

TV's Vietnam Coverage, Commercials for War?

New York — A psychologist who is noted for his studies of violence in the mass media has called TV's coverage of the war in Vietnam an "excellent" way to make viewers less sensitive to violence—military or non-military—and called battlefield film-clips "war commercials."

Dr. Frederic Wertham, author of "Seduction of the Innocent"—which helped to bring about a reduction in comic book sadism—and the recent "A Sign for Cain: An Exploration of Human Violence," disagreed with an ABC-TV executive who maintained that showing battle films on newscasts helps the cause of peace.

The executive, James C. Haggerty, former press secretary to President Eisenhower, claimed recently that daily exposure to the sights and sounds of the battlefield will "convince people that war is the least sensible way of settling disputes."

"My observations are different," wrote Dr. Wertham in a recent article published by The New York Times. "They are based on the reactions of teenagers in individual and group sessions, when discussing war and its representation on the screen. I have also studied adult audiences. The conclusion became inescapable that if you want to condition people to accept war and violence, the present TV treatment is excellent. Our channels of communication are hardening us to war rather than educating us against it."

He said that film clips of Vietnam fighting could be effective in promoting peace "if presented in a sufficiently severe frame and with proper reverence for human life."

"If a person is killed, that's a very serious thing," he added later in a phone interview. "But if you put that in between a deodorant ad and an ad for stretch bras, that's not a severe frame. That's a blasphemy against human life."

In the Times article, Dr. Wertham argued that the daily exposure to Vietnam fighting during network telecasts is having a dulling effect.

"The endless repetition of fragmented and fragmentary battle scenes," he said, has given them a clichéd character. "We have seen so many villages burn, so many soldiers going single file into the jungle, so many wounded being interviewed, so many helicopters taking off on desperate missions, that war is becoming routine and the corrosion of war commonplace."

The possible harmful effects of such coverage increased, he said, when it is realized that "no generation growing up in any epoch of history or in any place has had to face such a deluge of violence as modern American youth, now old enough to make history itself." He referred to such things as "kill toys," crime comic books, brutal movies and rough TV shows.

"The audience so conditioned from childhood on," Dr. Wertham wrote, "finds the Vietnam fighting pictures really tame stuff and is easily manipulated with regard to violence by the huge public relations establishment that has been constructed at the top of the military set-up. And the well-accomplished task of these public relations experts is to teach us not revulsion against war and violence, but receptivity to it. Practically every TV newscast now has some war pictures. In effect, these really are war commercials."

Meanwhile, TV's coverage of the war in Vietnam has been drawing criticism from other quarters. The New York Newspaper Women's Club recently gave an award for "best column" to Newsday TV critic Barbara Delatiner for a piece criticizing the networks because "the war has not been explored in the depth it warrants."

Earlier, a four-part series in TV Guide pointed up the networks' preference for battlefield film-clips over the more complicated issues of the war, which are not as dramatic on the TV screen and which are unlikely to help in the network rating war. One network battlefield correspondent told TV Guide:

"As a result, each time you go out, you've got to get something better and hotter than last time to satisfy New York (network headquarters). It's like a narcotics addiction, where you need increasingly larger dosages to have an effect. It's too bad, really, because so many of these military actions are meaningless in the long view. They're just tiny pieces of an immense jigsaw puzzle. But we're caught up in this competitive bind, and have convinced ourselves it's what the audiences want to see."

A summation by series author Niel Hickey seemed to corroborate Dr. Wertham's views on how current TV coverage of war has been influenced by what viewers learned from the mass media 10 and 20 years ago.



Morley Safer telecasting from Vietnam.

"It is a fact that the biggest battles of the war go on in the minds of Vietnamese and U.S. officials who are searching for answers to some of the thorniest problems any young nation has faced in the post-World War II period. But those battles are not visual. . . . So the U.S. networks opt for the battles they can cover—jungle gun fights, artillery bombardments, air strikes, the slogging day-to-day life of soldiers: a face of the war recognizable to every American who grew up watching John Wayne action movies." — (Catholic Press Features)

Frosh Elect Becket Student

A Becket Hall student, William Zielinski, has been elected one of three freshman representatives to the Student Board of Governors at St. John Fisher College. He is a graduate of St. Andrew's Seminary High School and the son of Mr. and Mrs. William S. Zielinski, 45 Van Campen St., Dansville.

Also chosen by their classmates to represent the Class of '70 in the student government at the college were Daniel Mitchell of New York City and Robert Laird of Paterson, N.J.

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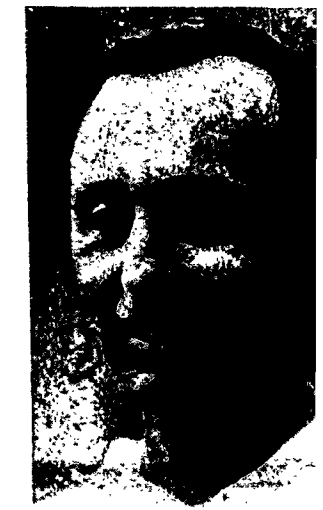
Africa, Asia, I

7 Priests

A number of area priests truly being "fishers of men" far-flung mission posts in Africa, in South America and in the Pacific.

Father Michael O'Sullivan, Sacred Heart parish, Rochester, has been teaching at St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary in Nairobi, Kenya on the no longer "dark continent" since 1961. He is a member of the Dominican Order, New York Province. Father O'Sullivan is a professor of Biblical Theology and Ethics in this land where leopards, giraffe and baboons are regular callers.

Built with Propagation of Faith funds in 1963, at the cost of \$750,000, the seminary is a typical African blend of old and new. The seminary



FATHER O'SULLIVAN

Josephine Dooley Mass Offered at St. Anne's

Bishop Kearney offered the Funeral Mass for Miss Josephine M. Dooley in St. Anne's Church, Rochester, Saturday, Dec. 9.

Miss Dooley, a registered nurse, who resided at 103 Redfern Drive, died Dec. 7, 1966.

Also at the Requiem Mass were Right Reverend Monsignors John E. Maney, P.A., John M. Duffy, William J. Naughton and the Reverend Fathers James Moynihan, Paul Wohrab, John Wheaton, John Rosse, Bruce Ammering, Robert Bradler and Edwin Metzger.

Born in Livonia, Miss Dooley attended high school there. Coming to Rochester after graduation she entered St. Mary's School of Nursing where she worked after attaining her R.N. She was supervisor of St. Joseph's Hall at the hospital. She entered special nursing in later years.

Surviving are three sisters, Miss Dooley and Mrs. John (Margaret) Cooney of Rochester and Mrs. William (Ann) Finnegan of Honcoy Falls, several nieces and nephews.

Arrangements by N. J. Miller's Son Funeral Home, Mt. Hope Ave.

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