

media should gather and report more news of the developing world..."—some more dangerous than the ill they were designed to cure, such as recommending that Western news organizations start their own Third World newspapers. "Such a course would be fraught with political risk," Hachten concedes, although "The World Paper," a newspaper supplement carried monthly by Third World publications on three continents, is edited in Boston.

Wilbur Schramm, a measurer of readership and listenership for a quarter-century, and L. Erwin Atwood, head of the Mass Communication Research Center at Southern Illinois University, cover the same ground and move a step beyond. They have tried to determine if Masmoudi's complaints have any foundation. They studied the flow and use of the copy of the four international news services for the week of December 4-11, 1977, in nineteen Far Eastern newspapers ranging geographically from *The Statesman of New Delhi* to *Dong-a Ilbo* of Seoul. Pleading funding problems, they measured readership in but one paper, *The Bulletin Today* of Manila.

Others, notably Robert L. Stevenson of the University of North Carolina, and Edward T. Pinch, have conducted similar studies that produced similar results. Schramm and Atwood conclude that the Western services provided their Asian subscribers, at least for that week, with more Asian news than they could print; and the newspapers, in turn, still printed more than their readers bothered to read. More than 50 per cent of agency news reports to Asian customers dealt with news of the developing world. Although they left unmeasured the quantity of Third World news flowing to the West, the authors concluded that statements demeaning the quantity of news of poor countries in Western reporting were "at the least extremely dubious, or simply incorrect." And they added: "There was greater richness available in the news than the readers of Asian dailies get to see. And by no stretch of reasoning or imagination can the blame for this be laid wholly upon the international news services."

But the authors seem to be so unaware of the political controls under which their specimen news-

papers operated that they undermine the credibility of their own conclusions. In seven countries representing fourteen newspapers, governments formally and informally control news content. Editors in Indonesia, Iran, South Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Thailand are not free to select news. Only in India, then emerging from Mrs. Gandhi's Emergency, and in Hong Kong did editors have freedom from government interference.

In reporting their readership survey, the authors describe *The Bulletin Today* as "one of the most respected newspapers in the Philippines." They neglected to point out that, under martial law, few Filipinos respected any newspapers permitted to publish; *Bulletin Today's* two rivals were owned and edited by relatives of Imelda Marcos, the nation's redoubtable First Lady; and its publisher, Swiss-born, Philippine-citizen Hans Menzi (not Menzel as spelled in the book) is a former aide-de-camp to President Ferdinand E. Marcos. As a result, the researchers appear to be remarkably ingenuous as they report how bewildered they were at the newspaper's low readership. Readers read 8 per cent of its news content, less than half the average indicated in 130 surveys in America. *The Bulletin Today* no more satisfied the interests of Philippine readers on the one day selected for the study—September 14, 1978—than *Pravda* reflected the Soviet Union.

Filipinos are intensely political. According to the survey, 25 per cent of readers, the highest single percentage, read what was categorized as "domestic political" news. But such news made up only 5 per cent of the paper's content. This can be explained in part by the fact that political news in the Philippines is almost totally government controlled. But "development news"—information associated with economics, finance, and development projects—is favored by the Philippine and other Third World governments. It is often supplied in quantity by the governments and is self-serving, making governments appear productive. Twenty-nine per cent of the *Bulletin Today* report was "development news." Six percent of its readers read it.

There's nothing new in the efforts of governments to control news.

Hachten recognizes such a tendency in his use of a quotation a century old from an editor of the *Times* of London: "The duty of the journalist is to present his readers not such things as statecraft would wish them to know, but the truth as near as he can attain it."

Government complaints about news coverage are not limited to the Third World, either. Caught in the crossfire between his secretary of state, Alexander Haig, and his then national security advisor, Richard Allen, Ronald Reagan suddenly noticed the world was watching...and he reacted to the press just as would the most manipulative of information commissars. "And I could appeal to your patriotism," Reagan told reporters to whom he was venting his anger over rumors of "absolutely no foundation," "because I tell you they're very destructive to our dealings worldwide..."

None of this is to insist that governments, politicians, civil servants, or ordinary citizens have no right to complain. They do, and should. The scope for improvement of news coverage, be it from a Boston neighborhood or an international summit, is infinite. The pressure of unhappy news consumers as an impetus for improvement is priceless. But whatever is wrong with foreign news coverage—or news coverage anywhere—it is not going to be helped by government intervention in the reporting and processing of news. Maybe, someday, someone will undertake a survey to prove that contention. [wv]

YELLOW RAIN: A JOURNEY THROUGH THE TERROR OF CHEMICAL WARFARE

by Sterling Seagrave
(M. Evans & Co.; 316 pp.; \$11.95)

