TV ETCHINGS IN THE MINDS OF LATIN AMERICANS: CONSERVANTISM, MATERIALISM, AND CONFORMISM*

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* The opinions expressed in this paper are solely the responsibility of the author, not of the institution for which he works.

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ABSTRACT

This paper has four parts: a summary review of conceptualizations of "the images of the world the mass media portray"; an examination of some Latin American television studies on this subject; a research-oriented analysis of the main images emerging from those studies; and a reference to U.S. influence on the content of the television programs aired in Latin America.

The first part concludes that the images are acquired from experience with nature and society, and are clearly influenced today by the mass media, and strongly contribute to determining social behaviour.

The second part presents, in some detail, a number of negative images identified in the Latin American studies reviewed. It starts by briefly touching on the world-wide classical motive of concern, violence, and moves on to a first set of broader socio-cultural stereotypes identified in radio and television "soap operas", stressing possible individual escapism and collective catharsis effects leading to resignation within the existing social order. The subject is pursued through other studies which yield images containing stereotypes linked to "racism", "romanticism", and "providencialism", among others. This includes at times, initial evidences of effects on women and children audiences, especially in terms of credulity and imitation tendencies. Finally, attention is payed to similar findings in studies with cartoon and educational television programs, which also yield other images regarded as noxious for the region's culture and development.

The third part brings out, in a composite manner, the 12 main images detected by the studies:

Individualism	Conformism
Elitism	Self-Defeatism
Racism	Providencialism
Materialism	Authoritarianism
Adventurism	Romanticism
Conservantism	Aggressiveness

A definition is then offered for each of these major images and it is noted that they may not be unidimensional as some of them appear to include concomitant sub-images in cluster-like formations. Also it is suggested that there may be systemic relations among them, a possibility that deserves the attention of research. Furthermore, it is proposed that three of the images --conservantism, materialism, and conformism-- may be more powerful than the others and, in fact, subsume them. On the other hand, attention is invited to the possibility of research based on differentiation by the main types of psychological stimulation TV is assumed to utilize: "narcotic-analgesic" and "exciting-energizing".

The fourth and last part reproduces opinions, and presents supporting data, indicating that the influence of the U.S.A. on Latin American television content tends to be decisive.

The paper's bibliography includes a selection of Latin American studies relative to images in mass media other than television. (L.R.B.)

BELTRAN S., Luis Ramiro. Empreintes de la télévision dans l'esprit des Latino-Américains: conservatisme, materialisme et conformisme. Bogota, 1976, Université de Leicester, Angleterre.

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COMPTE-RENDU

Cet essai comprend quatre parties: un bref compte-rendu des concepts des "images du monde que les mass media présentent"; un examen de quelques études de la télévision latinoaméricaine sur ce sujet; une analyse, orientée vers la recherche, des principales images qui se détachent de ces études; et une référence à l'influence des Etats-Unis sur le contenu des programmes de télévision diffusés en Amérique Latine.

La première partie arrive à la conclusion que les images sont acquises à partir de l'expérience avec la nature et la société, qu'elles sont nettement influencées aujourd'hui par les mass media, et qu'elles contribuent fortement à déterminer un comportement social.

La deuxième partie présente, en entrant quelque peu dans les détails, un certain nombre d'images négatives rencontrées dans les études latinoaméricaines examinées. Elle commence par un bref aperçu du thème d'intérêt mondial qu'est la violence et de là passe à un premier ensemble plus large de stéréotypes socio-culturels qu'on trouve dans les "feuilletons" à la radio et à la télévision, mettant l'accent sur de possibles effets d'évasions individuelles et de catharsis collective menant à la résignation à l'intérieur de l'ordre social existant. Le thème se poursuit a travers d'autres études qui présentent des images contenant des stéréotypes ayant trait au "racisme", au "romanticisme" et au "providentialisme" entre autres. Cela inclue parfois les premiers signes d'effets sur un auditoire de femmes et d'enfants, particulièrement pour ce qui est des tendances à la crédulité et à l'imitation. Finalement, on considère les résultats similaires dans des études sur les dessins animés et les programmes de télé-enseignement qui présentent aussi d'autres images considerées comme nuisibles pour la culture et le développement de la région.

La troisième partie met en évidence, d'une manière composite, les douze principales images décelées à travers les études:

Individualisme
Elitisme
Racisme
Matérialisme
Aventurisme
Conservatisme
Conformisme
Défaitisme
Providentialisme
Autoritarisme
Romanticisme
Agressivité

Une définition est ensuite proposée pour chacune de ces images principales et on fait remarquer qu'elles peuvent ne pas avoir une seule dimension puisque certaines d'entre elles s'avèrent accompagnées de sous-images concomitantes en chaîne. On laisse apparaître aussi qu'il peut y avoir entre elles des rapports de système, possibilité qui mérite l'attention d'une recherche. En outre, il est suggéré que trois des images --conservatisme, matérialisme et conformisme--peuvent être plus fortes que les autres et, en fait, les inclure. D'autre part, on attire l'attention sur la possibilité de recherche fondée sur la différentiation par les principaux types de stimulation psychologique que la télévision est censée utiliser: "narcotique-analgésique" et "excitant-énergétique".

La quatrieme et dernière partie reproduit les opinions et présente des données a l'appui montrant que l'influence des Etats-Unis sur la télévision latino-américaine tend à être décisive.

La bibliographie de l'essai comprend un choix d'études latino-américaines sur les images dans les mass média autres que la télévision. (L.R.B.)

"Truly, what type of informations do we transmit, which is the reality that we take to millions and millions of persons daily?"

Mauro Guimaraes

"Isn't the world we live in today so literally one world that we can no longer be indifferent to poverty, hunger and misery anywhere on the globe? And what effect on starving people do our programs have --featuring waste, dissipation, violence and luxury?"

H. J. Skornia

"The ads, the music, the images of radio and television penetrate --as a permanent drip of water on a stone no matter how hard this may be-- in the listeners and viewers until they become conformed to their shape. A double educational instrument that we all have in our homes, regardless of how poor they may be, that creates, perhaps without us realizing it, a certain type of man".

Leopoldo Zea

"More than that: (1) the media tell the man in the mass who he is --they give him identity; (2) they tell him what he wants to be --they give him aspirations; (3) they tell him how to get that way --they give him technique; and (4) they tell him how to feel that he is that way even when he is not --they give him escape".

C. Wright Mills

" It cannot be denied either that (the means of social communication) can have a relevant influence in the manipulation of ideas, elements, values and interpretations and in the lessening of the critical ability of large strata of the population, in addition to exerting, so to speak, a sort of cultural oppression..."

Pope Paul VI

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This paper deals with some of the images of the world that television seems to be portraying in Latin America. The reason for opting for this region alone is that going beyond it would make the assignment unmanagable within the required length of the essay. In singling out one medium, the reason is, similarly, that the amount of information existing about images in the other media is enough to make the adequate inclusion of it here impossible*.

