California State University, Northridge

ERIC SEVAREID

The Voice of Reason

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Mass Communications

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. INTRODUCTION.</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. THE EARLY YEARS</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III. THE ROLE OF THE JOURNALIST.</strong></td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IV. DOMESTIC ISSUES</strong></td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE MOST PRESSING PROBLEM--THE TRUST GAP.</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE BLACK DILEMMA</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIONS--THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE OVERPOPULATION BOMB</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXTREMISM</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>V. FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE COLD WAR</strong></td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALITARIANISM</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNISM--RED SCARE OR RED HERRING?</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE U.S.--WORLD POLICEMAN?</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea and the Dominican Republic</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOREIGN AID--BOON OR BANE?</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

ERIC SEVAREID
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by
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Few people would deny that the news media influence our opinions but we often know little about the individuals behind the faces we see, the voices we hear and the words we read. Eric Sevareid has reported and analyzed the news for over thirty years and is one of the most respected men in journalism. Yet surprisingly, very little has been written about him.

This thesis examines Eric Sevareid's views on various contemporary subjects and seeks to delineate some of the processes involved in the development of and, in some cases, the changes in these ideas.

The first section concerns the role of the journalist and Sevareid's outspoken views on the subject.
The next section covers domestic issues--broken down into various sub-topics. The first presents what Sevareid considers the most pressing problem this country faces. Moving on, the problems of blacks and overpopulation are examined, followed by a current view of unions in this country. The last item in this section is extremism, a subject of great concern to Sevareid.

The last major section covers Sevareid's opinions about foreign affairs and the relationship between the U.S. and other countries of the world. The chapter begins with a discussion about totalitarianism followed by communism. The U.S. role as a world policeman is then analyzed with particular emphasis on U.S. intervention in Korea, the Dominican Republic and Vietnam. Finally, his views on U.S. foreign aid policy are presented.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Eric Sevareid says, "I think the principal task of the journalist is to try to report the world, not to reform it....The only passion I've ever had is to try to find out the truth about things and explain it as best I could." Sevareid reports the world as he sees it, as he has since his days as a World War II correspondent, when he began to synthesize the "Weltanschauung" which is evident today in his writings and broadcasts.

World War II accelerated the rise of radio as an important mode of news reporting and CBS led the way with an all-star line-up. Although the appearance was designed to avoid trying to shape opinion, according to Erik Barnouw in The Golden Web, it did not succeed very well. He said:

If the calm style of CBS newsmen was meant to avoid the appearance of trying to shape opinion, it succeeded. If, however, CBS intended that opinion should not be shaped, it surely failed. Murrow influenced many, and consciously or unconsciously must have wished to....So it was with...Sevareid...and others....Murrow and his colleagues offered something akin to drama: vicarious experience of what they were living and observing. It put the listener
in another man's shoes. No better way to influence opinion has ever been found.\(^2\)

Sevareid himself, although he modestly downplays his own role as an opinion molder, noted during World War II that, "For the first time I began to comprehend the importance and power of the 'observers,' all those who speak and write. The nation had entered full into a war of words, and words were my business. I learned a new respect for my profession—and a new fear of it."\(^3\)

More recently he said of radio and television, "Its sweep and influence are enormous....It not only transmits news, it has a way of generating news, and it becomes, in many instances, a factor in the equation of any great public issue, such as the present war in Viet Nam."\(^4\) Walter Cronkite, testifying before a Senate subcommittee in October 1971, conceded that he himself exercises "awesome power."\(^5\)

Although the commentator or news analyst was not carried over from radio to television to a large degree, Sevareid, in his book *This Is Eric Sevareid*, described many of them as men with "disciplined, objective minds, men trusted by millions of Americans whose view of the world had been formed in considerable degree by such men."\(^6\)
There are many observers who would claim that Sevareid himself is one of these men. Former colleague Martin Agronsky included Sevareid in his definition when he said that a commentator is an opinion molder if he establishes "a reputation over the years as having some useful insights into contemporary affairs and saying things that are worth listening to, that the audience that you develop is one that is affected by your opinions...." Former NBC network correspondent Bryson Rash would concur with Agronsky adding, "Almost anyone in television of that position, of that stature would be an opinion molder. You can't miss...in that position---you have constant access to the television audience....This man [Sevareid] is respected and of course he molds opinion."

Perhaps the comments of writer William Holland come closest to explaining Eric Sevareid's appeal and value to his audience:

Forty two million people watch Eric Sevareid each weekday evening on the CBS Evening News. In his two-minute, pre-taped commentaries...he has probably touched the minds of more Americans and touched them more often than any journalist in the history of the profession and his words have probably been taken more seriously than all those but from a few politicians, poets and preachers in this century.
People will give many reasons why this is so... but the basic reasons are repetitive and complimentary...

First of all, he looks and acts the part... Sevareid is grave; Sevareid is serious; a sad optimist; a crochety stern voice of compassionate reason; a man of quiet integrity...

The second reason is his ability to express himself clearly. Clarity of thought is one of the virtues Americans most highly regard...and Sevareid has that virtue,...He talks with forebearance, wit and with more fairness than most men can muster.

The third reason...is that he brings a great deal of knowledge to his presentations.

...Americans somehow know that Sevareid has done his reporter's legwork when he speaks on an issue-it's written all over him.  

Sevareid's friends and colleagues are high in their regard for his objectivity. And Seminar magazine reported that members of Congress consider Sevareid among the "most fair" television news commentators.  

In addition to his value as a reporter many people consider Sevareid an important literary figure. Dan Rather, CBS White House correspondent, probably speaks for many of them when he says of Sevareid:

I think the basis of Eric Sevareid's transparent integrity is that he is the best short essayist in the English language. Now there are some who would say that this is an overstatement but I challenge anyone to show me one better.

...It's his ability to be incisive and direct, to know what you mean to say and to say precisely that. That's why people can recognize his integrity even though they might not agree with him.

Marquis Childs has said of Sevareid, "you can hear echoes of Artemus Ward, Mark Twain, Will Rogers with..."
even, now and then, a touch of Thoreau....His judgments...
are tempered with a wise understanding of human frail-
ties."12 Jack Gould, New York Times critic, adds that he
"...has always been one of the ablest essayists in
broadcasting...."13 Some have called him the Walter
Lippmann of the air.

It is perhaps somewhat of an enigma why so very
little has been written about him in view of his impact
on his audiences. Comprehensive research of the
literature reveals that aside from a few interviews and
passing reference in books dealing with the media, little
can be found about him. As human beings we are all sub-
ject to influence by people and events in our lives.
Because we see history through the eyes of those who
report it and often know little about them it becomes
increasingly important for interpreting history to under-
stand the viewpoint of those who report it. Furthermore,
as we witness history through Sevareid's eyes we are
observing it as seen by someone who probably helped to
change it.

It is the attempt of this thesis to present a
compilation of Sevareid's thoughts and ideas about
various subjects of contemporary interest. In so doing
the attempt will be made to show some of the processes involved in the development of and, in some cases, the changes in these ideas.

Topics to be covered fall into three areas: The Role of the Journalist, Domestic Issues and Foreign Affairs. Sevareid has some very definite ideas about the journalist's role in society and some of these will be discussed in the first section.

The next section will look at his views about some of the important domestic problems in this country. Beginning with what to Sevareid's mind constitutes the most pressing problem our society has to face, the focus then moves to the problems of blacks and overpopulation, and a latter day look at unions. Concluding the chapter is a section on extremism in the United States, a topic very definitely one of his favorites.

The foreign affairs chapter looks at some of the relationships between the U.S. and the rest of the world. A general overview of totalitarianism is a natural lead-in to a discussion about the future of Communism. The role of the U.S. as a world policeman includes sections on Korea, the Dominican Republic and Vietnam. Finally, Sevareid's somewhat outspoken views on foreign aid are
Due to the limitations mentioned on material available on Sevareid this thesis will, of necessity, be limited in its scope.

Many factors can help determine formation of and change in ideas and beliefs. Some, like "textbook" cases, follow a conscious logical progression to their inevitable conclusion. Others operate more clandestinely in the recesses of the unconscious mind and are not discernible to the outsider. Indeed, the individual himself may not even be aware of them. It is therefore beyond the scope of this thesis to try to document or even ascertain all of the forces which have influenced Sevareid and conversely, to attempt to measure his influence on the American public.

Although he is conversant in and has addressed himself to virtually all areas of public concern, Sevareid does not claim expertise in every area, and indeed, does not speak on all with equal authority. Some subjects such as blacks are handled very carefully because, he admits, "I don't know enough about it..."14, while others such as extremism are often topics of concern. With these limitations in mind this thesis can be viewed in the proper perspective.
FOOTNOTES

1 Statement by Eric Sevareid, personal interview, October 5, 1971.


4 Editorial, Los Angeles Times, March 6, 1966, p. 2G.


7 Statement by Martin Agronsky, personal interview, October 4, 1971.

8 Statement by Bryson Rash, personal interview, October 5, 1971.


11 Holland, p. 19.

12 Sevareid Papers (Library of Congress Manuscript Division).


14 Sevareid, interview.
CHAPTER II

THE EARLY YEARS

A great wave of immigration in the 1850's and 1860's brought many Scandinavian pioneers who settled among the gently rolling hills of Iowa and near the glacier formed, crystal clear lakes of Minnesota. The weather could be harsh and unrelenting, but the soil was fertile.

Eric Severeid's ancestors were among these hardy pioneers. As the railroads of James J. Hill spread westward, the sons of the immigrants packed up and moved westward to the Dakotas beyond. "The soil was perfect for the crop. There were no hills to circumvent, no forests to clear. It required steadier purpose, harder work, and better men than the finding of gold; but the wheat was their gold. This was the Wheat Rush." Many waxed rich in the years of the First World War.

Velva, where Severeid was born Arnold Eric Severeid in 1912, was one of many towns dotting the landscape of North Dakota and like the others it depended upon the wheat crop for its prosperity. Wheat was the
great equalizer. Literally the "butcher, the baker and
the candlestick maker" were at its mercy.

Psychologists and common sense tell us that
individuals are influenced by their experiences and young
Sevareid was evidently no exception. In Not So Wild A
Dream he reflected:

Perhaps it was our common dependence upon the
wheat that made all men essentially equal, but I do
know now, having looked at society in many countries,
that we were a true democracy in that huddled commu-
nity of painted boards. A man might affect preten-
sions, but he could not pretend for long. We lived
too closely together for that. There were, of course,
differences in degree of material wealth. There were
what was always referred to as the 'well to do' and
we had a few families 'on the other side of the
tracks.' No doubt there was envy at times and small
bitternesses here and there. But no man lived in
fear of another. No man had the power to direct
another to vote this way or that. No impenetrable
combine could foist a candidate upon the people if
they did not wish, and it would have been quite
impossible to rig an election and get away with it.
This was an agrarian democracy, which meant that
there was no concentration of capital goods, which
meant in turn, since we had no all-powerful landlords,
that no class society based upon birth or privilege
had a chance to develop...The Horatio Alger tradition
was strong even then, and the village boys really
read those insufferable little books. One day when
we were out picking wild plums by the river bank,
another boy said to me: 'Your father is a pretty good
man, even if he is the richest man in town.' I had
no feeling of pride; far from it. I was shocked, and
hurried home, close to tears. I demanded the truth
of my father, for if this were true, I felt I would
be in a highly compromised position; somehow my own
worth would be at a discount. Patiently, he
demonstrated to me that the charge of possessing
great wealth was a false accusation, and I relayed
this gratifying information to the proper place without delay.\textsuperscript{2}

If he learned intolerance it was of snobbery, of deceitfulness, of callousness. That he would not experience any special reaction to minorities he says is not due to broad-mindedness. Rather he cannot. "It just isn't there," he says. "The toxin was not injected into our bloodstream early enough, for which we give thanks to Velva."\textsuperscript{3}

Though he is now physically far removed from the farm life of his youth his roots are implanted deeply in the fertile soil of his early experiences. Some four decades later he was still moved enough by these things and memories of "...years and years of Dakota farmers fighting drought and locusts and dust storms and blizzards with damn little immediate help from anybody but neighbors, just to hang on to those free land gifts and improve them..."\textsuperscript{4} to comment in retrospect:

I suspect a lot of 'typical' American traits--inventiveness, a pragmatic faith in what works and the absence of theory and doctrine, respect for the practical man who could get things done, neighborliness, an implicit belief in progress and the solvability of problems...must have come out of that whole process...\textsuperscript{5}

One indeed had to have a lot of faith to till the land for nature could be cruel and unyielding. One day
the rains ceased and when the summer winds came they took the rich top soil with them. Many men were ruined, among them was Eric Sevareid's father. He packed up his family and moved to Minnesota.

Sevareid attended high school in Minneapolis where he edited the school newspaper. Although he credits the late Bill Francis, editor of the Velva Journal, with first stimulating his interest in journalism, this was his first practical experience. He graduated from Central high school in 1930 having learned, as he put it:

...nothing except how to put the school paper to press, believing that the ability to write a two-column 'A' headline was of a higher order than the ability to write a sonnet, believing that Herbert Hoover was a great man, that America was superior to all other countries in all possible ways, that labor strikes were caused by unkempt foreigners, that men saved their souls inside wooden or brick Protestant churches, that if men had no jobs it was due to personal laziness and vice-meaning liquor—and that sanity governed the affairs of mankind.6

Shortly after graduation he took a job with the now defunct Minneapolis Journal. Infused with the idealism of youth, Sevareid entered the working world secure in the belief that one's advancement was solely related to one's ability, that newspapers were knights in shining armor. His naïveté was shortlived.

Starting as a copy runner Sevareid rose rapidly
to become a reporter where he also served as "religious"
editor, summarizing Sunday events and writing columns of
church notices. He soon learned that of all people seek-
ing publicity, churchmen were the most demanding and
persistent. After all, no one could tell a churchman
off. He says, "I could see why nobody else wanted my
task, but no doubt it was good training in basic
diplomacy."  

The evolution of newspapers has tended to divide
its heirarchy into two strata. While men who trained
as reporters eventually headed the editorial staffs, men
who specialized in business problems came to fill
managerial posts and publisher's chairs. Thus Sevareid
found that newspaper editors had more in common with the
Weyerhausers, Hills and Pillsburys with whom they might
socialize than with the reporters with whom they worked.
One learned rapidly that discretion was truly the better
part of valor, that if you tangled with any of the names
dotting the social pages you were inevitably the loser.

Eric noticed one other important fact, that the
men who made it to the top were all men who had attended
college.

The University of Minnesota lies on a bluff over-
looking the Mississippi River, guarded at one end by
stately looking fraternity houses, traversed at a corner by railroad tracks and anchored securely on the south by Memorial Stadium.

College was an exhilarating experience for Sevareid but not because of fraternity parties or Bernie Bierman's national football champions.

For Sevareid it was an experience of acquiring basic beliefs and principles. A former journalism professor of his at Minnesota, Mitchell Charnley, recalled that one professor in particular seemed to have had a profound influence on young Sevareid.8

Benjamin Lippincott, today a well-known figure in political science, was at the time a young instructor in political science, a disciple of British economist Harold Laski. From Lippincott Sevareid received his first exposure to the great philosophers throughout history, including a group of men who belong to what may be called the Rationalist school of thought—men whose ideas deeply affected him. To this day it is possible to see the Rationalist influence in many of Sevareid's ideas and beliefs, particularly when he speaks about extremism.

Most authorities would agree that Rationalism can be defined as follows:
It is a system of philosophical belief which asserts that human reason unaided is competent to attain objective truth. In its basic form it is an epistemological doctrine in which reason is contrasted with sense experience, which is held to be unnecessary, or even a hindrance, to the attainment of truth.\(^9\)

It has its basis in the early Greeks. They were followed by the Sophists, 5th century educators who wrestled with the troublesome problems of distinguishing between truth and error. Their spirit was one of free inquiry and discussion. They sought to test everything by reason.\(^10\)

Their works and those of later men such as Locke, Hume, Voltaire, Rousseau and Montaigne laid the foundation for much of the Sevareid ideology.

