THE NEWS MEDIA IN A CHANGING GLOBAL POLITICAL SYSTEM: TOWARD THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AFRICAN NEWS AGENCY

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CONTENTS

Key to Some Terms Used in This Thesis i
Acknowledgement iii
Introduction 1

CHAPTER I: IDEOLOGY AND CULTURE: SEVERE CONSTRAINTS ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF PRESSMEN 21

1:1 - The Problem of Ideology, 23
1:2 - The Other Problem - Culture, 37

CHAPTER II: CONTEMPORARY NEWS MEDIA: STRUCTURE AND POLITICS 51

2:1 - The Super Transnational News Agencies, 51
2:2 - Free International Flow of Information (FIF0I), 66
2:3 - Freedom of the Press, 102

CHAPTER III: PRESS SYSTEMS 138

3:1 - Theories of the Press, 139
3:2 - The "Global Village Idiots", 152
3:3 - The Role of the Press, 158
3:4 - Sapsism: A New Theory of the Press, 164
3:5 - Sapsism Promotes and Sustains Journdev, 179

CHAPTER IV: A VOICE FOR AFRICA 191

4:1 - The Historical Setting, 192
4:2 - Penetrating the Media Frontiers of the Free World, 201
4:3 - Establishment of an African News Agency, 213

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS 230

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY 237
KEY TO SOME TERMS USED IN THIS THESIS

Jonestownian Journalism - Defined as a psychotic indulgence in the perversion of information or news. The term is derived from the grotesque and appalling abuse of religious freedom by members of a religious cult in Jonestown, Guyana, some fifteen months ago in which a mass suicide ritual was undertaken.

A Jonestownian journalist, therefore, is a psychotic misfit of the trade parading as an objective purveyor of news. But, unlike Jonestown, his or her perversion is inflicted not upon himself or herself but on an unsuspecting public.

NOTE: reference is to the Jonestown event per se and not about the reporting or coverage of it by the news media.

Journdev - Otherwise known as developmental journalism, journdev is derived from the words Journalism of development(alism). Journdev is preferred for reasons of economy of space and ease of pronunciation.

Newsocrat/Mediaocrat; Newsocratic Press/Media - The so-called "gatekeepers" of the news media. Newsocrat or mediacrat emphasizes the news management function of editors. Used interchangeably to mean the print and/or electronic media.

Sapsism - Derived from SAPS, an acronym for Socially Accountable Press System.

Rhodesianic - A rhetorical value configuration and/or argument that is designed to preserve and perpetuate an ill-gained and undeserved privilege.
Fleet Street Rhodesians

- Press persons who are Rhodesianic, and would do anything to preserve their privileges while exploiting others.

Shackled World

- As there is a "Free World" so there is an opposite world to it, a "Shackled World"; one that remains shackled by the mediating impact of external econo-political forces and its own internal political contradictions.

The term is preferred to the meaningless "Third World" as it does not only underscore the reality of underdevelopment but tickles the consciousness of the reader, as to arouse in him an awareness, even if dimly, of that reality.

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disproportionate attention I devoted to a reading desk that was strewn with bits and pieces of notes, learned quickly to respect the untidiness of my desk. To them I say, salaam.
INTRODUCTION

Problem and Objectives

This thesis addresses four main issues (the first one, more or less, giving rise to the other three issues): 1) international news reporting; (2) the international flow of information; (3) press philosophies and reality; and (4) accountability of the press. The analysis presented is undertaken at two levels: the first two issues at the international level and the other two at the national level.

At the international level, news distortion and imbalance in the flow of information are the specific problems dealt with. These problems - particularly of news distortion - were central to the 1978 UNESCO conference in Paris on global communication problems. At this conference, Shackled World countries (SWCs) charged the Western media with a habitual negative portrayal or news distortion of events in SWCs, calling for sanctions to check the behaviour of the Western news media. The Western news media, for their part, were largely concerned with the sanctity of Western press philosophy than with the merits of the case brought against them.

Problems call for solutions. For the problems identified, remedies are suggested. For there to be a balance in the flow of information, for example, SWCs - individually or, preferably, as a group - must establish alternative news agencies. It would be unrealistic for them to depend upon the charitable disposition of the dominant international media. How one region of the Shackled World, Africa, can overcome this problem of communication inequality
is the subject of Chapter IV.

The need for alternative and competing (international) media systems is referred to throughout this thesis as media egalitarianism. It is defined more explicitly as the equality of right to communicate and a reasonable equality of opportunity for media owners in the free international marketplace of ideas and opinions.

The question of news distortion is a larger and more serious problem. It has roots in the cultural and political beliefs, attitudes and values held by journalists and newsocrats. Unfortunately, and this writer finds it rather disappointing, texts on journalism or the news media in general hardly address the issues of culture and ideology as specific areas of concern. It is quite a pity. One can only assume that these issues are taken for granted and, therefore, ignored although they are capable of having a serious impact on the ability of newsmen to interpret objectively a world that is different from their own. Thus, this thesis begins with a look at culture and ideology as limiting or adversely mediating factors in the perceptive abilities of newsmen.

News distortion may not be a deliberate act; it comes in various forms. These are identified in Section 2:2 of Chapter II. It is believed that media internationalism can help minimize the incidence of news distortion. Media internationalism is concerned with the operations of the transnational, international and multinational media and the need for a commitment to international development. And international development addresses issues and problems that are common to the human race - hence the talk about global "interdependence". Such problems include poverty, hunger
and starvation, ignorance, racialism, environmental abuse and, of course, the ever-escalating arms race. To borrow the words of Bernard Rubin,

The mass media must concentrate on what can be termed the anatomical and biological factors of community life (local, national, international), in order to document the uneven progresses and regressions of civilization. Day by day the vast audiences must be offered information about the pressing issues which effect the quality of life.¹

The need for the press to use its potential power to bring about a broader social-political consciousness cannot be overemphasized for, to quote Rubin again,

Since the essence of democracy involves the political drive to better the condition of human beings, failure to communicate new values through the mass media indicates a crucial failure of doctrine and of system of government.²

If the media are truly a reflection of society as journalists and mediadcrats tend to think the media are, and pressmen see themselves as the people's watchdogs, then they ought to be answerable for their performance to the public which they claim to be protecting. Chapter III addresses the problem of accountability.

A philosophy most conducive to the attainment of the goal of servicing the essence of democracy to which Rubin refers is developmental journalism or "journdev" as used in this thesis. It is also discussed in Chapter III.

At the national level, since the Western media are so concerned about their hard-won freedom (of the press) and tend to

²Ibid., p.56.
insist upon its universalization, a review and assessment of press philosophies, the role of the press and the general performance of journalists is undertaken. An attempt is made to show that what is often said and proclaimed is not what is often practised. There is a need for the press to be accountable in an open and free society. One mechanism for bringing this about is to have the press elected.

**Procedure**

The thesis is presented in four parts: Chapters I, II, III and IV.

Chapter I is concerned with the role of the mass media in international understanding and cooperation. Cultural ignorance and political insensitivity are responsible for much of the news distortion with which the world press, dominated as it is by the Western media, has been charged. A greater degree of cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity is needed if the media are to play a more useful role in bringing the world together rather than tearing it apart. In this chapter, the cultural and ideological dimensions of the news media are examined in some detail; they are important in understanding the structure and politics of the news media - the subject of Chapter II.

We take up an analysis of contemporary media systems in Chapter II. Considered are such issues as the evolution, organization, ownership and control of the big news agencies; foreign correspondents; the free flow of information doctrine - its merits and potential dangers for the Shackled World and, indeed, the world generally; and, finally, freedom of the press. The problem of news
value and balance in the flow of information will become apparent as we advance in our discussion of the contemporary media. Solutions to these problems are offered where appropriate.

To put the preceding analysis (of Chapter II) in perspective, we move from the international arena to the national scene in order to examine more specifically the operations of the press in terms of philosophies and accountability. If, at the international level, we must have freedom of the press and a free flow of information, then it is necessary to investigate the tenability of these concepts at the national level for "charity begins at home". Accordingly, we begin this investigation with a review of theories of the press. We end it with a look at journalists and their trade and the role of the press - what it is and what it should be. Finally, as solutions to the problems identified - ones of accountability and philosophy - an alternative "theory" of the press is advanced based on social accountability. It calls, essentially, for the periodic election to office by an audience-electorate of publisher-editors or editors whose terms of office would run concurrently with that of elected political representatives.

Returning to the international arena, the final chapter deals with the African need for a distinct and indigenous medium of international communication as a solution for the eradication or, at least, a minimization of the imbalance in the flow and reporting of international information. The problems and prospects of establishing such a distinct medium are explored.
Methodology

An historical-analytical approach is employed based mainly on library research as opposed to field or empirical research. This approach is underlined by a strong sense of advocacy that will soon become apparent to the reader; academic work need not be dull, sterile or amoral. The reader may, therefore, find this thesis polemical or even rhetorical but the matter is one of individual opinion, style and emphasis. A dispassionate observer who hears a slave complaining that his master is killing him may be inclined to opine that the slave may very well be overworked and maltreated but to call that "killing" is simply overstating his case. The immediate and critical issue is one of process, and of fundamental concern is the question of structure: should the master-slave relationship exist at all? And at what point does the use of the word "killing" become appropriate? - hopefully, not after the victim is dead!

There are times when it becomes a matter of academic necessity for scholars to be less academic and more responsible, in terms of moral valuation, in their perception and analysis of contemporary issues. The present circumstances of the world media present us with such a challenge. The reader is implored, therefore, to bear in mind the question of structure and particularly of process - subtle as they sometimes appear to be - in his reception of the arguments put forth in defence of this thesis. What may possibly appear diversionary or even irrelevant to the reader are indeed key variables in the process of editorial decision-making.
Scope

The scope of this thesis is limited to the print media in particular and the electronic media in general. The term "African" unless otherwise indicated refers to member-states of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

A Preliminary Statement

In 1942, Kent Cooper* lamented:

It (a cartel of European press agencies) told the world about the Indians on the warpath in the West, lynchings in the South and bizarre crimes in the North...Nothing creditable to America ever was sent.

That was a complaint made by a top American press executive 37 years ago. Yet, only last year, news readers and listeners were being warned by a number of Western media of a Shackled World blitz, under the aegis of UNESCO, against press freedom and the free flow of information. The Shackled World was echoing Cooper's complaint! But this time around, European and North American news agencies and media were the culprits. News about developing countries is distorted and biased, they charged. With some 20-odd African countries alone engaged, within the past year, in border disputes, liberation struggles, racial violence, political hostilities or secessionist agitation, it was perhaps tempting to report the events and neglect examining and explaining the issues or the whys and hows behind the news. It is understandable but the Shackled World is not impressed. To paraphrase a Nigerian proverb, the Shackled World countries are like jet planes; we do not hear about them until they crash.

*An Associated Press chief in an autobiography released in 1942 describing "how a cartel of European press agencies controlled all the news that flowed into and out of the U.S. until well into the 1930s." See TIME magazine, November 20, 1978, p.66.
It has also been claimed that the flow of information is unidirectional, which is a naked truth, and, therefore, lacking balance. The have-not countries are calling for the establishment of a New International Information Order (NIIO). The NIIO is regarded as an introductory and necessary condition for the realization of a New International Economic Order which was first advanced in 1972 by the United Nations. The NIIO would bring about a more equitable and balanced flow of information between the developed and developing countries, they argued. Consequently, they called for instruments that would ensure the responsibility and accountability of the international press. Newspapers and other news media in the Free World betrayed their nervousness and guilt complex, one might say, in largely misleading headlines, such as: "UNESCO's Threat to Freedom" (The Bulletin, March 28, 1978); "UNESCO Draft Threatens Press, Canada Says: Third World Ideas Provoke Opposition From West" (The Globe and Mail, November 7, 1978); "UNESCO An Enemy of Press Freedom" (The Manchester Guardian Weekly - hereinafter referred to as The Guardian - October 22, 1978); "Third World vs. Fourth Estate: Showdown in Paris Over a Bid to Curb the Free Flow of News" (TIME, November 20, 1978). The showdown is still in progress. What does it all mean?

The free flow doctrine came into existence at a time when the global political system was much less complex, relatively more stable and dominated largely by a single power - the United States of America. The Russians, having lost some 20 million people as a result of Nazi racial aggression and persecution,
were preoccupied with reconstruction and rehabilitation. Western Europe was devastated by World War II. It took the Marshall Plan to bring things into some semblance of order. The bulk of the Shackled World were colonies busy aiding, albeit involuntarily, the development process in Western Europe. In the circumstances, the U.S. emerged as the world's dominant economic and military power. She exercised this global hegemony for some twenty-five years thereafter with little or no challenge. It is not surprising, therefore, that the constitutional proposals for UNESCO embodying the free flow of information principle, in its earliest beginnings, were drafted by a panel of US experts, and given a priority that emphasized U.S. global interests. The final act that gave accent to U.S. values was adopted (by 30 votes to 1) in 1948 at the United Nations Conference on Freedom of Information held in Geneva.3

The global scene has now changed markedly. All but a few of the colonies have gained their political independence - most of them in the early 1960s. The Soviet Union is now a superpower rivalling the United States, at least militarily. The EEC, Japan, OPEC and other emerging powers are making their presence felt.

The reality that this new trend has forced upon the global political system is an increasing web of interdependence among nations. This state of affairs has inevitably brought the nations of the world much closer together, weakening the powers

of some in the process and increasing the leverage of others. While the new nations are seeking to make this reality a tolerable working system, the older and well-established ones seem to lack the political will to effect any meaningful change. They are trying to cling to the glories of the old system now lost or in the process of being lost.

Incidentally, this stubborn resistance to any order that would upset the old pattern of international relations is not confined to Western governments alone. Powerful private concerns in the Free World have devised a means to ward off or fight against what they have come to regard as a threat by the increasing "trade unionism" of the Shackled World. That instrument of "self-defence" is a rich men's club that has been christened as the Trilateral Commission. It has been described as "one of the most important private forums where influential people can plan together the best ways of keeping their global system in a state of good repair."  

The changing reality of the international system is such that no one country or group of countries - not even the economically advanced West can afford to isolate itself from the system. It is disturbing however to observe that the lack of political will by policy-makers in the developed world is equally matched by a determination of private, "non-political" forces to maintain the old economic order. How else can one explain the membership in the Trilateral Commission - as identified by the New Internationalist  

\[\text{New Internationalist, No.72, February 1979, p.10.}\]
of Brazil, India, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela!* It only goes to support the thesis that the old Communication-Industrial-Military Complex is still very much alive. And a careful reading of the political economy of Trilateralism would raise the uneasy question as to the compatibility between democracy and capitalism.

It is within this global setting that has now clearly emerged that the role of the mass media in international understanding and development, and their impact on society generally must be analyzed. Their importance cannot be over-emphasized.

In a world econo-political system in which the Thomson (Newspapers) family, for example, can put out some Cdn$300-odd million in a bid to take over control of a non-related business, the Hudson Bay Company (Thomson now has control of the Bay), surely the Shackled World has good enough reasons to feel concerned and render "Cooper's Complaint" in its strongest form. The situation is compounded by the covert manipulation of the press by external politically-motivated forces such as the US Central Intelligence Agency, not to mention the recent South African information scandal.

Dependence sometimes breeds a curious climate of benign neglect, clearly on the part of those who are, relatively speaking, far more independent. In such a situation, developing countries are often losers. Their continued dependence on the giant news agencies and other foreign media for news about

*These countries are not official members as such but, through the power and influence of their leaders, they may pursue policies in line with those of the Trilateral Commission.

themselves and the world at large has become, in the circumstances, questionable. The need, therefore, for a distinctive African voice and expression is overdue. Outsiders are free to see Africa the way they can or want to see and portray it. But, by and large, Africans must tell their own story if generations yet unborn are to escape what often amounts to a racist reconstruction of African history, and daring, contrived notions of cultural superiority that serve to breed needless ignorance and contempt for "strange" cultures and societies. That is one side of the story. The other side of it must address itself to African perceptions and attitudes if we are to truly understand the complex nature of Africa's international politics.

Africa is the second largest continent in the world. It has a population of about 500 million. By the year 2000, this population will rise to an estimated 800 million. Africa's present population is about the same as the population figures of the United States and the nine EEC countries combined. Economically, increasing attention is being focused on Africa; this attention is likely to be intensified in the years ahead. The continent has been described by William Cotter as "the world's greatest untapped minerals storehouse." Its huge reserves of natural


resources will be needed to sustain the lifestyles to which most North Americans, Western Europeans and the Japanese are accustomed. A government committee in Western Germany, for example, has estimated that a 30% drop in chrome deliveries over a one-year period would lead to about 25% fall in the Federal Republic's GNP. Exploitation of these resources has intensified in recent years. Uranium and chrome, for instance, are no longer within the exclusive preserves of South Africa and Rhodesia. Some 215,000 tonnes per year of chrome are now produced in Madagascar and Sudan, the former being the bigger producer with an output of 200,000 tonnes. South Africa remains the leading producer with an estimated output of 2.5-million tonnes. On the uranium front, Niger - Nigeria's neighbour to the north, has since joined the "club" as second largest producer. On the import side, the potential consumption capacity of Africa is enormous as it is only beginning to develop its various economies. The bulk of its imports and trade generally are derived from and conducted with Western countries.


10 Ibid., p.87.
Despite Africa's vast economic potential and its growing importance in world affairs, it remains very much a "dark continent" for most Westerners and others in the industrialized world. To them, Africa is no more than a giant piece of real estate sandwiched somewhere between the memorial oddities of the likes of Cecil Rhodes and Coca-Cola. Africa remains, therefore, largely undiscovered, and is one of the most misunderstood, misrepresented and neglected regions of the world. This situation is aggravated by the fact that Africa remains practically voiceless in the corridors of international communication, depending on foreign news agencies and other media for news about itself and the outside world. In other words, Africans come to visualize the world in the manner intended or portrayed by the dominant international media.

It could be argued that the darkness in the perception of Africa is, in part, largely created, unconsciously or otherwise, by the mass media of the Western world. To compound matters, this distortion of the image of Africa and other parts of the Shackled World, as noted above, is transmitted back to Africa. Some understanding of the
implications inherent in this state of affairs can be gained if we consider Dennis Stairs' statement that "if the press is ignorant or mindless in its commentaries on the conduct of foreign affairs, its readers may well become the same, and from the vantage point of diplomats, hell hath no fury like an untutored public." ¹¹

Africa's problems are largely centred around its historical past, which it must overcome. The odds are, however, big. Colonial ideology was quite effective. Not only have the Africans, until very recently, tended to "downplay" their own culture, they idealized the cultures of their colonial masters. They have suffered, perhaps, an irreversible cultural mutation. However, more important is the present international economic order which is rooted in Africa's international relations of the past 500 years. Commenting on that rather sore historical past, the New Internationalist stated:

The commencement of the slave trade by the European powers brought the first systematic erection of the ideological scaffold. The slave trade was a racial war, conducted for commercial profit, without precedent in human cost... Godfearing merchants based their action on the bible, which laid down that the children of Ham

were born to be hewers of wood and drawers of water. In fact it was doubted whether the heathen negroes had souls. The arguments and the profit margins were so convincing that even the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel invested in slaves - branding them with "Society" to distinguish their ownership. 12

The above quote is presented not just because it is instructive per se and helps people to understand their past relations with others, and as a cardinal step in understanding the present and, therefore, in contemplating the future. It is offered mainly because what seems to be one of the darkest periods in Western European and North American infamy is not a matter of the past to be buried and forgotten. It cannot be explained away as the happenings of an ancient and uncivilized world, influenced by Social Darwinism or the "Manifest Destiny" of a particular race. Unfortunately, attitudes held then are still present in today's supposedly civilized circumstances. Seventy-nine years ago, Lord Rosebery, no doubt basking under the inglorious sunshine of British imperialism, bubbled with excitement: "What is Empire, but the predominance of Race?" 13

And although South Africa still propagates the Children-of-Ham ideology in her constant recitation of the catechism of apartheid, the Western world's reaction to South Africa has been and continues to be rather lukewarm. Their position is understandable. As the New Internationalist points out, the West did not go to war against the Nazis because of their racism. The racialist factor was incidental to the central concern of the Western democracies: Hitler's

12 New Internationalist, January 1978, p.5.
13 Ibid.
lust for territorial expansion. It further explained that in times of "high unemployment and social tension, similar ideas of the superiority of certain races were voiced in the US and the UK" - for example, during the 1920s and 1930s. That may be years ago but in the recent UK elections, a neo-Nazi party, the National Front, propounded such ideas in its electioneering campaign, not to mention the Conservatives' reaction to and promises regarding the "immigration" problem.

In view of the foregoing, it is not surprising that we have been greeted just recently with such newspaper headlines as "Third World Uses UN to Thwart the West" (The Globe and Mail, June 30, 1979, p.9); "US Has Strike Force Ready to Go Into the Gulf" (The Guardian, July 1, 1979, p.15); and "Time to Say 'no' to the Arabs. OPEC Dangerous, Disruptive Force: Economist" (The Toronto Star, July 4, 1979, p.B7).

If anything, the Shackled World is proving consistently, and strongly so, that it has no intentions whatsoever of remaining shackled. But intentions alone, sometimes emotionally charged, are not enough. The talk of who should do what for this or that region of the Shackled World is unappealing as it is irrelevant in the context of their historical experience. While the US spent 2.9% of her GNP in 1949 in international development as part of the Marshall Plan to reconstruct a Nazi-induced devastation of Europe, her international

\[14\] Ibid., p.4.
development expenditure in 1977, in comparison, amounted to only 0.22%. This is less than one-third of the UN development assistance target of 0.7% of national GNP, and represents a 92% drop in US aid over the period in question. Cotter also examined private sector philanthropy in the US and concludes that "4% of charitable contributions reported by 400 American companies went to international activities of any kind," the bulk of which went to Europe, Japan and Latin America. "This is despite the fact" he continued, "that the percentage of profits derived from international activities is far in excess of 4%." Although the Western world, led by the US - still the world's greatest economic power - has the means to bring about greater international development, and thereby effect desired equality and justice in international relations, self-interest and a lack of the political will to do so have been stumbling blocks.

Given the circumstances we have examined thus far, it would be foolhardy for Africa to expect equality and justice from quarters that are more interested in maintaining a standard of living derived from the human and material exploitation of Africa. As one writer observed, the second great scramble for loot in Africa is just around the corner, remarking that the "American diplomatic thrust in Africa is...seductive, conciliatory and economic." Africa must speak a language that

15 William R. Cotter, op. cit., p.12
16 Ibid.
Westerners can understand. Such a language must come in the form of competition. In this regard, Africa must embark on a planned, organized and systematic approach to its dealings with the West. Therefore, in seeking to penetrate the media frontiers of the Free World, Africa should (1) plan a greater and systematic exploitation of Africans in the diaspora, (2) seek genuine cooperation with interested media outlets abroad, and (3) reach the media markets of the Free World directly.

In approaching the topic of this thesis, it is believed that the business of reporting the world is too complex and enormous a task to be left alone to the generals of the big transnational news agencies. They have interests that may not be compatible with those of a people desperately and conscientiously engaged in the task of nation-building. An African news agency, in the circumstances, will have two immediate merits: 1) it will give the world a chance to hear or read African affairs directly from Africans themselves, that is African news as seen through African eyes; and (2) it will allow for a fair balance in news judgement and make for better comparative analysis of world events.

East-West relations tend to dominate the thinking of Western newsocrats, although it is with North-South relations that one should be concerned as that relationship poses, potentially, a far greater threat to world peace. Oil prices keep rising but what exactly are the issues involved? Oil is vital to the economies of the industrialized world so is trade and technology to the development of the have-not countries.
It is sad that the "average" man in the Western world today has yet to get a clear picture of the true relationship between the two. Such a reckless display of self-interest is unnecessary in the world's present circumstances. We do not have to have an Iranian Revolution to realize that there are more Muslims than there are Catholics in the world, and that Islam, like many other religions, has a profound effect on how a great many people think, live and govern themselves. It should not take an Angola to give expression to the fact that Africa is more than just a mere source of "colour" from which exotic stories are dug out, if any digging is done at all, in confirmation of certain pre-conceived notions. The point to be made here is that excessive and misplaced concerns with domestic affairs or self-interest in a world that is now so close together that it has been described as a "global village" is very dangerous. It took two bloody world wars to alert the West to a world that was far from being at peace with itself. Do we need another global bloodbath to draw our attention to yet another unhappy world around us? It is a disturbing thought.

It is in the foregoing context, and in the inevitable struggle for the hearts and minds of men, that the idea of an African news agency assumes a distinctive importance.
CHAPTER I

IDEOLOGY AND CULTURE: SEVERE CONSTRAINTS ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF PRESSMEN

The point must be made at the outset that any discussion of the mass media in a changing world without some treatment of the twin issues of ideology and culture would be incomplete and lacking in meaning and depth. Although economics often transcend ideology and cultural barriers, much of our dealings with, and perceptions of, other people who are "different" from us, are based on our culture-specific socialization and political conditioning. The media, of course, play a vital role in this mix of value configuration. They act as catalysts for attitude formation and persuasion. They can bring about a realistic understanding of human relations by emphasizing our similarities and explaining our differences. The media are man's potential hope for peace; everything depends on content and the integrity and humanity of the newsocrats. Unfortunately, however, ideological and cultural leanings sometimes constitute severe constraints on the perceptions of journalists and newsocrats. These major constraints can seriously endanger the unity of man. It is safe to hypothesize, therefore, that the

1UNESCO (Interim Report on Communication Problems in Modern Society, Paris, 1978, p.61) reports that "much research seems to indicate that in the main the media modify rather than radically transform public opinion on political questions and that their potential lies more in their capacity to reinforce more than to reshape attitudes and opinions." In other words, the media are capable of modifying attitudes and opinions as well as reinforcing them. The Report notes, however, that "...where the general interests of publishers and political, economic and social elites tend to coincide..., Reinforcement and maintenance of the status quo are more likely to be the main results of media operations, rather than threats or challenges to the establishment, whatever its political complexion." For evidence, the Report referred to David Murphy's The Silent Watchdog: The Press in Local Politics (London, 1976).
more insensitive newsocrats and reporters are to the changing world about them, the more unstable international intercourse is likely to be. It could be argued that the responsibility for bringing about a harmonious climate in global politics rests with politicians and not with pressmen. Politicians can no doubt play a vital role in this regard. However, domestic politics do not - and often so - permit politicians who are so inclined to exercise the option of actively promoting internationalism or the interdependence of nations. Partisan politics tend to engender an exploitation of local fears and sensibilities to the detriment of internationalism. Because of the independence and potential powers\(^2\) of the news media, they are better placed to reconcile national politics with the larger and delicate politics of global interdependence. To be able to execute such a task fairly - that is without unnecessary bias - newsocrats need not be blinded by ideological and cultural differences. The need for cross-cultural understanding must be emphasized; it is necessary for a better and more informed interpretation of world affairs. It is with this concern in mind that this chapter is undertaken.

The remaining chapters are not necessarily dependent upon what follows in this chapter. However, it is hoped that it will prepare the reader for a balanced reception of the analysis presented throughout this thesis. If nothing else, it presents the reader with a perspective rarely addressed in the general scholarly treatment of the news media.

\(^2\)"Vietnam", Watergate and the so-called "Muldergate" (the South African information scandal), to cite recent examples, show that the media are capable of exposing facts, of affecting public opinion and of engineering political action.
1:1. The Problem of Ideology

We are facing difficult times. Countries of the Shackled World are getting increasingly impatient and militant, and more articulate in their demands for a new world order - based on justice and understanding, not sympathy. The New Order they envision would be founded on the social philosophy of what an eminent Canadian scholar, Marshall McLuhan, has conceptualized as a "global village." The electronic media (television, radio and space communication) are the creators of this "village", one in which "we shall all feel and think alike without benefit of newspapers." The central idea of a "global village" is interdependence. Interdependence has been bandied about so much that it is beginning to lose its real meaning. The cloud of banality that this trend appears to have drawn over the idea must not blind us to its significance. It is not an out-moded concept, at least not in the present circumstances of international affairs. If anything, it is indeed an urgent necessity as the world continues to "shrink" and peoples of the world are brought closer together. The industrialized Western countries continue to depend more and more on the import of raw materials to maintain their present standards of living. The same goes for the developing countries which, in an attempt, gruelling as it sometimes is, to lift their respective peoples from illiteracy and abject poverty, depend mainly on the Western world for various forms of capital, technology and information.

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The concept of a "global village," however, remains a myth. Dr Cees Hamelink, a Dutch communication researcher with the Latin American Institute for Transnational Studies (ILET) in Mexico, in a report prepared for the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva, views the village rather differently. He describes it as a "corporate village," explaining its "sinister scenery" as "an impersonal economic unit exploitable for maximum profits from long distance. Its structure is a pyramidal skeleton with corporate industry on top, the national ruling classes as the intermediaries, and the villagers, massively, at the bottom. This structure contains a division of power that is carefully protected in order to keep the whole village surviving." In other words, the old pattern of relationship between the have and have-not countries remains virtually unchanged.

The present state of affairs in international relations results largely from a grotesque display of self-interest, impatience, ignorance and, often enough, arrogance - on the part of the Free World. This is not to suggest that there is no impatience or a certain degree of ignorance in the Shackled World's reaction to the Free World. However, when one considers the fact that they have been recklessly exploited for centuries, their impatience is quite understandable. As for ignorance, they are proving to be more and more in the know as to how the international system works in reality - the rich tending to grow richer while the poor tending to move in the opposite direction, not out of their own free will but due to international market "forces".

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When the Free World talks about stability in the troubled areas of the Shackled World, it is the survival of the "corporate village" - its communication-industrial-military complex - that is at stake more than the fate of a politically and economically downtrodden people. American covert intervention in Angola, the Western "fire brigade" exercise mounted in response to Shaba II in Zaire, and the Iranian Revolution are but a few blatant examples of the Free World's definition of stability. One observer concludes:

The great catastrophes of US foreign policy have come about through a mixture of cultural ignorance and political impatience. The isolation of the USSR greatly abetted Stalinism. Ambassador Spruille Braden, by opposing him, virtually put Juan Peron in power in Argentina. Three decades were lost before the Middle Kingdom and its "celestial bureaucracy" were perceived as cultural structures of an ancient civilization, and not the result of Marxist conspiracy. Tens of thousands died before it was understood that Vietnam's historical mission has been to contain Chinese expansion. Nixon's blind intervention in Cambodia destroyed that nation's fabric for years to come.5

If we add on such areas as Cuba, Nicaragua and southern Africa, the problem is indeed monumental.