The selection of television is not, however, arbitrary. Perhaps nowhere but in this medium is the imagery in point so clearly exemplified**. And, whereas it can well be argued that the number of people reached by television in Latin America is still modest, the impact of this "entertaining" channel is outstanding. Furthermore, TV-transmitted images stand a good possibility of being representative of most images presented through the mass media in general.

The discussion will placeemphasis, wholistically, on what has been called " the actual values, the styles of life, ways of living..." (Goulding /25, p. 46) rather than, isolatedly, on such specific images as those of sex, drugs, violence, war, race, and religion or on views about particular audience segments such as women or children. In other words, the interest is on how television may be instrumental to the communication of ideologies to the population.

* Reference to a selection of these studies, grouped by media, is provided in the second part of this paper's bibliography.

** Pertinent television studies other than those examined in this paper are, among others, these: Morel /51, 52; Morel, Ossandon and Fuenzalida /53; CIESPAL /70; Stryker /73; Swann /74; Figueroa /19; Hornik /28; Leon /36; Lima /37; Massotta /43; and Ruiz Duran /62.

Ideology will be understood here as "...the set of knowledge, beliefs, values, norms and patterns of behavior and models of social relations that man produces as a reflection of his concrete forms of life" (Urrutia /76, p. 8). This definition will be supplemented by the notion that ideology determines "...opinions referent to the problems of the goal desired in social development, opinions which are formed on the basis of given class interests, to whose defense they contribute" (Schaff /66, p. 139)*.

The review will be circunscribed to "pictures" regarded by researchers and critics as contrary to the aspirations for autonomous, humanistic and truly democratic national development in Latin America. This is not meant to suggest that the mass media do not, or may not, provide pictures of a positive nature** It is meant to indicate that, understandably, the negative pictures attract concentrated attention as they are the ones causing concern.

* The relationship between ideology and mass communication is increasingly being conceptually explored by Latin American reform-minded scholars, most of whom follow the European orientations of "structuralism" and "semiology". See, inter alia, the following works: Veron /79, 80, 81; Sodre /72; Mattelart /44, /45; Mattelart, Castillo and Castillo /47; Cohn /11, 12; Assman /3, 4; Freire /23; Ribeiro /59; Indart /29; Acosta /1; Munizaga /54 and Urrutia /76.

** Research documenting this possibility is hardly in existence in Latin America. For instance, as a part of U.S. originated propositions on the roles of mass communication in national development, Pool (/58, pp. 291-292) asserts that the media generate images of (1) life as subject to deliberate change, (2) economic growth as attainable, (3) the positive implications of being educated and cultured, and (4) the stimulating examples of already developed lands. Almost no research substantiating assertions as these seem to be available in this region. This does not necessarily mean, of course, that these assumptions do not apply here.

AN IMAGE OF IMAGES

Communication is inextricable from some exclusive characteristics of the human animal. One of them is his ability to perceive himself as a resident member of a given "world": i.e., a set of natural and socio-cultural conditions of existence, the limits of which he is --to some extent-- able to subjectively define, assess and identify with. "It is a kind of social shorthand, and everyone of us is skilled in this technique of recording our perceptions", Kato points out /33, p. 35. And he adds: "We perceive the world around us through these shorthand techniques, and in our minds we establish an "instant" world of fragmented images and stereotypes".

We are conscious of having "an image of the world", as Kenneth Boulding puts it, or "a world inside our heads", as Walter Lippmann said it. This "world", this kaleidoscopic composite of experiences, includes notions of reality as we believe it to be and pictures of that reality as we would want it to be. Individual and communal at once, more often blured than sharp, this complex and dynamic vision of life is known to largely command our behaviour. "The images people have of the world around them are the realities in terms of which they act. Such images have an abiding significance far greater than that which the concept 'image', with its ethereal connotations, suggests" (Pool /58, p. 291).

The Building of Images

How is such inner configuration of a universe constructed? What determines its normally intricate nature? When does the building of it begin? Specific answers may be numerous but, in general, the sources of "the view of the world" can be identified in the day-to-day learning adventure through the interaction of every individual with his physical and social environment. And this exchange of experiences which crystalizes in knowledge is only possible through man's sophisticated ability to communicate with his fellow men, with nature, with himself, and even with machines. Indeed, as Boulding noted:

> From the moment of birth, if not before, there is a constant stream of messages entering the organism from the senses. At first, these may merely be undifferentiated lights and noises. As the child grows, however, they gradually become distinguished into people and objects. He begins to perceive himself as an object in the midst of a world of objects. The conscious image has begun. In infancy the world is a house and, perhaps, a few streets or a park. As the child grows, his image of the world expands. He sees himself in a town, a country, on a planet. He finds himself in an increasingly complex web of personal relationships. Every time a message reaches him his image is likely to be changed in some degree by it, and as his image is changed his behavior patterns will be changed likewise /8, p. 6.

Beyond the house, the few streets and the park, into the world as a planet, what are the pictures of that world that the mass media are communicating? This is the question to which the present essay is addressed. The question appears germane for --regardless of what scientific research has said (or failed to say) so far about the impact of those media on people-- it would be grossly unrealistic to pretend that they have no influence in the formation of "the pictures of the world".

Images in Mass Media

"These media", notes development theorist Alex Inkeles (30, p. 148), "greatly enlarge the range of human experience with which the individual can have contact, even if only vicarious... They also provide models of new values and standards of behavior, some of which are far beyond the reach of most men, but many of which can be copied and do influence behavior directly". Pool shares this view: "The media create a picture of the world: and, in a modern society, we all learn this picture from what we read and hear. Study after study has shown that the media have small effects on attitudes and actions, but far greater effect on images" /58, p. 291. Furthermore, the media not only reflect reality but, for good or for bad, they even "make culture and they help create social reality" (Hartmann and Husband /27, p. 452)

In fact, as has been noted by the late sociologist C. Wright Mills:

> Very little of what we think we know of the social realities of the world have we found out first-hand. Most of 'the pictures in our heads' we have gained from these media --even to the point where we often do not really believe what we see before us until we read about in the paper of hear about it on the radio /50, p. 311.

Mills added, that media guide people's experiences, not just provide information; they tend to set our standards of reality and credulity. "Accordingly, even if the individual has direct, personal experience of events, it is not really direct and primary: it is organized in stereotypes... These deeper beliefs and feelings are a sort of lens through which men experience their worlds; they strongly condition acceptance or rejection of specific opinions, and they set men's orientation toward prevailing authorities" /50, pp. 311-313.