Sevareid was in particular a "student" of Montaigne. "Montaigne belongs to the Renaissance by virtue of his respect for orthodoxy but at the same time as a critic, was a forerunner of more aggressive Rationalism."\(^11\) His style and criticism make him the direct precursor of a long line of English essayists of whom Sevareid might be considered a spiritual descendant.

It was not an easy time for Sevareid but it was exciting. He described it as being like "learning a foreign language after one is grown. For a long time
the words and phrases beat without effect upon the brain—then suddenly one day they all drop into place; one can understand, and he can speak."¹²

Sevareid attended college at night for awhile, finally working out an arrangement with the Journal that enabled him to attend full time. An articulate speaker, he soon became involved in campus politics. Even by today's standards Sevareid would have been considered a "radical." The college revolution of the early thirties was different from any previously known to American campuses although Europe was no stranger to it. Concepts of emotional or sexual freedom had little to do with it. The liberals of the day believed, as Sevareid wrote, "in freedom for men and in the integrity of the human personality, but we sought these ends, not by changing the individual, but by changing his environment, the way society—meaning chiefly economic society—was organized.... The key to life in our times, we thought, was the relationship of a man to society in general and what a man did about it. To be otherwise was to be only half alive."¹³

What counted were the ideas the man represented. (In later years Sevareid had his doubts about this philosophy and came to the conclusion that the only practical solution was the improvement of the individual himself.)¹⁴
For a state with a relatively small proportion of the country's population, Minnesota has always been politically active. The governor at the time was Floyd B. Olson. Three times governor and beloved by the people of Minnesota, he devoted his life to the defense of the poor. He was a particular hero to Sevareid and his friends. (Olson died of cancer in 1936 shortly after he was elected to the U.S. Senate).

To young Sevareid it just didn't make sense that in the richest country on earth millions of people should be out of work and in breadlines, the "experts" and their "natural laws" of capitalistic competition notwithstanding. To him the system just did not work.

Imbued with a sense of activism Sevareid and a group of friends formed what they called the "Jacobin Club," a group that came to have a profound effect on the University.

Campus politics is but a microcosm of real life politics and Eric and his fellow Jacobins were deadly serious in their approach to the issues concerning them. On most campuses the "Greek" system usually controls most facets of student government and Minnesota was no exception. But while the Greeks concerned themselves
with class proms and the like, they soon discovered that they had lost control of the really vital instruments of government—the Minnesota Daily, the literature review, the Board of Publications, law review and so on and the Jacobins controlled most of them. This gave Sevareid and friends the vantage point from which to apply leverage.

ROTC was at the time compulsory at Minnesota. It soon became a burning issue. ROTC was finally abolished due in large measure to Sevareid's efforts. In so doing he incurred University of Minnesota President Coffman's wrath, an event which was to have significant ramifications at a later date.

One evening several hundred students gathered to debate the American version of the "Oxford Oath" which stated, "I will not bear arms for flag or country." The pledge was accepted overwhelmingly, Sevareid voting for it along with the rest. He was to be haunted during his wartime years by the memory of an ROTC officer "rising with simple dignity, facing the hostile crowd, and saying: 'If we are to enjoy the privileges of democracy, as you are in this meeting, why should we not be willing to defend it?'"¹⁵

Sevareid and his fellow students were not conscientious objectors in the usual religious sense. They
refused to believe that any people in the world wanted war. War was the product of economic and imperialistic considerations and mistrust between peoples. The solution was to better the material and spiritual position of man in society. They could grasp the implications of fascism but could not comprehend the scale of the thing; that a world conspiracy was under way, that it could not stop with Europe.

Sevareid wrote a lot for the Minnesota Daily, including what he calls "a column of alleged humor." For several years running, the editor had been a Jacobin Club member and Sevareid was to follow by dint of seniority and general agreement. Because of his activist role on campus several forces combined to insure that he was not elected editor. ROTC officers and University of Minnesota President Coffman combined to lobby behind the scenes to prevent his election. The incumbent editor, a fellow Jacobin, was persuaded to run again and thus prevented Sevareid from becoming editor. When the Board of Publications met to select the new editor, he lost by one vote. It was a lesson Sevareid never forgot. It was, he says, "a miniature example of a recognizable political pattern: the liberal, softened by success and propinquity with the rich and powerful, renouncing his comrades in
revolt 'for the good of all.'"18

One final event in Sevareid's college experience was to have a profound effect on him. In the summer of 1934 the Twin Cities was wracked by a bitter truck drivers' strike led by two Trotskyite brothers named Dunne. The strike was unique in American labor history as none had ever been so organized. Effectively stopping all truck traffic in and out of the cities, they set up a commissary, medical aid and a daily strike newspaper. Sevareid went to work for the Minneapolis Star as a reporter to cover the strike. Although the Star was considered to be fairly objective in its coverage most newspapers unabashedly supported the employers. So did the police chief, who, believing in law and order no matter what the cost, often had his men take unlawful measures to enforce their conception of order.

One day the police set a deliberate trap for the truck drivers which resulted in more than 50 strikers being shot down. Although only one policeman was injured, the Journal reported that the police had literally been fighting for their lives. Results showed that nearly all the injured strikers had been shot from behind as they frantically sought to escape the ambush. Recalls Sevareid:
Suddenly I knew; I understood deep in my bones and blood what Fascism was. I had learned the lesson in such a way that I could never forget it, and I had learned it in the precise area which is psychologically the most removed from the troubles of Europe—in the heart of the Middle West. I went home, as close to becoming a practicing revolutionary as I could ever get.19

Upon graduation from Minnesota Sevareid returned to the Journal. While there he wrote an exposé on a semi-secret fascist group called the Silver Shirts. He described it as an unbelievably weird experience, "like Alice going down the rabbit hole into the world of the Mad Hatter...They were quite mad."20 He was to remember this experience in later years during the war.

Sevareid was eventually fired from the Journal because of his activity in the Newspaper Guild.

After leaving the Journal Sevareid and his young bride Lois travelled to Europe where he did post-graduate work in political science at the University of London and the Sorbonne. He then went to work for the Paris edition of the New York Herald Tribune which amounted to little more than a house organ for the small American colony there.

As fascism spread so did the numbers of refugees, particularly from Spain. Sevareid compared the atmosphere of Paris to that of Minneapolis during the truck strike,
only a hundredfold intensified. He wrote, "Like the Minneapolis police, the Fascists of Europe were preparing a gigantic ambush, and, as their press made ready to call it self-defense, the buckshot was carefully loaded for the time when the people's backs would present the best target." As they fled from the fascism of Franco they encountered the fascism of the French police. Sevareid wondered what there was about police, even in democracies which makes them partial to right wingers and enemies of those on the left.

The year 1939 found Sevareid working for the Herald by day and United Press at night. One day the phone rang. It was Edward R. Murrow of CBS who had seen some of Sevareid's writing and who wanted him to try his hand at radio broadcasting. Eric failed his voice test miserably but Murrow was confident. "There won't be pressure on you to provide scoops or anything sensational. Just provide the honest news, and when there isn't any news, why, just say so. I have an idea people might like that," Murrow told him. Sevareid decided to try.

Sevareid remained in Paris to broadcast. He was one of the first to report on the progress on the Western Front; that there was no fighting of any
consequence at all. Wags soon dubbed it the "phony war." He also reported from Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg. He was also the only journalist to see the French "detention camps" which were in reality almost concentration camps and in the spring he beat the world with the news that the Germans had broken through the French lines at Sedan, an act which sealed France's fate. In spite of strict censorship he was able to get the news out by means of a pre-arranged code. In those last days before Paris fell anarchy reigned. It was an experience that Sevareid has never forgotten. Sevareid made the last broadcast from Paris before it was taken over by the Germans. It was June 6, 1940.

After leaving Paris he broadcast from Tours and then from Bordeaux. Timidity is credited for costing him one of the best scoops of the war. Sevareid writes in "Warning to Young Men" that he had discovered a short wave transmitter was available to him for broadcasting thus enabling him to avoid the usual crowded slow channels involving couriers. Finding that a rival from NBC has followed him and is on to his secret, "Sevareid requests competition to leave. Competition grins. Competition is about half Sevareid's size. Sevareid does nothing about it." When word came that Petain had been
named the new French Premier, Sevareid discovered happily that the courier had already left; he alone had the means to transmit this scoop to the world.

Sevareid drives frantically to radio studio, dashes up stairs to microphone as NBC half-pint strolls down wearing same grin.

'What did you say on the air?' demands insane Sevareid.

'Why,' says he, 'I said this means continued resistance. Look at all the generals and admirals in the new cabinet.'

Sevareid screams 'Hah!' of maniacal joy, rushes to microphone and blurts out news to world that France will capitulate.

'Get it first, but get it right,' says the motto of a great news agency. I got it right, but NBC with its flash on the cabinet change, got it first, and there went the bubbles out of that champagne."

The German advances made it impossible to broadcast any longer from France so Sevareid left and went to England. There he continued his broadcasts for several months. He was ill, homesick and felt out of touch with what the people at home were thinking, so he decided to return home.

For some time Sevareid felt that a subtle change had been working within him. He came to the conclusion that one could no longer be a neutral. Neutrality was quite impossible. The fascists had not halted after grabbing Spain, Austria and Czechoslovakia and there was no reason to believe they would halt now. Nor would appeasement work as it had not worked for the British.
It was truly a world conspiracy. A victory for fascism would mean the end of justice and truth as he knew it for a long time—if not forever. Therefore the only choice was to fight.

Once home Eric discovered that old idols had become new enemies—Populist leaders who had once taught him to hate war were now dangerous as leaders. He noted:

They believed that making war to save democracy would be the surest way of losing it. They believed that the struggle itself was the greatest of all evils—not the results if the struggle were lost. They could not see that a society can become more democratic by reason of the struggle, as the British had proved. They could not see, as I had seen in France, that the alternatives to fighting can be worse than the fighting, that men who have known the alternatives would, of their free will, fight again rather than submit to those.27

For the first time he began to understand the importance and power of the media. No matter how much he tried to be neutral in his broadcasts he could not be, for he was no longer neutral in his mind.28 He lectured for awhile but grew discouraged at the lethargy he encountered about the war effort.

By 1943 Sevareid had grown restless and was eager to return to the front to report.

The war with Japan was going badly on the China front. From all appearances Chiang Kai-shek was holding many of his best troops back as a block against the
Chinese communists. Indeed a flourishing trade had opened
between Japanese-occupied and free China. Japan had
occupied about as much of China as it could use for the
time being. It was probable that defeat of Japan could
not be accomplished without a battle on the China main-
land and the United States had no great desire to become
embroiled in a land war in Asia. The China lobby and
propaganda machine completely overwhelmed the few meek
voices who sought to inform the American public of the
true situation. Censorship in China was among the most
severe of any place in the whole war. Sevareid was asked
to go to China to report the true situation. And so in
the summer of 1943 he left.

Landing first in India, Sevareid prepared for his
flight to China. Little did he realize that his visit
was to be delayed.

The flight from India to China included flying
over the "hump," the Himalayan mountains. On his flight
the plane developed engine trouble and Sevareid and the
others had to bail out into Japanese held territory.
Landing uninjured, Sevareid found himself surrounded by
a score of short, naked men with knives and spears. They
were Naga tribesmen--headhunters! Something from his
childhood caused Sevareid to step forward, raise his palm and say, "How!" It was accepted as a gesture of friendship.

It was a most unnerving experience for the men. They did not know at first whether the natives were friendly or not. They didn't know where they were. One thing Sevareid was aware of, the calming influence and leadership of one of the other civilians, a man named John Patton Davies. Sevareid was in later years to have cause to remember Davies' bravery.

One month later they were finally rescued and months behind schedule, he was finally ready to start out once more for China.29

What he found was not too different from the dictatorships of Europe. All the usual elements were there—the propaganda machine, censorship and secret police terror.

The Chinese, he discovered, were simply sitting out the war, making some noise now and then for the benefit of their allies. Chiang's China was not unified; it was an uneasy, shifting coalition of local warlords, inflation was ruining the economy, his soldiers were often little more than slaves; all these and other things he saw.30
In America people thought that the problem of Chinese fighting could be solved merely by giving them enough guns and planes. Sevareid found the equipment was wasted because Chiang's men were, for the most part, diseased, spiritless, leaderless and utterly lacking in technical training. In addition, much of the material and medical supplies the United States sent was never received by the troops; it wound up in the hands of private profiteers or was being saved for the fight against the Chinese communists.

Returning home in late 1943 Sevareid tried to tell all of this to the American people, but his report was suppressed in its entirety.31

After a short respite Sevareid left again, this time to report from the Italian front. Taking time out for some sightseeing, he was fortunate enough to be on the spot when Mt. Vesuvius erupted. He and some Army men managed to get near the crater's edge and make the first recording of that famous volcano in eruption. Two days later New York sent a message, "Sorry, static washed it out." "Pure Bad Luck," said Sevareid, "Well, I had a little luck—an hour after we had left the crater's edge the section we had been standing on fell in."32
Sevareid was at Anzio when the American forces broke through. He scored one of the great scoops of the war by being first to report it.

Next was the invasion of southern France. His name was one of two drawn from a hat for places in a landing vehicle. He then reported the course of the war through France and Germany.

Toward the end of the war Sevareid made a broadcast which produced a veritable avalanche of laudatory mail. In it he said:

Only the soldier really lives the war. The journalist does not. He may share the soldier's outward life and dangers, but he cannot share his inner life because the same moral compulsion does not bear upon him...War happens inside a man...It can never be communicated...A million martyred lives leave an empty place at only one family table. That is why, at bottom, people can let wars happen, and that is why nations survive them and carry on.33

At the end of the war he returned to the United States and covered the founding of the United Nations. From 1946 to 1959 he was attached to CBS's Washington bureau, serving part of the time as chief Washington correspondent. In 1948 and 1949 he took a post-war trip through France and Germany, meeting with world leaders.34

In late 1953 he began a nightly essay on WTOP-TV in Washington. He was concerned about television saying, "I'm always worried that the viewer may be so distracted
by the picture he won't hear what I'm saying," and noted that the emphasis in television is placed on the picture when the word is the important thing.\textsuperscript{35} From 1954-1955 he narrated a program called "The American Week." Jack Gould, reviewing the show for the \textit{New York Times}, said that Sevareid was at heart more of a writer than a commentator. He added:

Amid all the babel of urgent and authoritarian voices in the Washington environs, his outlook is detached yet not Olympian. After a particularly hectic day of news he can go to the core of events and pluck out the meat and often the humor.\textsuperscript{36}

His caustic wit and articulate analysis made Sevareid one of the mainstays of CBS coverage of Presidential and off-year elections since 1948. In 1964 Jack Gould wrote in the \textit{Times} that Eric Sevareid had "clearly outdistanced his colleagues both in the forthrightness of what he had to say and in his command of distinctive phrasing."\textsuperscript{37} In 1957 and 1958 he was host and science reporter for the CBS "Conquest" series.

The next two years (1959-60) Sevareid served in London as CBS roving European correspondent. In March 1961 he narrated "Great Britain-Blood, Sweat and Tears Plus Twenty Years." Gould, reviewing it for the \textit{Times} wrote:
The program performed the happy function of restoring Eric Sevareid to television at his perceptive and witty best. Mr. Sevareid always has been one of the ablest essayists in broadcasting, and last night he had many an excellent turn of phrase...  

In 1961 Sevareid returned to the U.S. where he served as moderator for such distinguished CBS telecasts as "Town Meeting of the World," "The Great Challenge," "Years of Crisis" and "Where We Stand."  

He has also served as moderator for conversations with President Johnson, Vice-President Humphrey, Walter Lippmann, Allen Dulles, J. William Fulbright, Senator Brooke, Alf Landon, Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black, Henry Cabot Lodge and philosopher-longshoreman Eric Hoffer.  

