapers as a method of informing the public. He said the inconsistencies in U.S. foreign policy should have been “obvious to anyone who [read] the newspapers” and that the U.S. Embassy in Sweden made entertaining individuals like newspaper reporters a priority.⁴ Woodward’s references to newspapers suggests an awareness of how news reports played a significant role in the public’s understanding of U.S. foreign policy and global position. They also suggest an awareness of the importance of positive publicity for foreign missions. While this conceptualization of the press may seem old, that Woodward refers to the press in this way shows that this idea was nonetheless present in U.S. political discourse and is reminiscent of Whitaker and Baxter’s private efforts to influence policy through shaping public opinion.

An interview with the subsequent Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Edwin McCammon Martin demonstrates the same ideas about how news affected policymaking. Martin, who served from 1962-1964, explained to his interviewer that, following the rejection of a visa application for a Mexican writer who was also a member of the Communist Party, the *Times* ran a story on the visa denial and NBC called the State Department in protest. He also stated that “Kennedy called [him] on [the following] Saturday to ask about [the visa denial], based on the *New York Times* story.” Martin’s description of events establishes the important role news played in generating public responses to policy decisions and that policymakers – including the president himself – used news articles to inform issues they considered important.⁵

⁴ Robert F. Woodward, Interview with Robert F. Woodward, May 5, 1987, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Library of Congress. [URL?]

⁵ Edwin McCammon Martin, Interview with Ambassador Edwin McCammon Martin, April 7, 1988, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Library of Congress. [URL?]

Latin America in the Cold War

Foreign reporting was especially important for places of geopolitical importance for the U.S. In the Sixties, this meant foreign reporting on regions related to the Cold War.⁶ For the Kennedy administration, which began in 1961, “the Cold War ranked as their first priority,” and Kennedy’s successor, President Lyndon B. Johnson, similarly prioritized the Cold War.⁷ The decade vacillated between rising then deescalating tensions between the Western and Eastern blocs: Russia destroyed “an American U-2 spy plane,” the Cuban Missile Crisis occurred, the Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed, and the Sino-American relationship deteriorated.⁸

The decade specifically saw an expansion of the Cold War to regions that would eventually be referred to as the “Third World.” This designation largely applied to recently de-colonized countries like India, and their involvement signified a new phase in the Cold War. During this period, areas previously regarded as peripheral could “suddenly become vital” and “could yet tip the balance of power in the Cold War.”⁹ The novelty of these countries’ political significance made them a prime battleground for Cold War influence and likely created a demand for information on the newly important regions of the world. The works of John Prados, John Tidd, Rhodri Jeffrey-Jones, and Tim Weiner, among others, document the surge in the demand for intelligence on and the increasingly aggressive espionage activities in the Third World, but extensive exploration of U.S. spy actions stands outside the scope of this thesis.¹⁰ Rather, the primary takeaway of this discussion should be that the Sixties’ foreign policy focus on the Third World granted a new significance to

⁶ Kunz, *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade*, 5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 7–8.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹ Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 123.

¹⁰ See Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Doubleday, 2007); Rhodri Jeffrey-Jones, *The CIA and American Democracy*. 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

intelligence and news from regions of the world previously marginalized in the U.S. conscience stands as the primary takeaway of this discussion.

As recently decolonized countries and other developing countries became Cold War battlegrounds for the U.S. and the Soviet Union, Latin America rose in significance for makers of foreign policy in Washington. Previously, Latin America had been viewed as possessing limited importance as “the era of the Good Neighbor policy... had given way to hegemonic autarky on the part of Washington,” and the region’s geographical proximity was not seen as cause for “special consideration” when setting trade policies.¹¹ Instead, Congress only cautiously considered “large-scale economic aid” and possessed a myopic perspective on social movements, seeing them “through the lens of free trade and private investment.”¹² Indeed, the U.S. did not take seriously the social problems induced by the economic inequalities of the region.

In the new phase of the Cold War, however, Latin America became a more serious focus of U.S. foreign policy. The reenergized outlook was partially a result of President Kennedy’s liberal values and Ivy League advisory board, but also because the successful Cuban Revolution crystallized the immediate dangers of social and economic problems left to fester.¹³ A Gallup public opinion poll conducted at the beginning of the Sixties even confirmed this focus among adults in the U.S., reporting that around 80 percent of U.S. adults were aware of the tenuous relationship between the U.S. and Cuba.¹⁴ As such, the U.S.’ southern neighbors became the focus of the Alliance for Progress and assumed the identity of Cold War battleground, an area filled with dominos ready to topple. Washington – and

¹¹ O. Walker III, “Mixing the Sweet with the Sour: Kennedy, Johnson, and Latin America,” 43.

¹² *Ibid.*, 45.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁴ Gallup Organization, Gallup Poll (AIPO), “USGALLUP.60-631.R005A,” July 1960, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL. [URL?]

people of the U.S. interested in the world and national security – then needed to keep a close eye on the region.

The policymakers in Washington, however, certainly had their work cut out for them. As mentioned earlier, the U.S. had previously seen Latin America as a region of secondary importance and felt free to intervene in the region at will, in the manner of the Monroe Doctrine and Roosevelt Corollary.¹⁵ A perception of Latin America as “a virtual extension of their own frontier,” and of Latin Americans as primitives in need of uplifting and civilizing, undergirded these policies.¹⁶

While possibly guided by benevolence, the good intentions were only made possible by a perspective that saw Latin Americans as genuinely distinct from and less-developed than Americans in the U.S. American exceptionalism, then, appeared to be the ideology supporting these views, however implicitly. To apply an entire doctrine to the continent also necessitated a reductionist perspective of the region – a perspective that saw different Latin American countries as being more similar than different. A more nuanced understanding of the individual countries would be necessary for Latin America’s newfound significance in the Sixties. For this perspective to be possible, policymakers would need, to some extent, dismantle these reductionist assumptions about their southern neighbors.

Because of the importance of the media in setting policy agendas and for informing the general public, as well as Latin America’s increased significance, how news outlets reported on Latin America also became increasingly important. After all, newspapers served as providers of information. What newspapers wrote about the U.S.’ southern neighbors informed how newsreaders thought about the region, and the frequency of news coverage established the region’s relative importance in readers’ minds.¹⁷ Policymakers, as Jeffrey E.

¹⁵ Teresa A. Meade, *A History of Modern Latin America: 1800 to the Present*, Concise History of the Modern World (Chichester, West Sussex, U.K. ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 132.

¹⁶ Pike, *The United States and Latin America*, 19, 84.

¹⁷ Cohen, “The Press and Foreign Policy in the United States.”

Cohen, Kevin Arceneaux, Timothy E. Cook, and other communications studies and political science scholars demonstrate, then looked towards newspapers as an indicator of constituent opinions to factor into their decisions.¹⁸ What the *Washington Post*, the *Miami Herald*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and the like wrote about Latin America then carried more weight than ever before.

The Role of the *Times*

On this scene where the foreign news section of the paper held a greater degree of importance, the strength of *New York Times* foreign reporting certainly stood out. The *Times*' foreign desk stood as one of the most prolific foreign reporting departments of its time. It had "a staff of over forty correspondents stationed around the world," and plenty of other newspapers treated the publication as a wire service.¹⁹ As media scholars in the previous decade had demonstrated, whatever international news the *Times* deemed fit to print, other, more local publications would also choose to replicate over the few days following an event.²⁰ The duplication likely came from local editors' assumptions about the *Times*, that because "the *New York Times* employs many specialists to make decisions about relative news importance," the events found on a *Times* paper are truly newsworthy.²¹ That other publications saw the *Times* as a reliable source for the trickle-down effect of international news reporting suggests that the foreign desk of the newspaper held a respected position among different publications and had a relatively strong foreign reporting team.

¹⁸ Warren Breed, "Newspaper 'Opinion Leaders' and Processes of Standardization," *Journalism Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (September 1, 1955): 277–328, <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769905503200302>; Kevin Arceneaux et al., "The Influence of News Media on Political Elites: Investigating Strategic Responsiveness in Congress," *American Journal of Political Science* 60, no. 1 (2016): 5–29; Jeffrey E. Cohen, "Presidential Rhetoric and the Public Agenda," *American Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 1 (1995): 87–107, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2111759>; Jeffrey E. Cohen, *Presidential Responsiveness and Public Policy-Making: The Publics and the Policies That Presidents Choose* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

¹⁹ Topping, *On the Front Lines of the Cold War*, 311.

²⁰ Breed, "Newspaper 'Opinion Leaders' and Processes of Standardization"; Rusty Todd, "New York 'Times' Advisories and National/International News Selection," *Journalism Quarterly; Minneapolis, Etc.* 60, no. 4 (Winter 1983): 705–709.

²¹ Hess, *International News and Foreign Correspondents*, 48.

The prestige of the *Times* foreign desk also pointed to the publication's relative strength and bolstered the publication's overall reputation. As Stephen Hess later described, the "hierarchy or pecking order among foreign correspondents" illustrate the "hierarchy of prestige among... the organizations that they work for."²² Organizations were evaluated based on the extent of their "'serious' approach to news," meaning the "organization's willingness to commit resources, and its willingness to cover topics that are considered more important than interesting."²³ Based on these criteria, foreign correspondents often saw obtaining a position at the *Times* as the ultimate culmination of their career. That journalists held the *Times* in such high esteem suggested that, compared to most other publications, the paper was more willing to prioritize "important" stories with significant political, economic, or social implications, over "interesting" stories that may be more commercially significant.

Nonetheless, despite the *Times*' top-tier position among other publications, its coverage of Latin America nonetheless suffered from the same problem of superficial reporting that other publications experienced. The Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, for example, reported in 1962 that "despite the quantity of stories published [by the *New York Times*], the *Times* Latin American coverage was geographically uneven and restricted in subject matter."²⁴ The Center came to this conclusion after realizing that many of the article datelines – which indicate where the story was written – referenced locations in the U.S. despite having article contents that referenced events in Latin America. Here, the Center implied that stories from the *Times* were written by writers based in the U.S. using information from wire services based in Latin America. This practice meant that even the publication with most esteemed foreign reporting likely presented similar – if not the same –

²² Hess, *International News and Foreign Correspondents*, 47.

²³ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁴ Hal Hendrix, "The News from Latin America," *Columbia Journalism Review* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1962): 54.

information as their peers did. Or it just shows that getting Latin America “right” did not matter; what mattered was getting U.S. attitudes about policy right.

Moreover, the *Times* mostly focused on “diplomatic crises” from a smattering of countries, with little to no coverage of “the economic, cultural, and social developments of the entire continent.” Because of the *Times*’ minimal coverage of the region, “the remainder of Latin America might as well have been in hibernation.” Ultimately, the Center also concludes that the questionable products of the *Times*’ reporting came from a definition of “news” that includes “what ‘happens’ on a particular day at a particular place,” and not a definition that referred to “information that illuminates a situation, that builds a sophisticated understanding of a nation and its people.”²⁵ Again, the *Times*’ foreign desk of the Sixties only superficially covered the Latin American region despite being one of the most respected publications in the U.S. – a fact that the Center aptly refers to as “the most ominous fact of all.”²⁶

While the practical constraints of reporting on other countries underlay many of the *Times*’ problems with foreign reporting, internal conventions at the paper additionally exacerbated the problems. Specifically, the *Times* was notorious for its “nearly unwavering spotlight on heads of states and high level-diplomacy,” a perspective that Hamilton referred to as “Olympian.”²⁷ This type of reporting helped cement the *Times* status as the newspaper of the record as it dutifully tracked state-level developments. However, this style also precluded coverage of social or cultural developments that might have mattered more to the locals that the *Times* was reporting on.