Other scholars have pointed out that the world view of persons who live in the same environment is quite uniform (Littunen, Nordenstreng and Varis /38). And several share concern about it with Goulet: "Now everybody can receive images originated outside their own immediate environment. Everybody can be bombarded by the same images. This, because just a few individuals, a few interest groups, a few organizations, a few societies posses the means necessary to send these images. Consequently, a minority is sending certain selective values to the majority through the communication media" /26, p. 1.

Summing up, the pictures of the world that our minds host are: (1) acquired from experience with nature and society gained through interactive exchange based on communication, (2) determinant of our behaviour, and (3) highly influenced today by the mass media, which tend to communicate to the many the ideologies preferred by the few.

How do these conceptual guidelines relate to the Latin American mass communication reality? The rest of this paper will attempt to present answers in the specific terms of some television images, and their negative influence on audiences, as reported in researches conducted in this region.

A REPERTOIRE OF IMAGES

Literature on television research in Latin America is not abundant. Only in the last ten years or so have some analysts focussed on this medium and this has occured just in a few countries, most noticeably Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina and Peru. Nevertheless, already the inquiry is yielding motives for concern.

Examining in Venezuela a sample of imported telefilms, Salazar (64) found that it contained 55% violent programs. He also found some indications: (1) that the values most frequently played up in the majority of programs were money-making, use of brute force, and recoursing to astuteness and deception; (2) that heroes were 100% of U.S. nationality; and (3) that, in terms of social class, the protagonists' behaviours varied as follows: middle-class individuals were heroes in 75% of the cases and villains in 15% of them, whereas lower-class characters were villains in a 45% of the cases and heroes in a 15% of them. Albornoz (2) found that the kinds of values being consistently and frequently fostered by television were opposite to Venezuelan educational policy.

The Corpse in the Freezer

Research in the area gained momentum with the pioneer contribution of Antonio Pasquali (55), who carried out the first systematic verification of television content in Venezuela. Having classified the programs by content types, for two Caracas TV channels, he computed frequencies to measure the participation of each type in the overall programming and the relative predominance of one over the other. One of his findings was that 76% of the programs in one channel were violent (including gangster stories, westerns and other adventure offerings), whereas such figure reached 86% in the other channel. He exemplified the typology of these programs by summarizing some plots as follows:

> A beautiful blond has love affairs with fifteen men and then kills them to collect their life insurance... A pretty typist treacherously kills, to eliminate evidence, two colleagues who were covering up for her in her theft of 1.500 dollars... A thief shoots a cook in the back and puts his corpse in the freezer... A stupid and extravagant millionaire is rescued in extremis from a mysterious murderer from beyond the Iron Curtain by two young North Americans... (Pasquali, cited by Santoro /65, p. 114).

A few years later, this time tapping 4 TV channels, Pasquali (56) finds that, jointly, violent fare constitutes 56% of their programming. Another survey in Venezuela showed that 68% of television content in a typical week encouraged physical, emotional, and moral violence; this figure climbed to 73% on Sundays and to 83% on Saturdays (CONAC /78, p. 171). Pasquali also pays attention to the "soap operas", finding that they occupy the top place in the live programming, with 30.4% of the time devoted to this category. This he finds combined with abundant commercials, whose interjection in the telenovelas amounts, at times, to a period equal to that occupied by the episode itself.

The growing addiction of much of the audience to "soap operas" (telenovelas)* conducted the attention of some researchers towards the nature and apparent consequences of this TV gender. Selected studies on this format**-- as well as on others of importance-- will subsequently be summarized and presented as examples to the degree that they touch upon images.

Relax: Batman Will Save You

Rincon appraised the contents of a sample composed of 28 radio and television "soap operas" in Venezuela, from which 34 episodes, on the average, were studied. Assessing scripts and recordings of them, Rincon found the following strongly emerging stereotypes:

1. The very poor are basically "good" and are bound to take suffering well, with stoicism and resignation.

2. "Good people" are always and necessarily "good".

*Addiction is fostered by television interests. This is taken sometimes to an extreme, as in the case of two commercial television networks that purposedly ignored the news of floads affecting the area of Recife, Brazil, in order not to interrumpt the daily set of telenovelas.

** A great classic of the trivial and tearful gender is El Derecho de Nacer ("The Right of Being Born") and a modern unparalelled hit was Simplemente Maria ("Simply Mary"), both written and produced in and for Latin America under inspiration of the U.S. radio and television "soap opera" models.

3. Professionals (medical doctors, lawyers and engineers) are, as a rule, "good" /60.

4. "Bad people" always exploit "good people" but this latter endure exploitation and never rebel against it.

5. In the end, good always wins over evil. It's a matter of waiting and trusting.

6. One must not dispair when confronted with deprivation or disgrace; somehow providentially, things will get better. A fortuitous circumstance, the unexpected help of a mighty and noble person, a sudden encounter with fortune, something miraculous will come to one's rescue. And one must believe that the key to solving problems (social and economic and even political and racial) is simply love.

Rincon also observed that none of the stories in the units analyzed takes place among the working class, whereas 7 take place in some high class environment, 13 within a high class-low class relationship, 3 among rich farmers and ranchers and only one in a middle class atmosphere. The researcher points out that one classical indicator of this elitist bias is the story where a girl of the poor class escapes her ill condition by somehow prodigiously getting to marry a rich man.

"Yes, Believe"

Is the audience indifferent to the TV-manufactured stereotypes ? Does it reject them or does it, rather, assimilate them? As a part of an ambitious survey with a stratified sample of 1.000 housewives of Maracaibo, Venezuela, Colomina de Rivera (13) obtained --along with other valuable information-- some general answers to those questions.

She found that close to one half of the respondents believed that "radio-tele-novelas" are derived from real life. She also found a high level of projection of the situations presented in those programs towards the lives of the respondents: in fact, when asked if the problems portrayed in the radio-tele-novelas were similar to those of their own or of persons whom they knew, slightly over 61% of the subjects answered affirmatively. Even more, when asked whether the solutions given to problems in the "radio-tele-novelas" could help them solve their own problems, almost 53% of the respondents also answered affirmatively*

* Comparable results were obtained in a Brazilian survey by Marques de Melo /40.