"The concern for stability," writes Professor Irving Leonard Markovitz of the City University of New York, "clearly is a facade that disguises the real and basic issues of who rules African countries, for what purposes and in whose interests...As in the US, ethnic groups scar each other not because they want to destroy the system, but because they struggle to claim their share of the jobs and other opportunities."6 The increasing consciousness of the


populations of the new nations may be viewed as undesirable or even coated in ideological flavour to suit one's taste, but true stability, as the Free World is learning rather painfully, cannot be externally imposed.

Generally speaking, the Western media have been co-actors, consciously or otherwise, in this fraudulent portrayal of stability. Burson-Marsteller, a public relations group based in New York has done "a good job", says Niedergang, in selling Argentina as "the safest country for American investments." This was after the American Export-Import Bank had denied Argentina a credit line of $280-million on grounds of human rights violation. The Burson-Marsteller deal involved millions of dollars. But that is public relations although no newsocrat is under any obligation to publish such packaged "truth". A newsocrat faced with such "truth" has an obligation in the public interest to publish what he knows to be the true situation. He could as an alternative simply warn his readers that his medium does not necessarily support, endorse or agree with the advertised presentation. To allow such "truth" to go unchallenged amounts to a tacit acceptance of the message published. This type of public relations activity should not be confused with normal advertising which can be subjected to legal contention by injured consumers.

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8 Public interest is not synonymous with the readership of a medium. It refers specifically to the particular audience a message is aimed at and the ramifications of the message for the political economy of the home country and/or host country concerned.
Recently the Nigerian *Daily Times* revealed an alleged plot by NATO countries aimed at destabilizing Nigeria because "Nigeria's role in African affairs is now worrying some Western powers."\(^9\) The destabilization scheme would prevent Nigeria from "becoming strong, unified and capable of implementing ambitious development programmes," said the newspaper, adding that "In an apparent move already signalling NATO's offensive against Nigeria, the *New York Times* of March 17 carried an article titled 'Resentment growing in Nigeria's north - a world away from south.'" "In that article," continued the *Daily Times*, "the paper also said that southerners were better educated, more Westernised and occupy a disproportionate share of key positions in industry and commerce. It highlighted the recent closure of colleges and universities in some northern states allegedly protesting against discrimination in the country's admissions policy."

The *Daily Times* may be adding two and two together and getting five but the timing of the *New York Times*' faulty interpretation of events in Nigeria and the so-called NATO plot would strike one as a curious coincidence. This development is not the first time that the American press has been a torch bearer for American foreign policy. Its general coverage of events before and during the Iranian crisis is an example of a similar trend. The end result is usually disastrous not only for American interests but those they actively seek to "stabilize". This kind of coverage may be an exercise in flying "trial balloons" but to engage in partial reporting, even in outright distortion of the facts, is to embrace a reckless indulgence in political mudslinging. The Nigerian example is presented

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\(^9\) "NATO Plot' to Destabilise Nigeria?", *West Africa*, June 11, 1979, p.1049.
to illustrate how cultural perceptions can becloud the thinking and interpretation of otherwise well-informed and perhaps well-intentioned reporters. We have been told often enough that African politics is characterized by "tribalism", not by the competing economic and political interests that the Free World is accustomed to. So by digging up this story of a north-south confrontation in Nigeria whose principal actors come from distinct and dominant ethnic groups, the presumed politics of "tribalism" is reinforced in the minds of readers. And "tribal" politics by definition is supposedly primitive. In the global "struggle for existence", therefore, it becomes morally justifiable for those with the capability to do so to intervene and exploit such situations in order to preserve their own values, the sum total of which is referred to as "civilization".

This writer's general observation of the Western media leads him to conclude that Western mediocrats tend to see the world through Cold War eyes. It is nearly always "them" (the "communist-Afro-Asian bloc" otherwise known as the bad guys) versus "us" (the liberal democracies of the "Free World" otherwise known as the good guys). This happens in spite of their eternal pledge of allegiance to the journalistic goddess of objectivity.

So, subconsciously perhaps, single-party regimes are automatically branded dictatorial and undemocratic. Much of this kind of thinking colours the Western coverage of events in Africa and elsewhere in the Shackled World. It is a frame of mind that does little to enhance international understanding and goodwill.

When Canada's Prime Minister, Joe Clark, recently visited Cameroon, a CBC report told its listeners that Cameroon is a one-party state.
This is true but it neglected to explain what it was supposed to mean. It is not unlikely that most Canadians regard a one-party state as dictatorial and not worthy of their support even though a "one-party government" presently exists in the Province of Alberta.

One African "born-again" liberal editor, discussing briefly the one-party system of government comments:

...In the interview with John Burns he (Steve Biko) also said at one stage that one-party rule was appropriate for Africa...I waxing loudly vehement that this theory was "totalitarianistic tripe" and he needling me that my viewpoint was "good old Gladstone liberalism..."10

In examining political systems, special care must be taken to give the cultural dimensions of the society or societies being discussed the proper and high regard that they deserve. That culture should be singled out for special treatment cannot be overemphasized: it conditions our beliefs, attitudes and worldview. The very nerve centre or essence of democracy is choice, for or against, conditioned by socio-cultural experience. It is, therefore, sheer arrogance to try and universalize one's own cultural perspective without recognition of the existence of others. One Nigerian eloquently states the case as follows:

The television, press and radio are used to show and prove to everyone that communism is bad but nobody has ever cared to point out that the most sordid crimes so far committed against mankind - slave trade, colonialization, degradation and continuing economic exploitation of sections of mankind, atrocities against the Jews - are all the products of capitalism whose basis has always been inequality, greed, exploitation, hypocrisy, racism, treachery and war.

He continued:

The so-called "free world" would not allow the developing countries the FREEDOM OF CHOICE of any political system opposed to its own. And this brings out the fundamental fallacy of its political philosophy - that "freedom" is "freedom" if and only when the West is on the giving and not on the receiving end of its many unpalatable products. But only a few people are fooled. (italics and emphasis added).11

Perhaps it is only natural for us to idealize our own governmental system and put down others. Whether one system is better than the other is unimportant; like beauty, it is in the eyes of the beholder. However, the household understanding of what democracy is all about is simple enough: it is government of the people, by the people, and for the people exercised either directly or through elected representatives; it is a social condition of equality and respect for the individual within the community.

In some traditional Asian and African societies, the method of decision-making is consensual; and of conducting their affairs, by free discussion.12 These traditional settings, because they are small, are ideal for the practice of pure democracy. Historically, the city states of Ancient Greece practised this form of democracy. But modern society is a complex one and, therefore, commands the institution of structures to mirror that complexity, hence the next best form of democracy: representative democracy.

Representative democracy is organized on a party basis. And since free elections are key elements of it, the electorate is offered the choice to elect one of the contending political parties


to office. President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania contends that the object of this exercise is "not so much to elect representatives as to elect a representative party." Implicit in this observation, he notes, is the basic premise that elected officials should impartially represent all of their respective constituents — a premise Nyerere finds contradictory. Arguing his case for the existence of a democratic one-party system of government in Tanzania, Nyerere states that

Here in Tanganyika, for instance, we have adopted the Westminster type of Representative Democracy. With it, we took over the whole pattern of parliamentary and local government elections designed for a multi-party system. But it soon became clear to us that however ready we leaders might have been to accept the theory that an Official Opposition was essential to democratic government, our own people thought otherwise; for the idea did not make sense to them. As a result of the people's choice freely expressed at the polls, we found ourselves with a One-Party System.

The seeming incompatibility of the representative form of democracy with the value systems of most of the countries of the Shackled World has led to severe governmental disruptions. Most of them are now either ruled by military regimes or some other form of dictatorship. These developments are often seen in the West as a threat to democracy but, perhaps, "even a greater threat to democracy is the fear of anarchy, making new African governments as quick to pass Preventive Detention Acts as the US was to adopt the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798." As Americans rose against the


14 Ibid., p.27.

15 Ibid., p.4 (This quotation may appear to contradict Iwegbu's contention — cited on pp.29-30 — but the question remains: why did Tanzania adopt a multi-party system at independence? And why was there such a hostile Western reaction to the regime of, say, Angola after the collapse of the Portuguese colonial administration? The fear of systems of government different from that to which the Western world is accustomed to was at the heart of the matter).

tyranny of King George III so are the developing countries today rising against the tyranny of a grossly unjust system of inequality and exploitation - whether imposed from within or from without.

In light of such historical developments, it is rather simplistic to regard the presence or absence of a multi-party system of government as a criterion for deciding whether a government is democratic or not. Whatever the "necessary" conditions for a democratic state may be, one thing is imperative: there must be freedom of choice. Before journalists jump to conclude that this-state or that-state is a one-party state with its implicit pro-communist connotations, they will do well to consider the following very simple but clear definition of democracy:

I use "democratic" to mean, roughly, that decisions are made with general consent, according to established procedures, in harmony with such values as social equality, and under conditions in which opposition can be expressed (emphasis added). 17

The structure and processes of decision-making in one-party states determine whether or not they are democratic. 18 Unfortunately, when Western reporters use the term "one-party state" no distinction is drawn between the one-party socialist republics of the Soviet Union and the one-party states of the so-called Afro-Asian bloc of countries. There is a tendency, therefore, to "write off" and group the new nation-states as the "Communist-Afro-Asian bloc" - a redherring that serves to reinforce commonly-held fears about communism.

17 Ibid., p.702.
It is conveniently forgotten that the phenomenon of one-party regimes is not restricted to developing countries alone. The last Alberta provincial election is a recent case in point. Premier Lougheed's Progressive Conservatives won all but four of the 79-seat legislature, making it an effective one-party government.* That does not, however, render the Lougheed government any less democratic than any other. Examples of Western countries with dominant one-party systems at one time or the other in their history are the Socialists in Sweden and the Conservatives in Germany, Italy and Britain. The basic difference between the Communist one-party system and the African one-party system of government lies in ideological dogma and a right to exercise freedom of choice. Julius Nyerere puts this point in perspective when he observed:

They (the USSR) have made their policies a creed, and are finding that dogmatism and freedom of discussion do not easily go together. They are as much afraid of the "other party" as any government in a two-party democracy. In their case, the "other party" is only a phantom, but a phantom can be even more frightening than a living rival! And their fear of this phantom has blinded them to the truth that, in a one-party system, party membership must be open to everybody and freedom of expression allowed to every individual. No party which limits its membership to a clique can ever free itself from the fear of overthrow by those it has excluded. It must be constantly on the watch for signs of opposition, and must smother "dangerous" ideas before they have time to spread. 20

But the Soviets like to claim the classlessness of their system

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*A one-party government and a one-party system are not exactly the same thing but insofar as the process of governing is concerned, the end result is the same: government with little or no real (i.e. effective) opposition.


which, from a reading of G. Shahnazarov, is questionable. Writes Shahnazarov:

The features that distinguish one social group from another involve first and foremost the material living conditions, their productive activity, cultural level, and their spiritual requirements and aspirations.21

It is difficult to see where the difference in social distinctions lies between Soviet and "free" societies. "Classlessness" cannot be a substitute for freedom - that much should be recognized.

In cultures exhibiting fatalistic attitudes of acceptance, passivity and submissiveness to authority and whose socio-political tradition is generally populist-collectivist in nature, there is bound to be an "elite" controlling the affairs of state possibly through a single national party. And that fact does not make it any less democratic if the masses accord it legitimacy as is the case in Mexico or Tanzania.

The fear that a dominant party without a major opponent would be less responsive to public demands is questionable. Opposition does not have to come only from official political opposition parties. As Beer points out, private organization is very important: labour unions, professional associations and other interest groups can bring considerable pressure to bear on a modern economy that is highly interdependent. Any stalemate resulting from a confrontation between government and one or more of these groups could cripple a modern economy. Therefore, economies that

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are concerned with inflation, unemployment and so forth need the goodwill and cooperation of all segments of society. A dominant democratic one-party government would have to be responsive to public demands if it is to survive. Observed Beer: "the power that makes a regime democratic arises not only from the political structure - e.g. universal suffrage, parliamentary institutions, a party system - but also from economic and social relationships. Pressure groups with such a power base use it to provide channels of representation alongside the party system and would continue as a democratizing force even if one-party were to become predominant... this tendency toward the dominance of one-party in Britain results from a great democratic achievement, the profound lessening, if not total elimination, of class division."^22

So far we have looked at the need to examine the processes of government before deciding whether or not they fit our particular conceptions of democracy. A lack of understanding by a good number of the Western media of how developing countries run their states has led to such labels as Cuban-backed, communist-supported, one-party state, black majority rule and Marxist-oriented. The majority of the Western audience would be hard pressed, if not lost, to give a meaningful interpretation of what Marxism or even communism is all about. These labels, loaded terms as they are, are necessary reference points (bad guys versus good guys for instance) in the propaganda against an evil that is often simply non-existent. The

absurdity in this type of reporting can be seen in the total lack of similar double-barrelled adjectives in describing Western leaders or governments or even Rhodesia whose former rebel leader was consistently referred to as prime minister, and whose rebel forces are referred to as "security forces" - conferring legitimacy on a regime that is illegitimate and unrecognized as a state by any government. How does the following sound?: the white majority government of capitalist president, Jimmy Carter, of the United States...; or the white European country of France...Needless to say, it is as ridiculous as it is downright nonsensical.


Patriotic Front leaders Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo are seeking a new transition administration - replacing the bishop - which would dominate, while setting up a national army based on their own communist-armed force.

Now, as readers, we are informed that the Patriotic Front has a "communist-armed force". Fair enough but is there any reason why we must not know who is backing the bishop? Examples of this type of open bias and partisanship abound. It is disturbing because it neither advances peace nor does it prepare readers for a dispassionate reception and, therefore, objective assessment of what conflicts like the Rhodesian one are all about. Such partiality cannot advance the cause of internationalism. Ideological
rigidity is part of the problem and until Western journalists and mediacrats can render their news without such ideological colouring, international peace and, incidentally, open government are likely to remain unattainable goals. Audiences need to know what the issues and facts of a case are in order to positively influence their government's foreign policy.

1:2. The Other Problem - Culture

At this juncture, we must turn to the other major constraint on the ability of journalists to perceive dispassionately events that are outside of their psycho-cultural realm of focus. 23

Ruth Benedict hit straight at the point when she observed that

...Even very primitive peoples are sometimes far more conscious of the role of cultural traits than we (Westerners) are...The whiteman has had a different experience. He has never seen an outsider, perhaps, unless the outsider has been already Europeanized. If he has travelled, he has very likely been around the world without ever staying outside a cosmopolitan hotel. He knows little of any ways of life but his own. The uniformity of custom, of outlook, that he sees spread about him seems convincing enough, and conceals from him the fact that it is after all an historical accident. He accepts without more ado the equivalence of human nature and his own cultural standards (emphasis added). 24

Ruth Benedict was writing some five decades ago. Yet her statement is very much applicable today to the Western journalist, especially the foreign correspondent. Only comparatively recently,

23 Culture is not discussed in a purely philosophical sense in this treatment but rather from a media perspective; that is to say the impact that the mass media may have on cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Harford Thomas, a former deputy editor of the Guardian (London) newspaper, remarked: "The main weakness I see in Western press coverage of the Third World is that it is too narrowly interested in capital city politics." This phenomenon, per se, is not a "crime" when one considers the need for easy access to transportation, telephone, telex and other facilities that are concentrated in capital cities. However, the inevitable consequence of the journalist's self-imposed cultural isolation is a misunderstanding of local situations which, in turn, lead to misinterpretations and ill-informed conclusions. This is at the heart of Shackled World complaints about news distortion levelled at the Western press.

In their competitive bid to inform and entertain, the media have not been able to escape the reinforcement of fears and/or prejudices founded largely on ignorance. Let us consider television and the print media. For television, two popular and widely known shows, "Tarzan" and "Westerns" are reviewed. For the print media, examples of culturally-biased reporting are offered to illustrate the ignorance and insensitivity of the press.

Tarzan is reminiscent of Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness which detailed what Conrad described, in that book, as the "vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploration."

A whiteman, voluntarily or otherwise, escapes from civilization and embarks on a grand, brave and exciting adventure. His destination: the so-called Dark Continent. He arrives only to be greeted by a strangeness and savagery that only the figment of a dreamy writer's imagination could concoct. But it is real, so to speak. The "natives", "tribes", "traditions" and the dreadful jungle - all blend into one giant nightmare of primitiveness. He survives his encounter with the resulting cultural shock. With the passage of time however, he degenerates into a primitive creation of his own: he is now a total master of the hostile jungle about him and wills himself a divine right and power to shape and direct it. A hero is born.

Television characterizes Tarzan as such a hero. And in an attempt to amuse its audience, often very young and impressionable, this programme, wittingly or unwittingly, grossly misleads them.

Often, in a war movie involving Germans (the bad guys) and the Americans (the good guys), the Germans of course are portrayed as funny talkers; they are different. That is understandable; they speak with an accent. The message one draws here is that although the Germans are bad and speak English with a dreadful accent, they nonetheless remain as part of the human race - a people recognized as having their own language, a civilization, and capable of intelligent calculations even though they nearly always lose their battles.

Tarzan conveys a different message. What passes for the
"native's" language comes in the form of a jumbled, drawn out mumbling musical and gutturo-nasal grunts. And the inference: they are much closer to animals than they are to human beings. So, the Globe and Mail, for example, deemed it proper, in relaying to its readers a report filed by its correspondent in Salisbury, Rhodesia, to rekindle old notions of the nature of Africans. It read in part, "...Animal-like sounds emerge from her spittle-flecked lips."26 This casual and nonchalant introduction to reporting the real event is probably what makes a paper sell but that is beside the point. These "natives", you see, are incapable of making intelligent sounds, let alone talk. Their shocking state of primitiveness makes them eternally inferior and subservient to the god of the wild kingdom, Tarzan. They are animals to be tamed!

The end result is that pre-conceived notions regarding these "natives" may be subconsciously reinforced. As kids grow up, they often learn to socially and culturally differentiate and pigeon-hole these stereotypes into confirmed categories of perception. One cannot possibly have any respect for and empathy with people whose culture and society one does not really understand. It breeds arrogance and insensitivity, both derived from ignorance. The stage is set for violence or disorder or, simply, a "cold war" between their likes and those they perceive as inherent inferiors. Referring to the Canadian

ethno-political mix, a Royal Bank of Canada newsletter puts it this way: "Canadians of the dominant Anglo-Celtic group congratulated themselves for their tolerance while they expected members of other ethnic groups to be good sports and keep in their subordinate places... ignorance alone makes monsters and bugbears." 27

Television could do better bringing to its viewers some understanding of "strange" peoples and cultures, thereby promoting an awareness of the existence of other ways of life - in their entire ramifications. It would better prepare people for the inevitable interaction that the very close interdependence of the next decade and beyond is bound to entail.

This writer has met some Westerners who have been unable to function in remote areas of West Africa not because they were unable to overcome the cultural shock that they had to wrestle with, but because they were unsparingly betrayed by their own superiority complex. It would be disturbing for one, having been geared up and expecting to play the fascinating and exciting role of a modern Tarzan, to find oneself pitifully irrelevant in that context. As we shall see later, when foreign correspondents find themselves in such a situation, they resort to trivializing.

In discussing global development issues with those one might describe as "average" Canadians, this writer has noted

that they tend to attribute the root causes of poverty and underdevelopment in the developing world to such factors as laziness, superstition, idol worshipping, inferior intelligence - just to mention a few contrived misconceptions. But Tarzan continues to live!

One may wonder if people do remain "Tarzanized" after they have long stopped watching the shows. Well, when a vice-president of a large, well-known transnational firm, showing this writer around his massive estate and pointing to a swinging bridge, says "the sort of thing they have in Africa..." and, then, looking in his direction for confirmation, one really wonders.

Westerners by no means hold a monopoly of the ability to wrongly perceive the society, culture and civilization of other people. "Westerns" are to West Africans what "Tarzan" is to North Americans. West Africans are thrilled and fascinated by these movies but they emerge with offensive notions of the American personality: bloody and violent, greedy, selfish, would kill cold-bloodedly for profit, decadent, foul and so on. They cannot get over the ease and frequency with which actors move about with assorted weapons on them. The assassination of political leaders in the United States, the notorious activities of the FBI, the CIA and the Mafia all add fuel to their insatiable lust for misconceptual stereotyping of the American - and that, incidentally, means Canadians as well. Some Canadians in West Africa vigorously refuse to be called Americans; it is understandable! While these movies are making the rounds and
pulling in good profits, they are capable of having a lasting and very damaging effect on how West Africans and, indeed, other foreigners perceive Americans.

Given their cultural orientation, if West Africans were to shoot these films themselves, they would in all likelihood highlight North American family life, life-styles among the young and old, social institutions, beliefs and attitudes, educational and governmental systems, rural versus urban life, politics and business organization - a more comprehensive educative process. Viewers may develop little or no affection for what they see on the tube but the process of explaining why other people are the way they are goes a long way in bringing about an increased awareness of and sensitivity to other cultures.

But as things stand, do West Africans have to "buy" all that they see happening in westerns? Of course not, but it must be realized that the majority of these viewers, as is the case with their "Tarzanized" counterparts in North America, will never visit and see North America (Africa in the case of Americans) first-hand in their life time. So they will, necessarily, rely on what their television producers want them to know and believe. It is even more disturbing when those who are better informed insist on perpetuating the conventional wisdom concerning foreign values.

Television is a very powerful medium. It could do a great deal of havoc or good on human relations by virtue of its
impact on our attitudes and perceptions. Cultural stereotyping affects the way people relate to one another. Yet we seem not to understand the root causes of poor human relations in society, especially in international intercourse.

Radio and television are geared more to the spectacular and dramatic than they are to any substantial analysis of issues and ideas. They give us an instantaneous replay of events. But because domestic or foreign affairs are not easily compressible into 20 or 30-second capsules, we must turn to the print media for a depth of comprehensiveness in news coverage. Unfortunately, they seldom fulfill this need for the whys and hows of the news they provide. This trend has serious implications for international understanding, the cornerstone of any meaningful cooperation in a rapidly "shrinking" world.

The power of the print media could be formidable. When "...Used with prejudice or poor judgement, the publishing power can make mountains out of molehills or molehills out of mountains, to the confusion and detriment of the public." Much of the prejudice or poor judgement for which one could easily charge the press arise primarily from the concerns we have already expressed: cultural arrogance, ignorance, insensitivity and ideological dogmatism.

Prior to the beginning of the Commonwealth Games in

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Edmonton in 1978, a sports columnist for the Globe and Mail, Allen Abel, commenting on the boycott of the Games by some African countries used such stereotypic phrases and sentences as "bring them back alive;" "Gambian hurdlers with names that make us laugh;" "high-ranking chieftain of the Supreme Council of African Sports;" "tribal homelands;" and "...the airport is lined with Africans. Go get 'em, Banana Jarju."29

Only recently, commenting on the Nicaraguan crisis, Peter Brimelow, a columnist for the Financial Post, stated: "...Far from worrying about the carnage in Nicaragua, neither the US nor Canada should care if the Nicaraguans eat each other, so long as they don't threaten us. This is not immoral or amoral; it is supremely moral, because it has the goal of preserving our societies and the values they represent."30

Abel's report is not the nattering scabs of an innocent ten-year old boy. Neither is Brimelow's commentary the yammerings of a peanut-brained cretin. They are the schooled perceptions of presumably objective observers. This kind of reporting or what this writer calls "Jonestownian journalism" does not help Canadians in understanding, let alone appreciating other cultures. In a multi-cultural society, such efforts, to put it mildly, are lamentable.


30 Peter Brimelow, "Self-Interest Demands Intervention in Nicaragua to Stop Marxist Threat," The Financial Post (Toronto), July 7, 1979, p.16.
While some of these reports are trivial and rather silly in nature, others border severely on racial aggression. *Ms* magazine, in its April 1979 issue (p.21), carried a poem, part of which read:

...Such wonderful people, Africans
Childish, arrogant, self-indulgent, pompous
Cowardly and treacherous - a great disappointment
to Israel, of course, and really rather
ridiculous in international affairs,
but, withal, a people of charm and good taste

While this type of newsocratic indiscretion may pass unnoticed, national newspapers cannot escape being noticed. And when they exercise similar indiscretions, the repercussions could be immediate and injurious to international understanding.

The Canadian Immigration Minister, Ronald Atkey, reacting to Arab concerns over his government's plan to move the Canadian Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, remarked: "their bark is worse than their bite." Within the Canadian cultural context, this figurative reference to the Arabs commands no serious insult. In a cross-cultural context however, it is a time bomb. That bomb exploded; the Arab world reacted angrily. PLO leader, Yasser Arafat, threatened to teach the "Canadian scoundrels" a lesson. As Professor Paul E. Lovejoy explains, "...To these people, a comparison with dogs is the lowest insult, tantamount to profanity of the four-letter sort...to Muslims they show complete disrespect." 31

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31 In a letter to the *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), June 26, 1979, p.6.
If the press had ignored the remark or explained its possible implications, assuming that they were aware of it in the first place, the ill-feeling generated could have been lessened or avoided. But not only are the self-elected watchdogs of the public interest insensitive in the nose, their memories are quite short as well.

A Globe and Mail editorial of June 20, 1979 described the Arab reaction to the Jerusalem move as "outright arrogance" but as one reader asked the Editor, "...Was Canada 'arrogant' when it suspended relations with Gabon (a small, French-speaking West African country) because its early treatment of Quebec challenged Canada's claim to sovereignty?"32

It is clear that certain elements of perception could endanger a world that is already fragmented and is at war with itself. The biases we have alluded to all begin in the classroom with our depiction of history and treatment of foreign affairs. Eventually, these biases carve out a comfortable place for their nurturing in the minds of newsocrats who, regardless of their cries for press freedom and claims to fairness, objectivity and so on, engage in censorship by imposing their own pre-conceptions. At the heart of the problem, we must repeat again, are ideological rigidity, cultural bias, national passion and racialism. When journalism caters to the vilest instincts of man, it does not only put the trade in a rather low status, it

is a threat to humanity.

A man does not necessarily live in his own home by the rules and standards of his neighbour next door, let alone the irrelevance of those of a person living on the other side of town. Yet, it is possible for all to share the same community, with each fulfilling his or her obligations to it, while respecting the rights of others. Our present world should reflect such a community.

When we look at a society, perhaps intent upon faulting it with a view to "hanging" it, we should make every effort to judge that society by its own standards. Human rights, for example, is fundamental to democracy. What is a basic human right, however, differs from country to country. To a Soviet official, it may mean the right to employment and health care. To an African leader, such things as clean water, sanitation, good food, shelter, or basic health care, taken for granted in many advanced societies, are basic rights; people die from the lack or poor quality of these amenities. Therefore, the right to life itself is at the heart of African domestic and international politics. In the final analysis, it should be realized that there is more to these countries than a canal, coffee, cocoa, copper or oil. Too often, we are rendered hopelessly blind by our own untutored perceptions of the world around us.

As Ruth Benedict so brilliantly observed forty-five years ago,
Modern existence has thrown many civilizations into close contact, and at the moment the overwhelming response to this situation is nationalism and racial snobbery. There has never been a time when civilization stood more in need of individuals who are genuinely culture-conscious, who can see objectively the socially conditioned behaviour of other peoples without fear and recrimination. (emphasis added)\textsuperscript{33}

In conclusion: any analysis of the international news media that fails to examine the critical issues of culture and ideology or, precisely, how they affect the news that we read is to deny the exposition of a vital - and sometimes quite subtle - link in the understanding of how news is "created". Ignorance of "strange" cultures and ideological rigidity no doubt play a large part in the kind of distortions in international news reporting undertaken by reporters and their newsocrats.

"Tarzan", "Donald Duck" and similar entertainment features are not merely "cultural" creations designed to positively reinforce certain commonly held societal values but ideological instruments of negative political indoctrination aimed at "putting down" cultures that are different (for a discussion of the "cultural crusade of donald duck" see, for example, Cees Hamelink, The Corporate Village, pp.151-154). When terms like "more Westernized", "black majority rule", "communist-backed", and "tribe" are used - loaded terms as they are - to describe conditions that are far away from home and the immediate experiences of targeted audiences, the choice for readers or listeners are implicit but clear enough: their so-called cherished values or the barbarism of civilizable primitives-cum-the ever-present communist danger. For those unthinking audiences who carry their patriotism on their foreheads, such

\textsuperscript{33}Ruth Benedict, op. cit., p.10.
politico-cultural conditioning could be a lethal political weapon. Such conditioning does little, if anything, to promote international peace and understanding; the tendency is to ridicule that which is foreign and unfamiliar. For newsmen, the consequence is a tendency toward a trivialization and/or distortion of events in "foreign" places.

An enlightened international news reporting that will be beneficial to the world community is unlikely to emerge if cultural and ideological leanings are not moderated with increasing awareness of and sensitivity to how other people conduct their affairs.
CHAPTER II
CONTEMPORARY NEWS MEDIA: STRUCTURE AND POLITICS

The argument can be made that because the flow of international information is grossly out of balance, it is possible that those who dominate the system become insensitive to how they manipulate the flow of news within and across national boundaries.

This chapter deals with the international flow of information, the principal actors involved, and the concept of press freedom which is necessary if an international marketplace of ideas - competitively free - is to be facilitated and sustained. The intent of this chapter is to determine whether or not the structure and politics of the contemporary news media lend themselves to media egalitarianism and the concept of media internationalism.

2:1. The Super Transnational News Agencies*

It is difficult to estimate the exact number of news agencies - national, multinational and transnational - that exist today. However, there are an estimated 131 main news agencies in the world at the present time. The bulk of them were established within the last decade and are limited in the scope of their operations. There are some forty countries without a news agency of their own, about half of them with populations in excess of one million.