It was onto this stage that Seymour Topping stepped when he assumed the role of Foreign Editor at the *Times* in 1966. Some time had passed since the Cuban Revolution and

²⁵ Hendrix, “The News from Latin America,” 55.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁷ Hamilton, *Journalism’s Roving Eye*, 415.

Cuban Missile Crisis, and Latin America had again faded into the background as the Vietnam War and domestic debates about race and civil rights dominated political discourse.²⁸ As Foreign Editor, Topping directed all international operations, meaning that he oversaw where correspondents were stationed, served as an outside reader for the foreign correspondents under his supervision, and ensured that stories did not assume too much prior knowledge. A former foreign correspondent himself, Topping had worked mostly in East and Southeast Asia where he reported on the Chinese Civil War, the Korean War, and the emerging conflict in Southeast Asia.

As Foreign Editor, Topping let his experiences reporting in the Eastern Hemisphere inform his perspective and make him more sympathetic towards the daily demands of the foreign correspondent.²⁹ He understood that correspondents often saw themselves as more knowledgeable than their Foreign Desk editors – editors under the Foreign Editor’s supervision who directly reviewed the writing of foreign correspondents – and that a desire to see and explain the world frequently motivated foreign correspondents’ work.³⁰ Given this understanding, Topping knew that he could encourage his foreign correspondents to generate news that went beyond the perspectives of talking heads.

In fact, Topping understood that, despite the new demands placed on foreign news in the Sixties, the *Times* foreign desk was not operating at its full potential. Topping especially pinpointed the structure of the foreign desk that he inherited as responsible for precluding the strong reporting needed for the increased importance of the “Third World.” He saw them as “the most routine, and dispirited” editors who only “[corrected] punctuation and spelling,” and as hesitant to “engage with reporters in the field.”³¹ As such, the foreign desk editors did

²⁸ Williams, *Americans in a Changing World*, 342.

²⁹ Topping, *On the Front Lines of the Cold War*, 318.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 319; Hess, *International News and Foreign Correspondents*.

³¹ Topping, *On the Front Lines of the Cold War*, 319.

not push foreign correspondents to further develop their stories. This stagnant relationship between reporter and editor likely contributed to the superficial reporting that continued to plague the *Times* and subsequently trickled down to most other publications.³²

Topping's appointment to Foreign Editor then should have marked a change in how the *Times* reported on foreign countries, and an internal memo he issued just two months after he assumed his new position bolsters this point. In the memo, he explained that for the *Times* to "fulfill [its] function as the paper of record, [it] should progressively become more selective to the detail [it publishes]." He also stated that the newspaper needed to develop "appropriate forms of summary reporting" so that it could adequately cover the "growing number of subjects that demanded attention."³³ These goals that Topping wanted the *Times* to work towards suggest another critique: that the breadth of its coverage focused too narrowly on detailed coverage of select events instead of broader, more comprehensive coverage that would provide readers with a better sense of how others live abroad. Though Topping never alludes to the potential political impact of the problems he identified, they likely also contributed to the "uneven... and restricted" reporting that the Center had identified four years ago.³⁴

Indeed, another memorandum Topping circulated two years later in 1968 confirms that he brought a change in editorial perspective to the *Times*. In the memo, which he titled "Foreign Desk Guidelines," he confirmed that while the *Times* needed to "remain deeply concerned with the conduct of governmental affairs" because "governments will determine in large measure" how a country operates, the newspaper also needed to focus more on "how the peoples live, and what they and their societies look like, how their institutions and

³² The *Times* was regarded as one of – if not the – top publication for international news coverage so problems present in its operations were likely also present in other publications.

³³ Topping, *On the Front Lines of the Cold War*, 318.

³⁴ Hendrix, "The News from Latin America," 54.

systems operate.”³⁵ The new direction that Topping proposed underscores a desired shift away from country-level reporting focused on statements made by talking heads and towards reporting that could capture how societies functioned. In making these suggestions, Topping demonstrated his desire for stories that would provide readers with an understanding of life in other countries instead of stories that only gave readers an impression of official government rhetoric.

To facilitate better representation of other countries in the *Times*, Topping developed the “takeout” article. The takeout article was of moderate length – one to three columns – and meant “to add perspective, depth, and understanding to a subject.” Unlike more event-focused articles, the takeout “did not require a strong spot news peg,” making it an appropriate medium for delivering general information about a country’s background and historical context.³⁶ The takeout article, with its ability to provide context, thus became Topping’s go-to method of “[broadening] coverage in such underreported regions as Latin America and Africa.”³⁷ They could establish a narrative in readers’ minds that other stories with stronger news pegs could not.³⁸ That Topping developed a new type of article specifically intended for providing background to general subjects further strengthens the conclusion that Topping wanted his foreign desk to produce stories that educated readers about how other peoples lived, not about the perspectives of U.S. citizens living abroad.

However, despite all of his attempts to reform the foreign desk into an entity that looked beyond the U.S. perspective, Topping nonetheless faced certain structural obstacles that threatened to undermine his efforts – especially vis-à-vis reportage on Latin America. For one, as Topping himself repeatedly explained, *Times*’ readers had “limited attention

³⁵ Topping, *On the Front Lines of the Cold War*, 320.

³⁶ A news peg is the reason why the story is currently newsworthy.

³⁷ Topping, *On the Front Lines of the Cold War*, 320.

³⁸ Space constraints meant that stories with strong news pegs likely could not go into too much background. They would instead focus mostly on the immediately developing news.

spans” and could not focus on long articles. Long articles, as Topping defined them, were articles that took up two or more columns.³⁹ As such, foreign correspondents needed to keep their articles narrowly-focused and to the point, even when writing the life-related takeout that Topping wanted. Moreover, as Topping repeatedly emphasized in his memos and correspondence with correspondents, the inclusion of specific details in news articles was discouraged. Correspondents then had their hands tied: they needed to produce articles that could capture how people in other countries lived, but without including details that would potentially bore or distract the reader. Writing about Latin America posed an especially difficult problem, as most readers only thought of the region vis-à-vis Cuba, the potential communist threat, or U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic depending on where they resided.⁴⁰ To them, other theaters of the Cold War, especially Vietnam, were likely more pressing and interesting. Foreign correspondents then lacked the tools and the editorial impetus to go beyond existing assumptions about Latin America, especially as Latin America was considered one of the less exciting assignments.

The supply of foreign correspondents did not help with the *Times*' content-related problems. The foreign correspondents of the Sixties typically had experience traveling abroad prior to their career, but much of their “travel was connected with military service” and not for the purposes of studying abroad or for leisure.⁴¹ The military purpose behind their experiences abroad likely meant that the correspondents did not spend much of their time abroad learning about local culture and/or lives. Publications also rarely “[gave] reporters pre-assignment training in the language, history, and culture of the country to which they

³⁹ Seymour Topping, “Letter from Seymour Topping to Barnard Collier,” December 7, 1966, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

⁴⁰ This was partially a product of how news coverage had only focused on natural and political problems in the region; Hendrix, “The News from Latin America.”

⁴¹ Hess, *International News and Foreign Correspondents*, 14.

were being sent.”⁴² Consequently, the average foreign correspondent of the time did not understand and could not fluently “conduct an interview in the language” of the country they worked in.⁴³

The transitory nature of the correspondents’ assignments also detracted from the quality of the *Times*’ foreign reporting editors frequently assigned their correspondents to places that were not geographically similar – such as from Tokyo to Paris, and as around half of the foreign correspondent population were generalists who rotated around different countries without a specialization in any area’s history or language. Because of the correspondents’ relative lack of regional knowledge prior to their assignment, and because of the absence of thorough preparation pre-dispatch, the foreign correspondents that Topping worked with and could choose to hire from were often needed long periods of adjustment. Neither could they produce the thoroughness that Topping hoped to achieve with his memorandums and reforms.

Barnard Collier on the Job

Collier’s career at the *Times* exemplifies the publication’s low expectations for news coverage of Latin America. It also shows how a mixture of editorial direction and foreign correspondents’ personal characteristics produced lackluster reporting of the region. Collier first stepped into this world of foreign correspondence in 1966 when he applied to an opening for “Latin American reporter” at the *Times*.⁴⁴ Previously, he had worked at *Time*, the *Miami News*, and the *Detroit Free Press* and had most recently “been on [the] *Herald-Tribune* since 1963.” At the *Herald-Tribune*, Collier “specialized in Latin America but also [conducted] general reporting in Washington”; in other words, he was based in New York and

⁴² Hess, *International News and Foreign Correspondents*, 81.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁴ “Memorandum for: The File,” May 25, 1966, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

Washington and would only occasionally travel to Latin America. Collier's brief experiences in Latin America prevented the development of a strong, specialized base of knowledge for the region. Instead, he only held general knowledge of the region.⁴⁵ This limited understanding of the area he reported on made Collier a perfect embodiment of the era's typical U.S. foreign correspondent.

Collier's track record of reporting foreshadowed the type of work that he would produce as foreign correspondent for the *Times*. According to conversations that interviewers had with Collier's former coworkers, Collier "often cut corners and needled stories... and did little showing individual enterprise."⁴⁶ Writing articles that could capture how people in other countries lived and that went beyond "the threat of communism and... the relevance of any particular country to Americans" needed more drive and initiative than Collier typically demonstrated.⁴⁷ In fact, the comments of Collier's former colleagues almost confirm that he seemed more interested in using the foreign correspondent position to travel the world than in investigating and producing informative stories. Collier's reason for leaving *Time Magazine* for the *Herald-Tribune* – he wanted to "travel in Latin America" and have his name in a byline – only reinforced the profile of Collier as someone in journalism for personal gain, not for any desire to explain lives abroad.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, Collier "[seemed to be] the best man available out of the relatively small group of Latin-American hands around," leading to a hiring decision that emphasized the dearth of interest in and journalistic specialists of Latin America.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ "Memorandum for: The File"; Sydney Gruson, "Memorandum for: Mr. Daniel from Sydney Gruson," June 7, 1966, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

⁴⁶ "Memorandum for: The File."

⁴⁷ Dell'Orto, *American Journalism and International Relations*, 114.

⁴⁸ Barnard Collier, "Resume of Barnard Collier," 1966, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

⁴⁹ Gruson, "Memorandum for: Mr. Daniel from Sydney Gruson."

The personal qualities that Collier demonstrated prior to his job at the *Times*, plus the structural problems illustrated earlier, severely hindered Collier's ability to meet the expectations that Topping set out for him. As correspondence between Topping and Collier reflect, Collier as a correspondent for the *Times* continued to miss out on the slice of life type of reporting that Topping had hoped to facilitate through his restructuring of the foreign desk.⁵⁰ In a letter sent soon after Collier moved abroad to Buenos Aires, for example, Topping asked that Collier start collecting and reporting on "impressions of the sights and sounds of Buenos Aires" after he settled in to the new environment and had a chance to look around a bit.⁵¹ While the letter indicates an understanding of how a foreign correspondent needs to develop some local knowledge before being able to produce quality reporting, Topping's request also hints at an absence of reporting on how life worked in Argentina.