Albert L. Huebner

At a press conference in Berlin last September, Secretary of State Alexander Haig charged that new agents of chemical warfare have been used in Southeast Asia, declaring, "We now have firm evidence of utilization of such weapons..." The "firm evidence" produced the next day by the State Department consisted of a

"YELLOW RAIN": THE SOVIET RESPONSE

LETTER TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SOVIET UNION

December 3, 1981

The representatives of the United States of America in various United Nations bodies have recently circulated allegations to the effect that cases of the use of chemical and toxin weapons have taken place in countries of South-East Asia and in Afghanistan. In this connection, irresponsible references are being made, directly or indirectly, to some kind of participation by the Soviet Union in the alleged violations of the 1925 Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare and of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. Those making such allegations, which they know to be false, offer as the basis for them totally unsupported "reports" in the press and other mass information media, and more recently "physical evidence" allegedly obtained by United States specialists in South-East Asia...

In spite of the "abundance of witnesses" to the alleged use of chemical weapons, there has been no exhibition of any physical evidence (structural parts of ammunition, containers, fragments and the like) to indicate such use. The groundlessness of the "reports" of mythical cases of the use of chemical weapons by the Soviet Union in Afghanistan is further demonstrated by the testimony of J.-M. Monod, leader of the delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross at Peshawar, Pakistan, who has stated that ICRC doctors have never encountered a

single patient exhibiting any signs of the effect of toxic substances (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 22 October 1981)....

An indirect acknowledgement that the "reports" on the use of chemical weapons by the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and by Viet Nam in Laos and Kampuchea are without any foundation is contained in the note verbale dated 14 September 1981 from the Permanent Representative of the United States addressed to the Secretary-General, in which she states that even United States experts who had studied the matter reached the conclusion "that no known traditional chemical warfare agent alone or in combination with others could produce all of the symptoms described or cause death to occur as rapidly as has been reported."...

Obviously, this circumstance forced the authors of the "reports" on the use of chemical weapons to engage in the search for new "arguments" that would render their fabrications more plausible. Consequently, the above-mentioned note of 14 September 1981 from the United States, communicating the results of the tests supposed to have been carried out in the area of the Kampuchean-Thai border, trots out a version about the use in that area of toxins of the trichothecene group. It is also alleged that the level of the substances tested, which are naturally produced by fusarium fungi, were nearly 20 times greater than the level occurring as a result of natural intoxication, and that they "do not occur" naturally in warm climates, yet facilities needed to produce them artificially do not exist in South-East Asia. The authors of this document undoubtedly know that in particular areas of South-East Asia the natural level of intoxication by myco-toxins of the trichothecene group has not yet been studied, and that this level may be hundreds or thousands of times higher or lower, depending on the particular conditions.

...As reported...in the *Washington Post* dated 23 September 1981, the vegetation used in the tests could have been

single leaf-and-twig sample taken from a combat zone in Kampuchea. Given the skimpiness of the evidence and the paucity of details about how it was gathered, many scientific experts expressed skepticism.

As this is being written, the State Department has presented to Congress what it describes as "smoking gun" evidence. Whatever the reaction to this new information, Sterling Seagrave's thoughtful and deeply disturbing book leaves no doubt that we've entered a new age of chemical warfare, in which we'll have to contend with new, and particularly nasty, political and moral problems.

Seagrave argues convincingly that Soviet-made superpoisons were field-tested in North Yemen nearly twenty years ago and were used more recently by Vietnamese proxies against dissenting Hmong hill people in Laos and by Russian units against defiant

guerrilla forces in Afghanistan. *Who* was wielding the new superpoison was clear; *what* was being used remained a mystery. The blistering and convulsions that afflicted victims are characteristic of first- and second-generation chemical agents such as mustard gas and nerve gas, respectively. The massive hemorrhaging that accompanied these symptoms pointed to some new and dreadful third-generation agent, its origin lying somewhere in the terrifying world of biotoxins.

We learn of ornamental plants with deadly poisonous seeds, of species of plankton and coral that secrete toxins capable of killing a human being in seconds, and of the puffer fish, served as a delicacy in Japan, from whose organs the CIA has developed a powerful poison. But these substances, like the more familiar snake venoms, have charac-

teristics that are inconsistent with the observations made in Yemen, Laos, and Afghanistan.

The search for the elusive superpoison didn't hit pay dirt until it turned to a nightmarish killer from the Dark Ages. Surprisingly, the greatest cause of the pestilence that beset this period, aside from contagious diseases spread by vermin, was bread. Seagrave observes that on the grains "there grew such a curse of deadly fungus that it is a wonder anyone survived at all." The prevalence of these fungal poisons, or mycotoxins, declined in most of Europe as farming practices improved. In Russia, however, the peculiarities of climate combined with periodic disruptions of agriculture to produce epidemics as late as the 1940s, when an outbreak killed an estimated 300,000 people.