Finally, some 30% of the housewives interviewed said their children imitate the protagonists of the "radio-tele-novelas". And, as Colomina de Rivera observed, the lower the socio-economic and educational status of the respondents, the more pronounced the indications of all these effects on the audience*

Catharsis and Resignation for the Masses

In conducting a similar survey of 135 "soap opera"-consumming housewives in 10 neighborhoods of Sao Paulo, a Brazilian researcher observed the evasion-inducing mechanism in action:

> For the viewer, a "telenovela" represents a possibility of running away from the day-to-day bitterness and to find a different life, wrapped in mystery, suspense, love and passion, in which everything ends up well. The bad ones are punished, the good ones rewarded. This causes a type of psychological phenomenon named "substitutive satisfaction" ... Watching the "telenovela" chapters people forget their real problems... The suffering of the protagonists demonstrates that other people also suffer. And thus, a daily collective catharsis takes place. The tele-viewers relax, eliminate the accumulated aggresiveness, and gain a fictitious sensation of happiness" (Marques de Melo /40, p. 252)

A Colombian analyst of "telenovelas" stresses another basic dimension of the gender: promoting the notions of inmutability of the established order and inevitability of each man's fate. Referring to the "soap opera" protagonists, Bibliowicz asserts: "They demonstrate how human beings are conditioned from the moment of birth to a social role and how this is unavoidable; whatever one does, the son of a noble man will be the son of a noble man, the son of a worker will be a worker, the son of the peasant will be a peasant. One class will be the dominant and the other the dominated. Some will be masters and other slaves. The world of 'telenovela' gives but one road:RESIGNATION" /7.

* Martin, Mayorca and McDermott found, in a recent study of women and mass media in the city of Barquisimeto, concomitantly, that: "Levels of exposure to different categories seem to consistently reflect the fact that entertainment formats are the main media offerings to the poor and oppressed in Venezuelan society" /41, p. 16.

"Soap operas" are, by far, a most popular television format in Latin America. But they are certainly not the only one through which negative image formation seems to be taking place. Musical shows, interview-luncheons, contests, news, commercials and auditorium programs* are also vehicles for the instillation of prejudices, myths and distortions. Illustrations follow.

Good, Evil and the Lucious Blond

Santoro (65, p. 235) hypothesized that: (1) television programming in Venezuela includes more aggressive, violent and dramatic contents --embraced under the general label of "adventures"-- than cultural, educational and entertainment contents; (2) children will markedly prefer "adventures" over the other programs; and (3) this preferential exposure to "adventures" accounts for the creation in children's minds of stereotyped social, economic and political images.

These propositions were tested through content analysis of representative materials in one week of television in Caracas and a study of a sample of 938 boys and girls attending sixth grade of primary schools. Content analysis included a general classification of the assorted programs recorded, an in-depth analysis of those programs randomly selected, an appraisal of 144 commercial spots, and an assessment of adds in newspapers about the programs. The study with the children consisted of a written survey tapping availability, consumption rates, and program preferences, along with a semi-projective test of free drawings followed by a questionnaire.

The complex inquiry faced methodological problems which somewhat affected the ability of the researchers to generalize the findings beyond their subjects. Nevertheless, even if the results were to be taken only as valid for these, they contained empirical information that substantiated the hypotheses and which until then had been available no where in Latin America.

Indeed, 37% of the programs were found to be "adventures" (crime, westerns, spies, etc.) loaded with violence and were preferred by most of the children over the other, with humorous programs being the second favorite along with "soap operas".

Watching these programs" --asserts the researcher-- "tends to structure an image, an attitude as a function of the observed... Our children find in adventure programs the most perfect school for crime and delinquency. These effects do not just remain as simple images but tend to be imitated by the children" (Santoro /65, pp. 281, 279).

* For a case study of one of these latter, see A Noite da Madrinha (The Night of the Godmother) in which Miceli (49) carries out an in-depth and rigorously documented analysis of the program "Hebe Camargo", Sau Paulo's Sunday evening favorite talk show for over a decade. For an analysis of canned serials ("Bonanza" and "FBI in Action"), see Morel, Ossandon and Fuenzalida /53.

Evidence of these tendencies was found through the semi-projective drawing test which included ways to observe systematically the nature of actions and gesture of the characters in the designs. Violence, expressed in terms of contents implying damage, hurting or destruction-elimination of people, animals or objects, characterized 35% of the children's drawings. If to the general category "violence" the specific categories "delinquency", "spying" and "terror" were added, the figure would come close to 45%. Specific analysis of the actions and gestures in the drawings demonstrated in them an aggressive-destructive nature in 63.06% of the cases. Even the humorous programs* and those especially addressed to children contained aggressive and violent elements.

Disturbing as the findings on violent fare are, they are not surprising as this dimension of TV programming is most evident. Less evident but at least no less grave are Santoro's findings on other sets of no less alienating stereotyped images of appreciable incidence amounting to a general "style of life".

After completing their drawings, the children filled out individually an open-answer questionnaire containing these interrogations:

1. What happened in your story?
2. Why did it happen?
3. Where did it happen?
4. Who are the good ones? (What are their names, where are they from, are they rich or poor, of which color are they, and in what do they work?
5. Who are the bad ones? (Plus the same set of sub-questions as in numeral 4).

The following specific stereotypes distinctly emerged from the answers:

1. The "good guys" are from the U.S.; the bad, from other countries, mostly German, followed by Chinese.

2. The good guys are white, single and rich and tend to work as detectives, policemen and military.

* Santoro also notes that these programs are frequently based on degrading the persons, especially those in the lower socio-economic strata, on the basis or their lack of education and naiveté. He adds that the humorous programs also often play up the "smart guy" who takes advantage of any opportunity to profit from the ignorance of others whom he does not hesitate to confuse and deceive.

3. The bad guys are black and poor and tend to work as clerks and laborers.

4. Good or bad, most protagonists have English names*. But, when Spanish names are used, they pertain to the bad guys.

5. If there are protagonists from other planets, the good ones are earthlings.

6. The stories take place almost exclusively in the U.S.A.

"The hero", concluded Santoro, "is the white, handsome, North-American, rich individual who goes around the world spreading peace and justice" /65, p. 279.

Moreover, stemming both from the programs and the spot commercials, an image of a general style of life appears to be set forth for the children in the following terms:

1. Life is to be enjoyed by the individual. In order to secure this the important thing is for the individual to attain a good social and economic position.

2. Thus, the aims in life should be to have money, prestige, beauty, health and fun.

3. Money can be obtained through any means, violence, cheating and stealing included if need be, since theft is easy and many delinquents are never caught by justice.

4. Beauty and health can be secured by consumming products containing magic formulas and strange ingredients of fictitious names.

5. Fun is most often found in having a luxury liquor, fancy clothes, a fine cigarette, and a lucious blond by one's side.

6. Scientists are lunatics which live removed from reality and do not know how to enjoy life; they build weapons which they cannot control and are always poor unless they sell their secret inventions.

* The children were also asked to write the expressions they attributed to the characters acting in the stories they drew. Of the total, 63.04 were alien, neither proper of the Spanish language nor characteristic of the Venezuelan culture.

In summary, the programs depict an easy, exciting, adventurous and often violent life as the desirable pattern of existence. The ads stimulate artificial secondary needs inducing irrational buying behaviours, play up individualistic one upmanship hedonism and ostentation, and stress values of social prestige, beauty (and glamour) and health above those of intellectual achievement, cultural growth, spiritual enhancement and social solidarity*. Between the two, they make up an ethos of what it is to be successful, happy and developed, a picture of the world all bright people should strive to live in.