In fact, within a few months' time, Topping's correspondence with Collier began to show how Collier's previously-demonstrated lack of ambition negatively affected the stories that he wrote. First, Collier proposed six story ideas after being in Buenos Aires for around a month. These stories ran the gamut of political significance: one involved the political situation in Peru, while another involved "[sic] Banquero Rossi," a prominent businessman in the fishmeal industry.⁵² His proposed ideas appeared promising as they fulfilled Topping's requirements of covering cultural and economic developments alongside political developments. Yet, Collier's work fell short of even his own promises; none of his proposed stories materialized, as the print copies of the *Times* did not include any completed versions of the reports he proposed to Topping.

⁵⁰ The slice of life type of reporting was also intended to give U.S. readers a better sense of the world outside of the Cold War/Americentric frame.

⁵¹ Barnard Collier, "Letter from Barnard Collier to Seymour Topping," October 4, 1966, Box 101, Folder 7, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

⁵² Barnard Collier, "Letter from Barnard Collier to Seymour Topping," December 1, 1966, Box 101, Folder 7, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

Collier's inconsistent reporting continued even after he settle into his new position. In May 1967, almost a year after Collier arrived in South America, Topping wrote him a letter telling him that "[his] work has not been satisfactory." He complained that despite "[having] been told repeatedly what kind of coverage [the *Times* requires]... no substantial improvement in [his] work" has appeared. The same letter asserted that Collier's work "often missed deadlines for inexplicable reasons and promised stories sometimes never [arrived]." ⁵³ Then, in a separate internal memo written for foreign assistant editor Nathaniel M. Gerstenzang management at the *Times* wrote that Collier had been assigned a story about new education regulations in Argentina and claimed that he filed it after the deadline had passed, but the editors never received the story.⁵⁴ The same memo recorded that Collier repeatedly postponed meeting with a contact that the *Times* editors had established earlier – Alberto Gainza Paz – and that the stories he proposed earlier never appeared. Collier also regularly failed to answer or acknowledge certain messages asking him for follow up articles or to fact check a submitted piece. A lack of quality reporting from Collier undergirded this assertion, suggesting that Collier's trend of promising and ultimately failing to produce stories continued even as he became more familiar with the region.

Additionally, Collier received conflicting advice about the type of articles that he should produce for the *Times*. On the one hand, his editor, Topping, expressed that Collier needed to produce "more wrap-up type stories." These wrap-up stories acted as summaries of general developments in other countries, and "provides [the reader] with a good means of keeping abreast of developments and trends in large areas which [*sic*] are often out of the spotlight of the news." For these articles to provide a thorough survey of a country and

⁵³ Seymour Topping, "Letter from Seymour Topping to Barnard Collier," May 18, 1967, Box 101, Folder 7, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

⁵⁴ "Memo on Collier," May 3, 1967, Box 101, Folder 7, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

adequately inform the reader of various trends in the region, the writer needed to have sufficient space in which they could contextualize then flesh out the trends. However, on the other hand, Topping told Collier that the wrap-ups could not always be “as much as two columns.” Instead, they needed to be short and have “personality and color” – two characteristics that are not conducive to “providing... depth.”⁵⁵ Consequently, Collier lacked both the personal motivation and the editorial capacity to produce the types of articles that Topping wanted from his reformed foreign desk.

In fact, Collier did not write many “takeout” articles. Out of the ninety articles he wrote while in Latin America, the majority focused on singular events, not on broad changes in the region.⁵⁶ In reporting mostly on independent events and not demonstrating the contemporary or historical significance of his subjects, Collier’s articles failed to provide his readers with a better understanding of Latin America. Instead, he largely produced the type of crisis-driven reporting that the CSDI had criticized years earlier.

The articles that Collier did manage to publish reflect the difficulties Collier faced as a foreign correspondent in Latin America. They mostly referred to Latin American countries in general terms, treating the various populations as monoliths, and also took a U.S. perspective on socialism and left-wing movements when reporting on politics in Latin America. At the time, U.S. policy treated left-wing movements around the world – especially in countries termed “Third World” – as subversive threats to the U.S.-defined world order, a perspective echoed by most U.S. adults.⁵⁷ That Collier did not write many “takeout” articles

⁵⁵ Seymour Topping, “Letter from Seymour Topping to Barnard Collier,” de 1966, Box 101, Folder 7, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

⁵⁶ This conclusion comes from a survey from *Times* articles accessed through the ProQuest database of historical newspapers.

⁵⁷ National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago: Survey Research Service Amalgam, “USNORC.65SRS.R18,” June 1965, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL; Institute for International Social Research: Hopes and Fears, “USGALLUP.637POS.Q19P” (Gallup Organization, October 1964), Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL; Kunz, *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade*, 49.

meant that his articles lacked the impact they needed to have. Moreover, Collier's "takeout" articles provided historical context but failed to demonstrate the contemporary relevance of the context. While "takeout" articles as defined by Topping did not need a "strong spot news peg," they at least needed to be "comprehensive and modern."⁵⁸ Readers then did not receive a comprehensive perspective on what life was like in Latin America despite Topping's half-hearted yet persistent attempts to shake up the foreign desk.

Collier's articles on political developments in Latin America especially revealed his generalist attitude and shallow understanding of the region. Because he did not have a deep understanding of specific countries in Latin America, much of Collier's coverage echoes the political rhetoric used in the U.S. In his coverage of Argentina, for example, his writings on the new Onganía regime, which was installed in a coup, was mostly positive. He reported on the regime's "anti-red" policies, parroting the U.S. government's concern with the development of Communism at home and abroad, and also praised the regime's economic developments. In the article "Argentine Regime Breaks Relations with Labor Group," Collier referred to labor groups as "anti-government" and as trying to "embarrass or even topple the Onganía regime," thereby subtly positioning himself with the Onganía government as he accuses labor groups as working against the Argentine government.⁵⁹

Collier also brought with him a concern about the freedom of the press and government censorship – a typical concern for the U.S. – when discussing actions of the Argentine regime. In fact, his article titled "Drafting of Press Law Stirs Concern in Argentina: Papers Uneasy Over a Move to 'Control' Publication of Comment on Regime," which stands as one of his only articles with a more subtly critical tone towards the government, focused on the potential dangers of a proposed Argentine policy. The policy

⁵⁸ Topping, *On the Front Lines of the Cold War*, 320.

⁵⁹ Barnard Collier, "Argentine Regime Breaks Relations With Labor Group," *New York Times*, February 16, 1967.

would prohibit “the publication or production of anything that ridicules government leaders or functionaries, or violates good taste of custom.”⁶⁰ His concerns about Communism and the “Reds,” alongside of his concerns about a curtailed press, fit with the U.S.’ wariness towards left-wing movements. His usage of “Reds” also created “a very rigid frame that left little movement for insightful analysis.”⁶¹ This writing constructed for U.S. readers an Argentina that existed only in terms of U.S. values.

In fact, these evaluations of the coup mimicked U.S. State Department discussions about the regime. These discussions had previously concluded that the regime would “be a firm anti-Communist partner of free world in OAS, UN, and other international bodies,” and culminated in the U.S.’s recognition of the Onganía regime. Here, the U.S. policy towards the Onganía regime reflected the generally anti-Communist obsession of the Cold War and the belief that cementing economic development would prevent the development of Communism.⁶² The parallel sentiments undergirding Collier’s articles suggest that Collier looked at Argentine developments from the perspective of a U.S. citizen, not from the global perspective that Topping had sought.

In addition to his reproduction of U.S. political rhetoric, Collier lacked nuance when dealing with Latin American countries. Like policymakers who saw Communism as monolithic and considered non-aligned “Third World” countries similar enough to be remedied with the same solution, Collier saw individual countries as similar enough to be painted with the same brush. For example, in a 1967 story on Frei’s attempts on reforming Chile, Collier misused an adapted European fable to explain “just how Chileans [felt] in relation to some of their South American neighbors.” In his adapted fable, two dogs represent Chileans and Argentinians. The Chilean dog’s ribs were “visible through his sad coat” – a

⁶⁰ Barnard Collier, “Drafting of Press Law Stirs Concern in Argentina: Papers Uneasy Over a Move to ‘Control’ Publication of Comment on Regime,” *New York Times*, December 9, 1966.

⁶¹ Dell’Orto, *American Journalism and International Relations*, 94.

⁶² O. Walker III, “Mixing the Sweet with the Sour: Kennedy, Johnson, and Latin America,” 48.

detail that subtly gestured at the supposed economic status of Chileans – and was heading towards the more economically successful Argentina. On his way to Argentina, the Chilean dog sees “the Argentine dog... [trot] off toward Santiago.” The Argentinian dog then tells the Chilean dog that he intends to go to Chile “to bark.”⁶³

The exchange, where the Chilean dog heads to Argentina for economic reasons and the Argentinian dog heads to Chile for political freedom, seems to show that Chileans see the economic issues of survival as more important than political freedoms. Otherwise, the Chilean dog would not be abandoning his home. Yet, Collier chose to interpret his telling of the fable as an indication of Chileans’ pride in their political system – a conclusion that does not match up with the story he told. Collier’s retelling and interpretation of this fable point first to a lack of familiarity with his own message, and second to a utilization of the contemporary Cold War frame. As part of this frame, Collier pitted Chile and its left-leaning politics against with the firmly anti-Communist Argentina.

The same broad and rigid strokes presented themselves throughout the rest of the article. Immediately following his inappropriate story about the Chilean and Argentinian dogs, Collier reaffirmed the perspective he wrote from – where Chile was pitted against the rest of Latin America – through establishing the political differences between Chile and its neighbors. To accomplish his goal, Collier simply characterized Brazil’s military dictatorship as having “a messiah complex,” Paraguay’s military dictator General Alfredo as a man who “stands for no nonsense and never has,” and so forth.⁶⁴ The simplistic descriptions, which most uninformed readers would unfortunately take at face value, come off as caricatures of complex political figures. As such, they only reflect Collier’s superficial reporting – or even understanding – of Latin America.

⁶³ Barnard Collier, “Eduardo Frei Is Trying: ‘A Revolution Without The Execution Wall,’” *New York Times*, February 19, 1967, 237.

⁶⁴ Collier, “Eduardo Frei is Trying,” 237.

Collier also used the word “Chilean” to the same effect. He wrote that Chileans question the military dictatorships’ potential to “lead Latin America in the 20th century” and their ability to “achieve what Chile is going to achieve because of its uniqueness, its free political spirit.” In writing that Chileans doubt their neighbors’ leadership abilities, Collier characterized Chileans as a homogeneous group that holds uniform values. The generalizing effect of Collier’s word choice becomes most obvious when he wrote that “Chileans are convinced that the eyes of the world are focused on their peculiar-looking country....”⁶⁵ Again, characterizing all Chileans as conceited generates a superficial portrayal of Chile.