Internationally, twelve news agencies command a leading position in the gathering and dissemination of news. They are:

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*The specific statistical information presented here, unless otherwise indicated, is culled largely from Cees Hamelink, The Corporate Village, 1977.


36 Ibid., p.3 (Note: the year after a country indicates the year in which the agency was founded).
AP (USA, 1848); UPI (USA, 1958); AFP (France, 1944; Reuter (UK, 1851); ANSA (Italy, 1945); EFE (Spain, 1938); KYODO (Japan, 1945); TANJUG (Yugoslavia, 1943); IPS (a "Third World" cooperative news agency, 1964); and MENA (Egypt, 1956). Of these agencies, the first five are the most active and important as they exercise a virtual monopoly over the transmission of news throughout the world. Their enormous technical, financial and human resources make them super agencies. The Super Five are transnational in the sense that ownership and control is completely national but their operations and influence transcend their respective national boundaries.

TASS is government-owned, controlled and staffed. It does not claim independence of action vis-a-vis government policy as it is an integral part of the entire Soviet governmental apparatus. It cooperates with the national news agencies of the various socialist republics but its role is overbearing. The rights and responsibilities of TASS, conferred by the reorganization act of 1935, vis-a-vis the national agencies are noted as follows:37 1) TASS is to have the exclusive right to distribute foreign news or news collected by the national agencies within the USSR; (2) The directors of the national agencies are to be appointed by the director-general of TASS; (3) TASS is to be responsible for the direction and control of the national agencies, is to issue concrete assignments regarding the collection and distribution of news, and is to have the final say in their policies; and (4) TASS is to be responsible

for the training and assignment of manpower for the national agencies. Thus, TASS exercises a monopoly in the collection and distribution of local and foreign news for a majority of the Soviet press. However, important media networks with their own correspondents overseas include Pravda (an important instrument of the Communist Party), Izvestia and Trud. While the national news agencies of countries like Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic are directly financed by annual governmental subventions, Article 9 of the 1935 TASS decree forbids TASS from state funding. It depends on its news sales and related services for its entire funding.38

The American agencies, AP and UPI, are private, non-governmental, profit-making organizations. UPI is controlled by Scripps-Howard Newspapers. AP is a cooperative venture involving some North American media. Membership is at two levels: full membership and associate membership. However, as Richard A. Schwarzlose noted in a doctoral dissertation, "A careful reading of AP's Annual Reports indicates that the membership is not consulted on most issues...Directors operate ordinarily without benefit of initiative and referendum."39 Thus, associate or full membership confers little or no power in terms of the ability of members to control or influence

38Ibid., p.50.

organizational decision-making. In a sense, therefore, AP is like TASS in its relationship with participating member newspapers and other media.

Reuter, like most large Commonwealth private business enterprises, is a limited liability company. It was incorporated in the United Kingdom, with the agency's share capital ownership resting with the British, Australian and New Zealand press. Two British media associations, the Press Association and the Newspapers Publishers Association, own 41.7% each of the share capital. The Australian Associated Press and the New Zealand Press Association own 13.9% and 2.7% respectively. Concentration of power is vested in British hands as they control over 80% of the agency's share capital.

Agence France-Presse is structured differently. An Administrative Board, representative of the French press, press unions, state clients, ORTF and AFP personnel control the agency. It is substantially subsidized by the French government; 58% of its revenue in 1971, for example, came from the state.

The American agencies and AFP are heavily dependent on their domestic markets for the bulk of their revenue. Ninety per cent of AFP's earnings comes from domestic sources while some 80% of AP and UPI revenue is domestically derived. Reuter, on the other hand, receives only 20% of its earnings from domestic sources. However, it offers economic news services to non-media clients and this accounts for over half of its total revenue.
These facts of ownership, control and particularly source of earnings make it imperative that the super agencies gear their news selection to the special interests of the markets that they have come to depend upon so heavily for their economic survival and well-being. The markets are based in North America and Western Europe.

The predominance of the super agencies in the global news transmission business did not come about easily. Like the vilest scramble for loot that characterized the behaviour of the Western European imperial powers in the 19th Century, their fight for news territories was fierce and bitter. All of this occurred without the slightest regard for the interests of what is now regarded as the "Third World."

Three of the Super Five were established in the mid-19th Century. Havas was founded in 1834. In 1944, it assumed its present name of Agence France-Presse (AFP). As we have already noted, AP and Reuters were founded in 1848 and 1851 respectively. The United Press, founded in 1907 by Edward Wyllis Scripps of the United States in a determined effort to fight the European-dominated news cartel, absorbed the International News Service in 1958. The merger resulted in what is now known as United Press International. INS had been established in 1909 as a service organization to aid the Hearst newspapers. In the same year, Scripps' UP had been able to set up bureaux in most of the world's important capitals.

TASS came into being in 1918 under the name of ROSTA. It
assumed its present name in 1925. All together, the super agencies serve "at least 150 nations and territories which have more than nine-tenths of the world's population."40

One other important Western European news agency at the time was Wolff. A German agency, founded in 1849, it started out specializing in mercantile and financial news. In 1855, it added political information to its range of activities. Wolff "died" in 1933. In its place emerged the DNB (Deutsches Nachrichtenburo), which became an important instrument of Nazism. It engaged largely in propaganda, distributing its news in English, French and German. However, because it had exchange agreements with Havas and Reuters, DNB gained some respectability. Hitler had created DNB out of the remains of Wolff and "the news service controlled by the Hugenburg Trust, a vast publishing empire in pre-Hitler days which had set up its own correspondent organization."41

AP was no match for the European agencies. Competition for dominance of the global news market, therefore, was mainly among the European agencies. The competition was stiffened by the political support rendered the agencies by their respective governments. The agencies' own financial links, of course, further strengthened their positions. It was not until 1859


that their cut-throat competition assumed some organized order. An exchange agreement was struck which divided the world among the contending giants. News territories were distributed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement Year</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Allotted News Preserve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1859 (News Exchange)</td>
<td>Reuter</td>
<td>The British Empire; the United States; parts of the Mediterranean; the Suez Canal; a greater part of Asia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Havas</td>
<td>The French Empire; South-West Europe; parts of Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wolff</td>
<td>The rest of Europe including Austria-Hungary, Scandinavia; the Slavic States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td></td>
<td>---Exchange agreement expired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870 (News Cartel)</td>
<td>Wolff</td>
<td>Germany, Scandinavia, Austria, Hungary, the German colonies, parts of the Balkans, Switzerland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Havas</td>
<td>France, the French colonies, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, Rumania, Serbia, Turkey, most of Latin America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reuter</td>
<td>The Middle and Far East, most of Africa, part of the Balkans, the East Indies, parts of South America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>North and Central America</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---Agreement ended. "Free competition" began.

The need for economic growth and expansion led to an intensification of competition among the European agencies. Reuter and Havas took the lead and established bureaux outside of their entitled news preserves - Reuter in Amsterdam, Hamburg, Frankfurt and Hanover, and Havas in Brussels. Wolff did not take kindly to this violation of its territorial rights. The King of Prussia, incensed by this unwelcome development, intervened on behalf of Wolff, urging bankers to come to the aid of Wolff. It should be borne in mind that the powers of British and French imperialism were behind Reuter's and Havas' increasing capacity to expand. The exchange agreement of 1859 expired in 1865; the following year, Wolff entered into a separate agreement with Western Associated Press in the United States. The agencies had agreed to continue to work together as usual despite the "collapse" of their formal agreement. This was partly due to the rising cost of a new technology that had then made the linking of North America to Europe possible by transatlantic cable. It cost £20 Sterling, for example, to transmit ten words.

In answer to the Wolff move, Reuters and Havas signed an agreement with Daniel Craig of the New York Associated Press. The fight continued until the beginning of 1870 when a series of treaties were signed to minimize the growing conflict among the warring agencies.

Reuter, Havas and Wolff finally agreed to form a news cartel generally called the "European Agency Alliance" or
"International News Cartel."

AP was later admitted as a partner. In 1930, AP withdrew from the cartel. The grand alliance began to fall apart and in 1934 the agreement was ended. So, for some six decades, the European agencies dominated the world of news gathering and dissemination - growing, expanding and consolidating their positions in the process. Needless to say, the areas affected by their cartel were generally dependent upon the relevant "governing" agency for their information.

With UPI now actively in the picture, the four Western super agencies dominate the world scene. There has been free competition among the four since 1934, although until 1957, AFP was heavily subsidized by the French government to the tune of some $12-million per year. It is still largely government-supported.

While the four Western super agencies have an oligopolistic hold on the collection and marketing of printed news, on a global scale, a similar development exists in the realm of newsfilm production and distribution. The field is again dominated by three Western agencies: Visnews (British), UPITN (British-American), and CBS-News (American).

A Michigan publishing magnate, John McCoff, is a major

42 John C. Merrill et al, op. cit., p.36.

shareholder in the United Press International Television News (UPITN). A close friend of Connie Mulder, the ex-Information Minister of South Africa, McCoff was recently alleged to be connected with the South African information scandal, the so-called "Muldergate" scandal. McCoff secretly received $11.35-million from the South African government for a purchase attempt of the Washington Star, the Sacramento Union, and "a half share" in UPITN. He was unsuccessful in buying the Washington Star but the other attempts were successful. In 1977, McCoff had told To The Point, a South African newsweekly, that "South Africa needs to tell its story, and through something like UPITN we can do it." McCoff holds the presidency of two companies, Panax Corporation and Global Communications. The former controls 25 weekly and 7 daily newspapers in Michigan, Illinois, Florida and Virginia; the latter owns newspapers in California and Texas including the Union. It also administers McCoff's holdings in UPITN. Other owners of the UPITN are the UPI, Paramount Pictures and ITN (a British TV network). Paramount Pictures, incidentally, is owned by Gulf and Western.

44 See "Inside the Club of Ten" (an investigative report concerning a "small group of extremely wealthy businessmen" with important connections and influence. The club provides "strident 'Cold War' propaganda in defence of apartheid"), New African, May 1978, p.53; See also The Globe and Mail, June 5, 1979, p.3.


46 The Globe and Mail, op. cit.
It is not known to what extent these various communication channels have acted to facilitate South Africa's propaganda offensive. However, it is reasonable to assume, in the circumstances, that the McCoff media outlets, as a matter of policy or principle, written or unwritten, give the apartheid regime a chance "to tell its story." Like Hitler's DNB, hooking up to reputable media in North America and Western Europe enables South Africa to give its apartheid policies a respectable voice that it would otherwise not enjoy. What is indeed a desperate exercise in public relations may be presented to international audiences as pieces of objective journalism. There lies the dangers of misleading the world as was the case in Hitler's time.

Visnews Limited is owned by the BBC, the Australian ABC, the Canadian CBC and the New Zealand NZBC - incidentally, all members of the Commonwealth. Owning one-third of the total shares, the BBC, a public corporation, has a controlling interest in the company. Visnews is widely used. Its films and tapes are distributed to 174 broadcasting companies in 97 countries.

The Columbia Broadcasting System owns CBS-News. CBS has 100 subsidiaries in its operations, 75% of them foreign-based. CBS also engages in research and development, attracting substantial government contract awards in the field of (defence) information systems and space technology, including classified programmes.

Another important actor in international communication is the Voice of America (VOA) which is administered by the United
States Information Agency. It is government-owned. The Agency has 59 broadcasting and transmitting stations, installed in Liberia, the Isle of Rhodes and England. The station in Liberia is very clearly received throughout West Africa and other parts of Africa. The Africans, on the other hand, have no similar medium stationed in the United States.

Material prepared by the USIA is carried by some 5,000 stations globally for about 15,000 hours a week. VOA alone broadcasts in 38 languages, 845 hours a week. Its audience in 1972 has been estimated at more than 900 million in 97 countries. The foreign policy implications of these massive operations are underscored by the following statement rendered in 1964 by the American House Foreign Affairs Committee:

Certain foreign policy objectives can be pursued by dealing directly with the people of foreign countries, rather than with their governments. Through the use of modern instruments and techniques of communications it is possible today to reach large or influential segments of national populations - to inform them, to influence their attitudes, and at times perhaps even to motivate them to a particular course of action. These groups, in turn, are capable of exerting noticeable, even decisive, pressures, on their governments.

Corporations are growing bigger and bigger. This has resulted in the concentration of financial power in the hands of a few giant corporations. Industrial and commercial undertakings ranging from electronics and aerospace industries to insurance

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48 Ibid.
and banking establishments have diversified operations including communications hardware and software. Giant media enterprises, on the other hand, have branched into unrelated businesses. A recent example is the takeover of the Hudson Bay Company by Thomson Newspapers.

The Radio Corporation of America, one of the twenty or so largest corporations in the United States, engages in home products and other commercial products and services. This alone represented half of its revenue in 1971. It also has interests in broadcasting, communication, publishing and education, vehicle renting and related services; space, defence and other governmental business. It wholly owns the American NBC which provides management and service know-how to countries around the world. NBC's biggest projects are in Saudi Arabia and Nigeria. Other customers include South Vietnam, West Germany, Wales, Mexico, Lebanon, Sweden, Peru, the Philippines, Argentina, Yugoslavia, Barbados, Jamaica, Kenya and Sierra Leone.

The staggering reality of the operations of the big and super communication agencies is that they have inextricably interwoven interests with the general corporate empires of the transnationals proper. **50**

**49** Communication hardware refers to such transmitting equipment as radios, television sets, computers and satellites. Software is content-oriented and involves, among other things, magazines, films and general programme material.

**50** It does not necessarily follow or imply that they all have the same interests but where their interests happen to coincide, it is unlikely that one or the other party would upset the apple cart. It is difficult, if not impossible, in such circumstances for the agencies to act freely and independently.
In fact, they serve as watchdogs, not so much of the so-called public interest but the narrow interests of a corporate empire of which they are important members. They sound alarms and flash warning signals in an on-going vigilance to protect their vested interests. Their worldview is neither clearly objective nor is it dispassionate. Juan Somavia, in a paper entitled "The Transnational Power Structure and International Information: Elements for Determining Policy with Respect to Transnational News Agencies," likened the role of the super agencies to the functions of the headlights of an automobile:

(Their role is) to light up the road, pick out the danger signals and changes in route, inform those steering the system about everything that concerns their interests, dazzle dangerous elements, and help find a good road. And, like the headlights they are small but determinant; without the agencies, the system loses operativeness and efficiency and it runs the risk of crashing into unforeseen contingencies.51

Thus, argues Juan Somavia, the news selection criteria of the agencies "reflect neither the interests nor the social realities of the Third World countries."

In 1978, the Shackled World took its case to a UN forum, The UNESCO-sponsored International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, in Paris. Their grievances ended in a damning indictment of the super agencies. The agencies distort news about the Shackled World and operate freely without any

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51 As reproduced in Cees Hamelink, The Corporate Village, 1977, p.147.
effective international regulation. The news coverage of the developing world by the super news-agencies is generally out of balance and biased. More importantly, the international flow of information is completely at their command. The Shackled World is demanding a New International Information Order to correct the communication imbalance in question. The reaction of the Western media has been less than graceful. Their defensiveness has been so tasteless that they can be rightly described as the mental reflexes of Fleet Street Rhodesians.

To summarize what has been said so far:

1. The super transnational news agencies derive a large portion of their income from domestic sources. Since they have a responsibility to their clients and/or audiences, their news selection is geared to the interests of these customers and does not necessarily reflect the reality or the interests of developing countries.

2. Five transnational news agencies dominate the world of news collection and dissemination - four of them in the West (USA, Britain and France), and one in the USSR.

3. Competition among the Western news agencies was regulated up till 1934 although AFP continues to be substantially subsidized by the French government. Free competition now prevails.

4. The social, economic and political orientation of publishers tend to affect what their media choose to emphasize or promote.

5. Giant conglomerates (diversified corporate interests) are not uncommon in today's economic power structure. The media
are "tied" in in this development; it makes it difficult for the media to ignore its own interests for the sake of objectively - the dispassionate treatment of information and news.

6. Some of the big media, e.g. CBS, deal with classified programmes on contract with their home governments. Whatever these programmes are, the affected media have vested interests in them. It can be assumed that they are unlikely to be openly critical in such a situation.

7. Visnews is owned by the White members of the Commonwealth. It can be assumed that cultural and political considerations rather than economic ones were prime motivations for the make-up of Visnews ownership.

In terms of media internationalism, egalitarianism and social accountability, we can conclude from the foregoing section that the contemporary media do not exhibit such characteristics. But a definitive statement cannot be made at this juncture until the process of information flow and press freedom are examined. Below we discuss the critical issues of information flow and freedom of the press.

2:2. Free International Flow of Information (FIFOI)

The FIFOI doctrine is rooted in the East-West ideological confrontation, and the energetic campaign in the 1940s in particular by Americans to penetrate and unsettle the monopolistic powers of the European super news-agencies.52

52 For a chronology and/or detailed discussion and analysis of the FIFOI doctrine, see Herbert I. Schiller, Communication and Cultural Domination (White Plains, NY: International Arts and Science Press, 1976); George Gerbner, Mass Media Policies in Changing Cultures (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1977), Chapters 2, 3 and 9 (passim).
The FIFOI doctrine is similar to such concepts as "free marketplace" or "free enterprise", "free trade", "free press" and "freedom of the seas". This value concept of freedom is individually-centred and more often than not ensures the triumph of the strong over the weak. "Freedom of the seas" in international law is the closest in comparability to the FIFOI doctrine enshrining as it does the interests of the strongest naval powers - and so does FIFOI in respect of international media "moguls". These "freedoms" in theory presuppose a reasonable equality of resources and opportunity and non-governmental interference in the marketplace; supply and demand regulate interactions. The theory does not regard monopolistic or oligopolistic markets as free or desirable; they are developments harmful to free competition. It does not confer immunity from responsible behaviour. Neither does it provide a licence for anyone to do what one likes, wishes, pleases or chooses.

But the reality of the "corporate village" is that this well-meaning concept disturbingly guarantees the big, powerful and influential the freedom to exploit, sometimes without a flicker of human conscience, those who are powerless. As the late media critic, A. J. Liebling remarked, "Freedom of the press belongs to the man who owns one."53 The Free World has yet to demonstrate convincingly to the Shackled World that it means what it preachers - that the principle of free-this or free-that actually works.

As matters presently stand, the world is stable if and only when the Shackled World is being "vampired" upon by the Free World. It becomes unstable when the Free World is denied or threatened of its freedom to do what it pleases. The problem with the Free World is that it has since lost faith and confidence in a global system largely created and shaped by it because it can no longer control and direct it. If one wants to be cynical, one could take a close look at the American dollar bill which has stated on it "In God We Trust" and ask the logical question, "All Others Cash"? And when the same maxim is applied by the "Others", the world could indeed be a very "cashy" place. We have a good example in OPEC's price hikes. In 1975, G. Tyler Miller Jr. in reference to the per capita cost of raw material consumption in the United States stated that it "is less than $100, a price no higher than at the beginning of the century" while her "GNP... has been rising steadily and is now almost $5,000".\textsuperscript{54} Certainly, the Shackled World cannot claim the same trend for its imports or consumption of manufactured and capital goods. These facts, however, are often ignored in media treatment of the oil consumption crisis which is generally labelled as an "energy crisis" - a synonym for OPEC mischief-making.

OPEC, as an economic force in this decade, has rendered bare the contradictions inherent in "free" competition. When six private US companies contracted with the Mexican government for gas supplies to the US, the American government intervened

and killed the deal. The action was taken on the grounds that the price arrived at through a process of bargaining between the Mexican government and US private business interests was too high. The action was justified by invoking the national interest. Lesson: when national interests collide with private business interests, the former must prevail. In a recent television interview, US Senator Frank Church put it this way: "If we expect that the oil companies are going to solve our problems...then we are being foolish." This is quite realistic but what went wrong with the idea of a free market enterprise economy? In an earlier interview on NBC's weekly programme "Meet The Press," Walter Levy, an oil consultant, when asked if oil importing countries would consider boycotting middlemen or oil exporting countries that "jack up oil prices arbitrarily," answered: "Yes. But it would be resisted (by the middlemen) in the name of free market enterprise and non-governmental interference. But what is at stake is so great that a principle that doesn't work anyway shouldn't hinder governmental action." (emphasis added)

The reaction of these two highly-placed Americans better illustrates the reaction of the Shackled World to the principle of FIFOI. They would be foolish if they thought that the Free World was going to solve their problems. Their attempts to check the unrestricted "freedom" of the Free World's media to do what

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they please outside of their national borders would be resisted in the name of FIFOI and non-governmental interference. But, as Walter Levy brilliantly would have it, what is at stake is too great to be left in the hands of giant media monopolies.

The essence, then, of the Shackled World's reassessment of the principle of FIFOI undertaken last year in Paris under the aegis of UNESCO is clear: unless there is some balance in the flow of information and the right or freedom to communicate in the international marketplace of ideas, the flow of information cannot be regarded as free. These sentiments have been expressed at various international forums prior to the Paris meeting but the response of the Western media has been largely negative and hostile. However, some of them have seen the need for change and a reconciliation of values if any sense is to be made at all of international communication. The Washington Post and Le Monde (Paris), for example, have sharply contrasting views on the issue.

Reacting to the July 1976 meeting of the Latin-Caribbean UNESCO group on the subject of balancing the free flow of information and the right to communicate, a Washington Post editorial shot straight from the hip:

Now, this newspaper, which offers its news product for foreign sale, has an undeniable self-interest in nourishing an international climate in which the commercial opportunities for Western media are maintained. But this, of course, is no different from the vested interest that the American media - being free, competitive institutions - have in maintaining the same commercial opportunities at home. It is a simple matter of principle coinciding with commercial interest, and the principle involved here, of course, was set forth at a rather early stage in our history, in the first amendment to the Constitution. And if it is a sound principle for us in this country, it follows, or so it seems to us, that it is also a good rule to apply to the communication of ideas abroad.58

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58 Cees Hamelink, op. cit., p.206.
But as Hamelink wondered aloud, the newspaper failed to state when the US Constitution or the specific provision cited, formulated and enacted by Americans, assumed universal authority. It was not without good reason that several former Presidents of the US had strong words for the press of their country. Lyndon B. Johnson, for instance, once blasted a reporter:
"Someone ought to do an article on you and your damn profession, your First Amendment," describing the reporter's question as "chicken shit." He did not stop there: he described the press as "the least-guided, least-inhibited segment of US society... they are liars and cheats." Perhaps these were the outbursts of an angry politician. Harry Truman was less obtuse in his time. Once, lodging a complaint with a columnist, he noted, inter alia, "You newspapermen have a complex that anyone who tells you of any of your many shortcomings is either anxious to be a dictator or else he is an ignoramus." 60

The Washington Post fails to see the merit in the position of the Shackled World. Instead, a Cold War perspective leads it to conclude that in an attempt to combat "cultural imperialism," the Shackled World is simply interested in following "the Russian example of tailoring the mass communication to the convenience of the ruling elite." 61

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60 Ibid., p.88.

61 New Internationalist, October 1976, p.5.
This may be true but, again, the Washington Post failed to explain to whose convenience the Western media is tailored, not to mention its inability to come up with an answer to the specific questions of news distortion and imbalance in the flow of information which were at issue. It is instructive that only recently, US National Security Affairs Adviser Zbigniew Brezezinski and press secretary Jody Powell "called in six foreign journalists to express concern over the difficulty they feel foreigners have in understanding the routine, traditional American political values and procedures involved in the president's retreat to Camp David and his abrupt Cabinet reshuffle. The journalists represented influential newspapers and news agencies from Western Europe and Japan." 62

Le Monde, unlike the self-righteous posture of the Washington Post, had an answer:

The Third World has good reason to denounce the mastery of the West over information. The mastery is financial, political, cultural. The choice of what makes news - even if, most fortunately, it is rarely made on the order of the authorities - cannot be neutral; it is operated by Westerners, in line with their own system of values. It is a subtle, even if often unconscious, form of colonialism, which transmits back to the Third World the West's own image of that world, while at the same time failing to inform the West of the movements developing in the poor continents. 63

As was noted earlier, the doctrine of FIFOI as formulated and adopted in 1948 at a Geneva UN Conference, came about at the


63 New Internationalist, October 1976, p.5.
active instigation of American initiative. With Nazism still fresh in people's minds, the concept was appealing. As early as 1944, the American news media, led by Kent Cooper of the Associated Press, were already on the offensive calling for a FIFOI. Considerable pressure was brought to bear on the American political parties which in turn mounted a striking political campaign at home and at the UN in support of FIFOI. 64

In January 1946, William Benton, the US Assistant Secretary of State said

The State Department plans to do everything within its power along political or diplomatic lines to help break down the artificial barriers to the expansion of private American news agencies, magazines, motion pictures and other media of communications throughout the world...Freedom of the press and freedom of exchange of information generally - is an integral part of our foreign policy. 65

Gauhar notes that early in the previous year, nominees of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, AP and UPI had travelled by Army Transport Command planes to canvass their idea for an international free press in twenty-two major cities and eleven Allied and neutral countries. But all of this was not undertaken without some challenge. Needless to say, the European news media fought back with a fury. Commented the London Economist, for example:

64 Cees Hamelink, op. cit., p.3.

the huge financial resources of the American agencies might enable them to dominate the world... (Cooper), like most big business executives, experiences a peculiar moral glow in finding that his idea of freedom coincides with his commercial advantage...Democracy does not necessarily mean making the whole world safe for the AP.66
to which, the writer reacted: "nor did it mean, the Economist failed to add, retaining control for Reuter and British Cables."
So with the triumph of the American media and their home government, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 59 (1) in 1946 which reads: "Freedom of Information is a fundamental human right and is the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated."67 Coupled with the FIFOI doctrine and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights which declares "that everyone has the right to seek, receive, and impart information through any media and regardless of frontiers,"68 the super news-agencies' global operations were legitimized for some thirty years. Business has been good ever since they succeeded in obtaining this legitimation to operate and communicate wherever and with whomever they please. They were so corrupted by their unchallenged power that during the 1960s, AP, UPI and Reuter, for instance, denied infant national news agencies the opportunity to distribute their (the super agencies') messages domestically.

66 George Gerbner, op. cit., p.108.
67 Altaf Gauhar, op. cit., p.54.
68 Cees Hamelink, op. cit., p.2.
"They insisted that they must have the freedom to provide material direct to the newspapers," prompting the Guyanese Prime Minister to say that "A nation whose mass media are dominated from the outside is not a nation." And so began a massive and consolidated "electronic cocacolonization" of the Shackled World. Shows like "Kojak" and "I Love Lucy" have made it to the living rooms of most corners of the Shackled World. The implications are disturbing. Cultural patterns and socialization processes are capable of being distorted. Needless to say, such developments can have disastrous effects on the political economies concerned. To be sure, these shows are not forced down the viewing throats, so to speak, of the recipient countries. However, to ride high on the tide of this logic is an unpardonable perversion of morality; it is an unfair exploitation of a weaker and sometimes ignorant people.

In responding to a proposed merger of ABC with the ITT, the (US) Federal Communications Commission gave the following reason for rejecting the bid:

One cannot believe that the interests of the public of the North American community will be served by combining a television chain of the importance of ABC with an international undertaking.

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69Altaf Gauhar, op. cit., p. 55

70The electronically-engineered and supported consumer cultural value convergence and congruence that make it possible for an unfettered invasion of foreign media software. Coupled with the introduction of communication hardware, it creates a dependency syndrome which in various ways distorts local cultures and the processes of socialization.

71The present campaign by certain church groups urging a boycott of Nestle (products) because of the adverse effects of its baby formula advertising in economically underdeveloped areas of the world speaks to the kind of concern expressed here.
which has political relationships with foreign officials whose actions this chain would have to interpret to the world.72

The FCC decision was based on politics, not economics. Such a sound decision could be extended to cover cultural matters especially where the host culture is radically different. But it is possible that such cultural invasions create and nourish "an international climate in which the commercial opportunities for Western media are maintained" - to quote the Washington Post again - not to mention the foreign policy "benefits" to the home country of the invading media. Host governments can, of course, move against such invasions. When they do, however, those seeking to create a favourable international climate for their (media) products are likely to give them a bad press, painting a picture of authoritarianism and a desire to ape the Russian model of communication.

Technological advances over the years have given rise to various problems involving the development, use and direction of communication and information. Shackled World countries that have had to fight for their political independence in the 1960s and their economic existence in the 1970s are faced with yet another battle as we enter the 1980s - the fight against cultural imperialism. So there is bound to be an increasing demand for cultural and national sovereignty over the media of mass communication while the Free World insists on press freedom and FIFOI. In September 1979, the International Telecommunication Union will sponsor a World Administrative Radio Conference (WARC). The Conference will meet in Geneva to re-examine the distribution of broadcast frequencies that the Free World quite generously allotted among themselves over the past few decades.

The upcoming utilization review of the electro-magnetic spectrum should hold particular meaning for the have-not countries on two very important fronts: one economic, and the other in the telecommunication field.

The economic factor: it has been noted that satellites stationed over Latin America are capable of predicting a crop failure well in advance.\(^7^3\) This type of information, in the hands of a select group of countries, could further distort a global economic order that has been crying out for structural changes. It is feared, for example, that a country's economy could be disrupted by an artificial increase in a commodity's world price whose impending scarcity had been known in advance. It is ugly news for mono-crop economies in particular.