The pieces of the puzzle now fall

contaminated by fungus spores, while the toxin content could increase while being transported. On the other hand, the newspaper points out that the possibility of natural contamination by T-2 toxin in Asia was hardly studied previously. As for the toxin itself, according to the newspaper it is widely used in the United States itself for research purposes and may be sent in the mail. It is quite clear that such a system of transportation could not occur in the case of highly toxic substances intended for use in warfare....

...[O]ne of the descriptions of the effects of the use of chemical weapons makes it necessary to draw the conclusion that the alleged substances used [are] simultaneously capable of producing nerve paralysis, skin blisters, suffocation and incapacitation, that they can cause prolonged hemorrhage even after the death of the victims, affect the skin and tissues only in specific places, possess phytotoxic properties, and so on, although it is well known to science the world over that substances which possess such complex properties do not exist in nature.

No less untenable in this context are the "reports" about the physical properties of poisonous substances which apparently are able spontaneously to change from a compound liquid state to a solid state and then into a gas.

It is also well known that the United States itself resorted to the widespread use of chemical weapons in the course of the aggression which it unleashed in South-East Asia....

More than 2 million Vietnamese fell victim to the chemical warfare, 3,500 of whom died, while the others are still suffering from its effects. United States chemical weapons were also widely used, without limitation and without even a thought for existing international laws, in Kampuchea and Laos. In Kampuchea alone, up to 85 per cent of the forests were affected and more than 50 per cent of the animals died from its effects, while thousands of Kampucheans are suffering from various diseases caused

by poisonous substances....

...According to chemical weapons experts, the United States already possesses the world's largest arsenal of chemical weapons. The stockpiles of toxic substances of the sarin and VX-2 type come to 45-55 thousand tons. United States warehouses in the United States, Europe, Japan and the Pacific hold more than 3 million rounds of chemical ammunition, totalling more than 150,000 tons. United States army weapons include more than 90 different types of chemical ammunition.

In order to expand this arsenal even further, the United States decided to build a new plant in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, for the production of a completely new generation of chemical weapons, the binary ones....When the new plant is finished and put into operation the United States will possess new chemical ammunition for basic artillery systems, Big Eye airborne chemical bombs, Lance tactical binary missile warheads, winged missiles and spraying devices and cassettes....

...When the General Assembly adopted a decision on the signing of a convention prohibiting only bacteriological weapons, the USSR in 1972 joined the other socialist countries in submitting to the Committee on Disarmament a specific draft convention on the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and their destruction. The draft of this convention is still on the negotiating table in the Committee on Disarmament. Since 1976 the USSR has been conducting active bilateral negotiations with the United States on that issue but through no fault of its own, in 1980 those negotiations were broken off by the Americans, who have since shown no readiness to resume them.

The Soviet Mission to the United Nations takes the occasion to stress again the willingness of the USSR to resume immediately the Soviet-American negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons....

into place. The deadly substances produced by the fungal growth, designated T-2 toxins, cause precisely the symptoms observed in combat zones, and notably the spectacular bleeding. Furthermore, Soviet scientists have been intensively studying these toxins since the 1930s. No doubt this work was originally directed at preventing outbreaks of the dread disease they caused, but another goal emerged. Seagrave reports that of fifty articles on T-2 toxins in the open Soviet literature, nearly half deal with defining optimum conditions for biosynthesizing the compounds. There is no benign use for this technology, but it is the source of enormous quantities of a deadly poison that can be sprayed by aircraft as yellow rain—and almost certainly *has* been in Yemen, Laos, and Afghanistan.

Seagrave's investigation, prompted by Soviet use of chemical weapons,

was disquieting in an unexpected way: "The net result of my examination of the records has been, first, anger and dismay at what I have found the Soviet Union engaged in, but, second, even greater dismay at what I have discovered about the friendly camp." What he discovered was that the U.S. experience with chemical warfare has been "one of unrelenting folly compounded with fraud."

The story of defoliant use during the Vietnam war is well known; that particular folly has come home to the U.S. in the bodies of thousands of American soldiers who were exposed to the chilling dangers of "Agent Orange." But a potentially greater threat has been sitting on our doorstep for years. During the 1950s the Department of Defense procured a vast tonnage of nerve gas, failing to check on whether our allies, to whom

it was to be shipped, would accept it. No, it turned out, they would not. Leakage and mishandling led to a series of accidents the causes of which were denied by the Pentagon until denial was no longer possible. Eventually, even attempts to move these deadly chemicals by rail drew angry protest from the communities through which they pass. Today's storage sites, such as the one just ten miles from downtown Denver, represent a major catastrophe waiting to happen.