The same type of general reporting on Latin America reappeared in Collier’s next article on Chile. Writing in March 1967, Collier reported on “Bolivia, Chile, and the Sea.” Like his February article on Frei’s reform attempts in Chile, Collier’s March article, which attempts to explain contemporary relations between Bolivia and Chile, began with a hypothetical story. This time, the story included human actors and was about “the Bolivian admiral who made an official trip to Venezuela during the regime of Dictator Marcos Jimenez [sic].” After the vignette about Jiménez, the article then segued into an explanation of how “Bolivians cannot tolerate the fact that their country is utterly landlocked.”⁶⁶ In choosing the word “Bolivian,” Collier addressed the entire population of the country and treated the entire population of Bolivia as homogeneous. This type of language reinforced existing ideas held by residents of the U.S., where people from or who lived in Latin America existed not as individuals but as projections of stereotypes.

For the rest of the article, Collier introduced the states of Chile and Bolivia – as opposed to the people of Chile and Bolivia – as actors in the conflict. Collier shifts away from language like “Chileans... began mining” to “Chile signed a treaty with Bolivia.”⁶⁷ In

⁶⁵ Collier, “Eduardo Frei Is Trying,” 238.

⁶⁶ Barnard Collier, “Bolivia, Chile, And the Sea,” *New York Times*, March 12, 1967.

⁶⁷ Laura Roselle, *Media and the Politics of Failure Great Powers, Communication Strategies, and Military Defeats* (Gordonsville: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10150389>.

the first instance, Collier continued to recognize the people of Chile, but the second instance placed the focus on the Chilean state and distracts from the people of Chile. This writing took agency away from civilians and gives it to the state and state officials. The article's inability to distinguish between the actions and beliefs of a government, and the actions and beliefs of the government's people certainly made for a more straightforward story. However, in fitting the narrative into a formulaic frame, the general terms again oversimplified the complex dynamics between the two countries. The resulting news article reproduced the U.S. perspective on Chile and Bolivia – one where states and geopolitics overshadows the lived experiences and individuality of the people inside the state. The image that readers then received from Collier's article was then oversimplified and superficial.

Collier's simplistic reporting continued in this way until he left the *Times* in 1968. Whether Collier left of his own accord or was dismissed is difficult to ascertain from the archived records. His departure likely resulted from a mixture of both: he had mismanaged the finances in his bureau but also displayed little interest in responsibly carrying out his job. Thus, there exists a high probability that Collier's editors not-so-subtly pressured him to leave. Regardless, Collier's parting was no great loss for the *Times*. He had been at best a mediocre reporter, making an effort to only meet the bare minimum standards of the *Times*, and the work he produced mostly produced misguided images of Latin American countries.

On the surface, Collier's lackluster reporting on his region of Latin America may seem inconsequential. After all, readers had apparently demonstrated little to no interest in the region, and the U.S. was already much more entangled with North Vietnamese forces in Southeast Asia. Latin America, then, seemed to possess little, if any, political gravitas. Yet, much of this neglect of the region was a symptom of the reporting that had come before. With news coverage focusing on other parts of the world, Latin America barely appeared on the U.S. public's radar outside of first Cuba then the Dominican Republic. In failing to live

up to even the existing expectations, Collier continued – and even exacerbated – the problems with how the U.S. viewed its southern neighbors, especially when considering the tensions building in Chile – tensions that U.S. intelligence turned out to be very aware of.

Chapter 3: The Constraints of Personal Prejudice

After Collier departed from the *Times*, acclaimed war reporter Malcolm Browne took over his position. Browne previously had worked a prestigious career tracking events in the Vietnam War and hoped to bring his diligence to Latin America – a region that he claimed to have never seen as “a graveyard for Times reporters” because it was “not without interest or importance, after all.”¹ Because of a Pulitzer Prize and recognition Browne received for his work in Vietnam, as well as his own, often-vocalized, personal philosophies about journalism, Browne expressed much confidence in his own reporting. In other words, he displayed an inflated perception of his work undercut by an inability to think critically about his own work. A circular logic appears in his reflections: he believed that his award-winning portfolio and personal commitment to journalistic ideals made his work objective and impartial by default. That he had arrived on the job chock full of stereotypes about Latin Americans – all of which were commonly held by many residents of the U.S. – did not incentivize him to demonstrably acknowledge the limitations of his work. Instead, Browne’s self-aggrandizing beliefs about his work precluded serious introspection about his racist and quasi-imperialist worldview. As such, Browne existed in a constant state of hypocritical posturing: he expounded lofty journalistic ideals about impartiality and investigative journalism even as the blinders of Americentrism and cultural elitism obscured his outlook on the world.

The presence of this fundamental tension between professional responsibilities and personal prejudice had significant implications for Browne’s work and for contemporary foreign policy concerning Latin America. As Browne continued his spotty reporting, his

¹ Malcolm W. Browne, “Letter from Malcolm Browne to James Greenfield,” January 7, 1970, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

reputation as a prize-winning journalist and the “New York Times” header near his articles lent credence to his writing and likely precluded critical analysis of his work. Consequently, the questionable and deeply flawed reporting Browne conducted in Latin America endured for two years, and most likely fed U.S. residents’ disinterest in, and general ignorance, about the region. After all, if one of the most respected publications regularly portrays Latin America as a land permanently plagued by either socialist turmoil or military dictatorships, U.S. residents had little reason to question the motivations behind the U.S. government’s intervention in the region. Browne’s work, therefore, should be seen as enabling an unwavering stubborn blindness among residents and policymakers in the U.S. to other countries and the complex realities shaping their politics and development. The impact of his work went beyond the reinforcement of existing stereotypes; it also enabled the U.S. support of dictatorial regimes during and after Browne’s time in Latin America.

Browne’s blinkered vision about the world additionally prevented him from seeing several political developments occurring in Latin America during his tenure in the region. Just a few months after he arrived at his new office, a series of protests broke out all across Latin America: street violence in Santiago, Chile, in response to the arrest of eight students; Bolivian “students, workers, and professors taking to the streets in the ‘March for University Autonomy;’” and Argentinian students protesting en masse to commemorate the 1918 Córdoba Reforms.² However, Browne failed to report on these events, possibly because of his limited command of Spanish and because the events did not clearly fit the clear Cold War narrative of Communist subversion of free democratic countries.

U.S. relations with certain Latin American countries also deteriorated as Browne worked in Latin America; these deteriorating relationships paved the way for the 1973 coup

² Jeffrey L. Gould, “Solidarity under Siege: The Latin American Left, 1968,” *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 2 (April 2009): 348, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr.114.2.348>.

of Salvador Allende in Chile, the various Dirty Wars across the continent, the military dictatorship of General Hugo Banzer in Bolivia, the increasingly murderous repression and civil wars in Central America, and the emergence of various military juntas in the region. Neither Browne nor his reporting caught on to any of these trends – partially because the U.S. government and the CIA successfully kept their actions covert but also because of the blinders and blindness rooted in both journalistic failure to critically examine the contours of U.S. supremacy.

Thus, this chapter offers a kind of close reading and case study exploring the mindset that allowed Browne to miss such important developments and documents the institutional attitudes that enabled such blindness. In doing so, the chapter illustrates how narrowmindedness can foil even the most experienced and professional reporters. It also speaks to the deleterious implications of general ignorance in the US government and populace.

The Aftershocks of Vietnam

The year Collier left the *Times* – 1968 – coincidentally marked an important year for the U.S.’ news media. Johnson’s supposed de-escalation of the Vietnam War and the Tet Offensive both occurred in 1968. It was also the year that the media – news anchors such as Walter Cronkite and photojournalists alike – supposedly lost Vietnam because of its portrayal of U.S. offensives in the country. Those who allege that the press lost the Vietnam War contend that, by showing the shortcomings of the U.S. position in region, the press portrayed U.S. military in an unfairly negative light. They believe that in doing so, the press allowed for public pressure against the war to build and contributed to the eventual decision to end the Vietnam War.³ However, these criticisms of the press are misguided, because for the

³ Charles Mohr, “Once Again-Did the Press Lose Vietnam?,” *Columbia Journalism Review*; *New York, N. Y.* 22, no. 4 (November 1, 1983): 51–55.

journalists to ignore what they saw would have been an abdication of their professional responsibilities.

Nonetheless, those who critique the press's role in Vietnam are at least correct in asserting that the press contributed to U.S. citizens' distrust of official statements. Johnson supported "the military's claims of control" in Vietnam even though the U.S. had been forced to send more and more troops to the region over the past 3 years.⁴ This commitment harshly contrasted with media coverage of the Tet Offensive, an offensive launched by the Viet Cong that managed to reach the American Embassy and the journalists' hotels. That the Tet Offensive could penetrate so deeply into territory that Johnson had reported as securely under U.S. control reflected poorly on the U.S. position in the region. Television reporting showing "gun fights and reporters running for cover at the American Embassy" only exacerbated the problem. Public support for U.S. involvement in Vietnam likely plummeted as "images of the bloody Tet fighting" demonstrated how "the president had lied to [the U.S.] about progress in the war."⁵ While the press' coverage of fighting in Vietnam contributed to a decline in support for the ongoing war, the press' dogged reporting of U.S. weaknesses nonetheless constituted responsible media coverage. Their investigation of official military statements brought them closer to the reality of the combat situation. In doing so, they performed their role as a check on the U.S. government.

In fact, the media's role in creating the Johnson administration's credibility gap suggests that it assumed more responsibilities as an investigative watchdog during 1968 and the years leading up to it. Journalists' open questioning of the verity of statements from the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) certainly support this perspective.⁶ As

⁴ Laura Roselle, *Media and the Politics of Failure Great Powers, Communication Strategies, and Military Defeats* (Gordonsville: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10150389>.

⁵ Roselle, 41; James H. Willbanks, *The Tet Offensive: A Concise History* (Columbia University Press, 2008), 111.

⁶ Willbanks, *The Tet Offensive*, 112.

such, the news as an institution received much attention and criticism from politicians in 1968 who saw a failure to indiscriminately support the U.S.' military policy as unpatriotic. Yet, the media nonetheless continued to approach Latin America from the same superficial perspective even as foreign correspondents furiously attempted to identify and foil government falsehoods in Southeast Asia. Perhaps the differential attitudes of the press point to an unwillingness to dig up serious dirt unless U.S. lives are being lost or U.S. interests are being threatened. Regardless, the discrepancy between journalists' treatment of these two regions deserves attention, and Collier's successor – Browne – serves as the perfect medium for an investigation of this difference.

Prior to his job at the *Times*, Browne trained as a war correspondent for the Associated Press in Southeast Asia with a focus on Vietnam. He had arrived in Vietnam in 1961 and quickly became a senior member of the AP's staff there, an indication of his work ethic and dedication to journalism. In Vietnam, he participated in the questioning of MACV statements mentioned earlier, and he sensed "a high degree of skepticism in the foreign press corps about all official statements."⁷ These experiences informed the strong journalistic ethos he developed during his time in Vietnam. This ethos echoed the journalism guidelines put forth by the ASNE, which emphasized that the whole enterprise of journalism exists for the purpose of serving the public. While these standards eventually conflicted with his editors' expectations, they nonetheless indicate that Browne participated in a stronger wave of investigative journalism focused on challenging government positions.

