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Daley's media

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MARK LANE

An incident occurred some months ago that I thought to be quite amusing but not sufficiently pertinent to report on. Recent events have tended to make the episode more relevant, so I relate it now.

A curious organization in New York called The Dutch Treat Club had invited me to address its members in connection with the publication of "A Citizen's Dissent," my critique of the media. The organization is comprised of people in the media—Time magazine executives, New York Times editors, the leading editors at the leading book publishing houses—indeed, the very people I had written the book about. My host wrote, in his invitation to me, that although many representatives of the press would be present, I could speak freely since it was the custom of the club to meet sub rosa and that nothing that I related would be reported upon. I replied that it sounded like a fair descrip-

tion of one of my press commentaries.

I was informed at first that I could not be accompanied by my wife since "all luncheon meetings of The Dutch Treat Club are stag." This did little to alter my original impression that some media personnel are a little odd. In any event, I did speak—and with brutal candor—to an audience almost entirely in path and silence. There were a few exceptions. Some visiting English journalists were most kind in their remarks after the lecture; so was Lowell Thomas.

John Chapman, the drama critic for the Daily News (the only newspaper in New York whose type is set with a stone axe, in keeping with the publisher's commitment to a previous age), appeared to be unperturbed by my words—but then, he had prepared himself for the onslaught with time well spent at the bar. The only question in my mind at the time was whether Chapman, the chairman of the group, would be able to stay

on his feet long enough to introduce me. He did, but in fairness to the brew served up in the adjoining room I should relate that the introduction took approximately ten seconds. It took him that long to remember my name.

You have, no doubt, begun to wonder what happened to the promised amusement. That aspect of the story commences at this point. At the conclusion of my remarks an elderly gentleman, shaking as if palsied, came pushing and hopping up to my table. He was muttering, all the way, "Not true. What about me? He knows who I am." I turned to him, as did all of us in that section of the room. I said, "May I help you, sir?" He replied, "You lie and you know it. What do you mean the press didn't print stories? What about me?" I answered that I had not said that the press did not publish news about the assassination, quite to the contrary, the press was filled with the police version of the events. What I had said, of course, was that for a considerable period

of time there were no network radio or television programs that permitted the other side to be heard. "What about me? What about me?" he insisted. I asked who he was. "You know me very well. Don't pretend you don't know who I am!" he shouted. He was so certain that I knew him I began to wonder why I did not. My first thought was that he was some mad relative who I had met as a child.

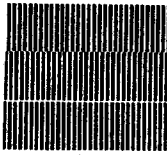
My second, that he was Walter Winchell. I apologized for not knowing who he was, stuck out my hand, introduced myself, and asked for his name. "Oh yes, you know me. I wrote 19 stories about Oswald and I have 17 million readers," was his reply. That eliminates the Relatives, I thought, but Winchell looms as a real possibility.

"Please tell me your name," I implored. This time he informed me that he had written 17 stories for 19 million readers. Finally the little old man said, "I am Henry J. Taylor and you know it all along. Why didn't you mention me

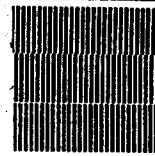
in your speech? You said only the establishment view was presented. Well, I wrote 19 stories." I did recall reading some of them, published in the now-defunct New York World-Telegram. "But?" I said. "You said Oswald was the lone assassin and that anyone who doubted it was mad."

"Well he was. He was. Everybody knows that," he replied. I tried to explain that his unthinking and uneducated articles symbolized the cause of my complaint—but several other journalists shook their heads, as if to say "He can't understand you," and I finally abandoned the effort. I was tempted to tell this story when, later, Taylor violated the ethics of the club by publishing a very inaccurate article about my speech. But even with his 17 million (or is it 19 million?) readers he seemed oddly irrelevant.

Now, however, he emerges as one of the spokesmen for the Chicago branch of the police establishment. The press refers to
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him as "an expert world commentator who has seen violence all over the world." His evaluation of the Chicago street scene—"the police behaved in the only conceivable way you can behave in the face of one of these frenzied human movements — unless you want to let it rage unchecked." The line emerging from the authoritarian-minded is that the television cameras and the newspaper photographs cannot be believed. Taylor challenged the authenticity of the TV and press coverage, stating that the acts of the demonstrators were not presented. His approach — and that of Mayor Daley — is that the viewer should not rely upon what he has heard and seen but, rather, upon the authorities who will place it all in comfortable perspective in a non-threatening and acceptable context. Such anti-intellectual appeals have, of course, been made before, but rarely in this country quite so successfully. Less than two weeks after the Democratic convention had concluded, the Associated Press reported, "In a flurry of white envelopes and purple prose, thousands of people are taking the three television networks to task for their coverage of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago."

