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## MEDIA ANALYSIS / Don Kowet

The dual personality  
of Wall Street Journal

**T**he Wall Street Journal seems the picture of perfect health. Nearly 2 million Americans purchase the newspaper every day. Eager advertisers queue up weeks in advance.

But behind that ruddy-cheeked, reassuring front page (still six columns, no photographs), critics say that The Wall Street Journal is suffering from a severe case of schizophrenia, one that threatens to blur its identity as a newspaper.

The Journal, they argue, has become a confusion of contradictory voices, its traditional Keynesian cant colliding against the syllogisms of supply-side editorials. Critics even claim to hear Karl Marx babbling in the background. In mid-September, the Soviet news agency Tass was crowing over a Journal article alleging that members of the Nicaraguan resistance were committing atrocities on unarmed Nicaraguan civilians.

The seed of this schizophrenia charge, said Journal editor Robert Bartley in an interview, was sown at "an acrimonious dinner I had with the Washington bureau in 1980. The way I handled that was a

mistake, and it's spawned this endless series of stories."

At that dinner, members of the Washington bureau accused Mr. Bartley of heavy-handed editing of their columns and keeping them from his editorial pages.

Now, said Mr. Bartley, "We run pieces by the Washington bureau on our editorial page. You don't see that in most newspapers."

Mr. Bartley called the "schizophrenia" charge "one of the most overdone stories in the history of journalism."

Yet others insist that the tension between various parts of the newspaper existed long before 1980 — and persisted long after it. Earlier this year, for instance, several Jour-

nal editors and writers reportedly wanted the newspaper to punish Gregory A. Fossedal, after the young conservative editorial writer had turned up "across the table" at a White House Star Wars briefing, helping White House staffers.

As late as last week, a front-page Journal headline blared "Military Secrecy Rises, With Pentagon Hiding Billions of Outlays." The article charged that the Pentagon's "black

budget" (alleged secret expenditures) "has shot up at least 50% for fiscal 1986..."

The specific source of this revelation was The Center for Defense Information, which Journal writers Roy J. Harris Jr. and Robert S. Greenberger identified as "an independent research group often critical of administration policies..." Critics contend that if The Center for Defense Information is an "independent research group," then so is The Institute for Policy Studies. The Center is a spinoff of the institute, which is putative father of the fanatic Mother Jones and a family of left-wing propagandists.

**M**r. Bartley and The Institute for Policy Studies are about as compatible philosophically as Jack Kemp and Fidel Castro.

Mr. Bartley, hired by the newspaper in 1962, worked as a reporter in Chicago and Philadelphia, and as an editorial writer in New York, before being assigned to Washington, D.C.

At the time, recalled a former Washington-based Journal staffer, "everybody in Washington loved everybody in New York. There were no turf problems, mainly because the editorial page never left New York."

Both Washington and New York shared a common world view, added the source, — "the old guard Republican view of the world."

Robert Bartley changed all that.

In 1971 Mr. Bartley moved to New York. In 1972 he became editor of the Journal's editorial page. He surrounded himself with conservative writers who were seeking

fresh solutions to the problems plaguing the American economy. A young Bartley protégé named Jude Winniski started shuttling between New York and Washington.

"That was the first conflict that Bartley had with Al Otten, the Washington bureau chief," Mr. Winniski recalled. "Otten protested that 'Winniski is going to Washington once a month at least, and intruding on our turf.'"

These rumbles over turf soon turned ideological. Mr. Winniski was discovering, through the work of others, supply-side economic theory. At first Mr. Bartley was skeptical. It took Mr. Winniski two years to convince him, Mr. Bartley said later, at the rate of "an inch a day."

But once Mr. Bartley was convinced that supply-side could be the savior of America's sagging economy, he would become its most resolute prophet in print. The Washington bureau refused to swallow the new editorial sacrament.

The schism was also aggravated by Watergate.

**"B**artley decided that the Washington establishment was not giving Nixon a fair shake, and more or less appointed me to be Nixon's defense attorney on the editorial page," said Jude Winniski. "That upset the guys in the Washington bureau."

The special prosecutor's office stopped leaking stories to the Journal's Washington bureau, reserving its tips for the rival Washington Post and The New York Times.

Mr. Bartley became editor of the newspaper in 1979.

In 1983, Peter Kann became associate publisher and Norman Pearlstine his new managing editor.