For one, Browne recognized that a reporter's primary responsibility was to the reader. He believed that a reporter needed to stay "a detached observer, setting down fact after fact with clear sighted fairness to all." For a reporter to become "an element in one of his own

⁷ Malcolm W. Browne, "Viet Nam Reporting: Three Years of Crisis," *Columbia Journalism Review* 3, no. 3 (Fall 1964): 6.

stories” constituted “a cardinal breach of the rules of [journalists’] game.”⁸ His disapproval of an Indonesian photographer’s decision to participate in a riot while on the job exemplifies this dedication to providing readers with impersonal and fact-based descriptions of events.⁹

The same dedication to reporting on events without the influence of preexisting partialities also came through in his own practice. When reflecting on the lessons he learned from reporting in Vietnam, Browne criticized the local U.S. officials’ perspective that “all press reporting from [Vietnam] should be positive” and referred to U.S. attempts to influence media coverage as “sins of dishonesty.”¹⁰ In fact, Browne chose not to intervene when confronted with a monk in Vietnam who had set himself on fire – the Venerable Thich Quang Duc, partially because “the monks and nuns . . . had prepared methods for blocking interference” but mostly because he felt “felt that a newsman’s duty is to observe and report the news, not try to change it.”¹¹ Browne saw himself as a fly on the wall, and his repeated emphasis on the reporter’s observer status demonstrates some dedication to performing his job in the most detached manner possible.

Browne also took it upon himself to act as an analyst for his audience in addition to mirroring events happening abroad to readers in the U.S. He tried to not give into readers’ and editors’ demands that news come “in the simplest capsules available,” or their desire for quantifiable elements such as the number of U.S. deaths during the Vietnam War.¹² Instead, Browne insisted on including background information in his writing because he understood that readers could not easily understand events happening in other countries without context. He also understood that complex long-term social changes had greater societal impacts than did explosive, short-term events, leading Browne to believe that articles on international

⁸ Browne, “Viet Nam Reporting,” 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹² *Ibid.*, 8.

events required more length and reporter-driven analysis than did articles on domestic issues.¹³ Browne was then demonstrably concerned with ensuring that his readers could accurately understand the real events that transpired abroad. These concerns again suggest that Browne approached his reporting with a more investigative spirit than did his predecessor Collier.

In fact, Browne explicitly believed that journalists could uncover an objective truth given enough hard work. He believed that a strong local support team (e.g., translators) and longer assignments could aid foreign correspondents in their jobs and “the pitfalls of reporting in crisis... can be overcome by attention to detail, hard work, and most of all, fairness at all cost.”¹⁴ Under these beliefs about journalism, versions of the truth unclouded by biases were possible so long as the right circumstances and infrastructure exist. In other words, Browne believed that all of the work that he produced would be unbiased reflections of the truth by virtue of his reputation, skills, hard work, and commitment to remaining a detached reporter. That Browne saw this as a possibility evidences his more serious and involved attitude toward journalism; it also suggests that Browne had internalized his experiences in Vietnam and let his experiences inform his work.

Given Browne’s lofty ideals and challenging of government rhetoric in Vietnam, one would expect Browne to recognize the limitations of his work and to be equally skeptical of his government’s intervention in other countries. Yet, after he left the AP and Vietnam, Browne decided to work not with a subject matter he was familiar with but in Latin America, a region of the world that he scarcely understood. This transition to working in the region reflected poorly on his commitment to practicing what he preached. As he himself had expressed, international reporting functioned best when the reporter is familiar with the

¹³ Readers could interpret events happening at home more easily than they could interpret events happening abroad.

¹⁴ Browne, “Viet Nam Reporting,” 4, 9.

region and can draw their own conclusions without relying on official spokespeople. Browne fulfilled neither of the prerequisites for strong reporting that he had set forth himself. He had studied chemistry – a subject with no relationship to Latin America or even the Spanish language – in college and, “apart from a brief tour in Cuba, ... [had] no direct experience with Latin America.”¹⁵ In fact, Browne lacked a full command of Spanish, as evidenced by the intensive Berlitz course that he needed to take prior to filling his assignment in Latin America.¹⁶ While participation in the course at least demonstrated some willingness to prepare for his assignment, Browne’s need for this course nonetheless pointed to a lack of basic credentials. Neither his academic nor professional experiences provided familiarity with his assignment in Latin America, and there existed no reason to believe that he would be able to approach the region with anything beyond an outsider’s perspective.

Browne’s treatment of his assignment in Latin America opens several possibilities. For one, Browne’s readiness when accepting the assignment suggests that, despite his aforementioned proclamations, he did not actually see having country- or region-specific knowledge as a prerequisite for reporting on a region. If Browne truly valued local familiarity in his reporting practice, he would not have requested an assignment in a part of the world that he had no connection to. He could instead have continued to stay in Southeast Asia or turned to reporting on domestic events in the U.S. Transferring to Latin America undermined Browne’s purported belief in the importance of background knowledge.¹⁷

Browne’s readiness to move across the world also points to a certain degree of hubris on his part: to take on the responsibility of understanding another corner of the world without the requisite background knowledge is to either overestimate one’s analytical ability or to

¹⁵ Malcolm W. Browne, *Muddy Boots and Red Socks: A Reporter’s Life*, 1st ed (New York: Times Books, 1993), 218.

¹⁶ Malcolm W. Browne, “Letter from Malcolm Browne to Metropolitan Desk,” October 2, 1967, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

¹⁷ Browne, “Viet Nam Reporting.”

severely underestimate the complexity of other peoples and countries. The former suggests a certain arrogance and the latter hints at a contempt for the other region; both are in line with contemporary U.S. thinking, which saw the U.S. as superior and other regions as imperfect copies of the U.S. In any case, his behavior demonstrated that, at least for some regions of the world, Browne saw no problem with discarding his self-proclaimed ideals. Perhaps the public recognition he received had inflated his ego such that he saw himself as an exception to his own rules. That Browne was considered one of the more accomplished reporters despite the selectivity with which he applied his efforts speaks to the overall quality of international reporters in the applicant pool.

Browne at the *Times*

Unfortunately, the *Times* treatment of Browne confirms that its professed standards for foreign reporting paralleled to that of Browne. Browne's accolades gave him credibility as a reporter of international news, so editorial staff at the *Times* were careful to treat him like a highflier. The foreign desk editors carefully phrased all of their critiques to him and made sure to clearly defend his work even in the face of external criticism. The editors may have only been trying to do whatever it took to keep a Pulitzer-winning reporter on staff, or attempting to preserve Browne's reputation and field experience, but their defense of Browne's actions nonetheless amounted to tacit support for his beliefs as a reporter and reflected an institutional tolerance for uncritical reporting in regions considered less important.

The Foreign Desk editorial team's response to a complaint from Esther Katz de Dávila most obviously demonstrates the *Times*' approval of Browne's conduct. Katz de Dávila – a woman who had previously lived and worked in Peru – had written in a letter to the editor complaining of a colonial tone in Browne's writing and of Browne's disrespect for local culture in his reporting. In response, an assistant marshalled Browne's credentials as a

demonstration of Browne's skill and competence, saying that Browne "[was] a Pulitzer Prize winner, and he is applying his talents in Latin America just as he did in winning that prize."¹⁸

In his defense of Browne, the editor suggested that he – and thus also the institution he represented – saw successful international reporting as a function of individual skill and not of local knowledge. He believed that the same skills Browne used to win his Pulitzer would help him succeed in Latin America; he did not consider the countless political and cultural differences between Southeast Asia and Latin America importance enough to be dealt with. Country-specific knowledge was only of secondary importance. This reaction revealed that the *Times* held a fundamental, but perhaps subconscious, disregard for the internal complexities of other countries. It believed that all countries could be deciphered and easily understood so long as the right elite journalist was put on the job. Here, the *Times*' conduct demonstrates how racism and cultural elitism undetectably creeps into and then limits thought processes.

Browne's early work as a foreign correspondent in Latin America reflected the same disregard for countries' unique characteristics held by his editors, and his predecessor Collier. In one of his first articles published on March 11, 1968, titled "Neighbors Fears Over Chile," Browne wrote that Chile's neighbors – Bolivia and Peru – "[showed] increasing fear that she may soon become a base for communist guerrillas seeking to subvert South American regimes."¹⁹ In substantiating his claim that the surrounding countries feared Chilean ties to communists, Browne marshalled only a two-sentence history of the War of the Pacific and quotes from Argentine and Bolivian government officials as evidence. None of the statements were factually incorrect, but the brevity of Browne's evidence could not carry his point.

¹⁸ Cleve Matthews, "Letter from Cleve Matthews to Esther Davila," November 6, 1968, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

¹⁹ Malcolm W. Browne, "Neighbors' Fears Over Chile Rise: 3 Nations Believe She May Become a Guerrilla Base," *New York Times*, 1968.

Browne's choice to make conclusions about three countries using sources from only two of them also demonstrated his comfort with generalizing about Latin American countries in spite of his own lack of knowledge.

The same article also evoked the same Americentrism and Cold War narratives mentioned in the previous chapters. In the article, Browne suspiciously highlighted the Chilean government's supposed alignment with radical socialists. He contrasted President Eduardo Frei's expulsion of Bolivian guerrillas arrested in Chile with a statement about how he "[safeguarded] their passage back to Havana."²⁰ Putting Frei's actions in opposition to his alleged intent to protect the guerrillas positioned him as at least supportive of their actions. After all, in providing safe passage, Frei implicitly condoned what the guerrillas stood for. By highlighting Frei's action, Browne also drew readers' attention to the connection between Chile and left-wing guerrillas. Spotlighting the Chilean president's alleged support for left-wing insurgents brought back to life pre-election rhetoric of Chile as a battleground between communism and democracy.

These assumptions that Browne put forth about Frei and Chile additionally map onto the U.S. governments' contemporary concerns. At the time, the U.S. State Department viewed political developments in Chile in terms of communist threats, and the CIA's interference in the 1964 election evinced the urgency with which the U.S. viewed the communist threat in Chile. Browne, in referencing other countries' fear of communism in Chile and Frei's acquiescence to the guerrillas' behavior, reproduced his governments' fears. While this tone may have been a product of the time, it nonetheless demonstrated the extent to which Browne allowed his own assumptions to creep into his supposedly detached work. The tone also demonstrates a certain laziness in his journalism where Browne chooses to

²⁰ Browne, "Neighbors' Fears Over Chile Rise."

build on the assumptions set forth by the U.S. government without acknowledging their presence.

The Value of Reporting from Latin America

Editors at the *Times* finally took action only after an important Chilean political figure reprimanded them, and even then, they couched their critique of Browne in praise. Topping himself wrote to Browne on March 14, 1968 that his reporting was “somewhat off base” and that he had “went a bit far” with his assertion that Frei had safeguarded the guerrillas passage.²¹ However, he sandwiched the criticism between reassurances that reporters taking on new assignments typically always receive complaints about their early reporting and that the editors did not “expect [him] to bowl over the Andes in the first months of [his] assignment in Latin America.”²² That Topping softened his criticism makes clear that, while he understood that Browne’s inappropriate extrapolating posed a problem, he did not see the problem as a serious or pressing one. Rather, Topping seemed to prioritize Browne’s reputation over the fair representation of varied nations in Latin America.

Again, several factors may have contributed to Topping’s disregard of Latin American news. Topping may have weighed keeping the Pulitzer-winning Browne on staff as more important than protecting Latin American countries’ reputations; he may have been uninformed about Latin America; the U.S.’ overwhelming contemporary prioritization of Vietnam may have rendered Latin America a non-priority; or Topping could have held a general contempt towards Latin America where he simply did not see the region as sophisticated enough to deserve nuanced reporting. Given the U.S.’ general lack of respect for Latin America – or any other country in the “Third World” for that matter, contempt for the region exacerbated by ignorance likely caused Topping’s dismissal of news from Latin

²¹ Malcolm W. Browne, “Letter from Malcolm Browne to Seymour Topping,” March 14, 1968, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

²² Browne.