The very presence of threatening chemical weapons on American soil will surprise many citizens. The Nixon ban on biological weapons more than a decade ago, and an accompanying public relations campaign, created the impression that the whole chemical and biological warfare program was being abandoned. But as Seagrave shows in a detailed account of de-

velopments since the ban, "shielded behind a barricade of lies, evasions, and false moves, the defense establishment resumed its research and development of war poisons and biologicals." He concludes that the ban "was in the end just a grandstand play, an empty boast, a hollow fraud."

Seagrave acknowledges a need to respond to the Soviet chemical threat. He advocates a small, efficient, and well-equipped strike force on the model of existing counterterrorist units. This would serve to deter Soviet use of chemical weapons without creating larger and more dangerous arsenals of such weapons. It is obvious too that civilians, particularly in NATO countries, are as vulnerable to chemical attack as their armed forces; and Seagrave accepts the view of the far-sighted Swiss and Swedes that in chemical warfare the best offense is a good defense. He argues that the many billions of dollars needed for the contemplated binary stockpile would be better spent for available high-quality protective gear.

This huge new arsenal of binary

weapons—comparatively harmless chemical components kept separate until the weapon is fired—forms the backbone of the Pentagon's response to Soviet chemical warfare. Seagrave rejects creation of a massive stockpile of binaries on the grounds that this approach is likely to replicate past follies. We cannot be certain that our NATO allies would accept these weapons. Furthermore, new concerns about spills, leaks, and explosions will arise, since binary components can be described as "safe" only when compared to the deadliest of toxins. Above all, once there is "a breakdown in the public willpower and resistance to binaries, a philosophical and visceral human safety factor will be gone forever," leaving open the door to "unlimited military development of yet unforeseen poisons...."

In a world already menaced by too many "unforeseen poisons," the moral force of public resistance, applied on an international scale, is likely to be the greatest defense against the irreversible degradation of the planet. [WV]

not only has proved to be, in some areas, an effective countermeasure to religion but also represents a significant change in Soviet tactics and their understanding of themselves. Soviet socialist ritual is being endorsed in a society whose revolutionary spirit had heretofore adamantly opposed ritual and championed rationality.

Fletcher's main task in *Soviet Believers* is to evaluate the Soviet sociological research on religion and then derive from it some general conclusions about the state of religion in the USSR today. Western suspicion of Soviet data is not surprising, given the manipulations that were endemic in the Stalinist era. But it can linger too long and hurt more than help Western attempts at gaining greater insights into the inner dynamics of Soviet society. Thus the questions that Fletcher addresses are critical: How reliable are Soviet data, and can Western scholars use them with any degree of confidence? Fletcher concludes that when some relatively apparent weaknesses in Soviet research are taken into account, Soviet data can be used with assurance; they are even essential for achieving a realistic and differentiated appraisal of religion's status in the USSR.

Some of the problems Fletcher identifies are not exclusive to Soviet research, but they do take on a peculiarly Soviet coloration precisely because of the complex Soviet socio-religious context. For example, Soviet researchers, like their Western counterparts, face the task of circumventing their own ideological predilections as they frame their questions and deal with their subjects. As might be expected, Soviet sociologists' sympathies are with the system rather than with religion. But beyond that, Soviet sociologists often have an inadequate understanding of religion and its workings because concrete scholarly research on specific religions was begun only in the '50s and is still incomplete. If any religion is at all familiar to these researchers it is Russian Orthodoxy; and regardless of the religion being studied, the tendency is to couch questions within an Orthodox framework. Fletcher notes that this can be a greater obstacle to the study of minority religions than even the researcher's Marxist-Leninist orientation.

SOVIET BELIEVERS: THE RELIGIOUS SECTOR OF THE POPULATION

by William C. Fletcher

(The Regents Press of Kansas; ix+259 pp.; \$27.50)

THE RITES OF RULERS: RITUAL IN INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY—THE SOVIET CASE

by Christel Lane

(Cambridge University Press; ix+308 pp.; \$47.50/\$14.95)

Judith M. Mills

For obvious reasons there has been great concern in the Western world over the present struggle between religion and atheism in the Soviet Union. These fresh studies document some unexpected turns in that struggle. Because they describe movement and countermovement, the two are interlocking and complementary; together they provide a picture that begins to approach reality. Each uses resource materials that only rarely have been tapped by Western observers, and then never so comprehensively.

Soviet Believers treats the status of conventional religions in Soviet society, using Soviet sociological research on religions and religious practices.

Most of this kind of concrete, data-gathering research by the Soviets has been done only since the late 1950s with the rebirth of sociology as an academic discipline. It serves two purposes. One is information-bearing for both the Soviets themselves and for foreign analysts who cannot gather their own data. The other is purely functional and tactical: To combat religion, which has remained a vital force in Soviet society, the Soviets have to have a more concrete understanding of its specifics.

The Rites of Rulers argues that the Soviet worldview is itself a "political religion," and Lane traces the development of rituals that express and inculcate its tenets. This phenomenon