The Journal's internal structure only added to the confusion. Unlike other periodicals, such as The New York Times, where A.M. Rosenthal is editor-in-chief of all the newspaper, "Bartley and Pearlstine are on the same level of the organizational chart," a source noted. "They can't pull rank on one another. If they have a conflict they have to take it outside of the Journal to Dow-Jones [owners of the Journal] and of course that almost never happens."

Worse, under Mr. Kann and Mr. Pearlstine The Wall Street Journal was about to assume a brand new persona, swelling, say the critics, the symptoms of psychosis.

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The New York Times had both enlarged and improved its business section, as had The Washington Post, and the Times-Mirror and Knight-Ridder newspaper chains. Business Week was resurgent, Forbes was booming. Dozens of specialty publications were beginning to intrude on the Journal's franchise.

Mr. Kann and Mr. Pearlstine began a balancing act, attempting to list their ship far enough to port to allow a broader base of readers to be hauled on board, while keeping the Journal's elite cargo of movers and shakers lashed securely to the deck.

New features were added to the "second front" page, including more personal-finance stories aimed at democratizing the newspaper's readership. News columns began bemoaning the plight of the poor and the unemployed.

Sections of the newspaper seemed to be splitting at the seams, drifting left or right, wherever the

current of commerce flowed fastest. And from every ideological vantage point, the Journal was slinging insults at the stunned, stranded "empire makers . . . who," an ad boasted, "lead the largest corporations." Mobil, after an article it deemed unfair, announced a boycott of the newspaper, refusing to give the Journal interviews or advertising dollars.

**T**he newspaper's growing identity-crisis was compounded by continuing internal friction.

In September 1983, Mr. Pearlstine appointed Albert Hunt as chief of the paper's Washington bureau. Mr. Hunt, a 20-year Journal veteran with high-visibility in Washington (he is married to PBS correspondent Judy Woodruff) and a personal friend and political ally of Mr. Pearlstine, used his clout to carve out space on the Journal's back page, where his writers could publish their opinions, on occasion contradicting Mr. Bartley's editorials.

Earlier this year, the Washington bureau was complaining again, after Mr. Bartley's editorial staff retained Fred Barnes (a Washington-based writer) to write an article about a Washington political figure.

"The split [at the Journal] really reaches beyond the [political] parties," said Mr. Barnes, now a senior editor at The New Republic magazine. "It's a question of whether you view the world the way the Washington establishment does, or the way the conservative visionaries do."

Nowhere is that visionary view more blatant than in the ideological marriage-of-convenience between Mr. Bartley and Journal investigative reporter Jonathan Kwitny, who on occasion has sent out soft Valentines about Cuba.

In 1984, Mr. Kwitny published a book called "Endless Enemies," in which he reviled American foreign-policy makers in general, and the Reagan administration in particular, for their failure to permit former Third World "colonies" to develop their own resources and become self-sustaining nations free of crippling debt.

Mr. Kwitny, a 1960s Peace Corps graduate, revealed his Marxist slant in an interview session with Publisher's Weekly magazine.

"... There's a widespread impression here that when Third World countries can't repay their debts to American banks and the IMF," said Mr. Kwitny, "they're ripping us off. But it is in fact the banks and the big international

manufacturing companies that are ripping us off . . . We help set up those one-party governments overseas, all in the name of fighting communism . . . International corporations imposing themselves on the world with our assistance — I don't like that any more than I like socialism."

According to his critics, Mr. Kwitny's front-page Journal pieces could have run uncensored in Mother Jones or Counter-Spy; the defunct publication of CIA turn-coat Phillip Agee.

In fact, Mr. Kwitny's critics charge, one of his most publicized articles was based on material borrowed from Mr. Agee. Mr. Kwitny wrote a Journal article in 1981 discrediting a State Department "White Paper" on El Salvador (which revealed that the Soviets and their satellites were supplying clandestine military aid to Salvadoran guerrillas). Mr. Agee howled that Mr. Kwitny had cribbed the critique of the White Paper from the Counter-Spy clone, The Covert Action Information Bulletin, without giving Mr. Agee proper credit.

**I**n the current Columbia Journalism Review, responding to a critical letter to the editors from Accuracy In Media chairman Reed Irvine, Mr. Kwitny said that, "When Agee raised the issue of plagiarism, I did not even remember that a paper he wrote was in the voluminous file I had assembled on the White Paper."