America. In any case, Topping's inability to see Latin Americans as worthy of the same investigative journalism afforded to U.S. lives abroad arguably signaled racism and nativism. While his communication with Browne never explicitly spells out a reason for his disinterest in the region, the disinterest's existence is at the very least undeniable.

Browne's own attitude toward his responsibilities to Latin America did not differ significantly from Topping's perspective. His letters to the foreign desk in New York in fact reflect that he saw all Latin American countries as indistinguishable from each other. In one letter from July 1968, seven months into his appointment in the region, he attempted to persuade Topping to allow him to adapt for the paper "a takeout [article] on the Chilean communist party" that he had originally written for the *New York Times Magazine*. Browne wanted the paper to publish an abridged version of the article partially for the personal reason of wanting to "salvage the work [he] did for the magazine" but also because he thought that the piece "sheds a lot of light on the Latin American left."²³

Here, Browne's view of Latin America as one uniform continent shows through. The communist parties of Latin America did not have the same origins, constituencies, or aims. Yet, Browne believed that the Chilean political situation could illuminate the political situation of all other Latin American countries, a perspective that implies a monolithic view South American politics. Moreover, some countries had more than one left-leaning party, meaning that even within countries, leftists held different values; some were socialists, others were Marxist-Leninist, others were even anarchists.²⁴ To see the characteristics of one sample of leftists as representative of other groups in the region suggests ignorance of the subject he was interpreting for his readers or a laziness when conducting his analysis.

²³ Malcolm W. Browne, "Letter from Malcolm Browne to Seymour Topping," July 18, 1968, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

²⁴ Meade, *A History of Modern Latin America*, 177.

Browne also ended his article referencing “non-communist Latin America.”²⁵ For the reader of his article, the phrase appeared to reference a cohesive group of politically-interested people singularly concerned about the rise of communism. In reality, no such Pan-American group existed. At most, the U.S. was the anti-communist force prevalent throughout the continent. Browne “non-communist Latin America” was an imaginary coalition that Browne had conjured up with the stroke of his pen. The premise of Browne’s article – that observations about one leftist group were transferrable across countries because of their geographical proximity or shared language and culture – had no basis in actual political developments in Latin America. Instead, they lay on a myopic and culturally ignorant assumption that trends in one Latin American country could be generalized to mean trends for the entire continent.

In Chile, the ostensible subject of his article, for example, there existed two parties concerned with economic reform: the Communist Party and the Socialist Party. The two parties had an alliance, but the Communist Party actually occupied a more marginal political position than did the Socialist Party. Of the two, the Communist Party had relatively conservative political positions, and the Socialist Party, of which future president Salvador Allende was part of, had staked out a stronger anti-imperialist position and a stronger propensity towards revolution.²⁶ Yet, Browne chose to paint the Socialist Party as unstable, divided, and headed towards failure, saying that the Socialist Party “probably [would] lose seats in the forthcoming congressional election” because of internal splits.²⁷

²⁵ Browne, “Letter from Malcolm Browne to Seymour Topping,” July 18, 1968.

²⁶ Department of State, “Chile: Is Allende the Prelude to a Communist Victory?” (Washington, D.C: Office of General and Strategic Research, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, September 30, 1970), RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 15 CHILE, National Archives; Benny Pollack, “The Chilean Socialist Party: Prolegomena to Its Ideology and Organization,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 10, no. 1 (1978): 121.

²⁷ Browne, “Neighbors’ Fear Over Chile Rise.”

In contrast, Browne portrayed the Communist Party as a strong, institutionalized party familiar with navigating Chile's political environment. He went as far as ending his article with a reference to the Chile's Communist Party as the party all "non-communist Latin America has its fingers crossed" about.²⁸ Here, the overstatement of the Communist Party's influence appears to reflect an anti-Communist paranoia prevalent in the contemporary U.S. The paranoia precluded a more nuanced and discriminating perspective on left-wing movements in Latin America. The overstatement also reflected a misunderstanding of Chile's political situation. Again, Browne appears to have misinterpreted the political situation in Chile despite his strong credentials and the *Times*' belief in his skills. Perhaps he could not read the local news reports, or his stringer – a short-term, freelance journalist local to a foreign assignment – did not provide him the necessary background. But neither scenario counts as an extenuating circumstance, and Browne's incorrect reporting constitutes a major oversight on his part.

Browne's reflections on his practice reflected the same reductionist approach to Latin America. In a letter to Topping from September 1968, eight months after he first arrived in the region, Browne explained that he saw an "enormous distance separating Latin America and the U.S."²⁹ The distance he referred to was more than a literal distance; it was also a distance between cultures and identities, across which people from the two regions could not find common ground. To further explain, he states that "Latins seem to know and care neither more nor less about the U.S.A than North Americans do about them," possibly because the U.S. has not "had great numbers of troops in" the region like they did in Europe and Asia.³⁰

²⁸ Browne, "Letter from Malcolm Browne to Seymour Topping," July 18, 1968.

²⁹ Malcolm W. Browne, "Letter from Malcolm Browne to Seymour Topping," September 18, 1968, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

³⁰ Browne.

The conflation of people from the U.S. with all North Americans aside, Browne's assertion that the U.S. lacked a significant military presence on the continent simply did not ring true. As historian Edwin Lieuwen described in a contemporary report to a Congressional Committee on Foreign Relations on the status of the Latin American military, the U.S. possessed a monopoly on military training in all Latin American countries except for Cuba. It also had multiple bilateral mutual defense assistant pacts with countries in the region and operated 43 military missions in Latin America in 1967.³¹ To assert that the U.S. lacked troops in the region in spite of the U.S. clear military interest in the region suggests again that U.S. involvement in other countries only carried significance when U.S. citizens were losing their lives. Furthermore, Browne seemed to be ignoring the U.S.' role in the Dominican Civil War just three years earlier and the U.S.' failed Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba. That Browne either intentionally ignored or accidentally forgot these instances of U.S.' troops in the region point to a shortsightedness unbecoming for such an esteemed reporter.

Browne additionally drew inappropriate conclusions when talking about Latin Americans. He grouped all of his interactions with individuals from various countries in Central and South America together despite their social, economic, political, and cultural differences. For example, Browne reflected on the political interests of Argentina and Peru as if they were the same, criticizing Peru's Fernando Belaúnde for liking Nixon because of his similar interest in building infrastructure and Argentina's businessmen for thinking of U.S. economic policy as separate from U.S. politics. To see the opinions of a select few government officials and businessmen as representative of the entire continent grossly oversimplifies the countries' internal conditions, especially as the two countries had

³¹ Edwin Lieuwen, *Survey of the Alliance for Progress: The Latin American Military* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967).

completely different political situations.³² Argentina had a staunchly anti-revolutionary government, and Peru unstably vacillated between military and democratic rule.

Moreover, Browne had only been in three countries during his tour in Latin America – Argentina, which he was stationed in, Chile, and Paraguay, which made his overgeneralizations especially egregious.³³ And even for the conversations Browne did have in those countries, his identity as a foreign journalist with barely passable Spanish most certainly detracted from his ability to have a meaningful dialogue with or extract substantial commentary from locals. However, rather than being cognizant of these limitations, Browne decided to make bold claims about people from the continent, saying that he had “much more in common and a greater community of interest with, say, a French potato farmer or a Cambodian fisherman.”³⁴ This inability to see people and countries in Latin America as distinct and unique entities belied the lofty ideals he had proclaimed earlier. It also reflected an ignorance-fueled arrogance about the world where Browne felt prepared to make assertions about unfamiliar subjects because he did not care to know the true facts.

A subtle contempt for the Latin American subjects of his reporting accompanied Browne’s over-simplistic perspective. In the same September letter to Topping, Browne acknowledged that bits of American culture – like “movies, TV, rock and Coke” – had made their way down to the southern hemisphere while also complaining that local “movie reviews... say things like... ‘it is obviously necessary to be familiar with North America to grasp its significance.’” To expect citizens of other countries to understand the intricacies of context-dependent cultural products certainly reflects a degree of cultural arrogance. Later in the same letter, Browne also griped that “at social gatherings, people talk about UFOs, or inflation, or the Church (birth control et al), or local politics and culture.” “U.S. domestic

³² Browne, “Letter from Malcolm Browne to Seymour Topping,” March 14, 1968.

³³ *Browne*.

³⁴ Browne, “Letter from Malcolm Browne to Seymour Topping,” September 18, 1968.

matters, political or otherwise,” on the other hand, rarely came up in those social gatherings, which Browne took as an indication of the cultural distance between himself and his subjects. Because of this perceived distance, Browne hoped that his editors – Topping et al. – would treat his reportage of Latin Americans in the same way they treated “reactions from Siberian eskimos [sic].”³⁵

In his critique of how the Latin Americans he had met interacted with U.S. culture, Browne’s language treated his subjects as inferior. Browne was clearly surprised that the people he talked to rarely expressed knowledge about or interest the inner-workings of the U.S. This assumption that they should understand and care about U.S. culture then led him to see them as unsophisticated and ignorant. Again, this surprise reveals the same presumptuousness and sense of superiority that American exceptionalism, the Monroe Doctrine and Roosevelt Corollary, and many other politicians had stood for.³⁶ With such contempt for and barely-subdued hostility towards Latin Americans’ apparent inability to comprehend U.S. politics, Browne could not be counted on to provide detached descriptions or analyses of the events he covered. That Browne, supposedly one of the top foreign correspondents of his time, saw Latin Americans through this contemptuous perspective also intimates that the rest of the foreign reporting establishment held the U.S.’ southern neighbors in a similar, or perhaps even more disrespectful, disregard.

The same arrogance, which is separate from his reductionist view that oversimplified the region, shows through his reporting. In an August 1968 article on an interview with Peruvian President Belaúnde, Browne explained that Peru had “claimed sovereign rights over the 200-mile strip of ocean extending from their coast” while the U.S. only “[recognized] the

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America*, 1st ed (New York: Norton, 2001), 201.

sovereignty as extending to 12 miles offshore.”³⁷ This understandably created a territorial dispute, as the U.S. did not accept the vast majority of what Peru had determined to be their territory. However, Browne then faulted Peru for exercising its sovereignty and not following the U.S.’ more limited recognition of offshore rights; he said that Peru and its neighbor Ecuador “seized more than 60 American fishing boats in their claimed waters” and released them “*only* [emphasis added] after the payment of fines that have totaled more than \$400,000.”³⁸ In using the word “only,” Browne stressed the presence of these fines and possibly hinted at their absurdity. With his language, Browne communicated to his U.S. readership that Latin American countries could not legitimately assert their sovereignty if doing so conflicted with U.S.’ interests or businesses. This subtle message hearkened back to the spirit of the Monroe Doctrine – that in the Americas, the U.S. always had the final say.