In telecommunication (radio specifically), it is a well known fact that, unlike urbanites concentrated in a few big cities, ruralites in Africa have no difficulty receiving clear signals from abroad when they tune in to stations like the Voice of America, Radio Moscow, BBC and other European international radio stations. However, they have considerable difficulty receiving national broadcasting stations. To overcome this problem, African countries must switch to shortwave bands. Only then would they be able to reach their rural populations with ease. Meanwhile, their position vis-a-vis the Free World in the geo-synchronous orbital arc (which "houses" communication satellites) puts them at a disadvantage. In other words, they

are badly disadvantaged in the distribution of frequencies.\footnote{Ibid., p. 145.}

Since the bulk of Africa's population is illiterate, we can realistically rule out a heavy emphasis on the print media at the present time. In addition, the diversity of languages coupled with widespread poverty would make it imperative that radio communication is emphasized over other media of mass communication. But it would be useless trying to undertake such a programme without a fair redistribution of the present broadcast frequencies. That is why the doctrine of FIFOI has some very serious implications for the Shackled World. If they cannot reach their own peoples while foreign powers, government or media, can easily reach those audiences, their whole value system could be systematically undermined. To make matters worse, the have-not countries have been unable to reach foreign audiences so that the foreign media would continue to portray them the way they wish. These concerns render the forthcoming WARC meeting all the more crucial. The talk of "electronic cocacolonization" is no rhetoric; it is real and places, once again, world peace at the cross-roads. The problem is further compounded by the possible use of scientific satellites in the direction of meteorological warfare. And talking about FIFOI, information collected in this respect is neither disseminated nor is it available to the public.\footnote{Cees Hamelink, op. cit., p.10.}

\footnote{Ibid., p. 145.}

\footnote{Cees Hamelink, op. cit., p.10.}
The logic here, according to Hamelink's argument, is that the communication-industrial complex is inextricably interwoven with the military-industrial complex to form one giant inseparable whole: the communication-industrial-military (CIM) complex. It is not for nothing, therefore, that American policy makers view the FIFOI doctrine as a cardinal point in US foreign policy.

When did all of these developments come to a head? Although UNESCO has from its inception been concerned with the role of communication in facilitating international understanding, the magnitude and complexities of the problems involved were addressed fully, perhaps for the first time, at the McBride Commission76 sitting in Paris last November. However, the battle lines had been drawn some four years earlier. In 1974 at a UNESCO conference (on freedom of information), the Soviet Union tabled a "Draft Declaration on Fundamental Principles Governing the Uses of Mass Media in Strengthening Peace and International Understanding and in Combating War Propaganda, Racism and Apartheid." This was seen by the US delegate, William G. Harley, as a "Soviet plot..."77

At the October-November 1976 General Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya, the old wounds, so to speak, were reopened. More debate, finger-pointing and screaming newspaper headlines

76 Sean McBride was Chairman of the UNESCO International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems.

77 Altaf Gauhar, op. cit., p.56.
in favour or against placing restrictions on the FIFOI doctrine were heard and/or read. Then came November 1978 at the 20th General Conference of UNESCO in Paris, and the proverbial hay hit the fan. This time, in short, the controversial draft declaration called for a New International Information Order which would witness the dawn of a "wider and better balanced dissemination of information." Among other things, the Shackled World called for (1) the media to be sanctioned in counter-propaganda; (2) the right of reply (to unfair criticism); (3) the right to choose what foreign publications or news agency materials are allowed into their respective countries; (4) the right of governments to select foreign items for publication in the local press; and (5) an international code of conduct for journalists. Again, the Shackled World pounded its chest in righteous indignation at what they saw as a Western media obsession: distortion of information about them. The Western media, for their part, got all enwrapped in a state of near hysteria pointing to the fact that most of the media in developing countries are government-owned and directed, and emphasized their rights to freedom of information. There were even rumours that the US might withdraw from UNESCO. The US is responsible for one quarter of the Organization's yearly budget of $303-million.


To the relief of the Western media and their governments, a declaration was adopted at the end of the Conference with "All references which could be construed as authorizing governments to interfere with the media...deleted." The need for a free and balanced flow of information was reaffirmed and emphasized. Although no mechanism or procedure for achieving this was spelled out, it was recently reported that the UN was considering "licensing and imposing penalties for 'incorrect' reporting." Enforcement would be by member governments. Needless to say, this is bad news for the Western media and they are fighting it.

While the idea of a free marketplace of ideas is desirable and should be pursued by democratic governments and peoples, there are many barriers at the present time to realizing it, namely: 1) powerful financial, economic and political forces seek to dominate communications; (2) there are so many violations of freedom and abuses in the name of that very freedom; (3) there are autocratic, bureaucratic and financial pressures on communication means and communicators; and (4) there is often covert outside interference in communication processes as well as manipulations by communicators beyond their proper functions. Particularly bothering to the Shackled...
World is what they see as the distortion, misrepresentation and trivialization of news concerning events in their respective countries. Commented Sean McBride: "there is a disproportionate focus on the Third World as being plagued by catastrophe whether natural, social or political, and there are vestiges of the view that developing countries are incapable of self-regulated survival."\(^84\) This kind of news value orientation prompted the following remark by the late Tom Mboya of Kenya:

...The result is that the news coming out of Africa is often, if not always, related to the already biased and prejudiced mind that keeps asking such questions as "Is this pro-East or pro-West?" Very few, if any, of the world's press ask such logical, in our view, and simple questions, as: "Is this pro-African?"\(^85\)

Whatever the grievances, curbing the "professional" activities or freedom of foreign correspondents would not solve the problem of bias and prejudice. Agreed: as Jacques Regaud, UNESCO's Assistant Director-General, would have it, "Decolonization must be carried to its conclusion in the minds of men. It is uncomfortable to have to admit that supposedly universal values sometimes conceal a hardcore of self-interest."\(^86\) Or, as Philip Townshend of Jesus College, Cambridge, has it, the so-called objective truth pursued by Western journalists "serves to stimulate a purely idle curiosity in the minds of people who

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\(^85\) William A. Hachten, op. cit., p.79.

have no honest concern for the fate of the countries they are reading about," charging that interest is present only "when they are being invaded, torn apart by rebellion, or devastated by earthquakes and the like." There is no doubt that specific philosophies can be invoked, perhaps as a smokescreen, in a particular undertaking, to justify or suit one's sinister objectives. In the end, however, only the availability of different shades of opinion which enhance our comparative analysis of events and issues would lead to global harmony.

While an international code of ethics for journalists operating outside of their home countries may appear attractive, it would do more harm than good. Governments or officials who are intolerant of criticism would find a ready refuge in such a code, invoking it as a legitimate tool to censure, harass or sanction a reporter, columnist or editor. Nothing stops them from engaging in such official reaction anyway, but the crucial difference lies in the knowledge that such behaviour would be condemned by people who they cannot readily "discipline" as the doings of an authoritarian or dictatorial regime. No country in the Shackled World - not even Somoza's or Mobutu Sese Seko's - wants to be so described. It is insulting to them even though they know that they are responsible for inviting such "insults."

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The presence of foreign correspondents may indeed be a benefit to host governments who may be so enwrapped in their own little worlds that they do not quite realize when they are violating the decency of humanity - albeit as seen from a foreign perspective. Nonetheless, it ought to be tolerated. A beneficial reporting is not equated with only that which is positive or favourable. It could be negative or positive. Exposing the corruption of a government official or local businessman may be "bad" news but it is beneficial to the society concerned. If corruption were generally accepted by a government and its people as a desirable form of reward or taxation, then the subject could be discussed within that context. But no country has yet declared corruption as such. In fact, they are all fighting it, and in some cases condemning offenders to firing squads. The present Ghanaian regime is a good example. Then, why the epileptic fits of indignation when caught in the act of violating one's own credo? It is ridiculous.

Rather than seeking to restrict or negatively sanction the freedom of correspondents, a mechanism for admitting them in the first place, which would facilitate their work to the mutual benefit of the correspondent, his sponsors and his hosts, should be seriously considered. Such a scheme is discussed below.

It is suggested that foreign correspondents be admitted on the basis of a foreign correspondence admission test (FCAT).
This should be designed to test the level of a correspondent's cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity, his knowledge of the politics of his own country, of the specific country and region to which he is seeking admission, his general knowledge of international relations, and, importantly, of international development. Those who fulfill these requirements through formal education or through an active sojourn in a culture or cultures other than their own may be exempted upon the provision or demonstration of proof.

How is the FCAT to be effectively administered? Host country experts (educational and media) may elect to draw up the scheme in much the same way as the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey does in conducting the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). An international body, private or public, can also undertake the task. The latter will have the added merit of appearing to be impartial by virtue of its multinationalism or international composition.

The FCAT is not a form of censorship. Neither is it a rationalization of any form of censorship designed to keep foreign correspondents away from the Shackled World. As we have argued, it is beneficial to have foreign correspondents in order to enrich, broaden and stimulate our understanding of issues and events as they arise. FCAT, as stated above, is recommended in the sense that such programmes as TOEFL are offered. Correspondents who are not prepared or are unwilling to write an FCAT need not seek admission into a foreign country for the purpose of working as a correspondent.

Foreign correspondents who may
plan on entering a country as businessmen or tourists or anything but a correspondent for a foreign medium, their declared intentions on making application for entry as against their actual performance would determine whether or not another such declaration on their part would be tolerated in the future in a particular country or elsewhere. In other words, they may be unwittingly conferring upon themselves the possible status of a *persona non grata*.

The FCAT has two important merits: one, it would spare host governments and nationals, and indeed the peace of the international community, the general irritation and nuisance caused by journalists who are uninformed, unaware and insensitive. Calling a spade a spade is not a problem but one has to understand a situation before one is able to sensibly interpret it. That is the central idea behind FCAT. Two, it is for the good of the correspondent himself and his sponsors that he should be tested in the fashion suggested to make sure that he knows what he is doing. It may be argued that the correspondent and his sponsors are better qualified to make that judgement. Wrong. When foreign students are required, as a condition for admission to some universities in North America, to write the TOEFL, for example, it is not because the authorities wish to frustrate or keep them away from their classrooms. Despite the fact that most foreign students who come to North America to study come from countries where English is the language of business, government and education, and have had all of their previous education
(some including the first level of university education) in English, TOEFL is designed in fairness to them. There is such a thing as an American English, a Nigerian English and an Indian English. "I'm coming" or "whack and shack" in one English may not mean the same thing in some other English. 88 TOEFL ensures that the student will benefit from his studies. A foreign student at Brock University once confided in this writer the fact that his first year in particular was a waste because he had extreme trouble with the (Canadian) accent of his instructors. He would have been better off studying by correspondence, he thought. Needless to say, his grades were affected. It is not known if this particular student wrote the TOEFL as a condition for coming to Brock. If he did, TOEFL would have given him an idea as to what to expect on a daily routine basis for some three or four academic years.

Generally, foreign students may think that they are better placed to make the judgement as to whether or not they need to write a TOEFL. However, as demonstrated above, it is for good reasons that some institutions require it. In any case, foreign students, graduate or otherwise, do not dictate the administration and admission standards of their potential host institutions. FCAT should be administered to foreign correspondents for similar reasons.

88 Depending on the situation, "I'm coming" in popular Nigerian English may mean "I'll be with you in a minute" or "Please give way." "Whack and shack," on the other hand, means to "eat and drink." Imagine a Nigerian male saying to an American female correspondent, "How about a quiet evening of whacking and shacking."
As Patrick Cole of the Nigerian *Daily Times* explains, "Journalism is a way of seeing and interpreting the world...," pointing out that "The typical foreign correspondent in Africa is a Western journalist who arrives (in a capital city usually) already certain that there is nothing of fundamental let alone educative value which he could possibly find in the so recently dark continent of Africa." He further noted an incident involving an American journalist: "A *Newsweek* correspondent baffled by the profound meaning of FESTAC (The Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture held in Lagos, January-February 1977) settles for a merely 'interesting' account of how a young black American from Watts is horrified by the squalor in Lagos." The point to be made here is not so much that Western journalists like our baffled *Newsweek* correspondent file false reports. His squalor-oriented story was true. But the point is: of what value is this piece of story to *Newsweek* which had despatched this correspondent at considerable expense to report on FESTAC or to the magazine's audience who were supposedly being informed about FESTAC? Whether or not such reporting is of any value is probably debatable but it is clear that the correspondent was ill-equipped for the task to which he had been assigned. As the Ontario Roman Catholic Bishop said in a different context, "There is a growing tendency to lash out at what is unfamiliar, to simplify the issues and to respond to

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89 *Daily Times*, November 9, 1977, p.7.
what is different with a destructive fury."\(^{90}\)
Cole, in his concluding remarks, was more blunt. He argued that the "inherited disability" of the Western journalist does not arise from cultural difference alone; "It is based on deliberately contrived theories of cultural superiority," and referred to the UNESCO Conference as follows: the "dismal fact is that all the yelling about press freedom was a hypocritical cloak for the far less noble desire to monopolise the circulation of news across national boundaries."\(^{91}\) FCAT is one aspect of this writer's answer to these various problems.

Much of the charges, **inter alia**, of bias and prejudice or lack of objectivity, insensitivity and abuse of press freedom emanate from how news is defined. However it is defined, news is news depending on who is doing the defining. The news of a new school or the installation, for example, of a water supply system in a remote village in Papua New Guinea may be news to the villagers concerned and communities nearby but for North American audiences who take such things for granted, it is no big deal, as one might say. So, it is not news and is, therefore, not carried by the international media. As one Western journalist explains it, "Why the hell should anyone but a specialist be interested in the Congo when there isn't a crisis there?"\(^{92}\)

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\(^{90}\)The Globe and Mail (Toronto), March 27, 1979, p.44.

\(^{91}\)The Daily Times (Lagos), November 9, 1977, p.7.

\(^{92}\)William A. Hachten, op. cit., p.83.
Some other comment: "It should be remembered that our basic role is not to promote African interests...Our task is to interpret."\textsuperscript{93} That is fine indeed; news is relative but the point, which we have already noted, is that interpretation based on misunderstanding or faulty perception of situations leads inevitably to faulty interpretations, or what is often described as distortions.

The charge of news distortion gives the false impression of deliberate falsehood. However, according to Juan Somavia, distortion assumes a variety of forms (of expression) based on an "arbitrary selection and a slanted evaluation of reality."\textsuperscript{94} He gives six examples of how such distortions are manifested, one of which is quoted below in full:

There is distortion by "preconditioning" of facts. Events having a specific dimension are presented in such a way that unfounded fears and misgivings are created, conditioning future action on the part of individuals, companies, social groups and governments.

The UPI filed the following dispatch on February 27, 1974; "New York, February 27 (UPI). A meeting of a number of the main bauxite-producing countries scheduled tentatively for March 5 in Conakry (Guinea) has caused understandable concern in Washington. Some experts feel that the conference could be the first step in the establishment of a series of international cartels for controlling raw materials essential to the industrialized nations which could set the United States' economy back more than 40 years."

\textsuperscript{93}Ibid., p. 87.

\textsuperscript{94}Cees Hamelink, op. cit., p.149.
Cables like this create the image in industrialized countries that the increasing organizational capacity of raw-materials producing countries is a "threat" to their own development. Implicit is the message that it is "legitimate" for the industrialized countries to defend themselves and seek by all means at their disposal to obstruct the organizational capacity of the Third World. At the same time, the cable warns the countries meeting in Conakry that Washington's concern is "understandable" and that, consequently, if they should come to an agreement on bauxite, it would be logical that reprisals might be forthcoming.  

The above example is presented at length to demonstrate that news selection is not based on a dispassionate view of events or issues. It is geared to the protection of vested interests and, by implication, tends to disfigure the free flow of information in the absence of other competing interests.  

The other kinds of news distortion given by Somavia are summarized as follows:

1) highlighting of events that have no real importance, interweaving the anecdotal, the irrelevant and what is considered picturesque in the developed countries with facts of real national significance;

2) making news by putting isolated facts together and presenting them as a whole, or presenting a sum of partial truths in such a way that it appears to amount to an overall truth;

3) misrepresentation by implication characterized by the presentation of facts in such a way that the implicit conclusions are favourable to particular interests;

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95 Ibid., p.150.

96 The other super news-agencies, AP, AFP or Reuter, cannot be said to constitute "other competing interests" as far as news value orientation is concerned. None of them is in business to promote the interests of bauxite-producing countries. Therefore, until those countries can reach the same audience independently, we cannot talk of competition or a free flow of information. It remains largely distorted.

4) distortion by keeping silent on situations presumed to be no longer of interest to the public for whom the agencies' correspondents are writing; thus Viet Nam has virtually ceased to be news in the international press after the defeat of the United States, despite the value and interest of its development work following so devastating a war;

5) distortions arising from government control of news, from restrictions on the freedom of access to news sources, from censorship and from governmental authority infringing on press freedom.

Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge of the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, have shed some light on international news gathering and dissemination by advancing several hypotheses regarding the determination of the newsworthiness of events; they partly explain the phenomenon of news distortion by the international media. Some of these hypotheses are presented below: 98

a) The more distant a nation is (in cultural, not necessarily in geographical terms), the more will an event have to possess obvious attention-grabbing qualities of the "horror, shock, drama" kind. Examples are natural disasters, accidents and changes of government;

b) The more distant an event, the less ambiguous it will have to be. Complexities can be coped with in one's own culture, but not at a distance;

c) The more distant a nation, the more necessary that an event should fit a pattern of expectation. Military coups in Latin America and sexual extremism in Sweden are examples;

d) The lower the rank of the nation in which the event takes place, the lower must the cultural distance be. The top-dog nations all have their own set of "sphere of influence" lesser nations from which they over-report relative to what they report from other low-rank nations;

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The lower the rank of the nation, the higher will a person have to be placed in that nation to make news;

The lower the rank of the nation, the more negative will the news from that nation have to be.

The implications of the researchers' conclusions for international understanding are potentially serious. As Temple notes, "...Readers will acquire a distorted impression of distant countries, emphasizing unpredictability, difference and danger within a framework of stereotype images. Causation of events will be insufficiently understood. Under-dog nations will seem to be grossly elite-dominated and unable to govern themselves sensibly." 99

Events in recent years have more than substantiated the propositions under reference and the kind of concern expressed by Temple. Altaf Gauhar, for example, monitored between December 1978 and February 1979 how the prestigious London Economist gathered, analyzed and reported the facts surrounding the fall of the Shah of Iran. 100 His review of the Economist's portrayal of events in Iran showed a consistent pattern of news distortion. One chilling comment on December 12, 1978: "While the blood was flowing, Iran's oil was not." Perhaps Iranian oil was more valued than the blood of its nationals! William A. Dorman and Ehsan Omeed have also demonstrated in an article entitled "Reporting Iran The Shah's Way" how the American media repeatedly misinformed the American public opinion about the Iranian Revolution. 101

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99 Ibid., p.41
100 Altaf Gauhar, op. cit., pp.61-63
This kind of Jonestownian journalism practised by some important Western media in their coverage of Iran may be mistaken for an exception. Unfortunately, it is not. The American media, generally speaking, have been known long before Iran to peddle "deliberate government lies" on matters of interest to the US government - such as the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion, the American U-2 Spy plane downed by the Soviets and the Vietnam War. This lack of independence and freedom from government-determined news - the First Amendment and government-guaranteed freedom of information notwithstanding - are further compounded by the use of journalists by the Central Intelligence Agency in secret intelligence operations. The CIA has long been involved with the media as a matter of routine. Said Charles B. Seib, "...At the same time, the CIA, while surrendering - ever so slowly - its involvement with the American media, has insisted that it must retain the option of manipulating the press abroad." Such propaganda activity has been known, according to William Colby, an ex-director of the Agency, to facilitate the emergence of "insignificant

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*The US is mentioned in this thesis more often than any other Western country for the simple reason that her media are more developed than any others in the Free World. They have a long tradition of independence and freedom. They indeed dominate the global communications market. It is reasonable to hypothesize, therefore, that existing shortcomings of the world's freest press system are very likely to be present in the media of the other countries of the Free World with a less open system of government. The criticism of the American press rendered throughout this thesis is borne out of a recognition of American leadership - a better American press would be a good omen for world peace.

102Walt McDayter, op. cit., p.25. See also William J. Small, Political Power and the Press, 1972, pp.194-206.

right-wing groups into national leadership in foreign countries."104 One other highly-placed CIA official stated that the American news media are "the only unfettered espionage agencies in this country," adding "No harm to the reputation of the US free press will be done if the journalists themselves do not gossip about their contacts with the CIA."105 These activities are part of a broad scheme in pursuit of the ever-elusive communist shadow, and at least in the heydays of the Cold War were "presidentially-directed" and "congressionally-endorsed."106 In the circumstances, to ask the international community to embrace the concepts of FIFOI and press freedom without a critical assessment of the performance of those propagating it would be less than realistic if not suicidal. That performance has been pretty poor and injurious to healthy international intercourse.

The American news media are not alone in this exercise in perverting news regarding international or transnational events. The British media, for example, have been accused of peddling "a potpourri of half-truths, near-truths and deliberate falsehood".107 One example of the several cases cited is the case of a Sunday Telegraph journalist who reported that Angolan government forces and their Cuban allies had slaughtered "at least 70,000 innocent civilians" in northern Angola, quoting "observers in London". Remarked the New African, also published in London: "These are remarkable observers who can apparently sit in their London offices and count the dead in Northern Angola."108

The Kenya Daily Nation reporting the death of British journalist, Lord Richard Cecil, said: "He often donned a Rhodesian military uniform and often carried a firearm! Hardly the tools of a mere cameraman or journalist seeking to provide

108 Ibid.
a fair and objective report of a war. Indeed, at the time of his death he was reportedly wearing a camouflage uniform and his face was blackened..."\textsuperscript{109} This quote speaks for itself.

Imaginary stories of the death (later to be explained away as assassination attempts) of Samora Machel of Mozambique were carried by several Western media including the highly reputable BBC, prompting a British diplomat to lament: "This is a retrograde step for British journalism."\textsuperscript{110} The BBC wanting to reassure itself of its world-wide reputation had undertaken a feedback survey of its "The World Today" programme. It received a few straight answers. One South African who identified himself as Alexander X, for instance, responded: "Sometime ago I heard BBC correspondents interviewing African writers in the vernacular. They talked to those creative people like they were 13-year olds. From that time on, I stopped listening to "The World Today."\textsuperscript{111} The BBC certainly cannot satisfy all of its listeners but the implication here, if we recall Galtung and Ruge, is how "inferior" countries and their nationals are perceived, portrayed and treated by even generally respected media.

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{109}] New African, June 1978, p.69.
\item[\textsuperscript{111}] New Internationalist, October 1976, p.10.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Much of the American media's distorted coverage of events in Iran and elsewhere (e.g. Africa, Argentina, Chile, Nicaragua, South Korea, South Vietnam and Thailand) may also be due to what has been described as "embassy reporting." Ignorant of the local culture and language, even of the dynamics of the country's internal political processes, some "American journalists," said Tom Johnson of the New York Times, "draw their news...from the information fed to American embassies by foreign policy decision makers. The result is that the same information is circulated over and over again." That would appear to be the case with the coverage of Iran, which no doubt prompted Sean McBride to charge that the American media reporting of events in Iran had been "rather deficient" resulting in Congress being ill-informed. It certainly does not say much for a supposedly independent and free press.

In the very heat of the UNESCO debate last December, a television channel in Britain, addressing the topic of FIFOI, devoted ten minutes to showing its audience shots of a reception thrown by UNESCO's Director-General for delegates to the Conference while portraying the Organization "as largely an inefficient talking shop." In the closing minutes of the


programme, the television host continued his interrupted interview with the British government delegate to the Conference. Not once, observed Africa, did it occur to him that his audience might be interested in hearing what the dark faces being flashed occasionally at them had to say about the matter. And this, too, concerning a matter that was of great importance to Western journalists and the values they were standing for. Said Wayne Ellwood, commenting on the general coverage of the UNESCO meeting by the Western press:

But, while coverage of the UNESCO debate in the Western press ranged from restrained liberal moralizing to self-righteous cold-war moralizing, any discussion of the reasons for the Third World's dissatisfaction was palpably absent. The old shibboleth of the "free press" was bandied about to defend "what Western democracies have struggled so long and hard to win." The possibility that we may be bogged down in a big, mushy myth was ignored. That "mushy myth" is the claim that the FIFOI doctrine and press freedom are necessarily in the public good. There appears to be a latent arrogance on the part of the Western mind which prompts a superiority complex in the interplay of values. That mind appears to be saying, "listen, we don't care what you say or how you say it. The fact is that our news values are the best and correct ones; you cannot help but accept them." That same mind forgets that the imposition by Western European powers of a parliamentary system


116 The imposition of governmental structures and processes in the colonies was quite blatant in some areas and subtle in others. When Guinea, for example, opted at independence not to "federate" with France, France did not give up quietly. Vital files were destroyed - some of them taken home to France by the colonial administrators. Telephone equipment and plumbing facilities were destroyed. Other reprisals followed. See Gwendolen M. Carter, op. cit., pp.169-171.
of government upon their colonies proved unsuitable, and has indeed been a disaster in some countries. In any case, if a FIFOI doctrine and press freedom are requisites for protecting and sustaining the public good, then it must be understood that such public good is not defined solely in terms of the interests of a particular Free or Shackled World country. The public good in question must be that of the international community and any departure from working toward that public good (defined as "internationalism") must be in direct violation of the spirit and meaning of the FIFOI doctrine and the press freedom which facilitates it. If this is not the case, then an international regime of regulations ought to be instituted to correct any abuses of the doctrine. Only then will the idea of FIFOI merit any serious consideration.

It is very tempting to see the FIFOI doctrine and the cries for press freedom as devices by a few to monopolize the flow of information across national boundaries. A balanced flow, which can come about through fair competition, can be achieved not by screaming each time a Western medium goes on a news distortion rampage or at periodical UN conferences but by establishing alternative news agencies. Conscientious efforts must also be made to penetrate, as an equalizing mechanism, the media frontiers of the Free World (see Section 4:2) in order to provide not just mere political communication but alternative and, therefore, competing interpretations of socio-economic and political events around the world. The problem with the Shackled World is that up till now, very little attention has been paid to
international communication. Valuable money is wasted instead on prestige projects. The OPEC nations, for example, can set up and staff a highly potent news agency that will compete on an equal footing with the super news-agencies if only they put their minds to it. They are only just beginning to realize the importance of communication.\footnote{OPEC recently announced its intention to establish a news agency to supplement the news of existing news agencies rather than compete with them.} However, some progress is being made. One example: the Inter Press Service.

To correct the existing imbalance in the flow of information the Inter Press Service (IPS), a cooperative of journalists dedicated to the development of the Shackled World, was founded in 1964. The cooperative consists of forty European and Latin-American journalists. They have some two hundred full time correspondents based in Rome and Buenos Aires. IPS has received some lucrative assignments since it came into being. In 1971, it was chosen to cover the Lima meeting of the Group of 77 and of UNCTAD's Santiago meeting in 1972.\footnote{Jeff Endrst, "Inter Press Service: A Third World News Agency," \textit{Development Direction}, October 1978, p.7.} IPS cooperates with the Yugoslav News Agency, Tanjug, and Iraqi News Agency, Venpress (the Venezuelan News Agency) and ARNA (the Libyan News Agency). It transmits information in Spanish, English and Arabic regarding the following: the promotion of (1) precise understanding of the cultural, political, social and economic reality of the Third World; (2) fundamental problems that the policies of the major powers pose for the Third World; (3) relations that Third World countries establish between themselves in their attempt
to escape the dominance of the major powers; and (4) relations between Third World countries and the industrialized countries. In undertaking all of this, IPS does not aim to operate along "traditional" news agency lines. Rather, it "concentrates on analysis, background information and day to day events, placing them in a larger frame of reference."119

IPS is a welcome start for the Shackled World but they have a long way to go in order to compete effectively with the well-established news agencies which have a vast wealth of organizational, financial and human resources at their disposal. Creating the "credibility" that the four Western news agencies now enjoy will not be easy but there is hope.

Summarizing the foregoing section, we note that (1) the international flow of information is unidirectional in a North-South direction. It is also distorted; (2) the Western media have largely ignored charges of imbalance and distortion in the flow and presentation of news and information made against them by countries of the Shackled World; (3) the FIFOI doctrine came into being at a time when most of the developing countries were under colonial rule. It tends to work to the advantage of the stronger owners of communication facilities; (4) outside forces covertly interfere with and manipulate the free marketplace of ideas; (5) violation of press freedom is not uncommon; (6) an international code of ethics is desirable in the circumstances; (7) foreign correspondents need to be admitted into the countries to which they are assigned on the basis of a Foreign Correspondence

119 Ibid.
Admission Test (FCAT); such a test should be administered by host country institutions or an international body.

2:3. Freedom of the Press

The literary fight against censorship is like the social battle against prostitution; it is an on-going struggle - one that has been with us from time immemorial. Censorship, of course, is not to be outdone by such unwanted but secretly embraced vices as prostitution. It had to keep up with the competition. So, like prostitution, it too has become rather sophisticated. As Wallace Clement observes, "it is possible that people need to believe that they are unmanaged if they are to be managed effectively." 120 Governments and their local media do not quite see eye to eye. There is always a climate of mutual suspicion if not outright hatred. The General Manager of Associated Press, Wes Gallagher coined a "law" that has been named after him. The Gallagher Law which reflects this mutual antagonism says that "criticism by the government rises in direct proportion to the amount of news printed or broadcast which reflects unfavourably on government policy." 121

Back to Wallace Clement's observation. How sophisticated has censorship become? Both government and the press indulge in it although they would be quick to point to non-prior restraint and freedom of information, and the fact that the public has access to the various media of mass communication. And if any person or group should be unhappy with any medium? He, she or


121 William J. Small, op. cit., p.395.
it could go set up an alternative medium. But it is not as easy as it sounds. The financing involved is rather prohibitive. It will cost about Cdn$25-million (1971 estimate)\textsuperscript{122} to start from scratch a metropolitan daily newspaper or a mass circulation newspaper. For proprietors who wish to be in the lead in the competitive newspaper and television industry, especially with regard to attracting advertising revenue, the figure is even higher. Employing such methods as computer setting, web-offset printing and editorial pages that are photographically transmitted by wire, Francis Williams puts the figure at about £35-million sterling (1969 estimate).\textsuperscript{123} With today's inflationary trend it could be considerably more expensive to start a newspaper of a meaningful size "...and there is always the fear that by the time the money is spent new processes will already have put the expensive plant out of date..."\textsuperscript{124}

As Clement says, for the public to be managed effectively, it must believe that it is not being managed. The scheme works in a government-press-public direction. In other words, the ruling elite must convince the people that their governmental system is not an authoritarian one. So the government gives the

\textsuperscript{122}Walt McDayter et al., eds., A Media Mosaic: Canadian Communications Through a Critical Eye (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada Ltd., 1971), p.16.