Daley, who had dominated the tube for a week (and whose legions, forewarned to shoot to kill in case of looting, swept demonstrators and spectators alike before them with clubs and blackjacks in the one display of equal treatment to be found in America's second city that week), demanded another free hour of prime television time from all three networks. They declined.

Cronkite had already surrendered in an interview with Daley as the convention ended, and CBS evidently felt that it had no more to give. NBC and ABC offered prime interview programs to Daley, but the Chicago Mayor is intelligent enough to know that his cause would hardly be aided by a free exchange.

Instead, he accepted an offer by Metromedia for a full hour. Approximately one hundred network affiliates, in addition to the five Metromedia stations, carried Daley's answer. The production was credited to "The City of Chicago" with acknowledgement for the film contributions of the Chicago Police Department, the Illinois National Guard, United Press International and various television stations and the networks.

For me, the highlight of the program was the appearance of Patrolman Robert J. Garber, who

said, "Probably some innocent by-

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standers were hurt, but they shouldn't have been there." The place that the bystanders should not have been? The streets of an American city.

There were a few inaccuracies, of course. The narrator, a Mr. Frank Babcock (who appears quite regularly in other commercials), said that the Poor Peoples' campaign mule train "had to be rescued by the police from the surging, menacing mob." I was but three feet from the mule train when the police halted it on Michigan Avenue, despite of the cries from the demonstrators to "Let them through. Let them through." I was but three feet from the mule train when the police "rescued" the wagons by firing tear gas at the train. I heard one of the wagon's occupants saying that they had been better treated in Mississippi.

We did expect a few errors, and we were not disappointed. We expected, as well, that the police would finally show us the footage that the networks had suppressed—the violent acts of the demonstrators that made the police force necessary. Alas, there we were disappointed. In spite of the many cameramen belonging to the various police authorities present on the streets, not a single act of violence that could be related to a single demonstrator was presented.

An odd assortment of weapons was displayed, allegedly taken from unnamed and evidently unknown persons. There were some bricks, some glass and some broken slats from park benches. Had MetroMedia given the other side an hour to speak of the weapons of its adversaries we might have seen a more formidable collection, including a tank, miles of barbed wire, many machine guns, thousands of clubs and blackjacks, thousands of rifles, gas masks, pistols, cans of Mace and thous-

ands of canisters of tear gas. Of America's children, purportedly armed with slats from a park bench, one of Daley's police spies observed on the TV spectacular, "They want to take over our country." To which one might well respond, "Well, it's time someone else did!" The agents of repression have had it for too long.

I intend to return to this subject in the future. I have, in fact, just completed a book about the events of Chicago. During the days that I lived in the Chicago streets I was fortunate in being accompanied by an excellent and courageous photographer, Carolyn Mugar. Her photographs appear in the book, "Chicago Eyewitness." I am certain that those who continue to show concern about what took place outside the Democratic Convention will be told that they are obsessed. This, then, makes for my second obsession—the first being my concern with the assassins of President Kennedy. The two matters are not unrelated, I fear. What this country lost that day in November, 1963, might have been recaptured during August, 1968, but the storm troopers took to the streets to make certain that representative government did not return to America.

There are those who insist that there is nothing wrong with this

country; and there are those who acknowledge the ills, but add that nothing can be done to save it. I have read my history well: I have read and know of Hitler's rise to power and of the importance of the Reichstag fire; I know as well that there were some Germans (most of them no longer alive) who were obsessed with those events. Not enough—but some. Here there is still time.

Even within the bowels of the Democratic Party there are men and women who sense what is happening. Less than one week after the Convention, Mrs. Jacqueline Flenner, the Democratic candidate for Congress for the 22nd Congressional District in Illinois, withdrew from the race. She said that she believes that a party "whose leaders only mildly protest the atrocities committed by the Chicago police in full view of the world is a bankrupt party."

The Governor of Vermont and seven other delegates to the convention made a stopover in New York City on their flight home. In New York, they dispatched a telegram to Mayor Daley. It read:

"Dear Mayor Daley: We and other members of the Vermont delegation are not yet home, but our arrival in New York City signifies that we are free once again. We do not believe the people of Chicago or this country will long endure the police state you imposed on freedom-loving Americans who came to your city to demonstrate the democratic process. We are pleased to be liberated from your streets, as well as from your amphitheatre."