Browne’s credentials only reinforced his presumptuous attitude. When he wrote about a conversation he had with “Radomiro Tomić, former Chilean ambassador to Washington,” for example, Browne did not take seriously Tomić’s concerns about the *Times*’ negative portrayal of Chile.³⁹ He stated that he “*of course* [emphasis added] denied any unfriendly attitude on [his] part” and that he explained how he “was trying to follow, however imperfectly, [his] ideas and those of the *Times* of objective journalism.”⁴⁰ Based on his defense, Browne saw his unsubstantiated claims about Argentine, Peruvian, and Bolivian fears of Chile as simply objective statements. Here, Browne fell back on his ideas about his role as an objective reporter. He hid behind the veil of insincere objectivity that he had developed as a foreign correspondent in Vietnam to shield him from Tomić’s criticism.

³⁷ Malcolm W. Browne, “Belaúnde Finds U.S. Ill-Informed: He Says Misunderstanding Strains Ties With Peru,” *New York Times*, 1968.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Malcolm W. Browne, “Letter from Malcolm Browne to Seymour Topping,” June 7, 1968, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

According to his circular logic, he was incapable of biased reporting because his reporting was purely objective reflections of what he observed.

Browne's betrayal of his professed impartiality also presented itself his personal correspondence. In another letter he wrote to his editor, Browne emphasized that it was "not [his] place to criticize or praise any government" but also that he "[took] pride in America's democratic heritage... and find in Argentina a typical backward Latin dictatorship, without even the imagination of the Peron regime." His homogenizing usage of the word "Latin" aside, Browne clearly demonstrated his contempt for Argentina with his stereotyping phrase "typical backward Latin dictatorship."⁴¹ Yet, Browne still considered himself objective without any irony. He seemed to see his accolades and prior recognition as an excuse for not engaging in introspection and for failing to be self-aware.

Times' readers were not blind to the pejorative undertones occasionally present in Browne's reporting. As the frequent letters to the editor demonstrated, readers often detected the contempt present in Browne's reporting. A businessman wrote to the editor that while he believed that the *Times* generally reported facts, he could "see why the Argentines get a bit upset" at the paper's coverage of the region; after all, the *Times* reporter there – Browne – consistently discounted the progress Argentina had made in the Tucumán Province.⁴² Another civilian, Roberto Mújica-Lainez, also wrote in to point out a contradiction in Browne's reporting on Argentina's Tucumán Province: Browne first wrote that unions had become too powerful then in the same article criticized government attempts to manage the unions as a "crack down."⁴³ In doing so, Mújica-Lainez made the point that the *Times* seemed

⁴¹ Malcolm W. Browne, "Letter from Malcolm Browne to Seymour Topping," August 23, 1968, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

⁴² "Letter to the Editor," August 6, 1968, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

⁴³ Roberto Mujica-Lainez, "Letter from Roberto Mujica-Lainez to the Editor," August 4, 1968, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

to always be against Argentina and that the *Times* never wrote positively about Argentina regardless of what the Argentine government accomplished.

In fact, Browne occasionally took his interpretation of events so far that even the Foreign Desk editors back in New York took note. Considering that the *Times* editors had previously given Browne what amounted to free rein in his role, Browne's work must have been obviously skewed for the editors to consider his work as boundary-breaking. They first reprimanded him after Radomiro Tomić, then the Chilean Ambassador to the U.S., wrote an indignant letter about Browne's article on other countries' fear of Chile to the *Times*. In the letter, Tomić accused Browne's writing of containing various inaccuracies, including Browne's aforementioned mischaracterization of Frei's treatment of the Bolivian guerrillas. He claimed that "the damage to my country [Chile] cannot be completely erased by this [his letter] or any denials."⁴⁴ As he suggested, Browne's misrepresentations mattered because they gave *Times*' readers the wrong impression of Chile. This misrepresentation likely damaged Chile's reputation in the U.S. much like current misreporting damages the reputation of Central and South American countries and people. It certainly enabled and fueled foreign policy hostile to Chile and likely stoked irrational fears about the country.

The frequent complaints about Browne that the *Times* received about Browne's work also raised red flags for his peers. Fellow Latin American correspondent Juan de Onis, who was stationed in Rio de Janeiro at the time, wrote an undated letter to Topping saying that, "having looked into the complaints [that members of the Chilean and Argentine lodged against some of Browne's recent articles], [he's] sorry to say that they are not groundless."⁴⁵ He then detailed three ways in which Browne had misrepresented political developments in

⁴⁴ Radomiro Tomić, "Letter from Radomiro Tomić to the Editor," March 12, 1968, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

⁴⁵ Juan de Onis, "Letter from Juan de Onis to Seymour Topping," March 10, 1968, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

the two countries: Browne incorrectly asserted that “leaders of the strong Radical party supported Mr. Frei... in 1964,” that Argentina granted West Germany a contract to build its nuclear reactor because the Argentine military was nostalgic “for one-time German military instructors,” and that Chile had the potential to become a guerrilla base.⁴⁶ This letter had no substantial impact on Browne because de Onis was a peer, not a supervisor, nonetheless indicated that at least some parts of the *Times* institution disapproved of how Browne performed his job.

Value Changes

As Browne spent more time in Latin America, his perspective on foreign correspondence in the region changed even as his attitude toward the people remained the same. In April 1969, almost 1.5 years after he had first started in Argentina, Browne raised his first substantial complaint against the way the *Times* covered Latin America. He did see or acknowledge his condescending perspective of Latin Americans as inherently more susceptible to dictatorships or as being more “backwards.” Instead, Browne echoed what he had written for the *Columbia Journalism Review* about Vietnam in 1964. He explained that the large geographical range of his responsibilities made covering “[his] hunk of Latin America for hard news in any systematic way” impossible.⁴⁷ In stating the difficulties of covering a large region, Browne recognized on some level that his previous work had perhaps been inadequate. Unfortunately, in doing so, he attributed the shortcomings of his work to structural problems and did not acknowledge the role of his own arguably racist assumptions.

In the same letter, Browne also recognized that any story he wrote “must be elaborately backgrounded for intelligibility” because of the average U.S. readers’ ignorance of the region. Browne primarily raised volume-related concerns, as he wanted “more hard

⁴⁶ Malcolm W. Browne, “Argentine Atom Job Is Won by Germans: Germans to Build Argentine Plant,” *New York Times*, 1968, sec. Business and Finance; de Onis, “Letter from Juan de Onis to Seymour Topping”; Browne, “Neighbors’ Fear Over Chile Rise.”

⁴⁷ Browne, “Letter from Malcolm Browne to Seymour Topping,” June 7, 1968.

news space, more situationer space and more effective wire coverage as well as” *Times* coverage. Situationers – a contraction for the more formal name of “situation story” – are a type of news article intended to provide background knowledge. The problem with how the U.S.’ media covered Latin America, as Browne saw it, was the limited number of articles about the region.⁴⁸ So, while Browne began seeing the holes in the larger institution of foreign correspondence in Latin America, he nonetheless remained incapable of introspection and recognizing his own limits.

The Foreign Desk in New York did not appear to issue any related response to Browne, but Browne was not deterred by the silence. In January of 1970, he wrote in a letter to the Desk Editor that he remained “concerned and unhappy and frustrated each time [he picked] up the State Department’s ARA-PAF [Office of Public Affairs at the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs] pressclip” because he would see that other publications, like the *Los Angeles Times* or the *Miami Herald*, used fewer resources to provide more news at “a higher degree of sophistication” than did the *Times*.⁴⁹ The situation was especially sad because the *Times* had “four men in Latin America against one or at most two for each of them.”⁵⁰ In this later complaint, Browne attributed this poor reporting to two factors: the lack of space and the *Times*’ editorial staff’s inconsistent standards for foreign correspondents.

His space concern was the same one he had raised half a year before, but the journalistic standard concern was new. In the latter, Browne explained that the editorial staff’s expectations for interpretive reporting simply did not match up with the shortage of space. Neither could correspondents fulfill the other expectation for frequently updated hard news without the type of extensive staffing that wire agencies had.⁵¹ Consequently, Browne believed, foreign correspondents’ hands were tied and did not have a chance when trying to

⁴⁸ Browne.

⁴⁹ Browne, “Letter from Malcolm Browne to James Greenfield,” 2.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

produce substantive articles. Browne's concerns accurately diagnosed some of the *Times*' institutional problems: an unwillingness to invest space in Latin American coverage and a set of reporting expectations that stood as fundamentally incompatible with the space limits. In fact, adequately covering Latin America was so insurmountable a task that he recommended that the *Times* actually shrink their presence in Latin America; if the *Times* was not going to get it right with a large staff, then it might as well stop trying and wasting its "money and... talent" in the region.⁵² In repeating his complaint, Browne made clear that, while he may not have questioned his stereotyped view of his subjects, he at least valued the professional responsibilities he had outlined earlier in his career.

Though the changes that Browne proposed were undeniably substantial – he wanted the *Times* to "reduce [the *Times*] present correspondents in Latin America from four to one," the *Times*' responses to his feedback spoke volumes about the institutional attitude toward Latin America in the *Times*. From the beginning of Browne's tenure in Latin America, the foreign editors came off as dismissive of the entire region. Previously, the editors had been dismissive of Collier's work in the region largely because of his dismal performance, but with Browne, there was no excuse given that they had previously abased themselves in defense of Browne's accolades. Nonetheless, Topping consistently downplayed the importance of the region in his correspondence. In a July 1968 letter, Topping emphasized that his Foreign Desk Guidelines memo "should be of special interest to correspondents working in Latin America" and that guidelines emphasize the occasional in-depth story with short wire stories filling in the gaps.⁵³ Recalling that having greater focus previously underreported regions was the intent behind Topping's updated guidelines, that Topping singled out Latin American correspondents as needing to pay special attention to the

⁵² Browne, "Letter from Malcolm Browne to James Greenfield," 2.

⁵³ Seymour Topping, "Letter from Seymour Topping to Malcolm Browne," July 10, 1968, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

guidelines emphasizes the unimportance of the region in Topping's eyes. Again, institutional factors precluded truly even reporting.

In fact, Topping admitted to Browne in a 1968 letter that he had little interest Latin America. He confirmed that he only wanted to devote space to "quality, analytical reporting" that would keep reader attention.⁵⁴ That Latin America did not often produce this type of reporting meant that the region deserved little space based on his formula. In fact, he wrote, "the Miami Herald has a special Latin American audience; not unlike our own readers who turn avidly to Metropolitan news. The coverage of Latin America, which I propose for our paper, is suitable for our readership." As his letter demonstrated, Topping's resistance to spending more space on Latin America was at least in part because he saw his readers as disinterested in Latin America. This assumption is in line with what CSDI had reported earlier: "too many [editors] still are in the deeply instilled habit of allocating a low priority for Latin American news and seeking out only the capricious, trivial, or disastrous from the Americas."⁵⁵ In his dismissal of Latin American news, Topping replicated both the general U.S. government and the U.S. news media's under-prioritization of the region. Like Browne, Topping effectively aided and abetted prejudicial views about Latin America through his dismissal of the region.