\textsuperscript{124}Ibid., p.302.
press its press freedom (i.e. no prior restraint) and freedom of information (in the case of the US) and the press believes that it is free and unmanaged. But it depends heavily on that same government for any meaningful news and the patronage of the economic powers that be. Without the "Deep Throats" in government, for example, it is doubtful if the Washington Post would have been able to uncover the Watergate scandal. It is a similar story with the Vietnam war. The point to be made here is that a dependent press cannot be a free press but it is essential that the psychological battle be waged.

The news media, for their part, would like the public to believe that it is the role of the media to promote, protect and sustain the public good. They pursue the objective truth and their vested interest, sans the commercial perhaps, is to monitor government activity in order to ensure government responsibility and, therefore, accountability. To sweeten the pie, the news media tend to claim that the public can have access to their media in support of their spirit of fairness. CBS president Frank Stanton can therefore claim, for example, that "Everyone has free access to what we do... We are not unaccountable". So the press is perceived as being free from governmental interference and the public may think that it can freely reach the press. The psychological battle goes on; it must be reassuring for the individually-minded to feel that no party is being managed. Society is consequently all the more amenable to effective

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125 William J. Small, op. cit., p.133.
management. More of this later. Meanwhile, let us explore the tortured history of censorship. 126

As early as the 2nd Century BC, censorship manifested itself in different forms. Philosophers, writers and dramatists had severe restrictions placed upon their ideas and plays by those whose supreme and divine right it was to govern for the good of the people. Athenians believed in regulating the right to publish. In the 5th Century BC, several philosophers and dramatists ran into trouble with their rulers. The philosopher Anaxagoras was fined for "impiety." Protagoras had his books burnt for allegedly engaging in blasphemy. Phrynicus, a dramatist, was barred for life, along with a fine, from acting a play he had presented about the destruction of Miletus. Socrates did not fare any better. He met his death at the age of 70; he was given poison hemlock to drink - his crime: "worshipping strange gods and corrupting young people." 127

The Romans blew hot and cold over censorship. People like Lucilius and Catullus published critical epigrams regarding the reigns of Pompey and Caesar without reprisals. These rulers seemed more tolerant but during the Second Punic War, Naevius, a writer, received punishment for bringing a leading Roman family to public ridicule. Under the rule of Augustus (27 BC-14 AD), censorship was severe. Critics were not tolerated. In 8 AD, Ovid was banished by Augustus. Then there was Emperor Tiberius (14 AD-37 AD) who did not view blasphemy as a crime.


127 See also the New Illustrated Columbia Encyclopedia, 1979 ed., s.v. "Socrates" which states that Socrates "was brought to trial for corrupting youth and for religious heresies."
He dismissed it with this comment: "If the gods are insulted, let them see to it themselves." Emperor Caligula (37-41 AD) had a writer burnt alive for publishing "double-edged lines." Nero (54-68 AD) the fiddler was reported to have deported his critics and ordered their books burnt. He is said to have been so shaky from drunkenness that he was seldom able to read any of the books he ordered burnt. Many Christians including Saints Peter and Paul died under Nero's harsh rule. A historian who made the mistake to make a "slight reference" to Domitian (81-96 AD) was executed by the ruler while the secretaries of the historian were crucified. This ruler also executed a dramatist, and had a "slanderer" fight for his life with "vicious dogs" in a pitch.

When Emperor Constantine emerged with the Edict of Milan in 313 AD putting a stop to the persecution of Christians, a ray of hope flickered over the liberal horizon. Then came the 15th Century when the printing press was invented. With it came the form of censorship known in many parts of the world today. In 1487, a Papal Bull was proclaimed requiring any material for publication to be submitted first for examination and approval before going into print. Such a practice is known as prior restraint.

In the 16th and 17th Century, prior restraint was widely practised in England. This authoritarian press system was later
to prevail in almost all the colonies of the British Empire. Although the Americans had introduced an amendment to their constitution (the First Amendment) in 1791, press censorship continued long after the press was guaranteed its freedom. Censorship assumed various forms, some of them quite crude — more so during times of war. On December 26, 1864, for example, General Sherman decreed: "Not more than two newspapers will be published in Savannah; their editors and proprietors will be held to the strictest accountability, and will be punished severely, in person and property, for any libelous publication, mischievous matter, premature news, exaggerated statements, or any comments whatsoever upon the acts of the constituted authorities."128 When one correspondent pleaded against his expulsion, claiming that he was pursuing the truth, the General told him flatly, "We don't want the truth told about things here — that's what we don't want."129

Newspapers were suspended from publication and editors arrested. In 1863 soldiers invaded The Rockport Democrat in Indiana smashing furniture and type cases. Several other newspapers across the country received similar treatment at the implicit blessing of the Federal Government although such actions were illegal. Papers so treated were accused of "disloyalty" and "reporting false statements."130

128 William J. Small, op. cit., p. 66.
129 Ibid., p. 67.
130 Ibid., p. 68.
Acts such as the Espionage Act of June 15, 1917 (which, incidentally, was invoked at the Pentagon Papers hearing), Trading With the Enemy Act of October 6, 1918 and the well-known Sedition Act of May 16, 1918 operate to frustrate the freedom of the American press. Small describes it as "formalized censorship." Under the Sedition Act, for example, newspapermen faced up to twenty years in jail plus a heavy fine for using "disloyal or profane language" about the US. The Post Office was able to invoke the Espionage Act in barring "over 75 publications from the mail," most of which were socialist-oriented or with German-American origins. In 1921 the Sedition Act was laid to rest but that has not stopped the FBI from invading the homes and offices of correspondents and writers.

On a less serious note, "poor pictures of the president are never released outside the White House either. Only occasional candid shots in public can ever go contrary to White House wishes."

The Official Secrets Act in Commonwealth countries makes it virtually impossible for the press to engage in any serious investigative work regarding the inner workings of government. The thalidomide drug case in England is a good example. For over ten years, the Official Secrets Act barred the London Times

131 Ibid., p.73.
132 Ibid., p.164.
133 Ibid., p.193.
from publishing the story of how children in England were being born crippled and malformed. The story was centred around the drug thalidomide which had been marketed by drug companies, was subsequently distributed on the market and expectant mothers availed themselves of its use upon prescription. It was not until April 26, 1979 that the European Court of Human Rights ruled against the British government for illegally censoring the Times.\textsuperscript{134} In 1978, the City Council of Sydney (Australia) passed the Disclosure of Allegation Bill. Under this bill a news medium may be sanctioned for publishing allegations of corruption involving government staff, such as was the case with the Sydney \textit{Morning Herald}. The bill empowers the Council to force the disclosure of sources of information.\textsuperscript{135}

In the Shackled World, press censorship is routine, and in some areas very blatant. Since they are several decades behind the Free World in general development, their predisposition toward the press is understandable. Although understandable, it is nothing to be admired, tolerated or condoned. So the Shackled World news media are fighting to free themselves from their shackles. Unfortunately, they are all heading toward the Western model which is very heavily cosmetic and confers little recognition of any responsibility on the press (see sections 3.3 to 3.5).


\textsuperscript{135}The \textit{Daily Times} (Lagos), May 15, 1978, p.17.
Patrick Cole of the Daily Times (Lagos) sees a Shackled World journalist more like an embattled soldier committed to defending the values and aspirations of his country than one who is simply operating as a detached recorder of news. The problem with embattled journalistic soldiers of the Shackled World however, is that they are required, explicitly or implicitly, at the battle front, to shoot at targets that they cannot see. And even more frustrating is the command to refrain from shooting at enemy targets which they can very clearly see. To make matters worse, the excuse of underdevelopment is often invoked by political leaders and scholars in the Shackled World and their liberal sympathizers in the Free World in support of authoritarian treatment of the press. Until developing countries come up with a mechanism that would allow for the unfettered airing of views - conflicting and unpalatable as they may sometimes be - the democratic system of government that most of them profess to operate would remain miles and miles away from their reach. More importantly, an underdeveloped country needs all the help that it can get. A free press based on social accountability (see section 3.4) would enhance the prospects of a rapid, rational and balanced development which could stem from open dialogue.

How does freedom of the press work? Is the character of the press compatible with press freedom in terms of the public good? Is it possible for the press to pursue the objective truth?

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Can the press be a neutral element in society? When all the additions and subtractions are made, the answers to these questions remain largely negative.

Modern media are very heavily concentrated and so is the power that goes with that reality. The media are buying into and/or taking over unrelated businesses. So are unrelated businesses buying into the media. And the result: a "delicate" web of interlocking interests with the corporate community. As the fortunes of that community go, so go the fortunes of the media. Golding reports, for example, that advertising in Britain averages approximately 1.5% of the country's GNP while ads on television alone net the networks there some £20-million in some months and totals over £700-million per year on all media. In 1972, the British people spent well over £1,000-million on media products. Globally, UNESCO reports that "In the mid-1970s the total billings spent on advertising in the world was $33-billion" adding that "Its place in any communication system rests mainly on economic as well as political considerations." Clearly, it is in the commercial interests of the media to protect these sources of revenue. It will be difficult, therefore, for the media to treat the business community of which they are an important part in a totally dispassionate fashion.

If the media have difficulty treating the business community dispassionately, it is reasonable to conclude that they cannot claim independence or freedom of action. Says Tom Wicker of the New York Times: "Too much cannot be made of that independence, of course, for it exists only within well-understood if never stated

137 See, for example, the survey of media ownership and control undertaken by the Financial Post (Toronto), December 2, 1978, Third Section, pp.1-16.
140 Donald C. Pirages and Paul R. Ehrlich in their book, Ark II (1974) lay emphasis in the charge that "the dominant social paradigm shapes this information flow, and most of the people who influence media operations have little interest in raising potentially embarrassing questions about the present social, economic and political system." Quoted in Bernard Rubin, op. cit., p.21.
limits."\textsuperscript{141} And as the Toronto Star publisher and president, Beland Honderich, confirms, "Since the opinions and interests of the chain owners are well known to the local editors, the independence the latter enjoy is subject to certain mutually understood inhibitions."\textsuperscript{142} He describes the power of the press as "arbitrary;" he is in a good position to know. When this happens the chances of the public having access to "diverse and antagonistic sources of information" are remote.\textsuperscript{143}

As individuals and free enterprisers, "Establishment" newsocrats, not to mention media owners, identify with the power structures of their local communities. At the national and international level, newsocrats are constantly on the look-out for any "infringement" upon their corporate interests. Locally, whether we are looking at special social clubs where the elite while away their leisure hours or examining the economic structure of a community, we would find newsocrats in the major socio-economic mix of that community. Their attachment is such that they are "seldom controversial and almost never adversarial about important community institutions."\textsuperscript{144} The following statement by Tom Wicker is worth noting: "...once a month,


\textsuperscript{142}Walt McDayter, op. cit., p.44. See also p.46 for examples of how this kind of ownership direction is exercised.

\textsuperscript{143}Ibid., p.52.

\textsuperscript{144}Tom Wicker, op. cit., p.22.
without solicitation, a full page ad arrived in the mail from the headquarters of Robbins Mills... The ads extolled free enterprise and the right to work, but so far as I ever saw, the Citizen did not have to run "puff" copy to qualify for this monthly windfall. On the other hand, I never noticed criticism of Robbins Mills creeping into our columns, either."145

Media power pervades every facet of society - not only economic but also social, cultural and political. The "Establishment" media reflect the dominant ideology of the ruling elite. "By the things it emphasizes in gathering the news, by its priorities in presenting the news, and by its editorials and interpretive stories, a newspaper can advance certain people, causes and ideas while obscuring or discrediting others."146

The power of the media is not mythical; it

145Ibid., p.24.
146Walt McDayter, op. cit., p.5.
is quite real and enormous. As one radio commentator concluded, "they are in fact the powers that be." 147

Admittedly, the journalistic front is not a rosy one as reporters are faced with barriers to information gathering, such as the laws of libel, Official Secrets Act, parliamentary privilege, and ministerial responsibility. While reporters no doubt face some of these obstacles in their pursuit of news, they have not fully exploited their potential - either because they are decidedly biased and are taking undue advantage of their power to seduce, corrupt and subsequently exploit fertile and unsuspecting minds or because they are simply too lazy to dig beneath the superficialities of news items.

It is tempting to point to competition as a major limitation of the powers of the press but 97.5% of the 1,768 dailies in the US, for example, have no in-town or city competition. And less than fifty cities across the US have competing dailies.148 Much of what passes for competition is simply partisanship. The recent elections in Britain and Canada clearly underscored the lack of objectivity of the major press in these countries. About the British press, Norman Webster reported: "One of the startling things about this campaign to the outside observer is the partisan way most newspapers are handling it. Fleet Street is at

147 This conclusion, on CBC Radio programme "Sunday Morning," July 29, 1979 was made in a survey of the relationship between American presidents and the American press. The regimes of Roosevelt, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon and Carter were highlighted.

148 Tom Wicker, op. cit., p.165.
war - and we aren't talking about the editorial pages. Headlines are trumped up and stories slanted in outrageous fashion (not to mention jokes) - and usually it is labour which gets kicked."\textsuperscript{149}

On the Canadian situation, an Associate Professor of Journalism at Carleton University had this to say: "This trend (of reporters wearing any hat but that of a journalist) to punditry among reporters surfaced on some of the larger newspapers as well. Instead of background or interpretive reporting there were daily examples of minor-league pontificating which got in the way of normal news coverage. This was compounded by the practice of putting the reporter's picture in tandem with the party leader - co-stars in action."\textsuperscript{150}

Media concentration has for some time come under attack by governments and people concerned with increasing media monopolies. They have every reason to worry because the effectiveness of our democratic government depends to a great extent on how well the mass media system keeps the public informed about what is going on in our society.\textsuperscript{151}

Media performance in keeping the public truly informed has not been particularly encouraging. Media people, however, like to pride themselves on the impartiality and objectivity of their reports. But there are several domestic and international instances where the media allowed their interlocking business

\textsuperscript{149}Norman Webster, "Labor is Butt of Jokes in Partisan U.K. Press," The Globe and Mail (Toronto), April 17, 1979, p.12.

\textsuperscript{150}Murray Goldblatt, "Media Had Leader Fixation," The Globe and Mail (Toronto), May 21, 1979, p.7.

\textsuperscript{151}Benjamin D. Singer, Communications in Canadian Society (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing, 1975), p.171.
interests or ideological biases to colour their perceptions. The Nigerian Civil War is one good example. Stated McDayter: "It was the persistent media play on the emotions, not dispassionate intellectual discussion of the political pros and cons, that aroused Canadians' involvement in the Nigerian Civil War...Such power in the wrong hands can be dangerous." 152

Are the media capable of going after the truth? Their character is such that it would be an illusion to think that they can, as this statement suggests:

...Truth means endless search, based on reflection, investigation, interpretation and discovery, and whether absolute or relative, truth has an independent existence. It does not depend for its emergence on deadlines. Nor does it have to be governed by the availability of space. The value of truth is not determined by its acceptability or plausibility. An inadequate, distorted, even false account of an event can be made acceptable and plausible by the media but objective truth must rely on its validity and not its presentation. 153

The above statement is corroborated by the tutored observations and feelings of two broadcasters. One of them says: "if it (news) is to be regarded as a commodity acceptable only when salable, then I don't care what you call it, I say it isn't news." The other: "We call it a news broadcast, but let's face it, it's a TV show. On TV you have to show people something, preferably something exciting. You have to keep dishing up stuff that is going to make you watch us instead of them. 154

152Walt McDayter, op. cit., p.3.
153Altaf Gauhar, op. cit., p.64.
154Desmond Smith, "Is Pleasing the Public the Ultimate?" The Globe and Mail (Toronto), January 13, 1979, p.6.
Television news, therefore, is said to be "'created' through highly subjective criteria laid down by producers, reality is filmed and edited for reasons like 'impact' and 'pace' that have too much to do with showbiz and not enough to do with what happened."\textsuperscript{155}

It is reasonably clear that the media's self-appointedness as the people's watchdog, concentration of power and vested interests do not properly qualify them to assume the special privilege granted them by, say, the American constitution whose First Amendment forbids any abridgement of the freedom of the press. A libertarian press system is one based on a self-regulating process but giant oligopolies or monopolies do not regulate in the public interest; their own fight for survival and expansion commands greater priority. It was in recognition of this serious shortcoming of the libertarian press that the idea of a socially responsible press system was advanced. But defining what is socially responsible poses a problem of "decisional" jurisdiction. Who decides what is responsible? Is it the editor or some neutral person or body? If it is the latter, then it is a move away from editorial determinism and a tendency toward authoritarianism. However, since we are concerned with the public good, and that is what the media claim they are "watchdogging" about, it should follow that the public ought to have the power of deciding what is responsible behaviour, and not the press and/or government.

\textsuperscript{155}William Casselman, \textit{McLean's}, March 19, 1979, p.52.
Responsible media behaviour would, therefore, be concerned with protecting and promoting the public interest, not selected interests which would defeat their credo of objectivity. In any case, as Alan Barth points out, "it (the First Amendment) was meant simply to assure to the fortunate owners of the media an almost absolute immunity from legal responsibility for their performance;" or, as he noted quoting Charles Seib, the First Amendment "guaranteed a free press, not a fair, honest or good one." 156

The First Amendment has no doubt enabled the American press to do some very good investigative work such as in the Watergate scandal. As already mentioned, this was only possible because certain "Deep Throats" especially in Vietnam's case were beginning to have serious doubts about government policy. The American press and people realized early enough that the First Amendment meant little since the press had to depend on government sources for matters concerning the public interest. So, with the growing demand for yet another freedom, the freedom of information, a bill to this effect was passed and became operational in 1967, a little over two centuries after America's independence. However, there is a snag; a serious one. Two years after the act took effect, Ralph Nader, the well-known consumer advocate, in a twenty-page report attacked the workings of the Act. He charged that the Act had been "violated

156 Alan Barth, "A Free and Irresponsible Press," The Guardian, September 25, 1977, p.16. (Note: Barth was a former member of the (Washington) Post's editorial-page staff).
systematically and routinely," stating also that it was being "undermined by a riptide of bureaucratic ingenuity."¹⁵⁷ Delays, complicated appeals processes, high charges for duplicating information, inconsistent interpretation by different agencies, and misclassification "to fit under one of the nine exemptions in the law" are some of the tactics used by the government and its agencies to frustrate public access to information. The nine exemptions referred to are:

1. Executive orders on matters "kept secret in the interest of the national defense or foreign policy"
2. "Matters...related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of any agency"
3. "Matters...specifically exempted from disclosure by statute"
4. "Matters that are...trade secrets"
5. "Interagency or intra-agency memorandums or letters which would not be available by law to a private party in litigation with the agency"
6. "Personnel and medical files"
7. "Matters...compiled for law enforcement purposes"
8. Material relating to "the regulation or supervision of financial institutions"
9. "geological and geophysical information and data (including maps) concerning wells"

In 1971, the American Civil Liberties Union resolved that "the consensus is that the law hasn't changed things much for the press."¹⁵⁸ Other similar concerns and documentation

¹⁵⁸Ibid., p.392.
regarding government violation of the Act have been undertaken.\textsuperscript{159}

The Act was designed to ensure greater openness in government by allowing interested or concerned citizens access to federal government documents - with severe provisos as we have noted above. The \textit{Guardian} has noted the following drawbacks of the Act:\textsuperscript{160}

1. Frivolous and malicious inquiries are made.

2. The FBI believes the system is being abused by criminals.

3. Cost to the FBI alone is estimated at $6.5-million per year.

4. Total cost of administering the Act is over $30-million per year.

5. The Act allows the FBI to delete an enormous amount of information before releasing the files.

6. Businesses use the Act to "spy" on their rivals.

Neither the First Amendment nor the Freedom of Information Act really facilitates the freedom of the press. As long as these instruments remain unchanged, the press will continue to be treated as unwanted outsiders and intruders in the governing process. How can they bring about government responsibility and accountability if they cannot freely monitor government activity? What makes Prime Minister Joe Clark or President Jimmy Carter any wiser or more responsible than, say, the

\textsuperscript{159}Ibid., pp.389-395.

\textsuperscript{160}"Now Britain Takes The Freedom Road," \textit{The Guardian}, January 28, 1979, p.5.
editors of the Globe and Mail and the Washington Post? It is simple: Clark and Carter have the people's mandate to govern; they were elected. And the press has never been. If the press is to perform its guardian role of protecting the public interest, it must become elected.\textsuperscript{161} For that to happen, existing liberal democratic structures would have to be liberalized a little bit more. The idea of an elected press is discussed in Section 34.

The question of media accountability is often raised by the public. It is a source of constant irritation for media people. To ask for accountability as far as they are concerned is tantamount to wanting to impose censorship upon their right to publish what they imagine the public wants. But Fleet Street Rhodesians can be trusted to react defensively whenever their privileges are "threatened". They do not, of course, hesitate to impose their own censorship on the public. Remarked Randal Martin of Carleton's Department of Philosophy: "What disturbs me is the intellectual dishonesty or blindness of those who preach a kind of universal anti-censorship position when expression of beliefs to which they are sympathetic is concerned, but who have no hesitation in advocating severest censorship against views with which they violently disagree."\textsuperscript{162}

An existing instrument for ensuring that the press performs responsibly (i.e. a presentation of the news or information without personal prejudice and uninfluenced by emotion) and is accountable for its performance is the press council. Other

\textsuperscript{161} The press will then have the mandate of the public to act as "watchdog" on its behalf. This will not necessarily engender any greater a partisanship than already exists. Various media are known to support or endorse one political party or the other, advance certain causes and people while ignoring others. The merit in an elected press lies in its true freedom to participate in the governing process as a monitoring agent and its accountability.

\textsuperscript{162} "Censorship Viewpoints," The Globe and Mail (Toronto), March 31, 1979, p.7.
similar concepts are press trusts or commissions and media tribunals; these are not widely in use. We review them briefly below.

Press Councils are operated either privately, under Libertarian or post-Libertarian press systems, or publicly under non-Libertarian press systems (Chapter III discusses the various press systems). A private Press Council is funded and supported, on a voluntary basis, by the press. A person knowledgeable about the news media is usually selected to head the Council.

Although the concept of a Press Council is popular with journalists, not all news media contribute to its maintenance. A major objection to a Press Council by sections of the press is that it hinders the freedom of the press to monitor the activities of government.¹⁶³ The public, too, has its complaints. They centre mainly around the ineffectiveness of the Council. It is perceived as a paper tiger that has no real power to effect any punitive sanctions against an erring journalist or news medium. A British Royal Commission Report on the Press published about mid-July 1977, in an obvious reference to this impotence of the Council, stated that the Press Council is seen by the public as being more interested in protecting the press than in protecting the public from the press.¹⁶⁴ In other words, the Press Council serves as a public relations forum for

¹⁶³ Tom Wicker, op. cit., p.258.

the press, "more often (reassuring) the public than (threatening) the press." 165 Those sections of the press which support a Press Council believe it is better to have a sympathetic ear when it is needed than to be subjected to the proceedings of a detached and unsympathetic legal process - e.g. a court of law.

The Nigerian press lists the main functions of a Press Council as follows: 1) the preservation of press freedom; (2) ensuring the maintenance of a responsible press; (3) encouraging the development and strengthening of professional associations concerned with the mass media; (4) protection of the rights and privileges of journalists in the lawful performance of their duties; (5) fostering the achievement and maintenance of the highest professional and commercial standards by the press; (6) reviewing developments likely to restrict the supply through the press, by public authorities, of information of public interest and advising on measures necessary to prevent or remedy such development; and lastly, perhaps of least concern too, (7) inquiring into complaints from the public with a view to ensuring that the media discharge their obligations to the public. 166

The British Royal Commission on the Press, already cited, makes the following recommendations on the personnel composition and powers of the Press Council. It should have an independent

165 Tom Wicker, op. cit., p.258.

chairman together with an equal number of press and non-press representatives, and an official conciliator for arbitrating disputes. Its powers would be (1) to investigate the record of a particular journalist or the record of a publication; and (2) to censure newspapers for publications based on inaccurate information. It also recommends (1) freedom for editors to join trade unions and undertake industrial action; (2) the right of editors to decide which articles their paper should print or publish regardless of the viewpoints of management, union or advertisers; and (3) the right of journalists to speak and write without the threat of being expelled by their respective employers or unions.

Unlike other professional councils, a Press Council does not conduct uniform examinations which journalists must pass before they are able to practice. Neither does it have a systematic method of evaluating the ethical conduct of journalists.

Government-run press councils are not so much concerned with press freedom as they are with ensuring that the press is "responsible". This point was very fiercely contested in the recent constitutional debates in Ghana and Nigeria. In Ghana, it was decided that the establishment and administration of a press council should remain the exclusive preserve of the press; in other words, the idea of a government press council was rejected.

In Nigeria, the idea was accepted by the government and implemented by it. The decree establishing the Nigerian Press
Council (NPC) made no mention of guaranteeing press freedom. Neither did it concern itself with the rights and privileges of the press. The Nigerian Constitution, however, guarantees freedom of speech under which it is assumed the press could operate. The Nigerian Constitutional Draft Committee had issued the following statement on the question of constitutionally guaranteeing press freedom (as is the case in the United States):

The majority of the members, whilst recognizing the need to protect the freedom of the press, feel that there are no grounds for giving any Nigerian citizen a lesser right to freedom of expression than any other person or citizen who happens to be a newspaper editor or reporter. It is felt that the right to freedom of expression is one of the most basic rights in any democratic society, and it should be a right to which every Nigerian should be entitled whether or not he is employed by the press.167

Membership of the NPC is broadly-based. It consists of a Chairman, appointed by the Federal Executive Council, "who shall be a person of high intellectual and moral qualities, knowledgeable about the media and public affairs," and one representative each of the following bodies: the Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria; the Nigerian Guild of Editors; the Nigerian Union of Journalists; the Advertising Association of Nigeria; the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations; and the Nigerian Bar Association. Members also include two representatives each of educational institutions concerned with journalism, and the Federal Government. The NPC decree also calls for three

representatives of the general public, "one of whom must be a woman." 168

The NPC is empowered to (1) punish offending journalists; (2) maintain a register of journalists - the implication here is that the Council has the powers, like a professional body, under particular circumstances, to remove a journalist from the national register, thereby effectively barring the journalist from practising his or her trade. The third major power of the Council is its prerogative to recommend methods of training for journalists.

The Nigerian Press Organization, consisting of the Guild of Editors, Union of Journalists and the Newspaper Proprietors Association, have registered their objections to the powers of the new Press Council. 169 They object to journalists being registered, the Council being principally financed by the government, the Council assuming judicial powers, and deciding how a journalist should be trained. These matters ought to be left, they argued, to schools of journalism, the courts of law, and professional media bodies. They particularly object to a code of conduct which requires journalists to uphold a principle which reads: "the primary duty of the press and of every journalist shall be the maintenance in spirit as well as in deed of the unity and stability of Nigeria." This is not required


of other professionals, so why should it be demanded of pressmen? The problem, however, is that pressmen are neither professionals (discussed in the next Chapter) nor do other professional bodies enjoy or demand a special freedom, such as a constitutionally guaranteed freedom of the press. As for journalists and employers being accorded the prerogative of determining how a journalist should be trained, it is interesting to note that, in the case of Nigeria, the largest employer, by far, of journalists in the country is the government itself. Radio and television networks are exclusively owned by state governments or the federal government; the latter has a controlling share in the major dailies in the country. So, while the Nigerian Press Organization have legitimate concerns, internal "contradictions" render those concerns irrelevant. In short, what they, and indeed their Ghanaian counterparts, want is the cosmetic dazzle of a Western-style private press council which, as we have noted, is a useless paper tiger in terms of exercising real power.\footnote{See "Protecting The Press," \textit{West Africa}, December 18, 1978, pp.2526-2527.}

The Nigerian Press, in a deliberate effort to wrestle its control out of the hands of government and assume responsibility for policing its own conduct, has come up with "Eight Commandments" for journalists. They are listed as follows: 1) the public is entitled to the truth; (2) every journalist must have respect for the truth; (3) every journalist is to publish only the facts, and never act to suppress such facts or to falsify them; (4) journalists should refuse any reward
for publishing or suppressing the news; (5) employ all legitimate means in news collection, defend their right to free access at all times, and have due regard for privacy of individuals; (6) observe the universally-accepted principle of secrecy, and not disclose sources of information obtained in confidence; (7) plagiarism is unethical; and (8) correct any published information found to be incorrect. These hurriedly drawn up "commandments" did not change the government's position. Nigeria now has a public press council.

The British Royal Commission on the Press recommendations come closer to giving journalists and newsocrats genuine independence and freedom, not from governmentally-imposed constraints such as the Official Secrets Act, but from certain ugly economic realities. The role of a press council, as it sees it, however, would not substantially alter the existing functional patterns of private press councils. The Commission's "new deal", therefore, would be difficult, if not impossible, to implement under the present libertarian press system that obtains there. It is more in tune with a "sapsist" press system as advanced in Section 3.4.

A Press Trust, as proposed by P. A. V. Ansah of the University of Ghana School of Journalism, recognizes that government ownership of the press in Africa, for sheer economic reasons, is a fait accompli. There is no use fighting it. The idea of a Press Trust, then, is to free the (press) management

and control process from governmental interference.\textsuperscript{172}

Instead of the present Boards of Directors running state-owned and controlled media, a Press Trust (PT) would be vested with this role to ensure independence from the government or the Ministry of Information. It would also have the merit of protecting journalists and newsocrats from political pressures, while calling for the PT to be accountable to the public by virtue of the composition of its membership. A maximum of twenty-five members is recommended to facilitate the effectiveness of its deliberations. These would come from "well identifiable national institutions and associations," such as the Bar Association, the Trade Union Congress, House of Chiefs, Churches, Universities, Journalists' Association, Civil Servants Association and the Chamber of Commerce. In addition, assuming a parliamentary system of government, equal numbers of Government and Opposition representatives would be admitted. These various organizations would be responsible for selecting their own representatives to the PT. Ansah's suggested method of financing a PT is through annual grants. However, fearing governmental manipulation of the process in order to keep the press in line with official views, he prefers the releasing of bulk grants to the PT. Such grants, made over longer periods of time, would enable the press to eventually finance itself through whatever profits it may make.