Researcher Santoro asks:

> Is this the type of attitudes we wish to form in our children? Are these the ideas, messages, which must determine the formation in childhood? Is this the society to which we aspire? Are these our values? Is this what is most convenient for the development of our nation? /65, p. 288.

Cupid is Alive and Hides in Argentina

Sometimes --perhaps to please McLuhan?-- the medium itself, becomes the message of love and decides to perform as a magician. For instance, there is in Argentina the television program "I Want to Get Married, and You?" which plays the match-maker by helping single or widow men and women meet each other on stage and even get married before the cameras. According to Walger and Ulanovsky (82, p. 37), "the 'great theme of the heart' characterizing this program contributes to establishing a parallel social order (an idealized society) in which, for instance, the rich in love is able to substitute for the rich in money".

What kind of love? Answer the same observers: "A love compulsive, swift, practically impossed, almost magic, the love of conformism..." (Walger and Ulanovsky / 82, p. 38). They add that the image topping the whole operation is that of necessary happiness.

Fabiana and her Fairy Godmother

At times, television also plays the role of the hand of providence, dispensing charity and redeeming graces to the invalid, the forgotten, the ill and

* Two of the categories in which the children's drawings were classified were addressed to tap their preferences for "Cooperation" and "Competition". The percentage obtained for the former was 1,7 and for the latter, 7,8. Thus, competitiveness greatly outdistanced social solidarity tendencies.

the downtrodden. Fabiana Lopez, a Buenos Aires slum girl, knows this well --as also reported by Walger and Ulanovsky (82)-- since the day when her boyfriend abandoned her after having won 300 million pesos in a softball score prediction game. Television, they report, rescued her from this predicament and "introduced her to a new world, almost magic" in which she was "civilized" at the expense of being "publicly destroyed" by having to disclose before the cameras every intimate detail of her origins, existence and tragedy.

Once the dream and the nightmare were over, the same analysts note, Fabiana humbly retumed to her everyday life, and the media covered her with praise because she had understood that her home was to be the slum.

The analysts claim that behind this conformity-inducing mechanism lies the will of the ruling class, represented by the media, "to fix each human being in his position within society, inmovilizing him ideologically in the place where he belongs". And from there, "it will only be possible to go out through the magic proposals the media offer" (Walger and Ulanovsky /82, p. 28). "Thus, the magic solutions appear as a corollary of a harmonious society in which contradictions do not exist. The shanty-towns from which the Fabianas Lopez emerge are a natural fact, and are accepted, as such... The proposal the diffusion media launch is that of Cinderella and her Fairy Godmother; what is sought through it is that every Message provides a systematic evasion from any rational content" (Walger and Ulanovsky /82, pp. 28-29).

The "Flintstones" as Vaccinators

Gorki Tapia, a Peruvian analyst, centered his attention on the TV cartoon "Los Picapiedra" (The Flintstones), a translated U.S. serial eminently addressed to children, which has as its setting a primitive community of cavemen modernized to match the characteristics of present day highly developed capitalist nations. He perceives the following pattern as clearly and sustainedly present in the program:

> The environment is that of a consumer society, plentiful in material well being and assumedly free of contradictions and conflicts. This setting is not accidental as the consistent intention of the series is to suggest, through such imagery, that the only natural course of humanity is capitalism.
>
> One central value proposed is selfish individualism coupled with rugged competitiveness. Opportunities may, in principle, be equal for all human beings but the best places in life belong to the best individuals; i.e., those who excel over the others in competition.

3. Success and happiness in life consist of getting to be on top of the others in terms of material well being expressed in an ever growing possession of goods and enjoyment of services. This accounts for prestige and power.

4. Society rewards those who win this game and punishes the losers.

5. At times, however, losers can turn winners and escape their lot by virtue of magic and providencial forces. (These are represented in the program by the mythical character "Gazu" who can tum, for instance, a laborer into a manager and the manager into a laborer...for a few days).

6. Those who remain losers must accept their lot as product of "fate", "the will from above", and their own incompetence and inferior endowment. Conformity and resignation should characterize their behaviour, not rebelliousness and aggresiveness. For such is the natural order of things and should not be altered.

Tapia (75, p. 64) argues that this pro-status quo persuasion scheme operates on the audience, the children, as an early "social vaccination". This is injected, through the apparently innocuous cartoons, in their consciousness, building defenses against different value propositions, new beliefs and opposite visions of life and development "... that would imperil the individual's psychic consonance with capitalist ideology" /75, p. 64.

"Sesame Street": The Tender Trap?

One of the most successful and best-known educational innovations of the recent years is the television program "Sesame Street" created in 1968 in the United States of America. It is an imaginative, humorous combination of live scenes, puppets and cartoons addressed essentially to providing, in an entertaining manner, basic notions of the alphabet and the numbers to children in pre-school age.

"Sesame Street" was readily translated into many languages and is regularly shown in some 70 countries around the world*. Its visual components, however, remained, as a rule, pretty much unchanged. "Then in Mexico in 1971" --reports Diaz Guerrero et al. (16, p. 145)-- "a completely new production of Sesame Street, particularly adapted to Latin America culture was

* For several articles providing a perspective of "Sesame Street around the World", see the Spring 1976 issue of the Journal of Communication /31.

developed. It was called Plaza Sésamo* . To build this version --intended to reach chiefly children in the lower socio-economic strata-- adaptive studies were launched and consultations were carried with a number of Latin American experts.

As years went by and the use of the program spread throughout many countries of the region, some evaluative research also took place in a few of them**. A major one found that: "In summary, generally negative results concerning the value of exposure to Plaza Sésamo were obtained for all children except the urban lower-class four-year olds. And, among these, the learning gain "... is only slightly greater than the gains achieved by children who merely watched cartoons for the same length of time" (Diaz Guerrero et al./16, p. 151).

The program's effectiveness in terms of being able to teach better than other educational technologies was not the concern of other researchers in the region. Instead, they were concerned with what was being taught. They were not sure that the program was "particularly adapted to Latin American culture". And, perhaps even more, even if the fitting were obtained, they still worried about what kind of "new education" was being transmitted. Was it one truly free of conservative bias and commercial connotations"? Were the messages contributory to a genuinely democratic stance identified with the need for social transformation? Were indeed the contents of Plaza Sésamo substantially different from those in conventional education and in the standard alienating and violent television programs in use in this region? Was the program a valid new alternative within a pedagogy that would not provide the children with the images of life that the rest of the system of education (family, school and church) and communication had been traditionally providing?

Guided by such critical interrogations, a few scholars in Latin America engaged, on the one hand, in examining the financial and managerial apparatus that made the Spanish version and its diffusion possible and, on the other, in attempting to decode the ideological implications behind the manifest content of Plaza Sésamo. Only findings in this latter area of concern will be reported here in brief.