Ultimately, Browne completed his assignment in Latin America having changed neither how the *Times* reported on the region nor his perspective on Latin Americans. In October of 1970 one of his final letters to his superiors – this time A. M. Rosenthal, then the Managing Editor of the *Times* – complained that he considered the *Times* as having only the fifth best coverage of Latin America despite its resources. He also repeated his concern that

⁵⁴ Browne, "Letter from Malcolm Browne to James Greenfield." Seymour Topping, "Letter from Seymour Topping to Malcolm Browne," July 15, 1968, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

⁵⁵ Hendrix, "The News from Latin America," 51.

the Latin American bureaus were overstaffed, and the *Times* would benefit from eliminating some of its position in the region.⁵⁶ The re-statement of these proposals to someone even higher up on the food chain emphasize Browne's confidence in his suggestions; they also demonstrate that nothing had changed since he raised his first complaint in 1969.

The conviction behind Browne's efforts to improve the *Times*' treatment of Latin America unfortunately did not translate into a parallel concern with treating the subjects of his reporting with respect. In the same letter he wrote to Rosenthal, Browne characterized South America as "a continent with a chip on its shoulder," suggesting that countries in Latin America had no reason to be resentful of how it had been treated by the U.S. and other colonial powers.⁵⁷ He also repeated the adjectival phrase "leftist nationalist" with scare quotes around it throughout the letter. The repetition combined with the scare quotes point to a deliberate emphasis on the phrase, with the scare quotes implying a certain skepticism about "leftist nationalist" as being the correct modifier. In effect, he conveyed his doubts about true motivations of generals who overthrew Belaúnde in Peru and Víctor Paz Estenssoro in Bolivia. Additionally, Browne hinted at South American generals' lack of foresight, criticizing them for protesting Washington's objection to Peru's decision to purchase supersonic Mirage V Jets. He reasoned that "these men were citizens of nations against whom these Peruvian Mirages would be used, [sic] in the event of a war between neighbors."⁵⁸ The continued criticism of Latin American subjects coupled with the annoyance towards Latin Americans' remembrance of past grievances reinforces the idea that Browne was incapable of recognizing his own hypocrisy.

⁵⁶ Malcolm W. Browne, "Letter from Malcolm Browne to A.M. Rosenthal," October 26, 1970, Box 100, Folder 4, New York Times Company records, Foreign Desk records (1948-1993), The New York Public Library: Archives & Manuscripts, New York City, New York.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Even decades later, Browne's arrogance towards Latin America persisted, holding on with a tenacity that demonstrated the extent of its influence on Browne's world view. In the memoir he published in 1993, two decades after his tour in Latin America, he wrote that the region possessed "many customs that make South America seem to an outside as rather antiquated." He also wrote that "many South Americans live in the past and deeply resent change." By characterizing South Americans as essentially backwards, Browne made clear that he saw his South American subjects not as equals, but as a people not yet capable of a sophisticated government "under the 'Firmament of Law.'" In fact, he complained that "woe betide the journalist who fails to study and respect Latin America traditions," as if demonstrating respect for other cultures was too much to ask for.⁵⁹ Clearly, Browne had become more cemented in his own quasi-imperialist preconceptions as he aged and never thought about how he contributed to the chip on Latin Americans' shoulders.

Browne also wrote disparagingly about the "Third World," a category that he saw as including much of Latin America. He saw the "Third World" as not in a state of development, but in "a putrefying state of existence perpetually in the grip of a plague deadlier than anthrax."⁶⁰ With such a fundamental lack of respect for South Americans, how could Browne expect to produce quality reporting that properly informed U.S.' readers about how Latin Americans lived? At most, Browne could produce inevitably exoticized descriptions of South American customs.

In the end, Browne proved to be a responsible but misguided reporter. Having cut his teeth in Vietnam and won an award for that work, Browne developed a strong sense of professional responsibility. His CJR article from 1964 delineated a strong work ethic that reappeared towards the latter end of his stay in Latin America when he pushed for more

⁵⁹ Browne, *Muddy Boots and Red Socks*, 234.

⁶⁰ *Browne*, 290.

analytical reporting about the region. However, he also brought with his reporting a classically U.S. sense of superiority and viewed Latin American political and social structures as inherently inferior. Because of these assumptions, Browne never questioned U.S. motives in Latin America the same way that he did the motives of Latin American leftists. Browne also never encountered an obvious lie from the U.S. government when working in Latin America the same way he consistently encountered MCAV lies while working in Vietnam. Consequently, the reporting he conducted in Latin America was much less investigative than the work he did in Vietnam. The sheer size of Latin America certainly also contributed to the challenges he faced, but that does not render his prejudicial reporting excusable. All of these factors contributed to the incomplete reporting of Latin America provided by the *Times*.

Conclusion

Journalism allegedly plays many roles in society: watchdog, agenda-setter, information provider. People count on it to learn about contemporary events that they did not experience first-hand, to expose government lies like the ones from Vietnam, and to tell them about important developments around the world. It also plays an important role in politics and public opinion, as many political scientists and media scholars have demonstrated. Given these expectations, the institution of journalism has many responsibilities to its audience. It owes them good faith attempts to conduct critical analyses, to not let personal – or cultural – biases creep into their work, and to thoroughly vet the verity of each story. In other words, responsible journalism calls for an honest effort to produce objective stories, as impossible as that goal may be. For journalists to fall short of these expectations is for them to conduct lazy reporting.

In the case of the *Times* in the late Sixties, international reporting about Latin America attempted to fulfill journalism's various responsibilities, but many structural and person-specific problems precluded complete fulfillment. For one, commercial pressures of the time period de-emphasized responsible reporting for newspapers. Television news stood out as a competitor to print media, and newspapers needed to find ways to out-entertain broadcast news and keep readers' attention. Cutting the length of news articles to one to two columns and making their tone and content less serious were two ways to stay competitive. Consequently, news editors at the *Times* urged their journalists to reconsider how they conducted their work. Topping, for example, repeatedly reminded both Collier and Browne that their work on Latin America needed to be brief and contain much personal voice. Both recommendations – to sacrifice detail for brevity, and to add color into their articles – detracted from the principles of objectivity and thoroughness that were supposedly central to the mission of journalism.

While the space problems that Topping presented were partially a product of the time, Topping's personal characteristics also contributed to the spotty news of Latin America produced during his tenure. As he oft repeated to both correspondents, he had little knowledge of and even less experience with Latin America. Consequently, Topping could not provide detailed guidance for his reporters in Latin America. This is not a value judgment of Topping's job performance, or to say that Topping is to blame for not understanding the region; his work as a foreign correspondent had taken him to other continents, and detailed knowledge about all parts of the world is not a reasonable expectation for an editor. Rather, this is to recognize that, though unintentional, Topping's role in enabling unremarkable coverage of the region is undeniable.

Of course, the personalities and skills of Collier and Browne also played a part. Collier embodied the bumbling foreign correspondent. As his successor Browne later complained, Collier "found plenty of time to freelance, swim, visit the zoo, and so forth," and a desire to have a good time while traveling the world overshadowed his dedication to the profession.⁶¹ The triviality with which Collier viewed his position is apparent from these observations. It also certainly showed through in his writing – or lack thereof. He often missed deadlines or forgot to follow through with proposed articles, and the articles he did produce rarely met the already-low bar that Topping had set for him. Instead, they were often over-generalizing and lacked concrete analysis. Collier's performance demonstrated both the laziness that lay behind much of the reporting produced about Latin America and the *Times* tolerance for low-quality reporting in certain regions of the world. His laziness also calls into question the accuracy of much of the reporting on Latin America produced during that time.

⁶¹ Browne, "Letter from Malcolm Browne to James Greenfield."

Browne presented a different story. Unlike Collier, Browne had professed much commitment to the tenets of responsible reporting. He ostensibly learned in Vietnam the importance of local knowledge when reporting on other countries, of staying objective, and of questioning government versions of events.⁶² This visible commitment to his profession suggested that he at least made an effort to carry out his work in Latin America responsibly. The chances of him wasting his time hanging around bars or frolicking in zoos was much lower. Yet, despite all of the advantages that Browne supposedly had over Collier, the reporting that he produced was nonetheless similarly oversimplified. Separately, Browne also relied heavily on the Cold War frame, choosing to interpret many stories through the lens of Communists versus the U.S. or Communism versus freedom. So, though Browne possessed more qualifications and was a harder worker, he did not out-perform Collier by much.

Problems with stereotyping and racism undergird many of Browne's difficulties. He unfortunately viewed Latin Americans as inherently inferior during his time in the region – and even many years after he had left. Of course, Browne never explicitly proclaims his superiority. Rather, his characterization of his Latin American subjects sufficiently evinced his arrogance. In saying “typical Latin dictatorship” or unfairly characterizing President Frei's actions, Browne demonstrated that he did not care to understand the politics of the countries he reported on even though he had previously doubled down on the importance of understanding local situations. This selective application of his own standards then speaks to a contempt for Latin America: it was not important enough for Browne to fulfill the responsibilities that he had delineated as necessary for good reporting.

The racial and cultural biases were by no means unique to Browne. Collier had demonstrated them in his oversimplification of other countries' internal politics, as did Topping with his dismissal of Latin America as a region. As such, these biases were a

⁶² Browne, “Viet Nam Reporting.”

symptom of a much broader societal problem. They were a product of a long history of stereotypes, where others' different cultural practices or behaviors were seen as inherently inferior because they did not map on to what the majority of U.S. residents were into. Their presence in journalism speaks to their pervasiveness. Their limiting effect on Browne and Collier's work demonstrates their insidious nature, as they can even taint one of the more objective professions. The quality of journalism about Latin America in the Sixties was thus undercut by market changes and biases both personal and societal.

Studying the problems with *Times* coverage of Latin America holds much significance. In understanding how an ostensibly strong journalist like Browne may still produce weak reporting, it provides an understanding of how pontificating about moral or professional values may provide a positive image that can obscure individuals' shortcomings. The deleterious effects that media market competition had on journalism quality holds additional relevance for today as more and more mediums of communication appear. These case studies of *Times* journalism also show how prejudices are perpetuated in the media, as biased reporters create tainted reporting that readers took as fact.

Moreover, the problems with the *Times* did not end after Browne left. In fact, the *Times* would only seriously reconsider how it treated Latin America after a story that Seymour Hersh broke in 1974. A reporter for the *Times*, Hersh authored a story about CIA intervention in across the world. Part of this article included details of the CIA's efforts to discredit and bring down Chile's Salvador Allende between 1970 and 1973. In publishing these details, the *Times* was forced to reconsider its history of tacit alignment with official U.S. policy in Latin America. The Church Committee that followed this story also significantly impacted the rest of *Times* reporting on Latin America. It revealed government deception that paralleled what had happened with MACV statements in Vietnam. Once

realizing that CIA and government statements on Latin America could not be trusted, the *Times* began to see the region as worthy of more investigative journalism.

That the *Times* coverage improved in the Seventies is not to say that its coverage is now perfect. In fact, many of the problems that plagued the *Times* in the Sixties still exist today. Newspapers must now compete with broadcast news, radio news, and other written publications that exist solely on the internet. Most of these other forms showcase shorter or more casually produced pieces, and next to them, longer investigative news articles may appear less interesting. This clearly dis-incentivizes critical reporting. Of greater concern is the increased presence of personal bias in news. Certainly, some degree of subjectivity will always exist because news requires acts of interpretation, but the extent to which some publications will bend facts to fit their narratives has become especially alarming. If anything, this thesis' case studies demonstrate that news may never paint a complete picture, and that strong prejudices may cause even the most well-intentioned reporter to stumble. The impetus is then on the reader to maintain a critical perspective on the news they consume.

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