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Statement from Jay Rosen

I think dismay is the right word to start with for journalists at CBS and elsewhere. Not just a strategic move to get approval on a merger, but a capitulation under pressure from an increasingly authoritarian president who counts alarm and dismay among journalists as personal achievements.

I'm not a lawyer, and anyway the American legal system is now too weak to do anything about it, but what happened at CBS was closer to bribery. You give me \$16 million, I will make sure your merger goes well. Deal?

Except that it wasn't concealed, as bribery usually is. Which puts it into a different category: Displays of the power to ruin institutions if they don't kiss the ring and cough up the fine for showing their independence.

We see a similar dynamic in the academic world. Columbia University is paying \$200 million to get back to where it was in receiving government grants— in cancer research, for example.

Still, there are some good signs that we should not ignore. CBS was not forced to apologize for anything it did to Donald Trump, which would have been especially humiliating and dishonorable. That's what counts as a victory these days.

Also on the bright side: the powers that be are not forcing upon the staff of "60 Minutes" some new person with experience in, say, the Murdoch orbit (as the Washington Post did...) Instead the next executive producer will be a 25-year veteran of the show, which is by far the most important part of CBS News.

Here's something I would watch for in the months ahead. Our ABC, NBC and CBS are similar to one another. They compete for scoops and audiences, but they do not compete by adopting different value propositions, publishing standards, or overt ideologies. They do not differ much on these grounds, as shown especially on Sunday morning when they run almost identical programs with interviews of politicians from both parties.

At the same time, one of the big challenges to every media property these days is to "differentiate" and offer audiences something hard to find elsewhere. That's not easy within standards and practices that may be 50 years old or older. I think there will be pressure on CBS to do things forbidden by tradition, but friendly to Trump, even if "60 Minutes" is allowed to keep doing what it has always done. Watch for it.