* A Portuguese version was also produced in Brazil under the title Vila Sesamo.

** See, for instance, Salas de Bodini /63; Calatayud et al. /9; Diaz Guerrero, Bianchi and Ahumada de Diaz /15; Diaz Guerrero and Holtzman /14; Lasker /35; and Lasker and Casseras /34.

U.S and a Latin American researcher --Goldsen and Bibliowicz-- contend that: "The Plaza Sésamo" programs amuse and attract children. But the programs also lay down an important part of the cultural scaffolding that Latin American children will build on. They expose the continent's children to a massive cultural assault whose consequences are incalculable" /24, p. 125.

How so? Argues Mattelart : "Plaza Sésamo, ... for all its wrappings of liberalism and democratic aperture, is an act of aggression and violence par excellence: it privileges a given organization of social relationships in which the relation of domination is a constant. In the particular social order which the serial defends and tries to make look as natural and universal, the children occupy, in an invariable manner a place of "learner" which, inas - uch as it allows no reversion, leads to a rigid conception of the distribution of roles. Adults represent the pole from which order emanates: they plan the activities, lead the games, take the initiatives, direct learning, organize the distribution of humor" /48, p. 195. And the analyst stresses:

> It is this imposing aspect, this verticality of the relation "trainer-trainee", this invariability of the order, that --in characterizing the pedagogical schemes on which the serial rests-- allow us to perceive the reactionary and repressive connotations of it" (Mattelart /48, p. 195.

The Government of Peru -- as reported by Perez Barreto (57)-- agrees with this charge of authoritarianism. In fact, the Ministry of Education of this country --which is carrying out the most profound overall reform of the objectives and methods of education, at all levels, so that it becomes democratic-- refused to give authorization for the broadcast of Plaza Sésamo. One of the several explanations justifying the denial was: "Because the reality with which the child is put in contact through the program is a reality adjusted to elitism, consummerism, phantasy, unreflexive obedience, a participation conditioned to instruction via formal motivations, very modern and attractive, but conceptually traditional and excluding" (Perez Barreto /57, p. 31).

The critics of Plaza Sésamo make, inter alia, the following specific observations about it:

1. The "neutrality" of the program is only apparent. For instance, the very fact that the episodes appear "sponsored" by the numbers or the letters of the alphabet, instead of being sponsored by business firms, retains in the children's minds the habit of the "commercials"*

* The general sponsor of the Spanish and Portuguese version serials is, however, the Xerox Corporation.

2. In teaching arithmetic, the numbers are handled in manners which implicitly foster capitalist principles, and habits, including consummerism

3. The world implicitly portrayed corresponds to that of the U.S. middle class, which is intended to serve as a paradigm.

4. The chief protagonists are never laborers. They are male artisans or merchants, always propietors. They exploit no one and nobody exploits them.

5. Women are depicted in their classic submissive and secondary roles in society.

6. Solutions to problems always come from outside in the story, they never stem from the will and ability of the persons in need or trouble. This is a subtle apology of dependence.

Mattelart (48) claims that the actual strategy of the program consists of simultaneously emitting parallel messages: the explicit and the implicit. The former transmits alphabetization and arithmetic elements and, through the manners that it does, gives way for the latter, which transmits the values and preconceptions and is, thus, the fundamental one. That is, the program's production techniques themselves communicate the ideology, they are not neutral. Mattelart points out that:

> The principle on which the "Sesame Street" experience is based in order to attain the education-entertainment fusion consists in relying upon the conditioned reflexes created in the infantile audience by commercial television. And hence, the profuse recoursing to the range of techniques which the producers of the mass culture have utilized to capture the attention of the small televiewers /48, p. 183.

And " these 'innocent' techniques", concludes Bibliowicz, "carry and reflect a whole ideological conception of the world" /6, p. 5.

THE COMPOSITE IMAGERY

Television research in Latin America is at such an early stage of development that it is not possible yet to safely and broadly generalize from studies such as those reviewed above. Many more, and even different, will have to be carried out --particularly in the area of direct measurement of actual behaviours over time as related to assume media effects-- in order to gauge with increasing reliability the actual negative impact of messages on people.

The Basic Images

However, the available studies touching on television images do provide already reasonably valid indications that this medium is attempting to induce in its audience an adherence to a number of beliefs* about human life and destiny, which several critics rate as noxious. From study to study, there is markable similarity in many of the observations. Conducted in different settings and times, with varying foci and under diverse procedures, the studies nevertheless demonstrate regularities suggesting patterns. In fact, a composite of the images said studies detected is essentially made of the following frequent elements:

Individualism
Elitism
Racism
Materialism
Adventurism
Conservantism
Conformism
Self-Defeatism
Providencialism
Authoritarianism
Romanticism
Aggressiveness **

Mostly on the basis of the ways these images are reported in the studies, they can be defined as follows:

* Rokeach (61, p. 2) defines beliefs as "inferences made by an observer about underlying states of expectancy".

** This sequence implies no ranking.

Individualism. The belief that the needs and aspirations of the individual predominate over those of the communities of which he forms part.

Elitism. The belief that the natural social order calls for the prevalence the few and best endowed over all others.

Racism. The belief that the white Caucasian race is biologically supe- to all other races.

Materialism. The belief that the main goals of human beings are the acquisition of wealth, the accumulation of goods, the enjoyment of services, and the achievement of general well being.

Adventurism. The belief that the individual's success in life is substantially based on daringness, opportunism, cleverness and ruggedness applied to outwitting others.

Conservantism. The belief that the socio-economic arrangements characteristic of capitalism constitute the natural and the only desirable social order and that, as such, it is to be kept indefinitely unaltered for the good of all.

Conformism. The belief that the present state of affairs in society is to be accepted with resignation since, even if unfair for some, attempts should not be made at changing it as it is determined by fate and is, thus, inmutable.

Self-Defeatism. The belief among some members of the lowest social strata that they happen to be, actually, intrinsically and abismally inferior to those in the upper strata, and that such inferiority is irrevocable and thus makes them definitive losers.

Providencialism. The belief that unprivileged members of society need not try to overcome their predicaments by themselves or through socially solidarity action since supematural external forces will, in the end, intervene to prodigiously do them justice and grant them happiness.

Authoritarianism. The belief that human behaviour must be controlled vertically in the sense that the powerless must blindly obey the powerful.

Romanticism. The belief that love constitutes a magic solution to the socio-economic and cultural problems many people are affected by.

Aggressiveness. The belief that recoursing to violence is not necessarily and ilicit or undesirable devise to attain success in life.

A Systemic Structure?

