

IN THIS ISSUE

The role of the media in conflict is one of the most controversial issues in the study of contemporary international relations. This is particularly the case with respect to the Vietnam war and political terrorism. In the Autumn of 1988, the Centre for Conflict Studies held its second annual conference on the theme "The Media and Modern Warfare." Papers from that conference, embracing the study of the media's role in terrorism and in the Vietnam war, provide the thematic core of this issue.

In his keynote address, noted British journalist and military historian Max Hastings takes issue with a number of myths and shibboleths concerning the relationship between the military and the media in wartime. He challenges the belief that reporters ought to strive for absolute objectivity while covering their own nations' wars. He asserts that, far from undermining the war effort, media coverage is essential for sustaining the national will of democracies in a protracted war and is also vital to the morale of the fighting men in the field. With this in mind, he urges the military profession to overlook its negative stereotypes of the media and to work cooperatively with the best that the profession has to offer.

Clarence Wyatt sets out to examine critically the comparative quality of reporting of three major Vietnam war battles in six American newspapers of national, regional and local standing. His exhaustive survey of their coverage yields patterns which challenge the popular images of the adversarial role of the press in the war. This kind of detailed analysis is essential if the media's role is ever to be placed in proper historical perspective.

Ralph Dowling calls into question the notion that media coverage is a major 'cause' of terrorism. Using a methodology elaborated by communications theorist Kenneth Burke, he demonstrates that terrorism serves a variety of social action functions that are pursued independent of any desire to publicize the terrorists' cause. Dowling's essay constitutes a provocative and useful contribution to the scholarly debate on the subject.

The issue is rounded out with four reviews of books on the Vietnam War. In the context of the theme "the media and warfare," Timothy Lomperis' review of Neil Sheehan's Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of John Paul Vann deserves particular attention. Both the story and its writing embody the tension and contradictions of the military-media relationship.

The opinions expressed in the articles, reviews and other contributions are those of the authors alone, and do not necessarily represent those of the Centre for Conflict Studies or of the University of New Brunswick.

Military Historians Take Note!

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCE

Clio and Mars: Themes in the Utility of Military History

4th Annual Conflict Studies Conference

University of New Brunswick

28-29 September 1990

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Nations and Nationalism in the USSR

Held at

The University of New Brunswick
Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada

October 5 and 6, 1990

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