One of his most publicized magazine pieces was "The Final Troubled Hours of Adlai Stevenson" which appeared in Look (November 30, 1965). In it he reported on a conversation that he had had with Stevenson shortly before he had died. Stevenson told him that he felt frustrated in his role as ambassador to the U.N. and wanted to resign. He also revealed that North Vietnam, acting through U Thant, had twice sent out peace feelers in fall of 1964, both of which were rejected by the United States. Sevareid received the New York Newspaper
where he currently resides.

Awards for Sevareid include the George Foster Peabody award (1950, 1964 and 1967), Teddy Roosevelt Rough Rider Award, the University of Southern California Distinguished Achievement of the Year Award; Order of the Crown from Belgium; the Freedom Medal from Norway; the One World Award; the Alfred I. DuPont Award; two Overseas Press Club Awards; the George Polk Memorial Award; the Outstanding Achievement Award of the University of Minnesota; the Brotherhood Award of the National Conference of Christians and Jews; Sidney Hillman Foundation Award, and the National Headliners Award for consistently outstanding radio broadcasting. He has also received several honorary degrees.43
FOOTNOTES


2Sevareid, Not So Wild, p. 7.

3Sevareid, Not So Wild, p. 11.


5Sevareid, This Is, p. 27-28.


7Sevareid, Not So Wild, p. 30.

8Statement by Mitchell Charnley, personal interview, October 10, 1971.


11Bury, p. 57.

12Sevareid, Not So Wild, p. 51.

13Sevareid, Not So Wild, p. 52.


15Sevareid, Not So Wild, p. 60.

16Sevareid, Not So Wild, p. 63.

17Based on personal correspondence between Eric Sevareid and the writer.
18 Sevareid, *Not So Wild*, p. 60.
19 Sevareid, *Not So Wild*, p. 58.
21 Sevareid, *Not So Wild*, p. 94.
22 Sevareid, *Not So Wild*, p. 103.
24 Eric Sevareid, "Warning To Young Men," *Saturday Evening Post*, May 16, 1959, p. 120.
37 *Times*, July 14, 1964, p. 67, Col. 4.


42. Times, June 22, 1966, p. 95, Col. 2.

43. CBS, "Eric Severeid," pp. 4-5.
CHAPTER III
THE ROLE OF THE JOURNALIST

This has become the age of the journalist in this last generation, says Eric Sevareid. The tremendous upheavals and the sheer technical means of practicing journalism have changed so much.

The advent of radio news marked a radical change from newspapers. The broadcasters themselves became public personalities. While this could be an aid to one's work in making contacts and such, in other ways it could impede it.

To Sevareid this has been an uncomfortable, almost painful experience at times. A shy, retiring man by nature to those he does not know well, he does not enjoy this attention. "Some people," he says, "handle it better than I do. Cronkite is a very gregarious, outgoing fellow, he kind of thrives on that. I kind of shrink, I don't like it that much and probably don't handle that part of it very well."¹ Although a broadcaster for more than thirty years, he has never conquered his nervousness. "A lot of people start blooming when
that little light goes on. I start to die," he told an interviewer.²

The principal task of the journalist, he says, is to try to report the world, not reform it. Opportunity exists for expressing opinion by editorial writing, columns or through commentators but as far as the "hard" news is concerned, one must continue to strive for objectivity. "We're all human beings and sometimes we make mistakes. But it has to be the aim in dealing with the hard news of the day. You never quite get there, but if you abandon it even as an objective, where in the hell are you?"³

Although he doesn't really think much of changing the way the hard news is handled today, its drawbacks have made Sevareid a strong advocate of news analysis and of the rights of columnists to say what they want. He became aware of the pitfalls of hard news handling early in his career.

In December 1938 Sevareid and his wife took a trip through Germany. Once, while eating, they discovered Rudolf Hess was at the next table. Sevareid's newsman's instincts tugged guiltily at him to try to interview Hess. But reason intervened. Any interview
would probably produce only stereotype phrases. It was a disservice, he reasoned, not a service, to again present the Nazi argument. Although it would have been considered "objective" reporting to interview Hess, Sevareid realized even then that so-called "objective" reporting was often misleading.

Fifteen years later, arguing for the rights of columnists and news analysts, he wrote:

Our rigid formula of so-called objectivity, beginning with the wire agency bulletins and reports—the warp and woof of what the papers print and the broadcasters voice—our flat, one-dimensional handling of the news, have given the lie the same prominence and impact that truth is given; they have elevated the influence of fools to that of wise men; the ignorant to the level of the learned; the evil to the level of the good.

In particular, at the time he was critical of the headline play given to Senator McCarthy's accusations. Eight years later he had to agree with the Civil Liberties Union that, had Lee Harvey Oswald lived, the alleged assassin of President John F. Kennedy never could have received a fair trial for he had already been tried and convicted by the police and the media. Supreme Court decisions in the last decade such as Sheppard v. Maxwell (1966) and Rideau v. La. (1963) appear to have given substance to these charges.
While objectivity is a vital goal in itself, it is equally important that one's audience feels he is trying to be fair, that one is an honest person. They may not agree with your opinion, says Sevareid, but if you give the impression of fairness and honesty, they will put up with a lot of things they disagree with and will continue to listen to you. If you can't give that impression you should be off the air.6

For those advocating the new or activist journalism, Sevareid has some harsh words:

We're now at a period with all kinds of young journalists...[who] feel that the old ideas of attempted objectivity any way are wrong...So they want to write the story of something that has happened their way, they put their truths into it.... I think it's a very dangerous practice. I'm old-fashioned enough not to like it."7

Far from claims that this will give true integrity to news broadcasts and news columns, Sevareid believes it will ruin them.

Advocate journalism itself is not new, it's just a different group of people doing it. Although he wouldn't go so far as to equate it with a period of renewed "yellow journalism" of the twenties and early thirties, Sevareid does note that both make use of a biased type of reporting. In fact this is what happens
in most countries including "free" countries like Great Britain where most papers are like that.

"That's the way they've always done it and I don't care much for that—I think that's where the American press is a little bit better—better than the British press...except for two or three very intellectual, quality papers...Their intellectual quality is probably higher than many of ours but their worse papers are worse than many of ours."8

Critics of the media are many. One recurring theme is that broadcasters lack objectivity. In answer to these critics Sevareid observes:

You have to distinguish between objectivity and neutrality. They're not the same thing, but people confuse them all the time. You may go at something in a very objective way, but you may come to a conclusion about it and therefore hold an opinion about it. So you're no longer neutral, but that doesn't mean you're unobjective. To be neutral on everything, you could never say anything that would be worth listening to.9

Other attacks, such as those emanating from government circles, have been vitriolic in nature. Sevareid's reply is that this is primarily an attempt by the Nixon administration to avoid its own credibility problems. To do this, they simply impugn the credibility of those who explain and report the news or who criticize the administration.10

When Vice-President Agnew proposed that commentators have their views publicly examined by government
personnel Sevareid's angry reply fairly well summed up
his views about the journalist in society:

The Vice-President proposed that network commen­tators like this one and brothers Smith and Reynolds
down the street at ABC-- people of that type, he says--
be publicly examined by government personnel. The
public has a right to know, he says, our opinions and
prejudices.

The phase, "people of that type" hurts a bit; we
certainly don't think of Mr. Agnew as a type; we think
he's an original.

What really hurts is the thought that maybe no­
body's been listening all this time. If, after some
30 years and thousands of broadcasts, hundreds of
articles and lectures and a few books, one's general
cast of mind, warts and all, remains a mystery, then
we're licked and we fail to see how a few more minutes
of examination by government types would solve the
supposed riddle.

Mr. Agnew wants to know where we stand. We stand
--or rather sit--right here, in the full glare. At
a disadvantage as against politicians; we can't cast
one vote in committee, an opposite vote on the floor;
can't say one thing in the North, an opposite thing in
the South; we hold no tenure, four years or otherwise,
and can be voted out with a twist of the dial.

We can't use invective and epithets, can't even
dream of impugning the patriotism of leading citizens,
can't reduce every complicated issue to yes or no,
black or white and would rather go to jail than do
bodily injury to the English language.

We can't come down on this side or that side of
each disputed public issue because we're trying to
explain far more than advocate and because some issues
don't have two sides; some have three, four or half a
dozens and in these matters we're damned if we know the
right answer. This may be why most of us look a bit
frazzled while Mr. Agnew looks so serene.

Another reason may be that we have to think our
own thoughts and write our own phrases. Unlike the
Vice-President, we don't possess a stable of ghost
writers. Come to think of it, if there are mysteries
around, unseen spirits motivating the public dialogue,
maybe that's the place that could use the glare of
public scrutiny— that stable of anonymity.

Finally, at the risk of sounding a bit stuffy, we might say two things. One, that nobody in this business expects for a moment that the full truth of anything will be contained in any one account or commentary, but that through free reporting and discussion, as Walter Lippmann put it, the truth will emerge.

Second, that the central point about the free press is not that it be accurate, though it must try to be; not that it even be fair, though it must try to be that; but that it be free. And that means, in the first instance, freedom from any and all attempts by the power of government to coerce it or intimidate it or police it in any way.11
1Statement by Eric Sevareid, personal interview, October 5, 1971.


6Schmidt, p. 51. 7Sevareid, interview.

8Sevareid, interview. 9Schmidt, pp. 14-15.

10*Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 1971, Sec. I, p. 8, col. 1

CHAPTER IV

DOMESTIC ISSUES

THE MOST PRESSING PROBLEM--THE TRUST GAP

There are many fundamental problems in this country today--crime, the economy, poverty, overpopulation--but strangely enough Sevareid considers none of these as the most paramount.

Trust, he says, or rather the lack of it is the most pressing problem this country faces today. This country was built on risk and trust and now we are in a period of questioning and mistrust--of other people, of government, of the military, of the educational system, of business and so on.

In part this is due to the nature of bureaucracies which seem to grow in accordance with Parkinson's "laws." Government, for example, just grows and grows, he says, and no one ever sees a breakdown or a measure of its accomplishments.

I've never seen it, have you? I don't know how to add it up--it's always easier for Congress or the President just to pose more programs and missions and agencies and pass money bills and the damn thing
grows—almost unmanageable. And it breaks down, things don't function. That's what a lot of kids and a hell of a lot of people are screaming about and I don't blame them. How do you turn it around? Thirty years ago, twenty years ago I wouldn't have thought that way about it. The federal government was pretty damn good then—pretty efficient. A lot of damn good people in it.¹

And a similar process has been at work in many other institutions in this country.

Sevareid points out that there is historical precedent for these events. This sort of thing has happened in many free countries. The combination of peace and essential prosperity can change things:

Then people are thrown back upon themselves—you know, what are they living for. The government can't answer that. We were in a period for many years from the beginning of Roosevelt at least until some time after the end of the big war where government did have to deal with enormous problems, the depression and the war and we had a kind of love affair with the government. This pervaded the consciousness of people very much.²

But suddenly the role of government changed. There was no longer one major problem for people to unite on. There were many causes but no one thing to unite on. That occurred in various European countries around the turn of the century, says Sevareid.

The great crises were over and that's happening here and there is this pervasive, persistent notion that government somehow is going to make individual people happy some way... It's not within government's power to do that. It's very great in time
of war or something of that sort. It's very limited otherwise.  

It is perhaps with government more than any other institution where the most disillusionment lies. Following issuance of the Warren Report after President Kennedy's assassination, CBS presented a series of broadcasts covering virtually all aspects of the affair. Walter Cronkite, commenting at the end of the last broadcast, noted that "...we have found also that there has been a loss of morale, a loss of confidence among the American people toward their own government and the men who serve it. And that is perhaps more wounding than the assassination itself." In Anything But The Truth the authors cite scholar Hans J. Morgenthau who claims that the current credibility gap is in large measure due to Vietnam:

As they once credited George Washington with not being able to tell a lie, so they almost take it for granted that President Johnson will not tell the truth. This lack of trust is not limited to official statements on Vietnam; it extends to all matters of public concern. For deception is being practiced not occasionally as a painful necessity dictated by the reason of state, but consistently as a kind of lighthearted sport through which the deceiver enjoys his power. This withering away of the public's trust in government might matter little to a totalitarian regime which can afford to govern through terror and the manipulation of the mass media of communications. Yet a democratic government cannot rule effectively, and in the long run it cannot rule at all, if it is...
not sustained by at least a modicum of the freely
given support of the people and their elected repre-
sentatives.5

After a 1967 survey showed that the great majority
of Americans polled thought they were not getting the
truth on Vietnam, Sevareid was moved to comment, "The
prospect of American citizens in great numbers having to
choose whether to believe their own government or that
of an Asian Communist state—and it's possible things can
come to that—is a loathsome prospect, unprecedented, full
of dangers."6

Sevareid himself provided a glaring example of
this very thing. His interview with Adlai Stevenson in
London shortly before the Ambassador's death in 1965 pro-
vided the American public with a startling revelation.
He revealed that contrary to U.S. government assurances
that "the other side" was unwilling to negotiate, North
Vietnam had tried twice through former United Nations
Secretary-General U Thant to talk with the U.S. about
ending hostilities. Other, more recent revelations such
as the Pentagon Papers in June 1971 and disclosures of
our real position in the recent India-Pakistani war
have helped to bear this out. The March 1972 flap over
ITT's alleged offer to contribute $400,000 to the
Republican national convention prompted Sevareid to cite this as another example of how people come to lose faith in political processes. He also noted that except in the scale of the thing there is nothing new about it and that is what is most disturbing.

In a recent interview he tried to put the whole problem into perspective. Like others he mostly blames Vietnam for the credibility gap. He noted:

We had the most illustrious men--the top of the government--for years and years just taking this country down the wrong road. Well, that does something very serious to the legitimacy of government. That's not happened in this country before on quite that scale. It began to happen in the Phillipino war of insurrection at the turn of the century but that war didn't last very long--that was breaking up the country too but it was over in eighteen months. It was beginning to happen in Korea. This has gone on forever.

Sevareid doesn't claim to know the resolution of the problem but things won't be the same. There could be a residue of permanent change in many areas, how deep and how lasting he doesn't know. But to the so-called "prophets of doom" who claim that our society won't survive, Sevareid would say, "Short of plague or conquest, I do not understand how a vast people goes about the process of unsurviving. We wouldn't know how to do it."
THE BLACK DILEMMA

The last decade had been a period of unrest and tension in many respects in this country. The early sixties saw the beginning of the civil rights movement and memories of Bull Conner's police dogs, sit-ins and three slain civil rights workers are still vivid. Even more recent visions of our inner cities in flames, Huey Newton, Eldridge Cleaver and Dr. Martin Luther King have been indelibly stamped in our memories. Yet Severeid does not often address himself to the problems of blacks, a circumstance which might seem a bit paradoxical in light of the fact that he is considered a liberal on many of the social issues of the day. (Severeid was one of the founders in the early fifties of a private school which was possibly the first integrated school in Virginia since Reconstruction.) The explanation is a fairly simple one. Severeid admits that he does not know enough about Negro life in this country or what it is to be black so he says, "I walk very tenderly on that subject."10

Severeid has said several times, "I happen to feel that the experience of American Negroes these many generations is the one deep stain in the American
national soul. I cannot help a greater readiness to condone their excesses than those of prosperous white college students (though the law cannot be morally choosy)."11 (There are those who would take exception to his statement considering the tragic history of our relationship with the American Indian and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the Mexican-Americans.)

To those people who claim that blacks have been driven to protest because their conditions of oppression were becoming increasingly unbearable Sevareid would reply:

The reverse is the truth. The barriers to Negro equality were beginning to fall before the period of mass physical action set in; this, in fact, is why mass action swept the nation. It is a commonplace now among social historians that change produces revolution before revolutions add to and institutionalize change. Basically, it has not been the street orators and marchers who have been bringing desegregation, for example; the marchers were set in motion by the fundamental changes of principle and law won in the courts by the quiet work of leaders like Roy Wilkins and Thurgood Marshall.12

Facts would point toward a definite trend in black-white relations. The Negro in America has gradually lost faith in the promises of white America. If the laws are to be enforced the black man must himself help assure their enforcement.