While the logic of Ansah's remedy for ensuring press freedom under a partially or wholly-owned public press is clear enough, how a government that pays the (press) piper is supposed not to call the tune of the news remains a dilemma. Self-financing does not necessarily guarantee independence or freedom from governmental interference. Privately-financed media systems in Africa should be able to attest to that. A Press Trust, like a constitutionally-guaranteed press freedom or freedom of information acts, would remove blatant governmental control of the press but the less visible methods of press manipulation by government (vide such mysterious concepts as "national security" or the Official Secrets Act) would remain intact. The concept of a PT stands somewhere in the middle, between an authoritarian press system and a libertarian press system. Like a bat, it is difficult to categorize it into where it properly belongs but like a vampire, it may be capable of drawing blood. And when that happens, it would inevitably be hunted by its victims.

A Press Commission is very much like a Press Trust and in some ways like a Ministry of Information, or as in the Canadian context, the CRTC.* In addition to the functions of a Press Trust, it would act like a press council, conducting liaison work between the press and the public, instituting disciplinary procedures, and maintaining professional standards and ethics. However, it would not have any right to control or direct the professional functions of pressmen. Like a Ministry

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*The CRTC is a regulatory body concerned with radio and television; it has nothing to do with the print media.
of Information, it would be responsible for regulating the press, and arranging for the training of journalists.\textsuperscript{173} Its chairman would be appointed only by the President of the country at the recommendation of the Council of State. But to ensure independence of action, he would enjoy the same security of tenure as is accorded Judges of the Superior Court of Judicature.

A Media (Performance) Tribunal is not a press council, trust or commission. It is an administrative tribunal concerned with settling disputes arising from media operations. While it would have the powers of a traditional press council, it would have one crucial difference: the power to punish or penalize erring journalists. This may take the form of a fine or jail term or both. The main functions of a Media Tribunal would be to "monitor, regulate and ensure the ethical presentation of news, ideas and opinions in the media."\textsuperscript{174}

Decisions by Media Tribunals may be appealed to appellate tribunals and eventually to courts of law should points of law be seriously contested. As the Franks Committee Report on Administrative Tribunals and Enquiries (1957) noted, the advantage of tribunals over the courts is in their "cheapness, accessibility, freedom from technicality, expedition and expert


\textsuperscript{174}The \textit{Sunday Times} (Lagos), November 6, 1977, p.5.
knowledge of their particular subject." The latter point in particular should induce the courts to restrict themselves to questions of law. Although they are also concerned with matters of fact, facts do not exist in a vacuum. Background, methods and principles, for example, determine the meaning and relevance of facts in particular cases. Understanding fully those elements would enhance a fair judgement and would avoid the incidence of technicality. To be consistent and fair in its deliberations, a media tribunal would make its policies and the reasons behind specific rulings available to the public.

Dennis Stairs notes that "the press, ostensibly a source of intelligence, is also a combatant, a weapon, a target and a battle field." Echoing similar concerns is a Ghanaian commentator who sees the media as "both weapons and targets in the struggle for political power," and concludes that "In the long run, their (the media) only source of protection and dignity is the service they render to the population of Ghana" (emphasis added).

One country, and perhaps the only one of its kind, where service is emphasized is Holland. There, journalists or newscrats do not have to flog their conscience feigning objectivity, fairness or impartiality. Historically, notes Bunce, "Dutch

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broadcasting is an exceptional case because the system is managed and operated neither by the State nor by private commercial corporations. Instead a number of very large audience-membership associations were formed reflecting the predominant religious, political, and economic cleavages in Dutch Society.¹⁷⁸ In essence, the media are accountable to designated constituencies, something commercial or government-controlled media lack. It also means that the media are accessible to the people and are "controlled" by them. Business or government media are usually not readily accessible to the general public.

The workings of Holland's television "Open Door" policy, started in 1965, is described as follows:¹⁷⁹

- any Dutch campaign or action group with more than 40,000 members can claim one hour of TV time and three hours on the radio every week;

- within two years, the group must have proved itself by increasing its membership to 100,000. If it succeeds, it gets more broadcasting time. If it fails, it goes off the air;

- the policy gives any action group the chance to reach an audience of eight million and without censorship;

- they have a variety of organizations claiming media time (so, the possibility of a monopoly is averted). If you want to hear a different point of view, just switch on your set the next night.

¹⁷⁸ Richard Bunce, Television in the Corporate Interest, 1976, p.7.

¹⁷⁹ "Why TV is Holland's Open Door," Yes But What Can I Do, 1976, p.27.
In a world in which social equality is quite an alien concept to those in control of national and/or global economic power, the Dutch example is quite devoid of rhetoric and is, indeed, an open door to sanity and egalitarianism. As one writer states the case, "when the right of a free press collides with the right of access to newspapers, a classic no-win contest may be the only result, with civil liberties the first casualty." 180

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with some of the international aspects of the news media. It has been noted, previously, that ideological and cultural conditioning are key factors which tend to inhibit the ability of newsocrats and reporters in effectively interpreting a world that is different from their own without fear or recrimination. A corrective measure is suggested; a Foreign Correspondence Admission Test (FCAT) will help prepare journalists cross-culturally for the task of covering "strange" cultures and political systems.

Also noted is the imbalance in the flow of information and the almost total absence of a willingness on the part of Western mediacrats to address the issue. The fundamental premise for such an attitude is rooted in supposedly universal values in the communication of news and information within and across national frontiers. Ownership of the means of international

communication is heavily concentrated in the hands of a few transnational news agencies based largely in the West. This situation renders the have-not countries practically voiceless. Developing countries will have to pay increasing attention to the development and operation of alternative news agencies if a balance in the flow and diversity of ideas is to be struck. A welcome news in this direction is the announcement by OPEC of its intention to enter the news agency business. The OAU (Organization of African Unity) recently decided to establish a Pan-African News Agency; the specific need for an African news agency is discussed in Chapter IV.

It could be argued that what the countries of the Shackled World need is access to the dominant media of the world rather than entering the marketplace of ideas as competitive producers of news and information. Such an argument as we have seen falls flat in the face of the economic realities of that (international) marketplace; it is untenable. Internationally, ownership of and not access to the world media is the critical issue. In national press systems, at least in the Free World, a case for "access" as opposed to ownership could be made but it must be remembered that editorial determinism (i.e. the right of editors to decide what is published) is the very essence of press freedom. As far as can be ascertained, the "right to know" and/or "access" to the print media are nowhere guaranteed in law. Editors are, therefore, under no legal obligation to
facilitate or grant that presumed "right" or "access". The need to know and communicate, however, places a moral responsibility on newsocrats. But, as will be argued in the next chapter, "social responsibility" as a press philosophy is an aberration. It is not an improvement upon the libertarian press philosophy which in itself is devoid of substance as far as the politics of "access" is concerned. Rather, "social responsibility" tends toward authoritarianism as an outside enforcer of that "responsibility" is implied. A press system that will respect editorial determinism and by extension freedom of the press is discussed in the following chapter; it is labelled "sapism" - the "theory" of a socially accountable press system.

Finally, freedom of the press which is the cornerstone of the larger freedom desired in the global marketplace of ideas has been reviewed. Because the United States of America has the freest press in the world, her media and government-press relations are singled out for particular examination. Regardless of a constitutionally-supported freedom of the press and a Freedom of Information Act, it is noted that these concepts are well rehearsed slogans if not indeed a myth. They amount to a very subtle authoritarian control of the press and a containment of any public demand for a "policing" of media power. If these concepts are designed to ensure open government, then the kind of adversary relationship that now exists between press and government need not arise.
Ghana and Nigeria are two African countries which appear to be moving in the direction of accepting these Western concepts of press freedom. A cautious optimism is advised.

We can conclude from what has been discussed so far that the present structure and processes of contemporary international media do not lend themselves to a promotion of media internationalism in any meaningful way. They are certainly not egalitarian. As for media accountability, we must wait until after national press systems are discussed in the following chapter before rendering a verdict.
CHAPTER III
PRESS SYSTEMS

At the heart of the palaver over whether or not the international media should be sanctioned in their news reporting is the concept of press freedom. The super news-agencies and other dominant news media of the Western world vigorously insist that this concept - their sacred cow - must not be tampered with. As will be indicated presently, it is a value system derived from the capitalist ideology, and one that does not enjoy universal acceptance.

In the previous chapter, we discussed the freedom of the press in some detail and indicated several operational shortcomings that inhibit its meaning and effectiveness. In this chapter, we proceed to examine philosophies of the press, journalists and their trade, and the role of the press in society - what it is and what it should be. This analysis, at the domestic or national level, is necessary in order to test the tenability of effecting a universalization of the concept of press freedom.

Finally, because the present press systems suffer serious inadequacies or contradictions in their operations, an alternative "theory" of the press - a socially accountable press system - is advanced. Under this system, the press will be elected and has a better chance of promoting "journdev".
3:1. Theories of the Press

As the Shackled World and the Free World go to "war" over the need for a New International Information Order, considerable attention is being focused on how the press fits into society. The role of the press in most societies is not static. It evolves over time in accordance with specific economic and political circumstances. In both the Free World and the Communist World, the role of the press is quite well established. Except for the United States, the rest of the Free World operate a libertarian press system. With the report of the Hutchins Commission (i.e. the (US) Commission on Freedom of the Press), the Americans have since come to adopt what is known as the social responsibility concept of the press. It is an offshoot of the libertarian philosophy which sees freedom of speech as a natural right. Social responsibility regards it as a moral right.¹

In the Communist World, the press is an integral element of governmental policy. The system under which the press operates has been labelled Soviet-Communist. And, since, invariably, the press in the Shackled World derived their press systems from colonial administrations - which held liberal views at home but clamped an authoritarian system upon their colonized territories - it is not surprising that the press

systems of the developing countries have been labelled as authoritarian. Under this system, the press comes under the control and/or ownership of government. Its proper role is to support governmental policies and programmes, whether it likes it or not, one might add, and inform the public accordingly. The dilemma of the Shackled World is that while they profess a democratic system of government, they have been unable to practice it properly. This is mainly because of the dynamics of the socio-economic and political structures and processes imposed upon them by an unrewarding colonial legacy and their own cultures (e.g. their authoritarian, passive, fatalistic and intolerant attitudes). It is also partly due to a lack of vision in devising methods and systems that would address the particular circumstances of their societies. Instead, what they have is an indigenization of the old colonial structures of government and public administration, which only serve to compound their worries. A high level of illiteracy, lack of indigenous capital, general poverty, a grossly inadequate communications infrastructure, linguistic and ethnic diversity, among other things, also contribute to their inability to operate or allow a libertarian press system. In Section 3:4 we attempt to find a solution to this dilemma by suggesting a governmental and press system that would give real meaning to democracy not only in the Shackled World but in the Free World as well.

The criteria used in defining press systems are the structure and functions or the ownership and control of the press.
They "are drawn from the standards of a given society and from the purposes and roles traditionally assigned to the mass media."\(^2\)

The foremost work on classification of press systems is the *Four Theories of the Press* by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm.\(^3\) They classify press systems into four categories: authoritarian, Soviet-Communist, libertarian, and social responsibility.

They are reviewed briefly below.

Under the authoritarian model, characteristic of 16th and 17th Century England, the importance of the state is emphasized over individual liberties, and rigid negative controls are exerted over privately-owned newspapers. This is designed to repress criticism of government and its leadership.

The Soviet-Communist model places all aspects of mass communication completely and directly under government ownership and control. The press serves as a mouthpiece of the Party in this system.

The libertarian philosophy of the press emerged out of the desire for a free marketplace of conflicting opinions, mutual respect and interdependence, a search for truth and rationality. In this system, an independent, private and non-governmental press operates as a watchdog over government activity, hence


\(^3\)Fred S. Siebert et al, *Four Theories of the Press* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956).
the so-called "Fourth Estate." As we have seen in the previous section, it emphasizes and guarantees freedom (from the State) but not how to use it.

As already noted, social responsibility as a philosophy of the press is derived from the libertarian concept and, in a highly developed economy emphasizes responsibility in the free marketplace of ideas. Accordingly, America's communications market demands of its actors social responsibility. Implicitly, therefore, the media, in maintaining their independence and freedom, are to be aware, sensitive and responsive to the public interest; to report social and political issues without fear or favour. Failure to assume this responsibility may invite governmental intervention. The following responsibilities, inter alia, are enumerated by the Hutchins Commission: 1) be responsible for "the presentation and clarification of the goals and values of society"; (2) provide "a truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning"; and (3) serve as "a forum for the exchange of comments and criticism." 4

These press systems have their roots firmly embedded in the ideological orientation of the countries within which they derive their assigned roles. 5

4As reproduced by Shelton A. Gunaratne, op. cit., p.24.

Importantly, however, it should be noted that the place of the press in society is determined by prevailing conditions. The United States Government, for example, did not deny itself the right and power to control the American press when her independence was won in 1776. It was not until 1791 that Congress legislated itself out of such power, forbidding itself to make laws that would abridge the freedom of the press.

So, the role and degree of freedom enjoyed by the American press is that which is imposed or granted by the Establishment. The press, for its part, accepts its role to educate, inform and entertain the American public in such a way as to uphold the ideology of liberal capitalism. So, if we return to our criteria of ownership and control, we see then, from an ideological standpoint, that private ownership does not conflict with capitalist philosophy. The duty of the press, therefore, is to marshal its resources in a fashion that would enable it to advance, defend and sustain capitalism. When the press finds itself in such a position, it must attack that which is contrary to its values. For the American press, then, that which must be attacked, constantly, is, first and foremost, communism because communist ideology espouses a different value system sharply in contrast to its own. Hence the seemingly eternal cold-war "politics" of the American press. The other enemy must necessarily be the government because, by the catechism of liberal capitalism, government ought to have no business meddling in private ownership. The adversary role of the press is derived from that
perspective.

In mixed media economies, such as Canada's and some Western European countries, ownership is influenced more by democratic socialist philosophy but their press values are the same as their liberal-capitalist counterparts. Control of the Western press, states Tony Momoh, comes through ownership and (commercial) patronage as opposed to ownership and policy in the communist bloc. He identifies the process of control in the Shackled World as being more of policy than ownership, remarking, "The problem of the media...are those of underdevelopment and if the luxury of Western freedom does not seem to be evident, it is simply because the process of control is less sophisticated" (emphasis added).7

The role of the press in the USSR is clearly defined in Article 50 of its Constitution which reads in part: "In accordance with the interest of the people and in order to strengthen and develop the socialist system citizens of the USSR are guaranteed freedom of speech, of the press, and of assembly, meetings, street processions and demonstrations" (emphasis added).8 The day-to-day happenings in the Soviet Union may not quite tally up to the noble declarations of its constitution but we must note the key proviso, "to strengthen and develop the socialist system." Substitute capitalist for socialist, and we could be talking about the Free World.

6 This is a situation which permits both public and private ownership or public-cum-private (joint) ventures.

7 The Daily Times (Lagos), March 21, 1979, p.7.

8 Ibid.
So, as in the capitalist system, the Soviet press is mandated to promote and sustain socialism in the exercise of its freedom. But unlike the capitalist press' relationship to the public sector, it does not play an adversary role vis-a-vis the private sector as there is no such thing; socialism, needless to say, does not allow private ownership of the means of production. So its target of "abuse" is capitalism and, perhaps, internally, dissidents.

In terms of classification, the Shackled World is a problem. It is difficult to pin down a clear ideology to which they subscribe although the Western and Communist press would be quick to assign them a label of one kind or the other when their governments' competition for spheres of influence gets tough. Embarrassed, the Shackled World tries to make it clear that it is neither pro-this nor pro-that bloc, that it is something else. That "something else" is not quite known. Moving from Tanzanian African "Socialism" (collective cooperation or communalism) through Emperor Bokassa's imperial monarchy to Liberia's "Humanistic Capitalism," thanks to the messianic crusade of colonialism, one is lost in a jungle of irrelevant -isms. But Africa's ideological stand is perhaps better summed up when the Nigerian Head of State, Olusegun Obasanjo, remarked:

Insofar as ideology is limited to a choice between capitalism and socialism, properly so called, we absolutely have no interest in it. We are interested in specific social, political and economic principles only insofar as they have an identifiable and immediate relevance for our condition. The experience of other nations is important for us only to the extent
that we can learn something valuable from it. And in this we have no dogmatic preferences. 9

So, we can conveniently assume that Africa's press system is based on pragmatism - tailoring the press to suit prevailing socio-cultural, economic and political realities. Given Africa's (as indeed the rest of the Shackled World's) developmental backwardness, the philosophy of developmentalism ought to be adopted - hence the notion of developmental journalism, hereinafter referred to as "journdev" for ease of pronunciation and economy of space. By way of definition, "journdev" does not only concern itself with grassroots development, equity and justice applicable only in the Shackled World; it addresses itself to human development in a total systemic way by embracing an internationalism that seeks the unity of man by investigating and explaining the root causes of underdevelopment throughout the Free, Communist and Shackled Worlds.

Given the economic realities of the mass media, "journdev" cannot successfully take place under any of the press systems described by Siebert and company. It is foolhardy to entrust the public interest in the hands of a free press which sees news from the perspective of a financial balance sheet, is responsible only to its owners and shareholders and lacks a democratic base. Social responsibility is not an answer, either.

social responsibility as a press philosophy has the appearance and appeal of social progress tending toward greater democratization of the press and individual liberty. However, when it is stripped of its rhetoric, it becomes clear that it is a retrograde step tending toward authoritarianism. We are faced with a problem when the question is asked: who defines what is responsible journalistic behaviour or "socially responsible"? - a point we have already raised. Those whose trade journalism is ought to know what is socially responsible but the implication inherent in the Hutchins Commission's recommendations (of 1947) is clear enough: if media people do not exercise the moral responsibility expected of them, somebody - no doubt the government - will have to make sure that they do. When this happens, it will clearly amount to an abridgement of the freedom of the press - a violation of the First Amendment.

Press systems that are mouthpieces of governments are even worse. Sycophants and intellectual robots parading as journalists cannot promote "journdev" as it would be impossible to see things any differently from their master's.

The classifications undertaken by Siebert and company are not very useful indicators of freedom of the press because if as we have seen a country's press system is a direct reflection of its political ideology and economic system, then each country's press system can be said to be socially responsible and free in defending and sustaining the system. However, to be a free and socially responsible press, the press must believe in the system under which it operates and not subjected to a coercive subservience of any kind. The question of freedom, therefore, becomes redundant if not irrelevant as an area of concern. As for these classifications serving as a descriptive tool in analyzing press systems, they hardly apply in the case of Africa which may, for example, appear to have an authoritarian or Soviet-Communist press system but does not. Most African newspapers are partially or wholly-owned by

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government but lack the underlying ideology of the Soviet-Communist press system. So they are neither authoritarian nor Soviet-Communist in the true sense of those terms.

In response to this inadequacy, William A. Hachten proposed a slight modification of the Four Theories of the Press. He retained the authoritarian and libertarian models, did away with the social responsibility concept and introduced a model called neo-communist. Under a neo-communist system, mass communication comes directly under government ownership and control but, importantly, without the Marxist or Leninist ideological orientation that goes with the Soviet-Communist or totalitarian concept. A neo-communist press is, therefore, designed to serve the interests of government and work toward the education, information and inspiration of the people and a fostering of national integration and development. A neo-communist media would not criticise the government and its leadership. However, as Dennis L. Wilcox observes, "wholly-owned governmental press systems can be more authoritarian than neo-communist." 12

Since Siebert and company and Hachten concentrated on ownership and control in their classifications of press systems, Ralph L. Lowenstein proposed a two-tier press system that "has more flexibility and descriptive quality" in classifying types of media systems.13 The first tier is based on ownership in which the private sector (individuals and non-governmental corporations); multiparty ownership (by competitive political parties supported by their respective parties and/or members); and the government all participate in media ownership

13Ibid.
and outputs. The second tier is concerned with press philosophy. Lowenstein retains the authoritarian and libertarian concepts but modified the totalitarian (or Soviet-Communist) and social responsibility philosophies to read "social-centralist" and "social-libertarian." The latter requires minimum government controls and represents a situation in which all views are aired freely. The former emphasizes positive government controls geared toward national development and the enhancement of philosophical goals. The advantages of Lowenstein's model are noted as being three-fold: 1) the separation of ownership from philosophy allows for a different interpretation of authoritarian press systems; (2) it avoids the semantic problems of defining a press system that is socially responsible; and (3) it does away with the element of communist ideology as a philosophical base.

One other variation of the Four Theories of the Press is the media subservience theory which "asserts the collaboration of the mass media in national programmes; and sees a critical press as a luxury for developing countries. A critical press is, therefore, subject to repression because it is 'irresponsible,' 'unpatriotic,' or even 'subversive.'"¹⁴ The arguments advanced in support of a media subservience theory are no different from those for an authoritarian press system. In that sense, it does not improve upon the authoritarian concept as advanced by Siebert and company except, perhaps, in the interesting

¹⁴Shelton A. Gunaratne, op. cit., p.22.
semantic choice of the words "media subservience" as opposed to "authoritarian". A major shortcoming of the media subservience theory, noted Gunaratne, is that it fails to "define the role of the press within the appropriate political philosophies adopted by these (developing) countries."\textsuperscript{15}

In a world in which the press is widely feared, distrusted or even hated, a mere categorization of national press systems is of little comfort. In Sections 2:1 and 2:2 we examined the activities of transnational news agencies. It is clear that the Shackled World is unhappy with the performance of these agencies. The agencies, for their part, argue the case for a free press and a free flow of information while pointing to the authoritarian press nature of their adversaries. The underlying assumption here, as is implicit in the \textit{Four Theories of the Press}, is that a socially responsible or libertarian press system is better and preferable. But as a careful reading of Richard Bunce (\textit{Television in the Corporate Interest}), Wallace Clement (\textit{The Canadian Corporate Elite}) and Walt McDayter (\textit{A Media Mosaic}) would indicate, libertarianism and social responsibility are a very highly sophisticated, subtle and well-disguised authoritarian flow of information.\textsuperscript{*} And when we consider that knowledge is power and without information there cannot be knowledge, those who exercise this authoritarian control of information flow do exercise a great deal of power that may not be in

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., p.23

\textsuperscript{*}These authors' views are by no means universal. However, they give the reader a better insight into the workings of the media marketplace and their social consequences as opposed to views which simply seek to perpetuate the status quo.
the interests of the general public. Thus classifying a press system as authoritarian or libertarian is meaningless when the real issues at stake are ignored. Those issues are freedom (editorial determinism), fairness (news coverage without bias, prejudice or favouritism), egalitarianism (equality of opportunity) and democracy. Oliver Boyd-Barrett puts all of this in some perspective in his "Media Imperialism: Towards an International Framework for the Analysis of Media Systems."\(^{16}\)

The media cannot continue to arrogate to themselves the role of watchdog or guardian of the public interest without a serious challenge. For there to exist a truly responsible free press in any society, the press must be accountable for its outputs in a democratic fashion. For a press to be responsible, it must be free but freedom per se does not necessarily guarantee responsibility. When press freedom is grossly abused, what we get may be labeled as "Jonestownian journalism." To be truly responsible, therefore, the press must be accountable. For it to be accountable, it must be representative. And for it to be representative, it must have the express support of its audience. The best way to ensure that representativeness (of views, concerns, and expectations), the press in a free, democratic and pluralist society must be elected. Anything short of an elected press is "Rhodesianic."

As Mark Twain once said, Americans of the 19th Century were fortunate to have "freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, and the prudence never to practice either of them." In the following sections, we advance a theory of the press that gives expression to the concept of a representative and elected press.

3:2. The "Global Village Idiots"

Before demanding an elected press, we must ask two relevant questions: one, what exactly is the calling of a journalist? Two, what is and should be the proper role of the press? To start with, the journalistic trade cannot be regarded as a profession. It does not satisfy the criteria generally applied in defining a profession, namely: 1) a generally commissioned syllabus; (2) certification; (3) rules and regulations governing ethical conduct; and (4) corrective sanctions. Or, as one professor spells it out, a profession must have "rigid educational requirements, formal competitive examinations, a specific code of ethical practices with punishment for violations (and) an effective public grievance process" (emphasis added). A reason for the non-professional character of journalism may lie in the highly individualistic nature of the trade. But so it is with professionals such as chartered accountants, doctors, lawyers and architects. Talent, skill, reflexes, dedication, wit,


18 University of California, Berkeley, School of Journalism Calendar, 1977/78, p.6.
perceptiveness, etc., are highly individualistic attributes distinct from a generally or specifically prescribed form of knowledge.

So what, then, is the calling of journalists? We know that clergymen nurse and preach a strong sense of morality, lawyers advocate and solicit justice, politicians lust after power, academicians seek the truth, and businessmen yearn for higher profits. And journalists: they cover all fronts simultaneously, making them 'not only Jacks-of-all-trades and masters of none but also amateur actors in a very contradictory milieu. It is not surprising, therefore, that they are the primary focus of the present debate on a New International Information Order. A newspaper can hardly be objective, or even informed, when it is chasing after the truth, seeking greater profits from selling news, soliciting and advocating justice, and moralizing - all at the same time.

As greater numbers of journalists emerge with broadly-based educational backgrounds and then specializing - in science, business, economic, social or political reporting - their status is likely to improve qualitatively. The present lack of qualitative journalism in Canada, for example, prompted Larry Zolf to release a flying descriptive bolt at "ordinary journalists" in the Ottawa parliamentary press gallery. He described them as "the Ottawa division of the Global Village Idiots. Any high school dropout and ex-disc jockey who could press a pencil or a pencil
mike at some befuddled Ottawa politician caught in another inexplicable vagary was eligible for membership in Canada's journalistic elite corps." 19 Further illustrating the "poorly-educated and ill-informed" nature of Canadian journalism, the writer pointed out the fact that a full 95% of the press attending the first public report of a Food Prices Review Board did not understand the meaning of that report. 20 "The Board's chief economist," he stated, "was obliged to take aside one reporter to explain the difference between an 'asset' and a 'liability'." This appalling state of affairs is not limited to Canada alone. It is a global problem as we have seen in previous sections. One Nigerian reporter, commenting on the status of his country's journalism, put the case quite bluntly: "Far too many Nigerian journalists are not in a position to educate, entertain or inform anyone." 21

A possible remedy is to professionalize the trade by having national or regional institutes of journalism that would operate like most other professional bodies. They should insist on (1) a prescribed interdisciplinary background which may be undertaken in a School of Journalism; (2) a period of apprenticeship or internship with a mass media outlet, and (3) qualifying

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20 Ibid., p.145.

21 The Sunday Times (Lagos), September 24, 1978, p.5.
professional examinations - all leading to the designation of "Registered Journalist" or suchlike title. In addition, it should operate a press or media council that would address the issue of ethical practice and administer punitive sanctions if/when necessary. An aggrieved party that is dissatisfied with any press council ruling could take its case to a higher level - the press tribunal, which would be empowered to fine or jail offending journalists. Rulings at this level, as we have discussed previously, may yet be appealed to a higher level, to a court under a regional or national supreme court charged with responsibility for hearing appeals against rulings by administrative bodies such as is the case in Ontario with respect to the physicians’ college. 22

Once journalists become tagged with such designations as "Registered", "Certified" or "Chartered" Journalist, they could then join their professional counterparts in other disciplines in officially sanctioning among its membership a disturbing cardinal ethical practice: never washing their dirty linens in public (see reference to Walter Lippman's remark below - p.157). The attitude of some media owners do not help to give the trade the respectability it should deserve under a free press system. Reed International is a case in point. Reed is the parent company of Toronto's Reed Paper Ltd. and is Britain's largest magazine and newspaper owner. Instructing its senior

management via a confidential memo to keep prying reporters at bay, Reed International warned: "No employee may talk to the press without the chairman's authority." The rules which outlined techniques for "squelching" journalists are described as stiff. So much for the public interest and the so-called watchdog role of the press. It is a classic case of Fleet Street Rhodesianism. Employees may, of course, act independently in violation of the kind of corporate decree described above but they would be doing so at the risk of losing their jobs. Reed Paper Limited has been a source of pollution; it is understandable why the company is so sensitive. For Reed International, perhaps the role of the press is limited to "watchdogging" government activity and engaging in petty gossip. It is an attitude that undermines the libertarian philosophy of the press and attracts such dubious concepts as "social responsibility."

Journalists themselves are of little help in this regard. They tend to be quite defensive when subjected to the public searchlight. However, they seem to have no qualms flashing the same searchlight on others with almost a childish abandon. When a reporter once found out that the former Liberal Minister of Health and Welfare, Monique Begin, had her interviews with the news media, including telephone conversations, taped the reporter went into a fit. This is the kind of defensiveness that subjects the journalistic trade to ridicule.

Once referring to this manner of defensive complex in a comment on the reaction of reporters to his criticism of the press, Spiro Agnew, former US Vice-President under the Nixon Administration, remarked: "It would have been a useful dialogue

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23 Roderick Oram, "How to Handle The Probing Journalist," The Financial Post (Toronto), November 18, 1978, p.36.

24 Barbara Frum, co-host of CBC's "As It Happens," speaks to the issue when she says that "I get defensive when journalism is attacked but most of the time I'm actually part of the attack myself." As quoted by Ray Conlogue in Broadcast Week Magazine (Toronto), May 19-May 25, 1979, p.17.
if they had accepted the criticism constructively instead of going off on this implied-threat-of-censorship tack, which is basically defensive and shows their inability to cope with criticism on its merits."\textsuperscript{25} Public support at the time for Agnew's attack was overwhelming, which left the networks "appalled." But as \textit{Variety}'s Les Brown observed, "The networks' own horror show has left them shaking with fear."\textsuperscript{26}

What all of this amounts to is simple: the press is unaccountable regardless of the Hutchins Commission's brotherly advice that "If the press is to be accountable - and it must be, if it is to remain free its members must discipline one another by the only means they have available - namely, public criticism."\textsuperscript{27} But as James Audu quoted an eminent journalist, Walter Lippman, as saying, "mutual criticism, like marital criticism, if it is publicly made, is too hard for a mortal man to take." In other words, as Lippman puts it, "journalists could not go about washing their dirty linens in public."\textsuperscript{28} This brings us to the next point: the role of the press.

\textsuperscript{25}William J. Small, \textit{op. cit.}, p.132.

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., p.130.