Rather than looking unidimensional, these elements of the imagery uncovered by Latin American scholars appear to constitute clusters of stereotyped beliefs. For instance, "Materialism" seems to include: (1) "Hedonism", (2) "Adonism", (3) 'Consummerism", and (4) "Mercantilism". Hedonism would be the cult of pleasure and fun in all forms: food, sex, leisure, sport, stimulants, etc. Adonism* would be the cult of physical beauty, as a rule associated with health and youth. Consummerism would be the cult of purchasing goods and services beyond real and primary needs. Mercantilism would be the cult of money to a point of greed, including the habit of rating people basically on their ability to make and spend the money.

Comparing among themselves the basic image categories identified by the inquiries leads also to readily assuming inter-related features based on contrast, afinity or instrumentality. For instance, selfishness would seem to link Individualism and Elitism whereas Conservantism and Conformism appear both based on atalism and a pro status quo bias. In turn, Providencialism could well be regarded as a reinforcer of Conformism and, thus, a safety-valve for Conservantism. And Racism could be connected with Elitism and Authoritarianism no less than Self-Defeatism can be vinculated to Conformism, Elitism and Conservantism. Similarly, there may be ties between Romanticism, Providencialism and Conformism, as well as between Aggressiveness, Adventurism, Authoritarianism, and Individualism.

If these beliefs can, in fact, be classified --as Rokeach (61) proposed-- between "central" and "peripheral", then it could be proposed that the central ones are likely to be Conservantism, Materialism and Conformism, probably followed closely by Adventurism and Aggressiveness.

If, in fact, the basic categories are clusters and if, furthermore, they are indeed closely interrelated, then they may amount to a sub-system of beliefs within the general belief system** each person is assumed to carry in his

* This neologism --derived from the name of the Greek god of beauty, Adonis-- is proposed as appropriately expressive of the concept and free of the pathological overtones of an alternative such as "Narcicism".

** "A belief system may be defined as having represented within it, in some organized psychological but not necessarily logical form, each and everyone of person's countless beliefs about physical and social reality" (Rokeach /61, p. 2).

mind. And if they are systemic --that is, jurisdictionally defined and functionally connected-- their impact could be expected to be such that it is in fact able to instil in people a "general style of life" or an "ideology". The serious implications of it lead to think that research ought to tap these possibilities for, if they hold through initial veritication, this would suggest that the study of mass media images should also be systemic in the sense of seeking to trace constellations of beliefs rather than isolated units of them.

Hallucinogenic Communication?

Another possibility of a research approach also seems plausible. For a long time now, mass media have been attributed the powers of putting their audiences to sleep by making them dream away from reality, hypnotizing them, and even placating them in the manner of sedative drugs. More recently, they have also been perceived of being capable, on the contrary, of activating their audiences in the manner stimulant drugs do. This, in essence, means that depending on the types of behaviours aimed at-- mass media messages may act on people as narcotic-analgesic influences or as exciting-energizing ones. Either through negative or through positive stimulation, the purpose of the communicators would be to render the communiquees highly amenable to manipulative persuasion.

Following these criteria, the image categories defined above could be grouped as follows:

POSITIVE STIMULATION Exciting-Energizing	NEGATIVE STIMULATION Narcotic-Analgesic
Individualism	Conservantism
Elitism	Conformism
Racism	Self-Defeatism
Materialism	Providencialism
Aggressiveness	Romanticism
Adventurism	
Authoritarianism	

These two types of stimulation can be seen as counterpoised or as complementary. If taken as counterpoised, this would mean that they probably could not be equally intended for application to the same people in the audience. That is, each would aim at specially affecting a given segment of it: the positive, to persuade the individuals who can potentially contribute to perpetuating the extant social system, and the negative, to those who potentially may rebel against it. If taken as complementary, the stimulations can be thought of as addressed to the whole audience without differentiation. This would imply the assumption that the stimulations are not mutually neutralizing or incompatible and that, therefore, it is not inadequate to exert them concurrently on the audience as a whole.

Different but Equally Grave Consequences

Be the two stimulatory regimes counterpoised or complementary, the basic image types contained in each are likely to have different intended consequences on the audience's behaviour. Those within the negative stimulation (narcotic-analgesic) should produce an aliviatory evasion from unpleasant reality and/or a depurative catharsis. Ultimately, they should result in impairment of critical ability, numbing of creativity and in compliant submisiveness. Those within the positive stimulation (exciting-energizing) should deeply build in the viewers a general drive to excel in the daily struggle to attain the behavioral standards set by the prevalent capitalist social order. Thus, autonomous internalization of the desired traits would render social control unnecessary. Should this, however, fail to occur in some cases --leading the inept potential perpetuators of the social system to stay with the "downs" -- then the analgesic images may provide the former with relief and consolation, and the narcotic ones may keep them from joining the ranks of protest and rebellion.

If something really effective is to be done one day to help people defend themselves from all these socio-cultural barbiturates handed out by the media, research must move beyond identification of explicit and implicit images in messages. It must seek to find out what really happens in the inner worlds of the persons reached by those messages in terms of concrete behaviors demonstrably produced by such stimulations.

THE ROOTS OF THE IMAGERY

The nature of "the images of the world inside our minds" has succintly been explored in the light of several conceptualizations. A selective and summary inventory of negative images being portrayed by television in Latin America has been performed. And, derived from it, 12 basic images have been underlined and preliminarily analyzed in terms of kinds of further research needed in the area. Finally, a very important element must be added to the discussion: the origins of the images surveyed. For, without this element, this review would be seriously lacking in realism.

"Made in U.S.A." : Impressions and Testimonies

In fact, it is logical and legitimate to ask: Where do the identified images come from? Are they generated in Latin America or do they come from abroad? Replies a U.S. researcher:

> Like advertising, the program content in the region is also predominantly North American in origin or influence (Wells /83, p. 139) ... The dominance of North American over other foreign influences on the developing countries is most apparent in the case of television

> particularly in Latin America, the internationally recognized sphere of influence for the United States (Wells/83, p. 94)*

Let two Latin American testimonies illustrate the consequences of this situation.

One comes from Brazil's Minister of Communication: "Commercial television is imposing on youth and children a culture which has nothing to do with the Brazilian one ... 57% of current programming is made of imported materials ... The figures are overwhelming, in this ideological political invasion, the weight of which is absolute on an every day more acute process of massification of the instruments of social communication..." The Minister added:

> ...'in the tribal village the world has become today, communication media are corner stones', but this evolution is a two-edged weapon. On the one hand, it widens the scope of individuals, it brings them together, and it informs them. On the other, it is capable of casting collective patterns of behavior, conditioning men to pre-established models, forcing alterations and not even allowing evolution. (Oliveira/54a, p. 46)

The other testimony comes from Chile, one of the extremely few Latin American countries where commercial television was precluded, at least for a while,** in favor of an educational monopoly in the hands of universities and government. Appraising 12 years of its operations, Caviedes says of the local producers:

> They have been able to convince the televiewer that the best way of living is the North-American; that its police is efficient, healthy and fair; that racial problems do not exist since there is always a black or two in these programs and, furthermore, they efficaciously collaborate in defending democracy and the free world; that the man who works triumphs; if he does not, is because he is lazy. Children's cartoons teach how to invest money so that it produces more and better without one having to work ... We know everything about the United States: its independence, its struggle against the fiery wild Indians of the West; its feats during the Second World War; its perfect judicial organization in which there is no room for injustice; its excellent spies

* For documented discussions on the matter, see, in addition to Wells/83, Frappier /22; Skornia /71 and Varis /77. The U. S. dominance includes virtually all media, according to several U. S. and Latin American studies summarized by Beltran and Fox de Cardona /5. For the general influence of U. S. interests in world communications, see Schenkel /67; Schiller /68, 69; and Dizard /17.