Sevareid is fond of quoting De Touqueville who
said, "The sufferings that are endured patiently as being inevitable become intolerable the moment it appears there might be an escape. Reform then only serves to reveal more clearly what still remains oppressive and now all the more unbearable."\textsuperscript{13} He would add, "It was never possible that their [Negroes] long delayed push out of this could be devoid of neurotic and indeed psychotic manifestations. The wonder to me is that there had been relatively little of that."\textsuperscript{14}

At the same time he draws a definite distinction between valid protest movement and the wild, violence-riddled summers in the cities of a few years ago. Most of them were not really race riots such as this country experienced in Chicago, Detroit and Tulsa a half-century ago where whites and blacks battled and many deaths resulted. Rather, he says:

Nearly all the recent summer-night riots have chiefly involved Negro kids smashing and looting the nearest property, most of which was owned by other Negroes. This is sheer hoodlumism, involved as its psychological and sociological origins may be. It is a problem for sociologists, psychologists and economists only in the second instance. In the first instance, it is a police problem...\textsuperscript{15}

But he is optimistic about the future. The Negro "revolution" will succeed, he feels, not only because it is just but because there exists within the American
people a true collective conscience which has now been
aroused. His feelings can probably be summarized by an
observation made by McGeorge Bundy of the Ford Foundation
who said that discrimination will end because, while the
older generation regards racial equality only as logical, the younger generation regards it as natural.16

UNIONS--THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

Big labor has come full circle from its early
terrible days of struggle in the thirties and so, cor-
respondingly, have Eric Sevareid's views of it. From
their rather humble beginnings they have grown and pros-
pered until today labor functions virtually as a busi-
ness. In 1958 Sevareid noted that "Little of political
ideology remains to organized labor; the goals are
almost exclusively material in nature and limited in
degree. It is a vast, vested interest, the other side of
the identical coin of capitalism."17 To him they are no
longer the "cutting edge" of liberal reform as they once
were.

While a cub reporter in Minneapolis Sevareid
became one of the original members of the American News-
paper Guild and was fired because of his activity in it.
Today he is far removed from his early views on labor and indeed, much of what he sees outrages him. He doesn't speak often on the subject, usually only when some big strike or labor leader is in the news, but he comes down hard and minces few words.

During the great typographers' strike of 1963 which closed down every major newspaper in New York City, Sevareid was moved to revise President Roosevelt's statement concerning the "malefactors of great wealth" and to apply to labor the term "malefactors of great power." "Irresponsible power in a democracy," he wrote, "is as dangerous when used by workers as by management."18

More recently the rail-transportation strike of May 1971 prompted some acidic comment. Labor unions are still at the spiritual stage of all-for-one and one-for-all, which really reads one against all, all being those outside the unions concerned, he said:

So 13,000 railroad signalmen strike, after which a half million other rail workers stay out too as an expression of sympathy or fear of doing otherwise, after which millions of other Americans scramble to get to work or don't get to work. The young bearded Weatherman or May Day crowd or other youthful street people are innocent amateurs in comparison, at what they call shutting down the system. . . . A strike by a very minor union can tie a whole country in knots, . . . It has become absurdly easy to throw sand in the gears of the modern industrial, urbanized state-a few grains will do.19
The fact that unions have become almost monopolies in some ways angers Sevareid. Recently he said, "You know, when one big union can loan 30 million to another one, what the hell is it--this is something else. The miner's union pension fund's in a bank right up this next street. For years 50 million in pension funds on which no interest is paid because mine leaders and their lawyers own the bank and handle the money...they have become a monopoly in this case....I don't like monopolies and I think that something has to happen."20

One "something" that may happen was suggested in a recent commentary on the CBS Evening News. "Very slowly the country is facing the question of whether some unions, like some corporations are too big for the national good...," he said, "Every time one of them does abuse its power the loser is not the other one [big business and big labor] it is the general public, which is why the role of government in the economy is bound to grow more powerful."21

THE OVERPOPULATION BOMB

Of all the current problems facing the United States and the world few are probably as troublesome to
Sevareid as that of overpopulation. It is a problem with many facets and its reach goes far beyond its own shore, reaching inextricably into other areas of concern. One cannot talk about problems of poverty, welfare, minorities or pollution without talking to some degree about overpopulation. It is a problem cloaked in the wraps of social, moral and religious controversy but Sevareid has felt for a long time that it is an issue that we must come to grips with sooner or later—the sooner the better. And the answer is birth control.

Sevareid's concern probably goes back to his experiences during World War II where he had the opportunity to visit some of the underdeveloped countries of the world. One is particularly drawn to his wartime impressions of India where the twin spectres of poverty and illness were overshadowed by the logistics of people simply finding enough food to feed themselves.

While the widespread concern of Paul Ehrlich, "Zero Population Growth" and others has been fairly recent, Sevareid has been at this for a long time. In the early fifties this country's concern about overpopulation was limited to "other" countries and was linked somewhat to the cold war. Because overpopulation would have an adverse effect on the struggle to eliminate
illiteracy, illness and the like, people felt that this would clearly aid the communists in their struggle for world domination.

Experts questioned what would happen when medical development began to decrease the death rate without also curbing the birth rate.

Sevareid noted that no other subject has been so wrapped in controversy—religious, moral and social—but added that in light of the other considerations, "it would seem quite in order to insist that when the government asks billions of dollars for, and pins long range hopes on, worldwide development programs, it should frankly face, and state, all elements of the problem—however controversial."22

In the early sixties Sevareid spent some months traveling through parts of Africa and Latin America. He returned shaken at what he had seen. He had news for those people who were concerned about "what will happen" to countries like India, Pakistan and those of Latin America and Africa. Much of what they had feared was already happening. One could receive a rather macabre first hand demonstration of Malthus' law—that while population increases geometrically, food could only be
produced arithmetically. Sevareid wrote:

...people are living to the edge of the available food supply, then dying. We speculate about how many tens of millions might die in an atomic war and whether cultures could survive such a shock. But nature, with the help of human science, has already loosed a war on the world, tens of millions are dying now, and it seems to me a present question whether many ancient cultures and social structures may not crumble before this storm of life is brought under control. 23

Sevareid was forced to conclude that for parts of North Africa, the mid-East, Latin America, India and Pakistan there was no hope of achieving stable economic growth and progress without the massive practice of birth control. He added:

I am aware that such a statement gives offense to many, that many intelligent Americans believe highly intensified efforts in irrigation and scientific farming, land ownership reform, industrialization and education can and will be the successful as well as the morally superior alternative. I can only say that from what I have seen I cannot share this belief. After a half generation of extraordinary effort, India's long-run prospects seem no better than they were when the effort began, even with the direct encouragement of birth control by methods now widely practiced in Western countries. Nasser's ten years of effort with land sharing, irrigation and industrialization ought to have transformed Egypt, but each year some 400,000 additional Egyptians wipe out the over-all gain with the regularity of a tide blurring over castles of sand. 24

Sevareid also has dire predictions for Mexico. The government will not deal with its birth rate problem, he says, and as a result Mexico's population will double
in twenty years. There will be mass tragedy there, he adds, revolution or civil war.25

More recently Americans have been forced to look closer to home. Growing problems of crime, poverty, overcrowding in our big cities and pollution have resulted in the realization that the United States cannot be insulated from the problems of the world. And, in light of our enormous consumption of world resources far out of our proportion to the earth's population, the world has become aware that it cannot separate itself from our problems. It was to these things that Sevareid addressed himself one night in 1970:

At the time of that giant leap for mankind last summer, the popular reaction was that if we can so magnificently do something so complicated as reaching the moon, then we ought to be able to clean up our environment and make our small space on earth fit for human habitation. But reaching the moon is a far simpler operation, for one reason: there are no people between earth and moon.

Here on earth the problem that people face is people. Destruction or our living space is directly connected with the creation of more human lives. The greatest threat to the human race is its instinct for perpetuating itself.

When the secretary of health, education, and welfare spoke to an environment meeting here the other day, he suggested that government might have to offer "disincentives" to keep families small. And today Senator Robert Packwood of Oregon...announced...a bill that would forbid a taxpayer to claim tax exemption for more than three children.

That's a disincentive. There could be direct incentives to accomplish the same end. One idea is to
provide a direct payment of, say, $500 to families in low income brackets for each year they do not have a child, and to grant the same amount in tax relief to higher income families who don't have a child during the year.

A good many such proposals are on the way and will produce serious debate. Two things are beginning to dawn on many people of potential influence: one, that we can't diminish the poisoning of the earth's waters and air and the various associated malfunctions of life unless we diminish the birthrate sharply; and two, that voluntary birth control, without the prod of direct economic incentives or disincentives, is not going to diminish the rate sufficiently.

Some people, looking far ahead, foresee the day of not only free and legal abortions, but compulsory sterilization as these things get truly desperate. The more immediate stage will be these financial devices. Other peoples in the world, even those more desperately crowded, see the American problem in a different light.

They see that with only 6 percent of the world's population, America consumes 35 percent of the raw materials produced every year on the entire globe. In terms of raw materials, food, power, living space, and general stuff, each American baby is a threat to the world's livability some fifty times bigger than each baby born in India.

At times most of us have probably felt an impulsive wish to isolate this country from the rest of the world and its troubles, but the rest of the world can't isolate itself from us and our effects upon the world.26

Sevareid sees birth control as the only solution to the problems of overpopulation. He sees some hopeful signs in our own country what with increasing support for the idea from all segments of society, including some Catholics. He wrote:

It is not beyond possibility that history will one day record the invention of a safe, effective
anti-birth pill, cheap and simple enough for use by the most ignorant Asia peasant, as this century's great contribution toward peace and order, more important than any missile, 'anti-' or otherwise.27

EXTREMISM

By sheer volume of words alone extremism appears to be a favorite topic of Sevareid's. But it is an area he feels deeply about and the depth of his feelings can be felt in his words and seen in his face. Perhaps more than in other areas, his beliefs were formulated early in his life and his themes follow a very definite, consistent, predictable pattern. Both political extremes are equally abhorrent to him but he fears the right wing more than the left.

Sevareid's earliest encounters with extremism were mainly with the right wing, reactionary groups. As a reporter for the old Minneapolis Journal in 1936 he spent many weeks sitting in numerous drawing rooms listening to a group called the Silvershirts warn of the imminent communist threat to seize the country. Sevareid wrote an expose on the group and some of the incredible things he had heard. The September 11, 1936 issue carried the first of the series:

You probably won't believe this story.
It concerns an organization now active in Minneapolis - known as the Silvershirts.

It concerns secret meetings, whispers of dark plots against the nation and the Silvershirts incredible credo.

Members of this organization talk about ideas and goals so fantastic that anyone who has heard them in meeting as I have goes away wondering if he still lives in America of 1936.

Then he wonders if Sinclair Lewis could have been wrong, after all, when he wrote "It Can't Happen Here."

The Silvershirts organization smacks of Fascism.

Hate and fear bind the members together - hatred and fear and the hypnosis of the secret-society phobia.

Reasoning such as theirs could live only in the hypnotic atmosphere of quasi-mystic secrecy.

Fascist in pattern, they have taken a fascist cry for their watchword. They want to segregate all Jews in one city in Minnesota. Anti-Semitism is the outstanding feature of the Silvershirts.

Absurd as it may seem, to them the World war, the present war in Spain (from where the Jews were expelled in 1492) and all the wars of the world were deliberately inspired by Jews.

One woman confided in me that the static which interfered with the radio programs she wanted to hear was purposely broadcast by Jews.

The Silvershirts national leader, a man who would like to be president, is William Dudley Pelley. Today he is on the west coast organizing his Silvershirts under the battle cry "Down With the Reds and Out With the Jews." In the minds of his people all Jews are Communists and all Communists are Jews.

If one points out certain known Communists who are definitely Nordic, their answer is - "Well, he must have a Jewish mind." None seems quite certain what composes a Jewish mind, however.

The leaders are quite bombastic about it all. They write dire words in the literature of their organization.

Never do they advocate direct action against Jews, but they come dangerously near incitement. In "Pelley's Weekly," official organ of the Silvershirts, Pelley has said editorially that Christians must
treat Jews "drastically." And then he defines the meaning of "pogrom." He says:

A pogrom, lest there be any among us unfamiliar with the word, is a wholesale slaughter of Jews merely because they are Jews...."28

A few days later on September 13 his amazed readers saw the following:

The Pyramids of Gizah have forecast dark events for September 16.

In the walls of the "pyramid" are graven the symbols which foretell the epochal doings of that day.

It can mean nothing else than the seizure of the world by the Jews, a seizure that has been planned since Solomon's time.

So believe members of Minneapolis' newest "Fas­cist" organization-the Silvershirts. This story is part of the anti-Semitic poison being spread every day in Minnesota by William Dudley Pelley's "Silver Legion."

September 16 is next Wednesday. It is a Jewish holiday.

Ludicrous as it may sound, a member of the "Christian Party" affiliated with the Silvershirts, told me this story in deadly earnest.

Not only have the pyramids made this "forecast" but they also forecast the beginning of the World war-to the very day, and the Armistice-to the very day; not to mention the present depression, declared my informant.

"Oh, we've known for a long time," he confided, "that the Jews are plotting to seize the United States government. They want to run the whole world and tell us what to do. Just look at Russia-the Jews certainly got Russia, didn't they?"

Yes, sir. September 16 is the day. You want to watch out. We've all got orders to stay home and away from windows."

"I'm ready for the siege. We have enough food to last me and my little wife for two weeks." He prodded me with a forefinger, and with the tone of a martyr said:

"If they come in here, I won't offer any re­sistance. They can sack and burn. But if they touch my wife-why I am prepared to die."29
Sevareid, remembering his experiences with the Silvershirts, was not at all surprised when World War II produced its share of fascist sympathizers in this country—men such as Charles Lindbergh and others. But it produced no real extremist cults. It was not until Korea that demagoguery raised its ugly head again in a new and terrifying manner.

The country was ripe for it. First had come the terrifying spectre of Russian aggression after World War II. China fell to the Communists and then Korea blew up in our faces. The Alger Hiss case really set the stage for demagoguery. The atmosphere seemed to suggest, in Sevareid's words, that there were "a bunch of bastards in the State Department who were determined to give the world away." And when former Secretary of State Dean Acheson uttered his famous "I will not turn my back on Hiss" statement, implying belief in the convicted man's innocence, it only added fuel to the fire. (Sevareid defended Acheson's statement at the time saying that the press did not bother to tell the public what he had meant. "His meaning was not that he considered Hiss innocent, but that he considered him guilty. His meaning was that he himself would apply the basic tenet of
Christianity—the forgiveness of sin."

As the months and years and the Senate hearings dragged on few voices were heard in opposition to McCarthy and his ilk. Sevareid was one of those men who dared to question the tactics and the ethics of these men—long before it became fashionable to do so.

Sometimes his method was one of parody or ridicule. In one broadcast called "Senator Pooh and the Communist Woozles" he said:

It's funny how fairy-tale creatures will suddenly resemble living persons. You take the third chapter of "Winnie the Pooh," where Senator McCarthy, I mean Pooh, and Senator Hickenlooper, I mean Piglet, go hunting and nearly catch a Woozle. There's Pooh, walking in a circle, when Piglet says: "What are you doing?"

"Tracking something," says Winnie the Pooh very mysteriously.

"Tracking what?"

"That's just what I ask myself. I ask myself, what?"

"What do you think you'll answer?"

"I shall have to wait until I catch up with it," said Pooh. "Now, what do you see there?"

"Tracks," said Piglet. "Paw marks, Oh, Pooh, do you think it's a-a-Woozle?"

"It may be," said Pooh, "you never can tell with paw marks. But there seem to be two animals now. Would you mind coming with me, Piglet, in case they turn out to be hostile animals?"