\textsuperscript{27}James Audu, "Role of the Press Before and After October" (in reference to the date for a return to civilian government in Nigeria), \textit{The Daily Times} (Lagos), January 17, 1979, p.24.

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid.
3:3. The Role of the Press

The role of the press in society is contingent upon the place that it is accorded. This was discussed in Section 3:1. To expand a little further, in the Soviet Republics, information or news is regarded as a social benefit or "public utility" service. The role of the press, therefore, is to serve the public interest as defined by government. To ensure that this role is properly performed, all media are publicly owned and controlled. The problem with this system, however, is that dissenting views are taboo. In essence, then, its freedom - in terms of exercising a personally-directed, non-governmentally imposed choice in news selection and publication - is non-existent. Its proper role in relation to government and its leaders is subservient and obligatorily supportive.

In the Free World, the press operates within the framework of the free market enterprise system. In this context, information is a commercial venture, and news a saleable commodity regulated by the law of demand and supply. And since the economy ought to be and is largely in the private domain, the press takes on the role of a watchdog, guarding against government interference. News that is profit-oriented may not be in the best interests of the public but newsocrats nonetheless have a duty sifting and selecting "appropriate" news in order to safeguard their own vested interests. It is, therefore, not a custodian or protector of the public interest. It is not accountable to the public for its actions and is, consequently, not responsible to the public. As we noted earlier, the Western
press with its Establishment character cannot be a neutral force.

In most of the Shackled World, the government is involved in newspaper and other media ownership simply because private capital and, therefore, initiative is very scarce. And since their problem is underdevelopment, calling for the need to marshall all their resources in overcoming it, the press has a duty to help in the development process, or so the argument goes. But because the press itself is underdeveloped, it tends to suffer from a blind adherence to Western concepts and ideas that evolved over time and, of course, are still evolving in response to specific needs in Western society. So, a lot of debating energy is expended on concepts such as freedom of the press as it is understood and practised in Western Europe and North America. Hardly ever do they address themselves to their own peculiar circumstances. Lately, there has been much talk about "journdev" as a media philosophy. The debate, however, is still being conducted within the framework of democratic structures of government as we presently know them. It is the contention of this thesis that if those structures remain basically unchanged, it would be impossible to practice "journdev" anywhere in the Free World.²⁹ By professing a democratic system of government, it is assumed that most of the Shackled World belong to that Free World. "Journdev" would be impossible to practice because it needs to be undertaken under a climate of greater independence, freedom and responsibility. Present democratic structures permit some degree of independence and freedom but do not encourage the "enforcement"

²⁹ In discussing "National Development and Media Goals" Bernard Rubin states, for example, that "...the practical chances for such developmental overview (tv as a developmental tool), at this late stage, are not likely unless the whole of the foundation for the present support of television and radio media is challenged...This introduction of the developmental thesis...is elementally dangerous to the exponents of what can be labeled the corporate entrepreneur thesis based on overwhelmingly commercial objectives." See Bernard Rubin, op. cit., p.54.
of responsibility toward the public. That this is so is simple: the public interest is marginal in the business calculations of the press.

What role then for a democratic press? A free press can exercise one of four distinct roles: 1) an audit role; (2) an adversary role; (3) a watchdog role; or (4) an advocatory role. An audit role would call for the periodic examination of public performance - whereby the press would give an accounting of what government had done and render an interpretation of its meaning for the well-being of the state and the general public. While, like an auditor-general's report, it may expose governmental maladministration, it would be undertaken after the fact. In this sense, an audit role would not be very useful. An internal audit role, however, would be very effective but given the present structure of democratic governments, the press is not regarded quite as "responsible" as politicians to be let into state secrets and what politicians, elected representatives of the people, are doing on behalf of their constituencies and the country. The monitoring nature of an internal audit would have the special merit of inducing responsible government, as well as responsible journalism. We shall find out how, when we discuss "sapsism".

An adversary role is what is now largely practised by the Free World press. Some developing countries see it as a luxury that they cannot afford, but for the wrong reasons as subservience is implied. 30

Like the terms bureaucracy and propaganda, the word adversary is clouded with negative overtones. But the largely antagonistic stance of the press vis-a-vis government has been partly responsible for such misconceptions. An adversary role, in the sense of dealing with an opponent, could be healthy especially when parties share a common goal: servicing and protecting the public interest, and promoting and sustaining a value system that is basic to society. In that case, debate is centred around what is best for society. However, we have seen that the press is more jealous and protective of its privileges than it is of the overall public good. So, instead of seeing an opponent, they see an enemy - a condition that is neither healthy nor conducive to effective government, nor even responsible journalism for that matter. James Reston in his book, The Artillery of the Press (Harper & Row, 1967) draws the conclusion that

Clever officials cannot 'manipulate' reporters, and clever reporters cannot really 'best' the government. From both sides, they have more to gain by cooperating with one another, and with the rising minority of thoughtful people, than by regarding one another as 'the enemy'.

The tendency for journalists to view their adversary role as a condition in which "We fight you (government), but you don't fight us (the press)" and "We try to get information from you, but you don't have the right to try to withhold information from us" raises at least one serious question about the

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31 As quoted in John C. Merrill, The Imperative of Freedom, p.119.
32 Ibid., p.118.
validity of this role:

...If the press values so highly this role of government adversary (a myth!), it should recognize that the government, then, has an equal right to be a press adversary. Otherwise there really is not any meaning to the concept... if the press and the government are truly adversaries, then secrecy in government should not be eliminated. The press, in its adversary role, may try to get at the secrets, but the government, in its adversary role, will attempt to preserve its secrets.33

The adversary role is misleading and contradictory in terms of the day-to-day realities of press operations.

A watchdog or monitorial role would appear attractive as a state of pre-emptiveness is implied. That is, it has the merit of preventing undesired action, thereby putting pressure on a targeted audience to react or respond in a desired direction. But a watchdog role could be both a hindrance and a nuisance. Like the dog the press seeks to emulate, they bark too often for no reason, a nuisance they presumably insist the public must tolerate in order to be protected when the real danger does threaten. The watchdog role presupposes a master-servant relationship, the master being the general public, and the servant, the press. Our analysis so far indicates that no such relationship exists. Again, principally for this reason, Merrill debunks the watchdog role as a myth:

To whom does the watchdog belong? Whom is it watching, and for what reasons? If the press is a "watchdog," presumably it is protecting something. Just what is that? Is it the people's watchdog, watching the government, and keeping the government from doing harm or violence

33Ibid.
to the people? This must be the core of the concept. But the question arises: who gave the watchdog this mission? Did the "people" buy the dog for this purpose? If so, then the press belong to the people; they own it, and therefore they have a perfect right to expect it to protect them against their own government. But...this is not the case. The "people" do not own the press; it cannot, therefore, be their watchdog. Why should the press "watch" the government any more than it should watch the people? The metaphoric myth of a "watchdog" is...meaningless...34

That leaves us with the advocatory role.

As its name implies, a press playing an **advocatory** role will tend to plead and defend its case without any presumptions in the process of publicly recommending action. As is the case of a lawyer in a court room, the press gathers and presents all the facts at its disposal before the public while arguing its case for acceptance or rejection. As Erwin Canham of the *Christian Science Monitor* observed, "nothing is more misleading than the unrelated fact, just because it is a fact and hence impressive. Background, surrounding circumstance, prior events, motivation - all are part of the real and basic news. This kind of interpretation...is actually the best kind of reporting."35 That is what an advocatory role for the press is all about.

On a somewhat different plane, it is not in the public interest, for instance, to wait until Company X fouls the environment before according it attention as is often the case under an adversary press system. It would be useful instead

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34John C. Merrill, op. cit., p.117

35William J. Small, op. cit., p.399.
to let the public know well in advance what Company X does for its existence, how it operates and how its activities are likely to affect the public. But in this age of conglomerate empires, Company X could very well be the owner of the only newspaper in town or a chain of them in a region. Responsible journalism, in the circumstances, would hardly be forthcoming from such a press.

While the advocatory role is the best of the four possible roles that we have considered, constraints such as government secrecy would prevent it from exercising greater responsibility in protecting the public interest, which politicians claim is their exclusive preserve by virtue of their electedness. An internal audit role, which would make the press and politicians active partners in the pursuit of the public good, combined with an advocatory role, to be known as an "advocatory" role, would be the best system under which a free press could operate. It would also be very conducive to the practice of "journdev". However, the present status of the press would not qualify them to assume such a role as, unlike politicians, they are unelected and, therefore, unrepresentative of the public. At this juncture, we must begin our discussion of "sapsism", the social accountability theory of the press.


Elected representatives and the press do not often see eye to eye. As for the general public, the press is suspect.36

Public figures are particularly distrustful of the press. Some examples: Pierre E. Trudeau in 1978 accused the media of "fueling a climate of cynicism" (The Globe and Mail, November 18, 1978, p.5). He once remarked: "I am a great admirer of the media in a very remote kind of fashion" (The Globe and Mail, April 12, 1979, p.9). He has also been known to regard the press as "a vehicle for error" and "an instrument of oppression" (Walt McDayter, A Media Mosaic, 1971, p.44); Kathryn Hepburn, commenting on the freedom of the press, snapped back in answer to a question in that regard: "To hell with that" (CBS Programme "60 Minutes", January 14, 1979); Pierre Berton thinks the media are "very rarely accurate" (TV Ontario Programme "The Great Debate", April 29, 1979); Spiro Agnew once declared: "I am opposed to censorship of TV or the press in any form" including censorship "by a little fraternity having similar social and political views" (William J. Small, Political Power and the Press, 1972, p.132). He also charged: "We would never trust such power over public opinion in the hands of an elected government - it is time we questioned it in the hands of a small and unelected elite. The great networks have dominated America's airwaves for decades; the people are entitled to a full accounting of their stewardship." (Small, p.129). And, finally, Dean Rusk, an ex-US Secretary of State, in a speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors:
Let's get rid of this genial myth of the fourth estate... That this should be so would seem to be elementary, because the American people have nothing to say about who are to be publishers and editors and reporters and columnists. We cannot admit in our constitutional system room for something called a "fourth estate" which has no democratic base.37

"Sapsism" is in response to the legitimate concerns and subsequent challenge advanced by people like Spiro Agnew and Dean Rusk. What they would like to have is a representative and accountable press and, therefore, a responsible one. "Sapsism", accordingly, advances the proposition that editors or publisher-editors or newsocrats or whatever other name news managers may be known by, be elected to office by an audience-electorate for terms of office running concurrently with that of elected political representatives. Only then can we speak of a true "Fourth Estate." Until this concept is institutionalized by way of constitutional recognition, it will continue to remain a mere slogan and indeed a myth.38

How are these mediocrats to be elected? And under what governmental structure should an elected press operate and function? First, let us consider the political system.

Democratic governments are presently three-level structured. There is the Executive branch of government, the Legislative and the Judiciary. In parliamentary democracies, an Official Opposition exists to monitor the activities of the government in order to ensure responsible behaviour and, therefore, accountability. This, in a way, renders the presumed watchdog role of the press under this system redundant. It must be conceded momentarily that an effective Opposition and consequently a free government will be rendered meaningless without an effective press. True but why does not the Opposition run its own press? Or is it incapable of running an "effective" press? The answer lies perhaps in the rhetorical claim or need to have a free and impartial press. However, recent elections in Britain and Canada

37 Quoted by P. A. V. Ansah in Universitas, May 1977, p.31.
38 That the concept of a Fourth Branch of Government is a myth can hardly be disputed. For a further pursuit of this line of argument see John C. Merrill, op. cit., pp.116-117.
and the behaviour of the press in covering them bear a clear testimony to the capacity of the press to be blatantly partial. Even when they try to be impartial, generally speaking, they end up attempting to please everyone, which is an impossible task. As Bernard Rubin notes, "network presentations tended to be designed to be inoffensive to all elements of the nation's population and were therefore not usually of real social or political relevance to any one group." "Sapsism" suggests a diversification of media ownership as a corrective mechanism.

In presidential systems of democratic government, there is no Official Opposition. Therefore, such instruments as Question Periods, Confidence Votes and unscheduled elections are non-existent. Rather, presidential systems tend to depend on a "checks-and-balances" system. But since there is no Official Opposition vested with the specific interest of actively monitoring government activity, it becomes necessary to accord the press the status of an Official Opposition - hence, for example, the First Amendment of the US Constitution. While there is talk of a "Fourth Estate of the Realm," the problem with these democratic systems of government is the non-recognition of the press as legitimate active participants in the sharing of responsibility for protecting the public interest. The press is, consequently, constantly on its guard to protect any violation of its freedom.

The Nigerian government is to assume a presidential structure in October 1979 when the present military regime hands over the reins of power to a duly elected civilian administration. In her new constitution, the press is denied any special status as we have noted earlier although Section 21, spelling out the obligations of the mass media, states:

The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people.

39 Bernard Rubin, op. cit., p.16.
The press is to exercise this freedom as per Sections 35 and 36 of the constitution which guarantees the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; and of expression and the press. In short, the press is not treated separately and distinctly from individuals. Pressmen, as individuals, therefore, may exercise their freedom of expression, of course within legal limits in the execution of their journalistic trade and the constitutional charge quoted above.

Perhaps if there is a group in society to be accorded a special privilege in a constitution for the purposes of acting as a "watchdog" in the interests of the public, it ought to be lawyers because of the nature of their calling. But as a recent Harris poll in the US indicates, the public has very little confidence in them. The poll was about public confidence in various institutions. On a list of 13, law ranked 11th. TV news was ranked 1st "somewhat surprisingly" conceded TIME, with the general press falling in 5th position. The specific questions asked of the public were not made known in the TIME article. The Spiro Agnew "poll" we mentioned earlier told a different story, however. Nonetheless, the issue at stake is not the undisputed need for a free press; it is the perceived and generally held illegitimacy of the press as representatives of the people.

To give concrete expression to the idea of a Fourth Estate of the Realm, there ought to be a constitutional fourth level of government - the Fourth Estate. Like the Legislative and

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41 Laws regarding libel and obscenity come readily to mind but under "Sapsism" the public renders a verdict on what is considered obscene. Concepts such as "national security" and "official secrets" need to be publicly debated and clearly defined if they are not to serve as repressive instruments of government.

Judiciary responsible for law-making and its interpretation and execution respectively, the Fourth Estate should assume responsibility for communication, and via a media tribunal under its jurisdiction, the interpretation of the law and ethics relating to the media of mass communication. Such a tribunal would not have precedence over legal courts of law. In the first instance however, as earlier suggested, press councils and tribunals ought to deal with the professional problems of the media.

In regard to law, the System allows for public and private practice. Judges, prosecutors and other legal personnel work for the government. In the private sector, lawyers operate private practices or work for private firms. The Fourth Estate will allow for a similar structure in the communication branch. Editors, columnists, journalists, or producers may work for the government press and its tribunal. They may, on the other hand, elect to work for the private press and its press council. In other words, as in courts of law with judges and prosecutors on the one side and private legal practitioners defending specific interests on the other, media tribunals will be able to operate in a similar fashion, with all interests represented.

With the presence of a Fourth Estate, the near mystical nature of "national security", often invoked to bar journalists from access to governmental information, will disappear. The Fourth Estate will be an active participant in the process of government rather than a partner because its mandate will not be to govern but to monitor government activity - a good legal recipe for open government.
The head of the Fourth Estate, a media expert himself, will be elected just like his counterpart in the Executive or appointed by mutual agreement (regarding the appointment) between the government and a body representing the media establishment; this will forestall the possibility of the press or government advancing someone sympathetic to either party. The Fourth Estate chief will share responsibility for defining and protecting "national security" and other "secret" policy matters with elected representatives. Should the Executive or any other branch of government for that matter deny access (to government information) to pressmen, the chief, by virtue of his inside knowledge and, therefore, responsibility will decide whether or not to support the government position. If he rejects the government's position and the government refuses to accept his decision, he will be constitutionally empowered to seek the advice of a "standing committee" of five made up of a member each of the Government and Opposition, a media representative, a legal expert and the chief himself. Committee decision will be by majority vote in the proportion of three to one, with the chief casting a "winning" vote if necessary. Such a committee decision will be made available to the public. Both parties (the press and government) will be obliged to respect the decision of this committee. The chief, for his part, will accept responsibility for any eventual "damage" to "national security" resulting from public knowledge of particular government secrets - a thorough checks-and-balances mechanism. It has the additional merit of lessening the national political burden on Presidents or Prime Ministers who may sit back and say with some comfort, perhaps, "Don't ask me, shoot the Fourth Estate." It will be a fine piece of responsible, democratic government with both the press and the government both accountable to the public.

In the same light, the head of the Fourth Estate will intervene in cases concerning the right of reporters to withhold
information about their sources. If a judge, for example, insists that a reporter must reveal his sources, regardless of confidentiality as in the Branzburg vs. Hayes (1972) case in the United States, or the ruling that "The press has no more right of access to public institutions than does the general public," (as in Houchins vs. KQED, 1978; Pell vs. Procunier, 1974; and Saxbe vs. Washington Post, 1974), the head of the Fourth Estate will have the power to intervene, examine specific circumstances, and moderate a judge's ruling in keeping with constitutional provisions. This way, there will be a check on the almost absolute powers of judges. The question arises: why not elect judges too? The fact is that some of them are elected in the United States for instance but that is not the point to be made. The point is a simple one: judges do not exactly operate like pressmen.

Incidentally, talking about political burden, an official under the Lyndon B. Johnson administration once complained to the Associated Press insisting that it is Johnson's right to protect his options, secrecy and decision-making, adding "The American people have a right to know but they also have a right to have dangerous problems handled properly by responsible officers and not by the press. Nobody elected them" (emphasis added). A constitutionalization of the Fourth Estate will remedy such concerns. And when it becomes technologically possible for TV viewers to "vote lousy shows off the air" the democratization of the communication process in a free society would be complete.

44William J. Small, op. cit., p.117.
Now that we have set the political stage under which an elected press will function, we can turn to the question of electing the press. But, first, the role of the press under the democratic political system described will have to be "advocatory" as already discussed; it is concerned with investigating and reporting both public and private sector affairs. Ownership and control of the press will be public or private or both, in accordance with the following pattern:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>MAJOR NEWS VALUE ORIENTATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>Governments</td>
<td>Information; Education (news as &quot;public utility&quot; or social benefit).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Parties</td>
<td>Ideology; Political Socialization (&quot;biased&quot; news).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churches</td>
<td>Social Order (&quot;biased&quot; news).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trade Unions</td>
<td>Economic Order (&quot;biased&quot; news).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Enterprise</td>
<td>Business; Entertainment; Information; Education (news as saleable commodity).</td>
</tr>
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</table>

To engender a free flow of information across national boundaries, foreign participation in ownership may be allowed, with the proviso that no foreign participant or group of foreign participants would have a controlling share in any national media network. This would forestall easy foreign policy manipulations of the local media by external forces.
E lecting the press: assuming that a publisher is not interested in running for office, at least three competent and/or qualified editors should run. These editors will then campaign on their respective platforms (personal, political and media philosophies) and then contest an election. And the electorate: if the circulation rate of the newspaper is say 500,000, then 500,000 media consumers will be invited to cast their votes; this could be done randomly and in the city in which the news medium has its base. Subscribers will automatically have a vote. No publisher will have the right to fire an editor for "political" reasons. If a publisher wants to contest an election himself, he will be required to run along with two other editors recruited and selected by an independent body - say a press council or an association of publishers-editors or some other similar body. If the publisher-editor loses in such an election, he must not interfere with the general philosophical orientation of his medium controlled by the elected editor who is now accountable to the public. The elected editor must, however, be accountable to the board or publisher of his medium whichever is the case, for administrative matters.

Under this system, the law will permit an overwhelming vote, say at least a two-thirds majority, by a medium's audience to effect changes in policy or even close down the medium if it proves detrimental to community interests or values as defined by that majority. Journalists will not be subjected to the same process as editors because they hardly control what finally gets into print.
"Sapsism" will be a sobering experience for the press system of a free and open society and will save the public from the horrors of Jonestownian journalism. And if the public should end up with "global village idiots" on its hands, at least it would rest assured in the knowledge and belief that it has the power to get rid of them.

It could be argued that readers already have the power to force changes in the output policies of the press or to force them out of the market by withdrawing their patronage or simply to induce a drop in circulation which is linked to advertising revenue. Buying power is not the same thing as voting power but then, the argument goes, the press is in business just like your favourite hardware store and, therefore, should not be subjected to the kind of political process that "Sapsism" suggests. The argument fails to add however, that there is no such thing as "freedom of the hardware store." Reasons other than buying power may indeed be responsible for falling circulation. These include population mobility, the lack of a high demand for afternoon newspapers and the availability of television and a consequent laziness on the part of audiences to read. Although readers have the option not to read a newspaper that they do not like, that option or consumer choice is rather limited in a one or two-newspaper town. Such an ownership structure does not constitute a "free market." Ownership of the media may not be a critical issue

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46 John C. Merrill, an ardent defender of press libertarianism, makes such a point. See his book, The Imperative of Freedom, p.117.
in national press systems as much as access to the media is in terms of (1) the diversity of ideas, opinions and other messages to which consumers are exposed, and (2) the number and diversity of consumers able to send out messages. As far as can be ascertained, no documentation of "access" as such is available. One thing seems clear, however: as Francis Williams suggests, newsocrats tend to cater more to the commercial interests of their medium than to the interests of the general public and in some cases newspapers simply cut their circulation to save money; such cuts have nothing to do with the demands or wishes of a medium's readership. The commercial interests of the media are closely linked with advertising agencies and their clients who no doubt have more buying power than the reading public. It is doubtful, in the circumstances, if readers will be able to exercise any meaningful power in bringing about changes in editorial policy.

"Sapsism" will provide for a broadly-based and more egalitarian and democratic structure of the press. Conflicts of interest may arise, such as between shareholders and popularly-elected editors, but these are "political" - not strictly management - problems that editors will have to deal with. Taxpayers, for example, are the "shareholders" in the enterprise of government. They do have conflicting interests, and it is the job of elected political representatives to reconcile those interests. The taxpayers eventually call

\[^{47}\text{Francis Williams, op. cit., pp. 215 and 298.}\]
upon them to account for their stewardship by the periodic
assertion of their voting power. This voting power is a
vital ingredient in the democratic process of eliciting
responsiveness and responsibility from those charged with
managing the public good. Editors will just have to learn
the art of conflict resolution. And when they do, they will
probably understand better what the governing process entails.

As for those interested in holding shares in a media
outlet, they will have to understand that (1) demand and
supply are the foundations of a free market enterprise system,
and, more importantly, (2) that a newspaper business by its
very unique character is not like a textile industry or, simply,
the marketing of Coca-Cola. Anyhow, shareholders are not
always keenly interested in how their company is doing until
it is going bankrupt or deeply in financial trouble and
dividends cease flowing in. If shareholders insist, under
such circumstances, that an editor get into pornography of some
kind to guarantee the flow of their dividends or in order
to induce greater profits, the editor will have to weigh
their tastes against the prevailing morality of those he
represents. Otherwise, he could be acting irresponsibly and
in so doing pulling the carpet from under his own feet.
Besides, shareholders, as part of a medium's audience-electorate,
may seek to influence management policy by arguing their case
publicly in order to attract wider support and, therefore,
legitimacy for their cause.
The idea of an elected press is a very scary proposition for newsmen, as it will curb their privilege, power and general irresponsibility. Henry Grunwald, in an essay in TIME (July 16, 1979, p.48), quoted New York's Irving R. Kaufman, Chief Judge of the Second Judicial Circuit as having written: "Different as the press and the federal judiciary are, they share one distinctive characteristic: both sustain democracy, not because they are responsible to any branch of Government, but precisely, except in the most extreme cases, they are not accountable at all. Thus they are able to check the irresponsibility of those in power...." Grunwald no doubt based his logic on Judge Kaufman's reasoning when he stated: "The fact that the press is not accountable to any other power except the marketplace clearly agitates a lot of people. This often takes the form of the hostile question to editors: who elected you anyway? But some institutions in our society simply should NOT (his emphasis) be subject to the usual political processes." (emphasis added). But why not? Grunwald, unfortunately, neglected to pursue the specific matter of an elected press beyond the statement quoted. Much of this kind of logic is based on the totally illogical and perverted presentation of a case or the facts. The judge talks about the judiciary and the press sustaining democracy. The question is: whose democracy? The judiciary is neither a commercial proposition nor is the law as such a saleable commodity; so judges do not deliver sentences and/or rulings
on the basis of marketability, or in a way that will ensure them higher income or profit margins - to satisfy shareholders or the owners of the enterprise. Judges and prosecutors are not out to entertain, so they do not have to put on acts to impress their audience. They have a clear duty to perform. We cannot, therefore, equate the judiciary with the press in talking about accountability to the public or some branch of government. When the judge claims, and rightly so, that unaccountability enables both institutions to "check the irresponsibility of those in power," he omits to explain how the irresponsibility and power of both institutions, especially the press, ought to be checked. "Sapsism", as we have argued, will check not only the powers of the judiciary in specific instances relating to the practice of journalism but also any irresponsibility on the part of those who are mandated by the public to check the irresponsibility of others in power. As Agnew would have it, if we cannot allow politicians to rule for life and freely provided they are socially responsible in their management of the public good, the arguments are even more compelling in the case of the press that it should not be accorded such a privilege. Much concern has been expressed by media critics over the increasing concentration that now characterizes media ownership and the inevitable power which accompanies it. Writes Francis Williams:
If the press were ordinary business all this perhaps would not matter much. Change and transition is normal. It is the tendency in all modern industries for the weak to go to the wall, or lose their identity in something larger, and for the successful to grow bigger. But newspapers contain the quite separate element of a particular and vital, not generalised but quite specific, public interest that sets them apart from other businesses.\footnote{Francis Williams, op. cit., p. 314.}

There is an urgent need for pressmen to recognize the fact that the press is not an ordinary business that is accountable like any other business to the marketplace. The media are essential actors in the enhancement of democratic rule but important as their contributions have been and, hopefully, will continue to be, their achievements "must not blind us to extremely valid criticisms which highlight shortcomings."\footnote{Bernard Rubin, op. cit., p. 70.}

3:5. SAPSISM Promotes and Sustains Journdev

We have argued that "journdev" cannot be fully undertaken under the press systems described by Siebert and company, and other suggested variations of their theories. This is so mainly because of the difficulty in defining and eliciting responsibility and, like the idea of free trade or free competition, the unworkability of libertarianism, a presumably self-righting process. These models ignore the economics and "politics" of the mass media,\footnote{Although references have been made to works on the economics of the news media and the power emanating therefrom, this thesis does not address these issues specifically for the simple reason that the subjects have received adequate attention elsewhere. Acknowledgement of these sources will, therefore, suffice.} concentrating only on ideologically influenced press systems. Besides, in a world that is
getting smaller and one in which a free flow of information is desirable and necessary, press systems cannot be analyzed in isolation.

Theories calling for the subordination of the press to government base their arguments on the need for the press to rally round developmental efforts by a people and their government. Such a system would be dangerous. Most governments do not tolerate criticism and use the arguments for an authoritarian press to silence the press, especially one that is critical in its analysis of government performance. The last thing any free and democratic country should want is an authoritarian press. It only works in the interests of a small ruling elite and not necessarily in the interests of the general public. Incidentally, so are the other systems as we have demonstrated. If pressmen are given the training and responsibility that we have suggested, they will contribute immensely to policy-making. Knowledge of what is best for a country then will not be the exclusive preserve of elected officials who, hitherto, arrogate to themselves the right to advance and decide policy, but also shared by those who have something to contribute - without fear or favour - to the decision-making process. Should pressmen differ in their opinions from politicians, who then reconciles them? Although politicians and pressmen will be elected, they will be mandated to assume different roles - the politicians to govern and the press to monitor government performance. The possible fear that there might not be an impartial arbiter in
the event of differences of opinion between these two groups does not arise. Besides, it is unlikely that the press as a whole representing clearly different and identifiable interests (under the ownership structure proposed) will adopt one set of opinions as against those held by one political party or the other.

Shelton A. Gunaratne, in discussing the media subservience theory vis-a-vis "journaldev", and then arguing the case for debunking it, arrived at the conclusion that "developmental journalism is highly compatible with the social responsibility theory of the press."\(^5^0\) His conclusion is based on the function of the press in a democracy. On that basis, therefore, the authoritarian, Soviet-Communist and libertarian theories of the press are ruled out, and rightly so, as not being conducive to the practice of "journaldev". "Journaldev," states Gunaratne, by way of definition, "could be looked upon as an integral part of today's new journalism which involves analytical interpretation, subtle investigation, constructive criticism and sincere association with the grassroots (rather than with the elite)."\(^5^1\) So, although "journaldev" fits the authoritarian and communist models, non-democratic limitations render the two concepts incompatible. And so is the libertarian concept with its information-cum-entertainment definition of the function of the press. If we extend his analysis beyond politics and into the realm of economics, we find that the

\(^{50}\) Shelton A. Gunaratne, op. cit., p.24.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., p.25.
social responsibility theory does not fare any better. A press that is part and parcel of the Establishment or of the elite, of giant conglomerates interested more in the philosophy of expansion, growth and profits than in advancing the cause of development, is unlikely to align itself with the have-nots of the world let alone undertake any serious investigative work in that direction.

The underground press is not a viable alternative as far as "journdev" is concerned. Martin H. Seiden writes:

The bias of this news service (i.e. the Liberation News Service based in New York) (and the underground press in general) is apparent from what they choose not to report. The LNS did not report on the invasion of Czechoslovakia or the subsequent repression in that country. LNS has also ignored the Russian repression of Soviet intellectuals and the considerable underground literature there. The service did not carry a single article on the Soviet show trials of Jews, their cultural repression by Soviet authorities, or the protests in the U.S. and Russia regarding Soviet treatment of Jews.

In domestic matters, problems of welfare do not attract the attention of LNS (or the underground in general) nor do the problems of the sociology of poverty or the education of the poor. The LNS packets and the underground media, in general, focus on identifying and reporting sources of discontent, rather than their solution.52

Returning to the more serious media, one prominent ex-Reuter journalist, Michael Dobbs, says that newsocrats regard "journdev" as a "a monumental bore."53


After unsuccessfully canvassing the idea of "journdev" among Fleet Street editors, one of them, Louis Heren of the (London) Times, gave Dobbs a straight-forward and honest piece of advice: "journdev" provides "remarkably little worthwhile copy," adding, "if you wish to succeed and prosper as a journalist I really think that you should specialize in another field." 54 There is no national newspaper with a "Third World Development correspondent" writes Harford Thomas.