More recently, Mr. Kwitny tussled with two other leading conservatives. An Aug. 8, 1985, article

he wrote (part of a series) suggested complicity by Michael Ledeen, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University, and author Claire Sterling in an alleged CIA scheme to get Mehmet Ali Agca to say that the Soviets and Bulgarians were behind the plot to kill the pope.

On Aug. 26, the Journal printed letters of denial from both Mr. Ledeen and Mrs. Sterling, followed by an editor's note stating that, "The Journal stands by its stories."

Last Wednesday, however, in an article about the Agca affair written by editorial writer Gordon Crovitz, managing editor Norman Pearlstine admitted that Mr. Kwitny had erred. Mr. Pearlstine's statement was couched in unmistakable lawyerese.

"... One article in the series," said Mr. Pearlstine, "may have left the unintended and erroneous impression that Mr. Paziienza [the prime villain in Mr. Kwitny's CIA scenario] supplied information to

Mrs. Sterling regarding the attempted assassination of the pope. To the extent that such an impression may have been created I regret and apologize for it . . ."

Will Jonathan Kwitny's apparently inaccurate reference to Mrs. Sterling, following on the heels of his controversial piece last year on Rep. Geraldine Ferraro (tainting the Democratic vice-presidential candidate with tales of her late father-in-law's Mafioso contacts) lower his stock at the newspaper?

Not likely.

"Kwitny," said Jude Winniski, "is no problem to the editorial page. Bartley is one of his defenders. The Wall Street Journal editorial page is not 'conservative,'" Mr. Winniski added. "It's a radical page in every sense."

"Jon did a pretty good job for us on the Ferraro story," said Mr. Bartley, "and took a lot of heat for it. I think he ran into a little trouble here with the Paziienza story," Mr. Bartley added, "but who's fault that was is still in question. You have to figure out what kind of game Paziienza's playing."

But despite Mr. Bartley's predictable public defense, an inside source insisted that Mr. Bartley definitely is no admirer of Jonathan Kwitny.

**W**hat kind of game is The Wall Street Journal playing?

Sources said that Mr. Kwitny's article on Mrs. Ferraro was originally destined to appear in a page-one news column. When news

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staffers complained that it was a smear. Mr. Bartley put it on his editorial page. Mr. Bartley, in that instance (and in others), found Mr. Kwitny useful to the editorial page.

The radical visionaries "don't like foreign aid," another conservative writer explained, "and Kwitny says that foreign aid's been bad, although not for conservative reasons."

"In some ways," said Mr. Bartley, "it would be easier to live in two different worlds and never talk to each other. I think the real story is," Mr. Bartley added, "that this is one of the few papers in the United States where the editorial writers and the news department *do* talk to each other."

But is that noisy dialogue really the sharp debate that it seems, or is there a hidden harmony beneath the counterpoint?

Mr. Bartley is a radical critic of bail-outs and protectionism and anything else that cramps purist free enterprise. He believes that unbridled economic growth is the path to salvation, and criticizes

businessmen who put their self-interest before their free-enterprise principles, complaining about their "lack of ideological seriousness, a kind of hypocrisy."

Mr. Kwitny's own radicalism (his scathing Journal catalogues of capitalism's flaws) highlights that "hypocrisy" from another angle, as do the occasional columns contributed by Alexander Cockburn.

Mr. Cockburn, in a Sept. 12 Journal article on a Castro-hosted conference on the Third World debt crisis, urged readers to recognize that Fidel Castro was right when he said that the debt should be canceled.

Mr. Kwitny might argue, as he did in "Endless Enemies," that the Third World debt crisis is a piece of villainy concocted by international bankers and manufacturers.

Mr. Bartley's editorial page might argue that the international financial community shouldn't have thrown good money after bad in the first place. A Journal editorial last week in no way contradicted the analyses of Mr. Cockburn and Mr. Kwitny, calling the debt crisis a "do-it-yourself project" for the debtor nations and calling on the Reagan administration to introduce "the marvel of supply-side reforms... to the countries that need them most."

The viewpoints fit one on top of the other, like the layered skin of an onion.

Somehow, on the pages of The Wall Street Journal, the right has met the left at the point where the political spectrum turns a full circle.