Piglet said he didn't have anything to do till Friday, so off they went together, round and round the spinney of larch trees.

Suddenly Pooh stopped. "Look! A third animal has joined the other two. It is either two Woozles," said Pooh, "and one, as it might be, Wizzle, or two, as it might be, Wizzles and one, if so it is, Woozle."
A fourth set of tracks join the three, and Piglet remembers something he should be doing: "So really, dear old Pooh, if you'll excuse me—what's that?"

It was Senator Vandenberg—I mean, Christopher Robin—watching from a tree limb. "Silly old bear," he said, "what were you doing?"

Pooh sat down and thought in the most thoughtful way he could think. Then he fitted his paw into one of the tracks.

"Yes," said Pooh.

"I see now," said Pooh. "I have been foolish and deluded."

"You're the best bear in all the world," said Christopher Robin, soothingly.

"Am I?" said Pooh. And then he brightened up. "Anyhow," he said, "it's nearly luncheon time."

In another broadcast he said in part:

McCarthy said he had once learned on the farm from an Indian named Charlie, that when a foe advances upon you, the best defense is to kick him as fast as possible below the belt until he is helpless. This is character assassination of a whole race; it's genocide; McCarthy has finally gone too far.

He has planted the big doubt about the erstwhile noble red man and half of America's literature. This is postdated guilt by association. It won't be long before any reservation Indian, to collect his government stipend, will have to prove his name is not Charlie, that he is not related to any Indian named Charlie. Anybody at all named Charlie will have to prove that he has no Indian blood in him, has never met McCarthy, and never been near Wisconsin.

This revelation by McCarthy shook me pretty deeply, for a time. In the wild surge of thoughts it produced, many mysteries seemed to be resolved, unrelated facts seemed to fall into place. Obviously Indians rarely wore belts because that would help an enemy's aim; no wonder, the tragedy of Custer's last stand; if he'd been seated, like Sitting Bull, instead of standing, he might have escaped destruction. No wonder the Indians have been rapidly declining in population.

But most of Sevareid's attacks and criticisms
were serious in nature. In late 1954 the spotlight became focused on the loyalty of career diplomat John Patton Davies. Investigated eight times, he was cleared eight times. He was finally dismissed for something called "defects of character." Sevareid, remembering Davies' bravery and leadership during their harrowing experience with the Nagas during World War II, was moved to write:

Sometimes, to add to the meaning of the headlines, a reporter must be personal. Eleven years ago I was a war correspondent, flying toward China over the infamous "Hump." There came a terrifying moment when the passengers, mostly GI's, stood near the door, trying to summon the courage to bail out of the crippled plane. Precious moments passed. Then one of the three civilians aboard, the diplomat who clutched a dispatch case to his chest, gave us a wry smile and leaped out. His action broke the paralysis; we all followed; and all of us, but one, survived.

In the weeks that followed, we were never entirely sure we would get out of those jungle mountains. In such circumstances men learn truly to know one another; who is weak; who is afraid; who is impetuous, and who is strong, and calm and prudent. As the time passed, the GI's and I began to recognize the civilian with the carefully guarded dispatch case as one among us with a calm and natural courage, as one who would never panic, who never complained. He was the one we chose, for common sense and discretion, to deal with the touchy and dangerous Naga head-hunters, our undecided hosts.

There was, however, a long and painful hike in rain and heat for all of us. There were moments when another step seemed quite impossible. In such moments it was generally the diplomat who would sing out with something like "Onward and upward with the arts," and we would laugh and gasp and keep on climbing. I began to faint with heat and thirst on one suffocating
slope; the man who left his half pint of water with me—all he had—was, of course, the diplomat.

...I think now, that if ever again I were in deep trouble, one man I would want to be with would be this particular man. I have known a great number of men around the world, under all manner of circumstances. I have known none who seemed more the whole man; none more finished a civilized product, in all that a man should be—in modesty and thoughtfulness, in resourcefulness and steady strength of character.

The name of this man is John Paton Davies. He is the man Secretary of State Dulles, on the recommendation of a five-man board, has just broken on the wheel of official disgrace. The Foreign Service officer dismissed, three years short of retirement and pension after giving twenty-three years of his life—and almost life itself—in the arduous service of his government. Eight times he was investigated; eight times he was cleared. One by one the politically inspired charges of Communism or disloyalty of perjury were dropped; the ninth board came up with something new, called defects of character. Mr. Davies is not, concluded the board and Mr. Dulles, of sufficient judgment, discretion, and reliability.

Sufficient, one may ask, unto what? Their test can only have been of supernatural design. I saw their victim measured against the most severe tests that mortal man can design. Those he passed. At the head of the class.34

On December 1, 1954 the Senate finally decided enough was enough and censured McCarthy. One commonly voiced argument against censure was that it would weaken investigative prerogatives of the Senate. Yet the censure was a step toward saving them—it was McCarthy who hurt those prerogatives. Indeed, Sevareid commented just recently that due partly to the wild excesses of the McCarthy era, Congress has been somewhat reticent in this area.35
Another, more serious argument against censure was that it would restrict Senatorial right of free speech. But there is a fine line, Sevareid would insist, between freedom and license:

We can only go back to the classic judgment that there is no freedom to yell 'Fire' in a crowded theater, because demoralization and tragedy result. And McCarthy has yelled 'Fire' in so many places—in military institutions, in State Department, in press, radio, and educational institutions, in the Senate itself, with no more than a few sparks at the most as justification for the fear and demoralization that resulted.36

What is important to remember about McCarthyism is that, like communism, there was no middle road. And, again like communism, McCarthyism was, in itself, totalitarian.

The late fifties and early sixties brought a spate of hate bombings and killings and heralded the rise of yet other extremist groups, sort of "posthumous" outgrowths of McCarthyism. After a particular outbreak of bombings in synagogues and schools in 1958 Sevareid attempted to dissect and analyze the actions and motives of these latter-day miscreants:

One of the curious things about the hatemongers is that they usually lie low, smoldering in private until they see, or think they see, a lead from much higher quarters. This gives them the illusion of justification for what they have always wanted to do in the privacy of their unhappy minds. Until
then they are merely the barroom snarlers, the scrappers on walls in the night, the semi-literate authors of the anonymous postcards. They are not very brave people; the courage of hatred is not quite like the courage of conviction.

Another curious thing about the haters is that they feel an identity of interest with one another, though the objects of their individual hatreds may vary widely. The intellectual-hater is drawn to the foreigner-hater, the Jew-hater to the Negro-or Catholic-hater. Let one group begin to hate publicly, especially if it has a lead from some national figure, and the others immediately start to crawl out from under the rocks. This happened in the McCarthy era, where the prime and public object of hatred was Communism and, often, merely alleged Communism. This emboldened all the other haters to strike at their special and very different targets. The same thing is happening now, when the prime and public object is prevention of racial integration in the schools.

In the emotional if not the economic sense, we are a class society; members of the tolerant class recognize and draw near to one another, and so do the intolerant.37

And the intolerant did band together, under new names to be sure, but it was not a new phenomenon. The John Birch Society, Minutemen, whatever they chose to call themselves—Sevareid had seen it all before, in dreary parlors in Minneapolis in the mid-thirties and in Congressional hearings in the early fifties. The charges, the suspicion, the intimidation, the hate, it was all there. Sevareid tried to explain it thusly:

Education has failed such people, or they have failed education. America is pre-eminently the land of change and any kind of change bewilders and upsets them, and they must seek simple answers. They cannot tell the difference between a spy for the
Soviets—the only real internal danger, which police specialists must deal with—and an old-fashioned Socialist or a garden-variety pragmatic liberal. They cannot understand that their own leaders are not conservatives but anti-constitutional radicals.38

It went far beyond rhetoric. The murders of three civil rights workers (Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman) in Philadelphia, Mississippi and the tragic deaths of President John F. Kennedy, the Rev. Martin Luther King and Senator Robert Kennedy began to make people wonder if, after all, we were not a decadent people (a statement to which Sevareid would surely reply that although we have always been a fairly violent people, we are not a decadent people). Political murder, he says, is not a viable catalyst of change—at least not in the direction the murderer intends.

Assassins and would-be assassins are always caught. The result expected by the murderers never comes. The effects are always the opposite or what the murderer has in mind. John Wilkes Booth damaged the Southern cause by his act. If Lee Oswald, the probable killer of Mr. Kennedy, had any thought of aiding Communism or Cuba or Russia, he has pretty surely accomplished the reverse.

White men who shoot or bomb Negroes hasten the end of white supremacy. Negroes who kill white men delay the time of Negro equality in their community. In countries where personal rule is the tradition, murder can and does change governments, policies, whole social structures. It cannot do so in a country that lives under the rule of law.39

There is a very definite basis for this, he main-
tains, a reason that is a bulwark of Sevareid's philosophy. The reason is that above all else society must have order. That is why men seek the protection of the law and not by the gun. And that is why the United States has a government under law and not of men.

But extremism of the right is not Sevareid's only concern. More recently it has been the far left in the headlines and Sevareid finds their extremist views as equally unpalatable as those of the far right. This activism has naught to do with the communists, for by today's standards they are considered almost passe when compared to some of the left wing extremists. Weatherman, Trotskyites, May Day Tribe, again their names are not as important as their aims.

The 1964 Free Speech Movement in Berkeley marked the dawn of a new era of college protest. Although it had none of the extreme violence which was to accompany later college turmoil it was unique in its scale and intensity. Never before had anything like this been so covered by the media or so debated. In the late sixties college campuses erupted again, this time with real violence. From Columbia it escalated to Cornell where guns appeared in the hands of student radicals and then
to the bloody terror and deaths at Kent State and Jackson State in spring of 1970.

Violence however has not been limited to so-called "left wing" political groups. Visions of Vietnam anti-war demonstrations, Chicago's 1968 Democratic convention and of course, the explosions that have rocked big city ghettos from Watts to Hough are seared into recent memory.

Sevareid's reaction to these events has been a mixed one of anger and fear—anger at all the violence and forms of protest and fear of its consequences.

Far from denying the right of dissent, Sevareid is well steeped in the history of dissent in this country. He knows that ours has been a tradition of change, that indeed this country was founded by dissenters. And, of course, his broadcasts, speeches and writings of more than thirty years attest to the fact that Sevareid need not justify to anyone his own credentials as a "dissenter" even though he says, "I do not subscribe to the proposition that if dissent is good in principle, then therefore the more dissent the better. I do not accept the argument of many youthful protestors that because the right of dissent is sacred,
therefore the might and form of their dissent are sacred." It is, he would emphasize, only the right of dissent that is sacred.

Sevareid's own past experiences and knowledge of history contribute greatly to his aversion to student and radical extremism. He remembers:

We raised a lot of hell in college when I was in school. We had compulsory military training thrown out...We thought we were pretty hot stuff but we never dreamt of using violence. We would have despised any student who thought of using violence. We thought of the university as something different—it was an oasis of reason—but it [violence] was an absolute abdication of everything education was supposed to represent and civilization was to represent and reason itself. We wouldn't have tolerated it. So we fought our battles by writing, by speech, by organizing. That's the way it's supposed to be done in a civilized place of learning. And of course people of that experience and of my generation hate this kind of thing because of what it can lead to.

Some of their methods remind him of his European experiences. "They [the student activists] have the same approach as the early Nazis and early Communists. 'We are right,' they say, 'we are progress. If you resist us, or defend yourself, you are the instigators of violence.'" They also remind him of the tactics of the McCarthyites who liberals so bravely fought in the fifties in the name of freedom.

History has taught many lessons, some of which
activists and revolutionaries seem to be unaware of, that:

...both successful and unsuccessful revolutions always increase the power of the state, the thing they hate the most, not the power of the individual, the thing they cherish. Most ordinary Americans know this in their bones, one reason this country is by no means ripe for revolution and is not going to have one.43

Sevareid decries the hypocrisy that often accompanies the self-righteous charges of the liberal activists. The words make so much difference to them:

If Castro in Cuba did all the things he's doing—domestic things, spies in every other house, you know, brainwashing the school children—pure totalitarianism—executions and imprisonments and exiles and called himself Fascist instead of Communist—but did the same things—you'd see half the people on the left here try to organize another Abraham Lincoln brigade—to go and invade that place! Now you can't suggest that, that's horrid, you must leave it alone, it's sacred. But human beings come out about the same under any totalitarian regime.44

Sevareid lays much of the blame for this on intellectuals. It is the intellectuals to a large degree who foster dissent and who often lead revolutions. Sevareid fears the intellectuals, not for fomenting dissent itself, but violent dissent. He would maintain that this is because people must above all else have order even if it means accepting tyranny.

Sevareid sees some dangers in the current college situation. Students are taught by young people, the ignorant are taught by the callow, so to speak. These
young instructors and assistant professors are very similar to the students in their attitudes and experiences. Prosperity and middle class life are all they have known. World war and depression are foreign to them. This is what divides generations. There will always be a generation gap, claims Sevareid, because youth can only measure in one direction--forward--from the way things are to the ideal, the way things ought to be. They lack the hindsight to see things as they were simply because they haven't lived long enough. The older generation, on the other hand, has to consider what used to be and also think laterally to what things are in other countries. Otherwise experience and life itself have no meaning, he maintains.

Jose Ortega y Gasset once remarked that youth is generally right in what it opposes and generally wrong in what it proposes. To the youths who suggest that they could replace the current evils, if they themselves could govern, with something good (i.e. peace, love) Sevareid would retort dryly, "...I am tempted to remind them of the barbarities of the Hitler Jugend, the Mussolini Youth, the Chinese Red Guards, the Simbas of the Congo—but perhaps that would be over-egging the
pudding, as the English say."45

He is particularly bothered that a lot of the radical movement is anarchistic in spirit. If he appears to come down hard on youthful extremists of the left it is because of his wartime experiences and his fear of the backlash. He says:

One thing people can't tolerate is a lack of order...I couldn't either. I was in France when Paris went down--for a few weeks--and saw what anarchy was. I'd never really lived in it before. It's the most tyrannous thing there is; it's the most frightening thing there is--nobody can do anything.46

People, given no other alternative, will always choose tyranny over anarchy because they must have order.

Sevareid already sees some backlash to the violence that has wracked this country the past few years. We now have "a Chief Justice of the United States who is an extreme authoritarian in his views and you may have a Court majority that way."47 He also cites various attempts at preventive detention and repressive attempts on the press as examples. In early February of 1972 Presidential assistant H. R. Haldeman said that anti-war critics are "consciously aiding and abetting the enemy of the United States"--the technical definition of treason. This statement, in view of Nixon's choice not to disclaim it, will
bring shudders to those who have lived through the "dark clouds of McCarthyism," Sevareid commented.48

However, he doesn't see another Joe McCarthy type of cult or personality emerging in the near future. He had had the fear--and he believed that President Nixon had had the fear--that some big military defeat in Vietnam might have caused such a thing a year or two ago. The critical period is pretty well over now he feels. Even if we suffered some humiliation in Vietnam, people are so fed up with the war that they would just accept it. Aside from some flare-ups by American Legion types, the danger is pretty well past.49

But there are hopeful signs, Sevareid, who sees himself as a short range pessimist and a long range optimist, would maintain. He sees much of what has happened as part of the cycle of history and history reveals that many of the current "cults"--religion, astrology, the hippie movement, even the popularity of pornography--have appeared before. These things enjoy popularity for awhile and then diminish or even disappear; why, no one seems to know for sure. The violence is dying away, he feels. The campuses and ghettos have been relatively quiet. Young people are
beginning to reawaken interest in things like sports.