** "Chilean broadcasting was originally government owned and non-commercial, but the Universidad Catolica operations in both Santiago and Valparaiso are now commercial stations with ABC Worldvision affiliations" (Wells /83, p. 119).

> who, in impossible missions, fight communism in countries oppressed by this inhuman system. In one word: (the producers) have achieved their goal of entertaining, educating and informing /10, p. 110.

"Made in U.S.A.": Facts and Figures

Bitter and sarcastic as this testimony is, it cannot be regarded as false when, parallel to it, basic pertinent information is considered. For instance:

1. On the average, close to one third of one week of television programming in 18 cities of Latin America was found to directly originate in the U.S., with Panama showing the highest figure: 92,7% (Kaplun /32).

2. In regard to actual sales figures, Fox de Cardona calculated in 1973 that "the total foreign sales for the U.S., according to MPEAA (Motion Picture Export Association of America), are a little over a hundred million dollars, of which 25% represents Latin America /21, p. 47. Varis (77) affirms that total sales of U.S. TV companies abroad in 1971 were 85 million dollars. With the exception of educational television, he states, "All the American companies seem to distribute about one third of their total foreign sales to Latin America" (Varis /77, p. 196). Sales to Latin America, would, therefore, total close to 26 million dollars. However, as Varis observes, "The dollar figures are not easily transformed into a total length of exported programs. The prices for American programs may be ten and even a hundred times lower in the developing countries than for example in Europe" /77, p. 194. Finally, Mas affirmed that Latin America spends on the average 80 million dollars per year in importing TV canned material from the U.S. /42.

3. "In Latin America the United States has a monopoly of the supply of the new technology, the basic film material, the technical experts and, of course, the large-scale capital needed to increase the size of the local investment" (Estrada and Hopen /18, p. 6). Consequently, most of the television programs produced in Latin America itself can hardly be distinguished --in intent, content and form-- from those in the U.S. This is due to the fact that, along with the technologies for transmitting television signals and producing the programs, the region received from the U.S. --understandably and inevitably-- a greatly heightened input of the ideology presiding life in this country. The phenomenon is so pervasive that even in one of the very few Latin American countries where substantive general social change is taking place, Peru, the production formats, save very rare exceptions, are still pretty much those established by the U.S. models. And this in spite of legislation reforming the education and communication systems, which includes one of the most advanced laws of radio and television in the region .

4. The three U.S. national television networks have been the main investors of direct capital in Latin American television and radio. Investing in five television stations, the ABC-World Vision group established in the 1960's a Central American Television Network (CATVN) and did the same in South America by creating the LATINO network, covering between the two operations in 13 countries. CBS became the owner of two stations in the Caribbean and made direct investments in television production companies in Venezuela, Peru and Argentina; in this last country, the company in question, Proartel, is the largest of the region and sells programs to many countries in it. To lesser extents, NBC invested in channels of Venezuela, Mexico, Argentina and Jamaica (Schenkel /67). And Time, Inc., which shared interests with CBC in Venezuela and Argentina, continues to invest, through financial and technical assistance to TV Globo and TV Paulista in Brazil (Mattelart /47a).

5. These direct investment have been sizably decreased, and even terminated, since 1970 due to apprehensions of political intervention. But the U.S. influence on the industry has far from subsided since indirect investment, through the programming sales mentioned above and through advertising, has safely and advantageously filled the vacuum of notorious and perhaps contingent direct investment (Mattelart /48). "The majority of North American feature films and serials for television are distributed in Latin America by the American Broadcasting Company in tight relationship with the chain of advertising agencies (McCann Erickson, Giant, Walter Thompson...") (Mattelart /46, p. 60). "Thus, irrespective from station control, television in the region has a strong North American commercial flavor" (Wells /83, p. 106).

6. Television channels in Latin America are private and commercial in 83% of the cases (Kaplun /32).

7. On the average, 20% of the broadcasting time of those television channels is made up of advertisements (Kaplun /32).

8. U.S. advertising firms (mostly multinational corporations) and U.S. advertising agencies (especially McCann Erickson, Walter Thompson, and Young and Rubicam) dominate the Latin American advertising business through all media. Specifically in television, for instance, the top five U.S. advertising agencies controlled in Argentina 35% of TV commercials, serving Standard Oil, Shell, Coca Cola, Ford, etc., and absorbing between 30 and 45% of all television advertising in the country (Schenkel /67). And the first five advertising clients in Colombia are Colgate-Palmolive, Lever Bros., American Home Products, Lotteries and Raffles, and Miles Laboratories; over 50% of television

advertising in this country is devoted to cosmetics, non-essential food stuffs and detergents, most of which are produced by U.S. multinational companies (Beltran and Fox de Cardona /5). *

"The Message is not the Medium: The Message is Society"**

A U.S. analyst condenses the critical perspectives as follows:

> ... The "commercial character of television has then to be seen at several levels: as the making of programs for profit in a known market; as a channel for advertising; and as a cultural and political form indirectly shaped by and dependent on the norms of capitalist society, selling both consummer goods and a "way of life" based on them ... (Williams /84, pp. 41-42).

The analyst asserts in addition that this "is at once locally generated, by domestic capitalist interests and authorities, and internationally organized, as a political project, by the dominant capitalist power".(Williams /84, pp. 41-42). Evidently, the situation is not one created by the "tropical imagination" of Latin Americans. As many other crucial things in their life, the intoxicating TV images that assail their minds indeed are, to a large extent, "made in U.S.A.".

* * *

* According to Wells non-commercial U.S. government influence on Latin America television is negligible if seen in terms of direct actions and investments within this medium /83, p. 99. On indirect influence, however, a former director of USIA (Leonard Marks /39, p. 4) has this much to say: "I can report proudly that the exhibits, broadcasts, films, books, pamphlets and periodicals produced by the U.S. Information Agency are now regarded as models by the professionals engaged in the arts and crafts of persuasion" (emphasis not in the original).

** Taken from Mattelart /48, p. 195.