"So, maybe...people are pretty sensible," he asserts,

"I don't think man's perfectible but I think he's fairly improvable."\(^{50}\)
FOOTNOTES

1 Statement by Eric Sevareid, personal interview, October 5, 1971.

2 Sevareid, interview. 3 Sevareid, interview.


6 McGaffin, p. 25.


8 Sevareid, interview.


10 Sevareid, interview.


15 Sevareid, "Destruction," p. 22.


20 Sevareid, interview.


23 Sevareid, This Is, p. 230.

24 Sevareid, This Is, p. 230.

25 Sevareid, interview.


27 Sevareid, This Is, p. 231.

28 The Minneapolis Journal, September 11, 1936.

29 Journal, September 13, 1936.


34 Sevareid, Small Sounds, pp. 247-49.


36 Sevareid, Small Sounds, p. 256.


38 Sevareid, This Is, pp. 125-26.

39 Sevareid, This Is, pp. 146-47.


41 Sevareid, interview.


44 Sevareid, interview.


46 Sevareid, interview. 47 Sevareid, interview.


49 Sevareid, interview. 50 Sevareid, interview.
CHAPTER V

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE COLD WAR

TOTALITARIANISM

Sevareid can probably claim more expertise in the area of foreign affairs than he can in many other areas. Having seen so much evidence and results of this country's involvement first hand, from World War II to the Dominican Republic to Vietnam, he speaks with authority and knowledge.

As a young student at the University of Minnesota Sevareid and his friends studied about fascism in a "textbook" situation. They understood the principle of the thing but they failed to grasp the realistic implications and the scale of it. The Minneapolis truck drivers' strike and later experiences in wartime Europe were among the catalysts of change. He wrote:

The course was quite clear now, and perhaps it was not too late. The duty was to fight with every means available, even though the better future of men was not guaranteed by success in the fighting. But success in the fight would give the future a chance at least; and failure meant the end, perhaps for a great many generations. Truly, in Fascism the 'underworld has risen,' and reason itself was under
assault. The victory of Fascism meant the victory of a new world barbarism among men; it meant the end for a very long time, if not forever, of the long, long, struggle toward truth and justice.¹

For Sevareid the change has been a painful process. It meant acknowledging to himself that he had been wrong in his beliefs about man's nature. He said:

Now, for the first time, really, I acknowledged to myself that all my hesitations, all my blind hopes that my own people could somehow stay out and avoid this fearful business were foolish and impossible hopes. I had clung to them even through this last year in a hundred arguments until I didn't try to argue any more but guarded them to myself. My more acute colleagues and friends had been right all the time. There was no possible living with Fascism, even for a strong America; neutrality was quite impossible. The Fascists could not halt now any more than they could halt after they had gotten Spain, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. Europe was small, and with Europe gone the world was very small. If we took the opposite course and tried to appease, it would mean that every Fascist-minded man and group inside my country would rise in power and prestige; it would mean the end of education in freedom as I had known it; would mean that the Silver Shirts and all men of darkness like them would move out of the dim parlors and into the city halls. It was all clear; this was a world of conspiracy. They could do it; and they could do it either by arms or by the defeat of men's minds. They had allies everywhere, in Minneapolis as well as Tokio [sic] or Buenos Aires.²

After World War II fascism was no longer a dire threat to the world. It was soon replaced by communism. Soviet imperialism terrified the world. All of Europe was prostrate as were most of the other countries of the world.
And the Russians stepped into the breach. They tried to get concessions made in North Africa, Turkey and the German Ruhr. In 1948 the Berlin crisis happened. And then came Korea. No one knew whether peace and freedom were indivisible.

By the mid-fifties, although tensions were still high, some questions had begun to arise about the communist's beliefs in the basic tenets of Marxist fundamentalism. Sevareid noted that the Russians no longer appeared to believe these tenets and indeed only seemed to trot them out for mass exhortation purposes.  

It was a mystery to Sevareid why the Marxist doctrine held even for propaganda purposes. Far from communist claims that wars were brought about by capitalism's need for aggressive expansion, the great wars were caused by pseudo-capitalistic fascist regimes whose resemblance was to communism far more than to democracy. Sevareid noted Marx predicted that under capitalism, workers' misery would increase--it had decreased; under capitalism inequalities in wealth would increase--they had in actuality come closer in every modern Western society (studies made in the early 1970's, however, may eventually refute this claim); and finally, programs that Marx had
predicted could come about only via revolutionary means—the progressive income tax, free education and so on—had come about through peaceful democratic means. But this apparently did not change the USSR's basic goals, for the cold war remained hot.

Sevareid makes a definite distinction between communism and fascism. The fascism of Hitler, Mussolini, France and of the Japanese was a definitely expanding thing with power and conquest as the ends. It had a master race psychology. "I don't think communists have that," he says. "They have a much deeper and greater theme than old-fashioned conquest." Communist is concerned only in the vaguest of long runs with the "battle for men's minds," he maintains. Communist is "not so much an alternative way of life as [it is] a political technique for seizing power."

Sevareid began to feel that much of the liberal view of the cold war was wrong. The liberal outcry after the Bay of Pigs, not because it had been botched up but because it had ever been planned and the indignant cries of the immorality of the thing infuriated him to the point where in late 1961 he wrote a stinging editorial:

I hope American nerves are strong; I know American heads are be-fogged.
The showdown with the Communist world conspiracy is on. We have entered the final stage of the long struggle to determine if we can hold our world position short of a great war. We are in that stage because Khrushchev has decided we are. He will act accordingly, which will force us to act accordingly—if we can clear our heads.

He did his best at Vienna to make us understand, just as Hitler did, time after time. It is wrong to think Khrushchev said nothing new. When he said, "No negotiations on anything unless it suits us tactically. No disarmament agreement, no test stoppage agreement, no U.N. save on our terms, no letup on Berlin"—when he said all this in effect, he was saying, "We have you. Why go on with the chess game?"

He has concluded that the Western Alliance cannot be pulled together; that North Africa will soon be wide open to Communist exploitation with Central Africa to follow; that Southeast Asia is rapidly crumbling into Communist hands; that our Latin American flank is being turned. He is now sure that the great game of isolating the United States, then impoverishing it, then breaking its will is all over save for our helpless, thrashing convulsions, which will be interesting and from time to time dangerous.

No doubt there are after-hours parlor games in the Kremlin these nights. Betting pools, for example, on the precise month when the U.S., driven desperate by Castro's subversion of other Latin regimes, threatens to use force, whereupon Castro laughingly points out that he has short-range missile emplacements aimed at the lovely white city of Miami and would we care to test his will to use them? [This was nearly a year and a half before the missile crisis.]

I imagine they play an uproarious game of "Can you top this?" reading selected items from the British and American press. The passionate claims of British Socialists that Britain will have more world influence if she gives up her atomic weapons must be a consistent funny-bone tickler. These days they must particularly cherish the Whitehall-Lippmann theory that if we show willingness to re-negotiate West Berlin, the Reds will obligingly give us at the bargaining table a stronger position than we have now.

Surely they adore reading the worrying, hair-shirt arguments that the United States must not do.
this or that because it will offend "world opinion," knowing as they do that there is no such thing in the moralistic sense—the proof of which is that after all their crimes, including Hungary, they enjoy more influence and respect in the world than ever. They must love the British-American notion that the bosses of the new, "neutral" nations are somehow more high-minded and spiritual than those of the committed nations.

...And they must love the large school of professional American liberals who assume that any given country, however barren and illiterate, however profound its background of violence and chieftainship, is capable not only of economic modernization, but of parliamentary democracy.

The liberals with social-worker mentalities do not grasp that illiteracy, low wages, concentrated land ownership and so on are not "social problems," but integral parts of a system of life and, therefore, enormously resistant to quick change by anything less than the "totalitarian disciplines" the same liberals abhor. The liberals assume that, because a Marshall Plan worked in modern Europe, a similar plan can work among those regimes of Latin America, where statistics are wild guesses, where trained economists hardly exist, where economic planning is finger painting, where, as between countries, there is very little background of communications, normal trade or even intellectual interest in one another.

The gamesmen in the Kremlin must smile in their sleep as they realize how deeply ingrained is the American illusion that a ton of wheat can offset a ton of Communist artillery shells, that a squad of Peace Corpsmen is a match for a squad of guerrilla fighters.

Frightened people in a score of desperate countries want to be on the winning, not necessarily the moral, side; and we have to start winning soon. We are going to lose in several more places before we do. We may as well face the fact that we will also lose in places we cannot afford to lose, until and unless we are willing to fight no matter the reproving editorials in the Manchester Guardian, no matter what the temporary backlash of "world opinion" may be. The relations between nations are not the same as those
between individuals. We can afford to lose everything—except respect for our strength and determination. Lose that, and Khrushchev won't bother to sit down and talk again, even to say "no".7

The response was startling. The words were reprinted all over the country. He was strongly attacked by his liberal friends and right wing politicians thought they had won a convert and a new friend.

Sevareid could hardly have forseen it, but his commentary came at a most fortuitous time. We are still too close to events for history to judge the degree of his impact on American foreign policy but it did produce some definite results. What it did do was to spark debate on such questions as the existence of "world opinion," the supposed virtues of neutrality, concepts of foreign aid and, for the first time offered for consideration the possibility that Castro might try to hold the United States hostage to serious danger.8 The Cuban missile crisis a year and a half later made Sevareid appear prophetic.

Though he bothers to differentiate between the two forms of totalitarianism, it is important to remember that in the long run they have the same effects on men's lives. Human beings, he would maintain, tend to come out the same under any totalitarian regime.
COMMUNISM—RED SCARE OR RED HERRING?

Sevareid's wartime experiences brought him many realizations about cultures and ideologies which came to influence his views on several subjects. One such area concerned the future political independence of some of the underdeveloped countries of the world. He commented particularly on China and India where he spent some time during the war. His words, uttered in the mid-forties when Russia was still an ally, would have smacked of heresy to right wing individuals had they been spoken a few years later:

We would like them to use the methods of the free ballot and free assembly. Russia's methods of a ruthless dictatorship, even though the aim was good, were repugnant to us; to many they were more repugnant than the frightful conditions of life they were designed to end. But my basic beliefs in the liberal approaches were deeply shaken by what I had seen in this part of the world. I began to doubt whether, in any case, they were universally applicable. Could men apply the methods of literate nineteenth-and twentieth-century societies bred in the tradition of tolerance to societies that were centuries behind us in social advance? The great aim of freedom in security for the individual seemed to me universal and eternally right. As for the methods, however, it seemed clear that there was a time-space equation involved which could not be ignored. The basic economic problems of India, for example, could be largely solved by a ruthless collectivization of the land. Thousands, even millions, of men might suffer liquidation and death in the process; but millions
were dying every year under the present conditions, and would continue to die every year until the matter is solved. Half the human race was barefoot, filthy, sick, and worried from morning till night, from birth until death, over no other problem than simply finding food for their bellies. The truth was that, no matter how ruthless the effort might be, nothing could be worse than the present condition. And maybe in ten years, or twenty, or fifty, these hundreds of millions would be able to live, to be clean and whole, to rise above their animal state and walk as men. True, there was danger that the means would become the end. But it seemed to me that the risk was worth the taking.

Under these circumstances, what had the Western democracies to offer these peoples in comparison with the Russians? We could offer a ballot box and education in tolerance. This was also medicine, to be taken voluntarily by the patients, as rapidly as they learned to understand it. Russia offered a forcible surgical operation without anesthesia, but with a quicker, more certain cure. For the Western peoples, I had serious doubts that the future belonged to Communism; for those of the East I was not so sure.9

When asked in 1971 about this assessment made twenty-five years ago, Sevareid replied that he has been right about China. He had long doubted that Chinese leaders could manage democratic institutions of any stability. He admits however that he was wrong about them in some respects. Bad as the Chiang Kai-shek regime was, Sevareid had thought that the Chinese could at least defend south China at the end of the war. They couldn't and indeed, didn't really even try.10

India, he says, we don't know about yet. It has managed so far at terrible cost and bloodletting, what
with Pakistan and such. He thinks that unless India is lucky, it may just break up some day. Or it may fall under some sort of dictatorial control. Vietnam, he thinks, will fall under communist rule in a few years. It just isn't a society that is going to hang together in a democratic way.11

As to future communist aggression against the United States, Sevareid sees the danger diminishing. He sees communism as having undergone an evolutionary process. Communism is no longer a centrally governable force. Nationalism is a strong feeling in the European satellite nations and makes some of them quite independent. (Yugoslavia is a prime example.) A more far reaching and fundamental change has resulted from the breach between Russia and China, a breach which may be permanent.

Sevareid believes strongly that if a country is to modernize and industrialize it can't do it as a communist country. Life becomes too complicated and government leaders will discover that an authoritarian system cannot cope with the problems. Then the stratification sets in as has happened in Russia and will happen to China. "They don't have communism in Russia," he says. "It's not an egalitarian society--no modern society can be."12
These factors plus the credibility of our deterrent which was established with the Cuban Missile Crisis add up to present a brighter picture for co-existence between the United States and the Soviet Union. He sees the two powers entering a new phase:

If cold war means a condition in which the big powers talk as if they were at war without actually going to war, then perhaps we are entering a period of 'cold peace' with Russia—a condition in which the powers talk as if they were at peace without actually ratifying the peace.13

The danger of war still exists but not as a result of a confrontation between the big powers as in 1939. Rather the danger is of another 1914 with aggression between two small powers dragging the big ones in.

His views on this subject perhaps can be summarized by an assessment he made in 1967:

Does Communism always and everywhere require physical containment or does it not have within itself its own built-in braking mechanism, its own containment? Is it true today...as seemed very true in the thirties and forties, that peace and freedom are indivisible? Or is it the real truth that peace and freedom will continue to coexist with war and tyranny as they have coexisted through most human history.14

THE U.S.—WORLD POLICEMAN?

"I don't like the business of our intervening anywhere...," says Sevareid, except in matters of finality
and then the end can justify the means. He had not always felt this way.

As a youth Sevareid and many of his friends had been influenced by isolationist leaders such as Senators La Follette and Shipstead and socialist leader Norman Thomas, who believed that war itself was the ultimate evil—not the results if the struggle were lost. It was with this attitude that he approached the war he was to cover. But events often have a strange way of altering men's notion.

And events that Sevareid witnessed as a correspondent during the war affected him profoundly, each one having a subtle influence and making his position as a "neutral" observer a little less inviolate. All his hopes that the United States could somehow stay out of the conflict were dashed. Finally he came to the conclusion that there was no other way out than to join the battle. This decision would appear to mark a turning point in his philosophy.

Reason itself was in dire danger. A victory for fascism could mean the death of the struggle for truth and justice. There were times when our intervention was not only justified but even called for. A society could
become more democratic by virtue of a struggle. And the alternative to fighting could be worse than the actual fighting itself. Sevareid has seen that men who had known the alternatives would fight again of their own free will rather than submit to them.

World War II ended and with it came the Marshall Plan to rebuild shattered Europe, the theory being that a strong Europe would be a bulwark against the further spread of communism. Europe held but the fire still smouldered and finally burst into flame in Korea.

Korea and the Dominican Republic

There was no hesitation, no question in Sevareid's mind this time. He compared the events there to events in the colonies in 1776.

In '76 there were colonies and leading men who wavered; there were neutrals and equivocators; there were deserters and those who held secret dealings with the common foe. In 1950 there are nations and leading men of similar stripe.

Surely, to the farmer colonists, George III and Britain's imperial machinery seemed at least as awesome in their might as Stalin and Russia's world political machine seem to ordinary men of today. But there comes a time when courage, born of desperation, overrides the fears. For the colonies seeking to achieve freedom, the time came in 1776. For the nations seeking to preserve freedom, that time has come now, in our year of 1950.16

Today, in retrospect, he is not so sure but at
the time he believed it had to be done. The whole world situation was very different then. Europe lay helpless and impotent. The Russians had caused trouble in Europe-in East Germany, in Turkey and the German Ruhr. Recently he reminisced:

They were tough people and frightening people and Stalin turned this war on in Korea without any question. They couldn't have done it without the Russians --the Russians trained them all, they were there. What did it mean? Did it mean that he Stalin was willing to take the great risk of another world war? After Japan the Atomic Bomb what were they after? I thought we had to resist them.17

Yet there were criticisms about our handling of the war and some wished to make it a campaign issue in the 1952 elections. It was to these critics that Sevareid replied in a broadcast in mid-1952:

Young Americans are again gambling their lives in battle. The American people and the American Congress are overwhelmingly behind them and the decision to take the gamble. Those are the dominant facts of our immediate situation. To take great notice of the scattered recriminations would be almost as great a disservice as to indulge in them; but it is necessary....

And it is worth pointing out that there is a certain parallel, in the political reactions, between Korea and Pearl Harbor. After the Pearl Harbor attack, the first criticism was that our advance intelligence had failed. General Marshall was out horseback-riding, and so on. After the Korean attack, the immediate criticism was the same--President Truman was in Missouri, and so on. The second Pearl Harbor criticism was that the tactics were wrong--our fleet should not have been in there. The second Korean criticism was that our troops should not have been out of there.
The extreme claim that Roosevelt deliberately involved us in Pearl Harbor and the big war did not come until much later, and it came from the extreme right wing. The claim that Truman deliberately involved us in the Korean war has been heard already, and it comes from the extreme left wing.

In the first case, the extreme right wing complained that Roosevelt was too belligerent towards the Fascists, and thus got us into a fighting war. The complaint of the extreme right this time is that Truman was not belligerent enough toward the Communists, and thus has got us into a fighting war. But if the Pearl Harbor precedent holds good the great majority of Americans will, after a time, come to feel that the fault in the Korean business lies with all of us, with both Republicans and Democrats, with Administration as well as Congress, with the general American state of mind, which would not quite let us believe that the enemy was serious, that it could happen to us, that ours must be an era of expensive sacrifice, not one of expensive indulgence.

Before Pearl Harbor, though the world was already in flames, we believed we could buy safety through halfway measures, by aid to Britain, arming the merchant ships and so on. Before Korea, though the world was in political flames, we believed we could buy peace and safety through other halfway measures, by the Marshall Plan, by spot military-aid here and there, while cutting our taxes, keeping our armed forces relatively small, and suffering no more than a slightly unbalanced budget.

If it is fair to blame the President for letting Communists into China and South Korea, it would seem to be equally fair to credit the President for keeping the Communists out of Greece, Turkey, and Western Berlin.

If his critics, this fall, argue that he has not been equally successful everywhere, he can argue that America has not had enough power to apply it equally everywhere. And for that shortage of power, after five years of political world war, history will probably blame all Americans, of every political faith, who pretended there was peace when there was no peace.
Korea, he says now, "was a tragic business but there was no one else in the world that could do anything about any events except the United States. Nobody, not a soul had any power except us." 19

Yet if Korea were today Sevareid would not want to intervene. This is because concepts and circumstances change with time. The world situation has changed since Korea. Communism is not the frightening monolith it once was. The split, maybe permanent, between Russia and China especially has brought this home. Russia has had troubles with one after another of her satellites (from Hungary to Czechoslovakia to Yugoslavia) seemingly because they are more interested in nationalism than communism. "Now maybe this would have happened in Korea in a different way," Sevareid reflects, "You can look back now--there are a lot of things you might have done differently--nobody's got a crystal ball about these things." 20 The old ideas that peace and freedom were indivisible were changing. Peace and freedom were not indivisible and we would co-exist with war and tyranny.

Korea was followed by our intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965. Sevareid supported U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic, an act for which
he was soundly criticized. But the Dominican thing was
different in his mind from Vietnam, for example. The case
of Castro's takeover in Cuba and the concomitant crisis
over the missiles were still fresh in his mind. He
simply couldn't believe that Cabaño and his followers were
just liberals who only wanted to run a democratic country.
But the primary distinctions in his mind were two. "... we
didn't go in there to fight a war. We went in to stop
a war and we stopped that war and quite quickly," he
says, "and we did not prop up any military dictatorial
regime. Everybody's forgotten that. All we did was give
them another chance for some stability and freedom."21

Sevareid's stand on the Dominican intervention
caused a minor flap in some CBS programming. CBS News
had planned an electronic confrontation on Vietnam between
several so-called "hawks" and "doves" called "Vietnam
Dialogue: Mr. Bundy and the Professors." Sevareid was set
to be moderator but the anti-war professors balked at the
idea because of his views on the Dominican affair. They
thought if he was pro-administration on that, he might
also be pro-administration on Vietnam. Sevareid recalled,
"This is one of the first times I ever saw CBS negotiate
with people as to who would be moderator—we usually just
tell them and they can take it or leave it but we were bending over backwards. And these were rather arrogant people as a matter of fact—they were going to decide who should be moderator and pass on me or someone else. Well, to hell with them."22 William Small, in his book To Kill A Messenger, remembered:

I refused to offer any other moderator.... Sevareid was the finest moderator of discussion programs in all of television. The Steering committee of the 'professors' came to my office in Washington still reluctant to agree to Sevareid though eager to have the debate with Bundy. I suggested a visit with Sevareid who never knew of their opposition. Ten minutes of conversation with Sevareid and they came away somewhat awed, considerably charmed and thoroughly agreed that he would be an excellent moderator.23

Sevareid had convinced them that he just couldn't make up his mind about Vietnam. Indeed this was the case for he had entered a period of deep soul searching which was to result in a complete turnabout in his beliefs on the subject.

Vietnam

Of all the topics Sevareid addresses himself to, on none has he undergone so radical a change in attitude in such a short period of time as that of Vietnam.

Sevareid's knowledge of and concern with Vietnam extends beyond the events of the last decade. In early
May of 1955, CBS's weekly rendition of "The American Week" which featured Sevareid as host devoted the entirety of its program to the civil war in Vietnam. Even at that time, he reported, America was pouring billions of dollars in aid into Indo-China, aid that for the most part went for naught. Attributing the problems in Vietnam to eighty years of poor French rule, nationalism, lack of well-trained native administrators, corruption and a host of other reasons, he noted that these events had left the country vulnerable to attacks by the communists. And the United States was caught dangerously in the middle of it.

The following decade saw the U.S. become more and more involved in Vietnam, escalating from mere financial aid to "advisors" to commitment of hundreds of thousands of men.

Several factors combined to make Sevareid's position, up until 1965, one of support for administration policies. Chief among these probably was his view of communism and the cold war. It is important to remember that in the early part of the sixties, Sevareid, as well as many others, still considered communism to be a worldwide conspiracy. He thought the United States was in a showdown with communism and that its spread must be
stopped. What people won't face, he wrote, is the fact that there are places in the world—"Viet-Nam seems to be one, like Greece, Korea and Malaya before it—where Communist attack has to be beaten off, and with the instruments at hand, before fundamental social reform can proceed."25 Events such as the ruthless Russian suppression of Hungary in 1956, Castro's takeover of Cuba and the Russian attempt to place offensive missiles in Cuba helped nourish American fears of the Russian Bear.

It was this same Cuban missile crisis in 1962 that finally established the credibility of the American deterrent. And with this came a gradual shift in attitudes on the part of many Americans about the role of the United States in foreign affairs.

Another reason for Sevareid's support of the war effort was his assumption that the leadership of the country—President Kennedy, the military and others—was probably correct in its assumption about the war. Vietnam was a relatively minor effort which could be contained and all we wanted to do was to give the Vietnamese a chance to help themselves. Erik Barnouw wrote in The Image Empire that until late 1965 Sevareid had tended to avoid speaking about Vietnam. Though beset by misgivings he felt
that President Johnson should be given the benefit of any doubt.26

The turning point for Sevareid appears to have come in mid-1965. In July of that year Sevareid journied to London where he had a lengthy conversation with Adlai Stevenson just two days before the Ambassador's untimely death. In his conversation, Stevenson revealed to Sevareid, a long-time friend, that he was on the verge of resigning in protest from his position as United Nations Ambassador. He told Sevareid that President Johnson had twice thwarted the peace making efforts of then U.N. Secretary-General U Thant.27 Sevareid broadcast parts of his story in abbreviated form but the full force of his revelations burst upon the public in the November 30, 1965 issue of Look magazine in an article that Fred Friendly, former president of CBS News, said was "...in many ways the most distinguished single piece of journalism done outside Vietnam in 1965 by a broadcast journalist."28

While Ambassador Stevenson's disclosures were fresh on his mind and made him even more aware of his own reservations about our war effort, the catalyst for change was President Johnson's August 1965 announcement that he was sending seventy-five thousand men to Vietnam. This
bithered Sevareid a great deal. It was at this point that he began in earnest to research the history of Vietnam--the Vietcong, the Vietminh, the French experience. He said:

By the time I got through reading a few of these books and thinking more about it--it just dawned on me that this is hopeless. No matter how many troops you put in--it's just going to lead to more and more excesses--spread destruction everywhere. It isn't going to stabilize Southeast Asia, which is what Rusk thought. It's going to exacerbate it. It isn't going to hold. It isn't a society that's going to hold in any democratic way anyway. That part of it never seemed to make much sense.29

Still bothered, Sevareid decided a first-hand look at the situation was called for and in the spring of 1966 he journeyed to Vietnam. Upon his return he was given one-half hour to report his impressions. It was broadcast on CBS June 21, 1966. Sevareid felt hopelessness at what he saw and his report was fraught with warning. He noted that in this war fact and fiction are often difficult to separate. In part he said:

I am not an authority on Asia. Asia is far too big, changing far too rapidly for many certainties. I am not an expert on war. There is no such thing as military science. War is a rude art, in which human character, will and faith play at least as great a role as figures and logic.

About truth, I hope I know more. It is a reporter's business to tell appearance from reality, rhetoric from fact.

He often fails. In this Vietnam war, he fails unusually often. Because he is normally a stranger to
the land, its language and its people. And because at every level—military, political, economic, psychological—the truth is fragmented in a thousand pieces. At each level it is a jigsaw puzzle that no single man is able to piece together. We are therefore confronted with an extraordinary condition: no honest man can return a convincing answer to the great and obvious questions that all men ask:

Is our action there insurance against eventual war with China, as the administration asserts, or is it increasing the risk of such a war? Will the Vietnamese pull themselves together, politically, or fall further apart? Are we winning this war? Do we have a clear strategy for winning it? How many years and men will it take?30

Sevareid observed that the old ideas of communist aggression and expansion were at work. Although China seemed indeed frightening to the United States, Sevareid perceived that some of her neighbors, like Japan, were not so worried. They believe, said Sevareid:

...that China is already contained. She is contained by the existence of the nuclear bomb, by the simple knowledge that if she marches over the border of a friendly country that we are able to help, we shall immediately help. She is contained by this gigantic ring of steel built by the United States along her eastern and southern borders and by Russia's ring of steel along four thousand miles of her western borders. If she feels encircled, no big power ever had more right to feel that way. She fears what the United States may do more than some of her neighbors fear what she may do.

China can try the methods of subversion in Southeast Asia, she has and she does. But it is doubtful how successful she would be, even without our presence and resistance in Vietnam. Nationalism is basically stronger than any ideology. Most nations are not dominoes, that fall over with a click. These nations of Southeast Asia, like Thailand or Burma, are more like sponges.
Their edges can become waterlogged with Communist-trained resistance groups, but there are a thousand natural obstacles to the water seeping through the whole organism. One is the historic dislike and distruct of the Chinese throughout these regions.31

Sevareid saw as a key question whether our intervention had, in fact, prevented the spread of Chinese dominance throughout Asia. With a few exceptions—Korea and Thailand—Sevareid felt this was untrue. Indeed, he thought it would be just as logical to argue that our presence in Vietnam and the concomitant spread of hostilities could just as easily lead to a war with China.

Sevareid is convinced that, until the U.S. entered the war, the Vietnamese struggle was essentially a civil war—a social revolution and a struggle for freedom from European rule. He noted the difficulties in determining "progress" and "victory" and also pointed out the immense cost in terms of dollars and human suffering.

Sevareid had his doubts about our goal of democratizing Vietnam. His prediction, should the U.S. seek that goal, made him once again seem prophetic:

We try to apply Western logic and experience to this Oriental land. So we encourage the elections, envisage a parliament, eventual civilian rule, representing groups and regions.

My own guess is that this process of democratizing would produce years of political turmoil before stability is reached. It will probably, though not certainly, open a whole new pandora's box, all the quarrels in the country bursting into the open.
Vietnam, I think myself, is not to be compared with Korea or Greece, where we were successful, in these respects: a strong national sense and strong leaders existed in those countries.

If this proves to be the trend, as we try to democratize government in Vietnam, then the immediate consequence will be a nightmare for us—for we should then have to involve ourselves deeper and deeper into their politics, their economy and more and more of the fighting and dying will be done by Americans and less and less by the Vietnamese.\(^{32}\)

He ended his discourse on two notes of warning for future U.S. ventures in Asia:

One is the fantastic size of our military establishment and the fantastic speed by which its cost increases. This can consume our marginal substance. This is what General Eisenhower warned about in his last words as President. He said we must guard against undue power by a military industrial complex. It will take a very convincing peace and a very strong President to put our military genie back in the bottle.

The other thing is this: the deepest, strongest forces motivating the people of Asia are not those we picture as we sit here at home.

...the deepest forces moving Asian peoples now are forces of the modern scientific-industrial revolution. Asians have discovered the great secret, so long hidden from their hope: that man is not born to a short life of pain and work and poverty. They see the marvelous evidence, nearly everywhere they look; Japan, a booming economic colossus whose production may soon pass Great Britain's. Korea, prosperous enough to do without direct American aid. Taiwan, where food production has doubled in fifteen years and where new hotels, highways, factories open every month .... Even Communist China, where basic comfort now seems assured for most, and where a new generation of economists, engineers, builders is slowly but surely coming to replace the old men of politics and war as they were replaced in Russia when Stalin died.\(^{33}\)
Basically, Sevareid says, he changed his mind about Vietnam when he came to the conclusion that the security and the vital interests of this country were simply not at stake in that part of the world.

Something is involved, but it all depends on the price you want to pay and it dawned on me that the price we would pay before this was over would be way out of proportion to any lasting gains...[to] our interest and security in the area.34

Vietnam began to appear more and more as the subject of CBS's nightly news commentaries and although, as he stated, he tries at least to do more explaining than advocating, his views on this subject could often be seen. In one commentary he presented and subsequently dismantled the primary arguments for our presence in Vietnam. He says in part:

There seems every reason to assume, as the autumn begins, what one had to assume as the summer began and the spring began—that the longest war in American history is going to go on for a long time yet.

Year by year, stage by stage, the cutting edge of the leading arguments for this intervention has been blunted and discarded. At first the argument was that the security and vital interests of the United States were at stake in the outcome of this civil war in a strip of East Asia. The specter was raised of a threat to the whole power position of America and the Pacific if the northerners won instead of the southerners. Very few suggest that anymore. Then the commitment argument was made, that the SEATO treaty somehow obliged us to send in American forces. It says nothing of the sort; other signatories have remained passive, and this argument has faded away.

For two or three years it was claimed that more
men, more planes, and more tanks would finish the war. This prevented defeat of the South, but did not finish the war. Then it was said that the enemy was realistically beaten but hung on only because he was encouraged by the protest movement inside the United States. But the protest movement has ebbed and flowed, and the enemy behaves the same.\textsuperscript{35}

These critics found a new tack with Mr. Nixon's withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam saying that it would seriously weaken our power in the Pacific and our position in other areas of the world. By way of rebuttal to this argument Sevareid commented that proponents of withdrawal don't believe that it would weaken our position or our power in the Pacific, the Mediterranean or in Europe and they don't think the Russians or the Chinese believe it will either. "They don't think the world is a dike, the little country of Vietnam the hole in the dike and the United States the only Dutch boy around with a ready thumb."\textsuperscript{36}

But the war continued to escalate and when, in 1970, American forces invaded Cambodia Sevareid noted:

...the Vietnamese war is once again revealed for what it implicitly always was, the centerpiece of a general Indochinese revolution and civil war encompassing all three countries.

The official notion of several years ago that American intervention would stabilize Southeast Asia now has more of a dreamlike quality to it than ever. The official notion of the past few months that we could neatly extract our own troops while the South Vietnamese neatly expand their power until the enemy
withers down to impotence—this is acquiring the quality of a dream, at least to more and more observers. 37

Although the mission was in some respects a success militarily, Sevareid raised some interesting questions about the Cambodian invasion. Chief among these was the constitutionality of the President's action but he was also concerned about the international and domestic reactions. Some of Mr. Nixon's critics, he stated, were convinced that the President wanted to end the war on a military victory note to mollify right-wing forces in this country. 38 Sevareid believes the President at the time feared the possibility of another Joe McCarthy type of experience should the U.S. suffer some grievous defeat in Vietnam.

On May 8, 1972 President Nixon announced that he had ordered the mining of North Vietnam's harbors and major inland water routes. In an analysis of the President's speech Sevareid was generally pessimistic. He noted that Nixon's moves amounted to tacit admission that the army of South Vietnam couldn't hold the line or protect our remaining troops. Vietnamization, he noted, had not worked. He was very doubtful that the North Vietnamese would accede to our demands about release of the P.O.W.'s noting that they would "...have to be squeezed to the point of utter,
total exhaustion and defeat" before this would happen.39

Near mid-1972 Sevareid can see no end to the war as it stands on its present course. As to his personal feelings about the war, he says, "Whatever our obligation to South Vietnam, it was paid long ago."40 In general, his feelings about our involvement in Vietnam echo his feelings about our involvement in any part of the world. It just depends on the price you want to pay and Vietnam is far more costly than anything the U.S. could hope to get out of it.

FOREIGN AID - BOON OR BANE?

Sevareid has often said that he is becoming more and more conservative on foreign affairs, an attitude which has become increasingly evident in his views on foreign aid.

Foreign aid appears in several forms, from outright money to goods and services. United States foreign aid policy was formulated on several premises. American aid is given in the hopes that it will help produce trends toward economic growth and literacy and then democracy in recipient countries. The greater the increase in democracy, it is reasoned, the less the threat to America's national security. Other efforts such as the Peace Corps
operate at least partially on the premise that peace can be promulgated through people getting to know one another.

Sevareid has for some time been a critic of U.S. foreign aid policy basically because he feels its premises are wrong (In the course of his travels in 1959-1961 many of his beliefs were sustained by first hand observation). Because of our success with the Marshall Plan which was economic rehabilitation of an existing industrialized society we thought we could facilitate the economic development of the underdeveloped nations of Africa and South America. In the early sixties Sevareid questioned the reasoning behind Washington's justification of foreign aid. He said that Washington:

...has assumed that charity is materially good for the receiver and morally good for the giver--the most defensible of all arguments for foreign aid. But it has assumed, more importantly, that foreign aid produces economic growth in backward lands, that economic growth produces trends toward democratic freedoms, that democracy tends toward peace and that peace in these areas enhances America's national security.41

But the countries of Africa and South America are steeped in a fundamentally different lifestyle from that of western society--lifestyles that are deep-rooted in their cultures. Concepts like industrialization, a middle class, education, democracy and the like are virtually non-existent in many parts of the world while
dictatorships, tribalism and such prevail. Sevareid suggests a cold, hard look at our policy when he says:

We have to ask ourselves why we assume that intervention by foreigners in totally alien cultures can produce economic levels, political institutions and social mores in ten or twenty years of the kind produced in Western societies only after many generations.

We have to ask ourselves why we think we can produce even a respectable fraction of such results in lands where we have no enforcement powers when we cannot elevate life in the West Virginia mining areas or get on top of the problems of poverty, illiteracy, crime and crowding that are swamping welfare planners in our own urban sprawls.42

To assume that there is a relationship between rising levels of income and literacy and a rising level of democracy and stability is not necessarily a wrong assumption but it is only a general and certainly a long term one. Therefore, Sevareid says, we should reevaluate our goals and speak of economic growth in terms of a generation, not a decade, while parliamentary democracy should be a goal and an aspiration, not a requirement.43

Another criticism Sevareid has of U.S. foreign aid policies is that we have spread ourselves too thin trying to do too much with too little in the way of trained personnel, money, techniques and concepts. Even the Peace Corps comes in for his attack.

Many people lauded the early efforts of the Peace
Corps but Sevareid was not among them. Don't, he admonished, take the Corps for more than it is.

In the first place, the work of the corps has very little more to do with producing peace in this world than with producing war. The long history of peoples heavily interpenetrated culturally, frequently waging war on one another, undercuts the whole notion of peace preserved by 'folks getting to know one another.' More importantly, while the Corps has something to do with spot benefits in a few isolated places, whether in sanitizing drinking water or building culverts, its work has, and can have, very little to do with the fundamental investments, reorganizations and reforms upon which the true and long-term economic development of backward countries depends. Perhaps the most fruitful field is in the teaching of skills to future agronomists and civil engineers and the like, because no development structure can stand without such underpinning of knowledge. But the end results of such efforts lie far beyond the mistiest horizons; it is impossible, as well as ridiculous, to start proclaiming them now.44

One final word of caution was issued to Peace Corps administrators. They must realize, he warned, that not only does it take a special type of person to be accepted in a foreign, often backward society, but that it may take years for any one individual to accomplish anything worthwhile. "A system built on brief tenure and rotation will, I freely predict, become an expensive joke, a sequel to The Ugly American."45

A decade ago U.S. foreign aid efforts were closely tied to the cold war and the battles were fought on the economic and propaganda fronts. At the time Sevareid
favored consolidation of our aid efforts to concentrate in those countries where we had the best chances for success. He noted:

...virtually every new nation created since the war and which has tried republican, parliamentary institutions, has already abandoned them. Political democracy is not spreading; it becomes more and more the exclusive mechanism of the most sophisticated and educated peoples, those long conditioned in the traits of co-operation and tolerance.

The problem is not to save the world for democracy; it is to save the world; and to save democracy in those parts of the world that know how to operate democracy.\textsuperscript{46}

And don't meddle in their affairs, he would add. "I tried to discourage Bobby Kennedy from making that trip down there \[to\] Latin America. \[It would\] just stir up people, which he did."\textsuperscript{47}

A particularly appalling fact to Sevareid about our aid program is that very often it does not reach those people for whom it is intended and indeed are most sorely in need of it. The Alliance for Progress program, for example, he never much believed in because he knew enough about Latin America then to realize what is common knowledge now; that little aid actually reached the peasants. It was instead mostly a big gravy train for a lot of politicians and business men and army officers.\textsuperscript{48}

This approach, he contends, won't solve problems
there. Sevareid's ideas could probably be ascribed to the "God helps those who help themselves" school of thought because he firmly believes that our flooding these countries with massive doses of aid merely postpones the day when they must come to grips with their own problems such as birth control, illiteracy, a feudal system of land ownership, which they must do. Even our immigration laws are subject to his soul-searching because they help put off the day when other countries must deal with their overpopulation problems and they further compound the overcrowding problems in our own big cities.

The key to giving democratic institutions the opportunity to thrive in these countries is the development of a middle class, Sevareid believes. It is basically the middle class in a country that keeps it from either political extreme, he maintains, and countries that don't have it are, in his words, pretty "lousy" countries.

And finally, he would have us remember that "we are just ordinary mortals like anybody else. We're just bigger. You know, our fund of worldly wisdom just simply isn't that great, our supply of able, trained people isn't that great, our supply of money isn't that great. We can't remake the world."49
FOOTNOTES


2 Sevareid, *Not So Wild*, p. 182.


7 Sevareid, *This Is*, pp. 162-64.

8 Sevareid, *This Is*, p. 5.


10 Sevareid, interview. 11 Sevareid, interview.

12 Sevareid, interview.

13 Sevareid, *This Is*, pp. 6-7.


15 Sevareid, interview.


17 Sevareid, interview.


24 Sevareid Manuskripts, Library of Congress.

25 Sevareid, *This Is*, p. 78.


29 Sevareid, interview.


33 U.S., p. 13484. 34 Sevareid, interview.


37 Cronkite, p. 115. 38 Cronkite, p. 121.


41 Sevareid, *This Is*, p. 232.

42 Sevareid, *This Is*, pp. 232-33.
43 Sevareid, *This Is*, p. 228.

44 Sevareid, *This Is*, p. 234.

45 Sevareid, *This Is*, p. 219.


47 Sevareid, interview. 48 Sevareid, interview.

49 Sevareid, interview.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Eric Sevareid does not fit easily into any particular mold, political or otherwise. Many conservatives consider him a liberal or "worse" and many liberals feel he no longer represents the cutting edge of liberal reform. The truth, as it so often does, lies somewhere between these two viewpoints. In general, Sevareid considers himself liberal on many of the great social issues of the day (i.e., blacks, poverty, prison reform) and increasingly conservative on foreign affairs (i.e., Vietnam, foreign aid).

The matrix of his thought patterns is somewhat further complicated by his apparent contradictory moods on various topics ranging from great optimism to despair. Perhaps the title of writer William Holland's 1969 article on Sevareid best describes him--the "Brooding Optimist." One reporter who worked with him claimed that Sevareid is so worried about world events that "he gets up in the morning and vomits about what's happening in Berlin."1 And Edward R. Murrow used to call him the
"gloomy Dane." Sevareid is a self-admitted pessimist
"about tomorrow" and an optimist "about the day after
tomorrow."

But Sevareid is more predictable than these
apparent contrasts would lead someone to believe. One
has to start with the assumption that beliefs and attitude
formation are influenced by environment and life ex-
periences. Sevareid's early childhood, spent on the
prairies of North Dakota, taught him a deep respect for
self-reliance. The parallel is not lost between his view
of the farmers' struggles for survival and the emerging
and underdeveloped nations' struggles.

Perhaps the most far reaching influences on
Sevareid result from his college and wartime experiences.
His forays into campus politics and philosophy taught him
much. Indeed, the influence of the Rationalists (see
p. 14) has been indelibly stamped on his psyche and is
evident in much of his thought today. The phrase "people
are pretty reasonable" or facsimiles thereof are sprinkled
liberally throughout or implied in discussion of such
topics as extremism, black problems and Vietnam. He may
have learned in college about the textbook theories of
fascism but it took his experiences in the 1934 Minneapolis
truck drivers' strike (see p. 20) to really feel in his
bones what is was. His observations during the war, both at home and overseas, brought him to some sharp realizations about extremism, totalitarianism and human nature.

Sevareid, Murrow and others performed a vital service during the war. Their work largely paved the way for the acceptance of the electronic media as viable news reporting media forms. And Sevareid learned a new respect for his profession and for the tenets thereof.

Sevareid has always been one of the most staunch defenders of "objective" reporting. In fact, many of his colleagues would consider him the epitome of this school of reporting. At the same time he has been aware of its drawbacks (see p. 39) and has been a strong advocate of the rights of columnists and commentators. Even though the column or the commentary is the place for personal opinion, he does not abuse the privilege, preferring instead to do far more explaining than advocating. Because of this, people feel that he is honest and has integrity, which most assuredly accounts in large measure for the immense respect and success he enjoys today.

There are some critics like Robert Cirino, who accuse Sevareid, among others, of covering up editorial viewpoint and personal attacks by judicious use of such
tactics as attributing their own feelings to the mouths of "many people" or "some individuals" or "a portion of Americans." Cirino claims that this is done to circumvent the necessity of giving opposing viewpoints the chance to reply.\(^2\) Cirino's latter argument falls somewhat flat with the knowledge that Sevareid has long advocated and argued for extension of network news to a one hour format, particularly with provision for rebuttal.

There are other reasons for Sevareid's eminent position. He brings to his viewers a sense of thorough preparedness, knowledge, analytical ability and expression of serious concern about domestic and world issues. He is a prodigious reader and when he speaks, his audience knows that he has done his homework.

One cannot help but be struck by Sevareid's words, spoken and written. Even though his mode of expression today is primarily the spoken word, he is at heart a writer. There are many who consider him to be par excellence. CBS White House correspondent Dan Rather considers Sevareid the best short essayist in the English language. His eloquence cannot be easily denied and when mixed with his not inconsiderable wit and analytical ability, it presents a potent force not to be taken lightly.
To pick just a few samples of his writing is difficult. Like a child suddenly given free choice of anything in the candy store, one is tempted to try everything but a few choice pieces will do. Some of Sevareid's comments about the late Senator Joseph McCarthy (see pp. 65-66) may have been humorous but one could not fail to catch the point. Through the efforts of men like Sevareid, McCarthy was finally brought to heel.

Sometimes Sevareid finds himself disgruntled with intellectuals and the following comment expresses some of his disaffection with them:

...intellectuals adorn life. We wouldn't be civilized without artists, intellectuals, writing, but there are certain characteristics about certain ones of them on social and political matters that drive me up the wall. They don't really like people. They love humanity—they just can't stand those people next door.3

Many of the issues of the day are highly emotional in nature but Sevareid is right there sorting the wheat from the chaff. Vice-President Agnew's 1970 blasts at the media brought Sevareid's quick verbal broadside (see pp. 42-43). And, in the highly-charged aftermath of the September 1971 uprising at Attica prison, he warned:

What has to be resisted is the propaganda assertion by the militant revolutionary groups that these prisoners like Miss Angela Davis are "political" prisoners. They are not in jail or in trouble for
Shortly after the release of the Warren Report on the assassination of President Kennedy, he commented in part:

What fed the conspiracy notion about the Kennedy assassination among many Americans was the sheer incongruity of the affair. All that power and majesty wiped out in an instant by one skinny, weak-chinned, little character. It was like believing that the Queen Mary had sunk without a trace, because of a log floating somewhere in the Atlantic, or that AT&T's stock had fallen to zero because a drunk somewhere tore out his telephone wires.

One finds in him a tremendous awareness of history and respect for its lessons and that in turn contributes to the perceptive foresight he displays. The classic example perhaps was his 1961 column where he predicted the possibility of Castro's nuclear blackmail (see pp. 86-89). A more recent example concerned President Nixon's strategy in nominating two Supreme Court judges to fill the seats vacated by Justices Hugo Black and John Harlan. Remembering the debaucle with the nominations of Haynsworth and Carswell, Mr. Nixon floated a trial balloon with six names before the public to test its reaction. Sevareid offered for consideration the following proposition:

But maybe there's another explanation. Mr. Nixon, a football fan, is a supreme example of a political player who learns from experience. Another donnybrook
in the Senate like those over Haynsworth and Carswell would be disastrous. And what the list of six may represent is just a fake sweep around right end to draw off the defending critics whereafter the real ball carrier will be observed plunging for the center of the line..."6

A few days later William Rehnquist and Lewis F. Powell, Jr. were nominated. And, of course one can hardly forget his dire prediction of the results of U.S. continuation of its program of democratizing Vietnam (see pp. 106-07).

An often overlooked but vital contribution of Sevareid is that not only does he report the course of world events but he has also helped to change it. Depending on one's viewpoint the changes may have been for the better or for the worse but one cannot deny the influence, whatever the degree, of the media. The broadcasts of Sevareid and the others from war-ravaged Europe most surely affected American opinion as Erik Barnouw noted (see pp. 1-2), just as surely as has American opinion on Vietnam been altered in part by men like him.

A study such as this one, which focuses on an individual should, in the best interest of research, seek to present all necessary facets of the individual, including criticism. It comes then as somewhat of a surprise to have found virtually no criticism of Mr. Sevareid
in the course of research. One might be tempted to attribute this to research design or wishful thinking but exhaustive research in a variety of areas revealed a paucity of material written about him, let alone much of a critical nature.

In conclusion, after extensive examination of hundreds of broadcasts, speeches, columns, books and articles both by and about Mr. Sevareid and from personal interviews with him and with colleagues, a very definite picture of him emerges. What emerges is a man of irrefutable integrity, subtle wit, extraordinary depth of insight, perceptive foresight and one who has shown a forthright ability to adapt and change. He is a man who has had a profound effect as a commentator and a writer on his field and on the country. He has earned the title, the voice of reason.
FOOTNOTES


3Statement by Eric Sevareid, personal interview, October 5, 1971.


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