It is clear that social responsibility as a philosophy of the press is not rewarding in terms of "journdev". We can, therefore, reject it as a viable conduit for the practice of "journdev." To borrow Gunaratne's own words, "sapsism" provides the most fertile ground for reaping the full potential of developmental journalism" 55 because, unlike social responsibility and libertarianism, accountability and, therefore, responsiveness are assured. As for identifying with the grassroots as against the elite, or the other way around for that matter, it would not have to be a moral imposition, dictated by government but by the wishes of a medium's constituency.

54 Ibid.

55 Shelton A. Gunaratne, op. cit., p.27.
The audience-electorate decides whether the press leans toward a top-bottom approach to development (i.e. from governors down to the governed) or a bottom-up approach (from the grassroots upwards) or a systemic approach that would operate like a fountain - providing a steady flow and balance in development which is associated with the bottom or grassroots, the middle-level groups in society and the top (the governors and/or elites). The general public which the press and government alike are "fighting" to protect would, then, truly speaking, make the decisions, ultimately, and mandate the press and government to lead, inform and guide it.

A common mistake in advancing the worthiness of social responsibility in terms of its compatibility with "journdev" is that while the socio-political context is considered, the political economy of the press - which renders social responsibility irrelevant if not a total farce - is neglected. Besides, development is viewed from a nationalist angle, an orientation that does little to promote global balance and harmony. Development, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder. What it is depends on one's worldview - socialist, capitalist, nationalist, internationalist or humanist. And that has

56 Incidentally, to quote Gunaratne again, "The social responsibility theory assumes that the public ultimately makes the decisions, and charges the mass media with the duty of informing and guiding the public" (p.24) - emphasis added. We could say the same thing about politicians. In the end the public will decide, and politicians are to lead (for the press read "inform") and guide. Both lean toward the Up-Bottom approach to government. So, sincerely associating with the grassroots is not undertaken within a meaningful cooperative context but rather in a paternalistic fashion, which is not in keeping with the philosophy of "journdev".
influenced the development debate on such issues as self-reliance, foreign aid and capital, the need for national ideologies, grassroots development, government control of the "system", etc. The definition of developmentalism offered earlier on is derived from a humanist-internationalist perspective, and while recognizing the legitimacy of national priorities, transcends the parochialism of national self-interest.

As for Western journalists embracing "journdev", the Shackled World can put that idea to rest because the Western press operates with a different value consensus. Their audiences are different from those in the Shackled World and share certain value assumptions which the press seeks to actively reinforce in order to retain its "credibility," and thereby continue to enjoy their patronage. From personal observation, it is truly a monumental bore for Western audiences to be confronted with "poverty pornography" in the name of development. As one American journalist quite frankly states the case, "Who would dare tamper with prime viewing time and project African images into the American living room?" 57 Or, as CBC's Desmond Smith points out, "Poverty's not a topic that will readily find its way into City Woman." 58 Or, indeed, the reaction of worried London (Ontario) Free Press newsocrat when reporter Joe Matyas,  


covering the April 18-21 Encounter 79 conference on population
held at the University of Western Ontario, submitted his
second story. The newsocrat: "We don't want too much garbage
from way over there." 59 The Free Press is said to be one of
Canada's better newspapers "with extensive foreign coverage
and thoughtful editorials." 60

The answer to some of these problems does not lie in
appeals or threats to Western journalists in attempts to get
them to report positively on development in the Shackled World.
The answer lies in creating an environment conducive to a
free and independent press within their own borders. When the
local press wins confidence, trust, faith and credibility by
operating within the framework of commonly shared value
assumptions - and that can only come about by the free and
unfettered competition in the marketplace of opinions and ideas -
it would not matter what distortions the foreign press chooses
to print or whether the CIA has journalists planted for the
purposes of filing home, to US audiences, manufactured news in
the pursuit of certain foreign policy options. In that sense,
have-not countries are the very architects of their own
destiny. They cannot continue to blame the foreign press
for their problems especially when local audiences have more
confidence in foreign news media than in their own local press.

59 See John de Bondt, "Encounter '79: Curbing Close Encoun-
ters in the Third World," Development Direction, May/June 1979,
p.4.

60 Ibid.
"Sapsism" addresses this fundamental problem and makes it possible for the press in the Free or Shackled World to operate in a truly free, independent and responsible fashion.

As for Western journalists seeking unrestricted access to information in the developing world, it is simply not feasible as no Western government is likely to grant foreign pressmen unrestricted access to information within its borders. Even Reed Paper International debunks the idea! Despite the freedom of information act in the US, American journalists do not have unrestricted access. Nothing stops Western journalists from arriving in and reporting on local news provided they satisfy entry requirements such as FCAT, suggested in the previous chapter, and are subject to the workings of local press councils and tribunals like their host counterparts - all, of course, within the democratic framework of SAPSISM.

As Gauhar remarks, "The mass media have robbed man of his option to choose and evaluate facts for himself."61 Surely, this cannot be said to be in keeping with liberal democratic assumptions. It is hoped that the press would be able to reconcile the need for an elected press with its marketplace orientation. Only then will the press enjoy real independence and freedom. As a Greek publisher remarked, "no human being is

61Altuf Gauhar, op. cit., p. 66. (The idea of an individual having the "...option to choose...facts for himself" must be contingent upon the media presenting all the facts at their disposal and leaving their audiences to select whichever facts they prefer to emphasize. To be sure, in any conflict situation the public is likely to be divided as to cause and/or effect and may seek facts that support particular standpoints. This is natural and healthy as long as all the known facts are made available to the public and not pre-selected by a reporter or newsocrat).
as free as a good journalist,"62  In a free and democratic society, what is good is not necessarily decided only by a small fraternity of newsocrats or politicians but by society at large. That is the true test of democracy. An elected press is imperative.

Conclusion

The foregoing review of press systems draws at least one very clear conclusion: national press systems derive their freedom (of the press) from the role traditionally assigned to them by the state. The role assigned is based upon the dominant ideology of the state. In that sense, all media which operate within that ideological context can be deemed socially responsible.

Attention is almost exclusively given to the philosophy and functions of the Free World press. It is noted that media libertarianism is incompatible with the public service role of the media because of the overwhelming emphasis on commercialism. The "social responsibility" concept of the press is an attempt to re-align such emphasis and strike a balance between the moral and social responsibility of the media on the one hand and their commercialism on the other. However, it is noted that this concept violates editorial self-determinism and, by implication, press freedom. Under the present libertarian press system, journalists and newsocrats tend to regard their role as that of "watchdogs" or government "adversaries," and to view their trade as the

"Fourth Branch of Government" or the so-called "Fourth Estate". These concepts, we find, are mere slogans and popular myths.

To give concrete expression to the idea of a "Fourth Estate," a socially accountable press system - "sapsism" - is suggested. Under this system, the press will be elected and mandated to actively participate in ensuring government accountability and, therefore, responsibility. This mandate does not conflict with that of elected political representatives which is to govern or to act as watchdogs (in the case of Opposition politicians) in the true sense of the word. Since "The forces making for commercialisation and group domination of the press are now particularly strong in North America," the need for some kind of audience "unionism" is overdue.

What are the chances of an elected press colluding with politicians to "defraud" the public? The answer must be: no more than pressmen or Opposition politicians now collude with governing politicians!

Freedom of the press is upheld not because the media are in business just like any other commercial enterprise but specifically because of their public service functions. Journalists and newsocrats, under "sapsism", will embrace these functions as their most important role while the business aspects

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63 Francis Williams, op. cit., p.215

64 Some of these functions, stated Henry Fairlie - a British observer of the mass media - include: 1) reconciling the multiplicity of conflicting interests from which a policy may emerge; (2) maintaining public interest in political issues without which free government is meaningless; (3) acting as a catalyst on public opinion; and (4) serving as a link between informed and public opinion. See Bernard Rubin, op. cit., p.14.
of the media must be left to non-journalists. This will enable journalists to act freely and independently without sanctions being imposed upon them implicitly or otherwise by media owners. The proper role of the press, then, will be "advocatory" - derived from an audit role, the process of gathering and checking information, and an advocatory role, the process of presenting the information so gathered and checked.

Advertising agencies and their clients can no doubt bring pressure to bear on the orientation of a particular medium but with the freedom of journalists truly guaranteed under a constitutionalized Fourth Estate, such pressures can be averted by legally charging such agencies and/or their clients with violating the freedom of the press. For journalists to take proper advantage of this new role, a greater degree of professionalism will have to be promoted and sustained.

Finally, we note that the present press systems by their very commercial nature cannot promote "journdev" - not even the underground press. Because a public service orientation of the press, enhanced by "sapsism", will have to address the dire issues confronting man's quality of life, the "sapsist" concept of the press is the most conducive to the practice of "journdev". And when this happens, a greater move toward media internationalism and accountability will be facilitated.
CHAPTER IV

A VOICE FOR AFRICA

In this final chapter, the need for a continental African news agency is advanced and examined. This regionalism would appear to contradict the kind of internationalism that "journdev" espouses but it must be seen within the context of media egalitarianism - an equality of opportunity which facilitates a diversity of media ownership on the international scene. Until such a balance is struck, we cannot really talk about a free international marketplace of ideas and opinions. If people in the Free World are to render any informed opinion and meaningful impact on the foreign policy decisions of their respective governments, they must have free access to the ideas and opinions not only of their fellow citizens but of other peoples with whom they share this planet. Such a plurality of ideas has a better chance of ensuring global political stability than does the present international information order which is unidirectional and often distorted and manipulated.

There are, of course, many problems associated with the idea of establishing a regional news agency. It is the task of this chapter to explore the possibilities of operationalizing the concept.
4.1. The Historical Setting

A cursory glance at the communications and political maps of Africa would give the reader a telling picture of the colonial legacy that Africans now live with. With the partition of the so-called "Dark Continent" at the Berlin Conference of 1885 among the competing European powers, the structures for internal political instability and external exploitation of the resulting confusion were firmly set long before the African wind of change started blowing. The Europeans must have arrived at the strategic calculation that independence was inevitable as direct control was no longer possible. But the colonial structures - indigenized but not changed when and since Africans won their political independence - ensure that indirect control is maintained.

The political map is such that it is possible to find a particular ethnic group spread over two or three countries, which technically imposes an alien status on one group against the other. Much of this is responsible for the political upheavals and secessionist agitations that have continued to rock the continent. The communications map underscores the absurdity of colonial administration. The entire communications system makes little or no sense in terms of Africa's social and economic development. But colonial administrations were not so much concerned with such matters as they were with feeding the industries at home in Europe with cheap raw materials from the colonies. So railways were constructed from the seaports to mineral or
agricultural centres, with no interconnections with other parts of the country, not to talk about a regional or continental linkage system. There are 49 different railway systems on the continent - about a quarter of them running at a permanent loss for both political and economic reasons - with nine different gauges. The French territories and German East Africa have a 1000-mm gauge; the British, Belgian and Portuguese 1067-mm imperial gauge. While the entire railway system of Tanzania, for example, was based on the 1000-mm gauge, the new TANZAM railway was constructed to the imperial gauge. Some of the other systems were built to a mineral gauge of 1435-mm.

In telecommunication, it was impossible to reach a neighbouring country by telephone without having to pass through exchanges in London or Paris, or for the southern Africa countries, Bulawayo and Johannesburg. About two decades after independence, the Africans are now taking steps to correct this massive distortion of the communications map of the continent. Two key developments which will greatly facilitate intra-continental communication are already underway. They are the Trans-Continental road network or (African) Unity Road as it is popularly known, and the Pan-African Telecommunications Network (PANAFTEL).

The road network is very important as fourteen states in Africa are landlocked, depending entirely on their neighbours for their import-export shipments. Zambia at independence had her communications system nearly entirely directed southwards through Rhodesia and South Africa. Political constraints have
made this communications pattern a painful experience for the country. The projected continental highways would ease this burden when they are completed. Of the many projects planned, the most important ones are the Trans-Sahara highway, the Trans-Africa, Trans-Sahelian, Cairo-Nouakchott (in Mauretania), Ndjamena-Massawa, Cairo-Gaborone, and the Tripoli-Ndjamena stretch. The Trans-Sahara route will run from Algeria through Niger to Kano in northern Nigeria. The Trans-Africa highway is an East-West connection, from Lagos to Mombasa on the east coast, 1,000 miles of which have to pass through troubled Zaire. The North-South stretch or the Cairo-Gaborone project begins in Egypt and will run through Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya to Tanzania, Zambia and Botswana. Considerable progress has been reported but these projects are a long way from being completed with several wars going on.¹

When the now-approved Pan-African News Agency (PAFNA) begins operations, the PANAFTEL network should be a great help in easing the transmission of information throughout the continent. Reuter and AFP dominated this field until independence. After independence several other agencies entered the market. That market is still very heavily dominated by the super news-agencies of the West.

PANAFTEL is a system of national and international telephone and telegraph links between African states. Its beginnings date back to 1962 when African states met in Dakar under the auspices of the International Telecommunication Union to set up

an organization to overhaul the continent's obsolete communications system that were designed to serve narrow colonial administrative and military interests. Direct telecommunication links have now been established among eight of the fifteen member-states of the Economic Community of West African States. Twenty-seven of INTELSAT's membership of 99 are African states. Progress is not as rapid as one would expect but considerable progress is being made, especially in Algeria, Nigeria, Sudan and Zaire. The need for an African satellite communications system has been suggested as INTELSAT, owned and controlled by private American transnationals, has a near-monopolistic hold on the international communications system as well domestic systems. Fearing such initiative, INTELSAT has reduced its price for the lease of one transponder from $3-million to $1-million as a disincentive.²

Africa's political problems would not be easy to overcome. However, two critical areas of concern should be of interest to the Africans. One is communications, and the other is political integration. They have to be able to communicate with one another quickly and with ease if they are to avoid some of the problems that they now face. Political integration may very well be an impossible task to accomplish but if the old colonial structures are dismantled and a redrawing of boundaries effected to take into account socio-cultural, economic and political realities, political integration would not be as impossible as it now appears to be.³ All of this should facilitate a more coherent voice for the


³Such integration can begin with the reunification of presently divided ethnic groups into self-governing provinces. Where factors like population size and availability of natural resources render such boundary designation economically impossible, a merger with one or several other groups can be undertaken. To allay possible fears of domination by one country or the other, the economic resources of the newly created provinces should be used almost exclusively for the development of these provinces for a specified period of time. Under such a scheme, present national boundaries will be rendered meaningless.
continent. Below, we discuss briefly the status of the African press during and after the colonial era.

Colonialists may not have seen themselves as such but when challenged, or even reading the records of their stewardships, one gets the impression that they were benevolent autocrats who considered their roles necessary in the process of bringing some light and brightness to a continent that was considered "dark". The history of the continent's press dates back to the beginning of the 19th Century. They had two purposes: one, the press owned and controlled by expatriates catered to a small group of resident expatriates. Two, the missionary press published in the vernacular was meant largely to facilitate the spread of the Gospel. It was not until during the 1870s that Africans became keenly interested in operating newspapers. Most of them, beginning in the 1850s, got involved in the newspaper business out of frustration as they were effectively barred from participating in government and commerce. They assumed the role of opposition to government. After the great World Wars, this opposition assumed a fierceness that was often embarrassing to local colonial administrations. In Kenya, for example, it culminated in the Mau Mau operations.

Although the colonial powers operated a libertarian press system at home and assumed the universality of basic liberties such as freedom of thought, speech and expression, they did not hesitate to impose a crushing authoritarian system on their colonies. The reason for this was, of course, to ensure "stability".
A Governor Hill of the West African colony of Sierra Leone in 1857, for example, had invoked an adaptation of mid-18th Century English law in placing severe restrictions on the Era, a newspaper published by a West Indian whom the Governor had described as "an adventurer from the West Indies without position or substance." Complaining to the Colonial Office about increasing opposition to his administration, he wrote to say that the aim of his opponents was to excite to discontent the native population...as it is hardly to be expected that a semi-civilized people easily led by the discontented few, can clearly understand why this government allows the publication of slanderous attacks on its policy and intentions towards them, without contradiction, the uneducated native supposing the government he has hitherto respected, and the power of which he has probably always overestimated would naturally contradict untruth and punish the utterer of such falsehood, can only attribute its silence to acknowledgements of the allegations published against it, and be induced to believe that he is oppressed and therefore justified to offer opposition to constituted authority, and by such means a docile and contented people be made factious and troublesome to their own injury and that of the colony generally.

The tragedy of British colonialism in Africa is that the British never really got to know the people they had colonized. This is particularly evident in areas where they took up permanent settlement such as in Rhodesia. Despite a devastating war, most White Rhodesians would be quick to point out that their Black countrymen, if they saw them as such, were a contented lot. So in colony after colony, the docile and contented natives waged a crusading journalistic war against colonialism, based mainly on

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[5] Ibid., p.15.
political communication. Needless to say, restrictions on their freedom to publish were severe. They ranged from government withdrawal of advertisements which at the time were a principal source of revenue to heavy fines or imprisonment or outright closure of the offending press; some Governors, like Lord Lugard of Nigeria, were conferred with emergency powers.

Many of the political leaders who emerged in Africa after independence were themselves veteran crusading journalists during the colonial era. Knowing the potential force of the press, especially a crusading one, they did not hesitate to impose the same restrictions they themselves had suffered under colonial rule. Although, traditionally, freedom of expression knew almost no legal bounds, colonialism introduced a new dimension to local politics: regulated freedom of expression. The successors of the colonial regimes did not bother to change it; it suited their purposes. The problem with the crusading journalism of the colonial period is the heightened nature of its political propaganda as opposed to objective journalism. Much of the argument for an authoritarian press in Africa is derived from that fact. The late Lord Thomson of Fleet Street speaking to an Assembly of the International Press Institute in 1965 said:

...From my own experience, I am convinced that in some of the new nations of the world, criticism of Governments may legitimately be subject to some degree of restriction. Some of the journalists in these developing countries do not have a sufficient background of knowledge, experience and judgement to enable them to restrain themselves from destructive or inflammatory criticism which, exposed to populations
which have not yet learned the art of political stability, could lead to serious unrest and even revolutionary activity.\(^6\)

The problem is not so much that journalists are not properly qualified (because it is editors, ideally, who decide what finally goes into print) but the high degree of intolerance for criticism by insecure government officials and political leaders.

In the post-colonial period, only a few of the newspapers are privately owned. The bulk are national governmental newspapers carrying government or political party news. The role of the press is seen as informational, educational, entertainment and mobilization of the public behind government policy. Press freedom is defined within that context. Any departure from that expectation is met with penalties ranging from fines to imprisonment and the closure of erring outlets.

The status of journalism in Africa at the present time is very low. Consequently, able people are not attracted to the "profession." The pay is unattractive and working conditions poor. The newspaper business itself is not a promising one for political and economic reasons. Invariably, those who enter the market do so, as was the case in the colonial era, in order to propagate particular political viewpoints. For this reason, the public is distrustful of the local media, and for reasons of lack of independence from government, the public tends to depend or rely more on external sources, such as the BBC, for news concerning events within the country.

Poor communications, a high illiteracy rate, general poverty and governmental sanctions make it almost impossible for the African press to experience a healthy growth. With the accelerated rate of education now in progress in several African countries, the newspaper business is bound to thrive in the near future. Training of journalists would have to be intensified. For now, government ownership of the press is inevitable as they are able to afford the resources to keep them in operation even at a loss. Radio and television are publicly owned and controlled. With some 1,000 languages throughout the continent, the best form of mass communication remains the radio. People living in rural areas, however, have difficulty receiving national broadcasting systems as we have noted in the previous chapter.

If Africa is to break the barrier that has and continues to exist in the international flow of information, a liberalization of ownership in the print media must be allowed. Only then will the initiative and dedication required to make the system work assume greater momentum. The negative governmental structures in Africa are not particularly conducive to greater productivity, as anything with a governmental label means that it is a business that is nobody's business. That is why most government newspapers are not doing particularly well, even with government patronage.

We have discussed freedom of the press elsewhere, but perhaps it should be stated again that an authoritarian press would hinder rather than promote stability. We offered "sapsism" as an answer.
4:2. Penetrating the Media Frontiers of the Free World

The economic reality for Africa at the present time is that it still remains the poorest region in the world. Its transportation and communication infrastructure, not to mention basic social amenities, are grossly inadequate. Given its massive development needs, therefore, it is doubtful if any one African country, or Africa as a whole for that matter, can undertake the task of overcoming its past within a short period of time. But it can begin by paying greater attention to its relations with Africans in the diaspora, particularly the Afro-Americans in the United States.

A Nigerian proverb: an orphan who finds himself in a wrestling contest in an arena where no one is on his side to encourage or cheer him on should ignore the crowd and listen carefully to the advice being hollered to his opponent by relatives and handlers at the ringside. Availing himself of such advice, he will be better placed to perform well. Africa is very much a neglected orphan in international politics. So, when Fred Charles Ikle, a US consultant on national security affairs, advised that

Furthermore, the US government must construct - or reconstruct - a wider range of instruments to exert influence abroad. With the military balance moving against us, we will have to compete more effectively, for example, in the information and propaganda battle, with more sophisticated communication throughout the world.  

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\(^7\)Fortune, November 20, 1978, p.84.
Africans ought to capitalize on that well-meaning advice in a fashion appropriate to their interests. More relevant is the remark of Dr Lionel Barrow of Howard University. Said he, "We need a vigilant, fighting press, sure in its blackness, concerned and knowledgeable about the facts and images needed by its community." Africa can help bring that about. How this can be done will be examined presently.

In the development aid business, it is a common practice for the Free World to "aid" development in the Shackled World by advancing to them loans which in turn are used, largely, in purchasing goods from the particular Free World country concerned. It is called tied aid. Africans need not engage in such practice. In any case, such aid, in the communications field, is unlikely to find any indigenous African communication hardware to which it could be "tied". But Afro-Americans who have been showing a keen interest in their ancestral roots since the 1960s - a fact largely ignored by the Establishment news media in their treatment of Africa, with of course a few exceptions - would be interested in communications software (content and programming) insofar as it is relevant to them. Before discussing specific tools

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8 The Daily Times (Lagos), July 1, 1978, p.20.
of cooperation between Africa and Afro-America in particular and the United States in general, let us examine how important or potentially relevant the Afro-American connection is.

Black America is growing in its economic power and political influence. Its population in 1978 was estimated at 25.3-million. And although this figure represents 11.6% of the total US population of 217.3-million, the Afro-American economy is the 8th largest in the Free World; it is ahead of Australia and Canada.

Afro-Americans own and operate over two hundred newspapers in the US. However, none of them has reached the heights attained by newspapers like the New York Times. There is no Afro-American owned and controlled international news agency, competing with AP and UPI. Should they operate one, they would have no difficulty finding a ready market in Africa and other areas of the Black World. Such a happening would induce greater competition and improvement in the seriousness of news coverage of African affairs by the older news agencies and major Western television networks and newspapers. Also, there is no television network with significant national and international undertakings owned and controlled by Afro-Americans. Given these facts, Africa or individual African countries like Nigeria could guarantee, or make available, loans to capable

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11 The Daily Times (Lagos), July 1, 1978, p.20.
Afro-American media entrepreneurs to expand their operations nationally and internationally. And to enable them to compete successfully against the pre-emptive position of the super news-agencies and TV networks, Africa should treat genuine Afro-American businesses wishing to operate in Africa as "infant" industries and accord them protection until they are able to compete on an equal footing with the well-established agencies. Until such cooperation comes into being, Africa can expect no change in the attitude of the present giant media establishments in the United States.

Africa's strength in exploiting the Afro-American market lies in the fact that Afro-Americans do not receive a fair press themselves. They are negatively portrayed by the dominant White-owned and controlled media. The images of Blacks on American television, for example, are ridiculous. They are portrayed as brutes, buffoons, clowns, dim-witted and shuffling nonentities. They are assigned no serious roles. And, by extension, one might add, Africans are perceived in the same light, if not worse. It was not until "Roots" that a positive image of Blacks emerged. "Roots" depicted Blacks as masters of their own fate with a strong sense of family, of pride and of dignity. The observations are well supported. On July 7, 1979, ABC-TV in its programme "Tony Brown's Journal" discussed the evolution of Black Americans in television - their portrayal, participation and how audiences perceive certain TV shows - such as the "Jeffersons" and characters like Jimmy Walker - in which Blacks are featured. The conclusions drawn were largely negative.

For distortions, inaccuracies or "downright fabrication" of news about Black-White relations, see the research work undertaken by Howard Ehrlick entitled "The Politics of News Media Control" published in The Insurgent Sociologist, Summer 1974, pp.31-43.

Bernard Rubin, op. cit., pp.34-39, also examines the general tendency to negatively portray Blacks.

first part of "Roots" is said to be the highest-rated show in television history, attracting in its wake lots of advertising revenue. But for some unknown reason, reported the ABC programme under reference, the networks are not ready to go beyond "Roots". Until Blacks exercise some decision-making powers in the boardrooms of these giant media establishments or have the resources to compete favourably with them, the situation of Blacks in the US is unlikely to change. To illustrate the point, a documentary film about racism, "Blacks Britannica", produced in England and scheduled for its first public broadcast on July 13, 1978, was cancelled by a Boston TV station. The station did not stop there. After its producers complained against the censorship, the station sought and obtained an interlocutory injunction in a London (England) court prohibiting its further showing. The film had been well-received by audiences in London, especially Black audiences.

The film, its producers explain, did not pretend to view racism as a mere social or psychological aberration but


\[14\] The name of the particular TV station concerned was not given by New African in its article, "Brutal Censorship", June 1979, p.73. However, David Koff's remarks (next page) indicate that it is likely to be a public TV station. David Koff is the principal producer of "Blacks Britannica".
attempted a prescriptive-oriented analysis of the subject in a bid to offer a better "understanding of what it is that sustains racism." That understanding is the postulation that racism has been ideologically interwoven with capitalism for the past 400 years and has served as a divide-and-rule tactic to make easier the exploitation of people "not just Blacks but Whites, in this case, Britain." Stated David Koff, the film's principal producer and director:

But that is one thing which TV...is not set up to do: to show the unity of oppressed peoples. TV exists, really, to divide people, to separate them, to show how one group of people somewhere in the world is so much different from another group. Blacks Britannica flies in the face of that latent, and sometimes very blatant practice, of TV...it identifies the state, and its agencies, as essential to the practice of racism indeed as actually using racism to benefit the capitalist class, the film flew in the face of the purposes of TV in the US, as in Britain, which is to re-enforce as much as possible the ideology of the ruling class, the ideology of the state. Public TV in the US was not prepared to broadcast Blacks Britannica because of its politics, because of its analysis of capitalism, because of its analysis of racism, because of its internationalism. What makes the film controversial, is the historical racism of the media, in Britain (and) the US...16

David Koff has been quoted at some length to give the reader an idea of the politics surrounding "Blacks Britannica". It is interesting to note that the Boston TV station not only censored the film but sought and obtained the prevention of its further showing. No doubt, such Fleet Street Rhodesians would be the first to point to the First Amendment should their

16 Ibid.
freedom be threatened; one excellent example of newsocrats who preach a universal anti-censorship position with regard to views with which they are in agreement but do not hesitate to impose severe censorship on views with which they disagree.

All of this points to two things. One, it would not be difficult trying to convince Afro-Americans about the distorted image that the American and other Western media portray of Africa. An immediately relevant example will clarify the point. CBS News is the first American TV network to set up a permanent bureau in Africa. It was established in January 1977 and is based in Nairobi. Its chief is a 28-year old Afro-American, Randy Daniels. When Daniels was being considered for the job, although his professional competence was unquestionable, "there were determined efforts...to convince senior management that a Black American would be ineffective in Africa and incapable of giving African news an objective and balanced treatment." Daniels had an answer: "We assign Jews to cover Israel and White correspondents to cover Europe without ever challenging the integrity or objectivity before the fact. Why not Blacks to Africa, I argued." Daniels is the only Afro-American to head an American news bureau.

Two, a strengthening of the Afro-American media may act as a catalyst in changing Western media attitudes toward Africa.

18 Ibid., p.96.
Afro-Americans are already active on the political front. The Reverend Jesse Jackson's organization, People United to Save Humanity, the NAACP, TransAfrica and the Congressional Black Caucus are some of the important pro-African groups in the United States.  

While the strategy advocated here may appear attractive, the cultural barrier between Afro-Americans and Africans is likely to obstruct an effective execution of such a scheme. But if the West Africans could overcome their diverse social and cultural barriers in organizing the Economic Community of West African States, then, with a little effort on both sides, things should come to a happy fruition.

The dilemma of Afro-Americans, to generalize, is that they expect to be welcomed with open arms upon arrival in Africa. They are sometimes guilty of violating African cultural and political sensibilities, often quite innocently. It is perhaps with this in mind that the Nigerian Head of State, Olusegun Obasanjo, addressing the American Press said: "understanding (of African efforts at development) cannot come from unsympathetic reports of a majority of Western journalists, nor entirely from the reports even of sympathetic Black American journalists who unfortunately are seldom able to stay with us long enough to acquire a broad enough vision into our historic adventure."  

19 William R. Cotter, op. cit., p.11.
Africans need to exercise greater tolerance in dealing with Afro-Americans. Their historical experience warrants such a stance. *Africa* magazine, explaining the plight of Afro-Americans, states that "Black entrepreneurs...have been rebuffed by their own mistakes and certain attitudes by negative propaganda about Black business in the US," and charging that they "arrive (in Africa) without much preparation, adequate capital or power-based relationships, expecting miracles merely because they are black." It identifies four major problems responsible for the Afro-American situation: 1) lack of information on investment opportunities; (2) lack of specific programmes by the government to assist Black businessmen to export; (3) non-involvement of Black financial institutions in the export business; and (4) non-coordination of efforts by Black entrepreneurs. These problems are not insurmountable. Africa must bear them in mind, however, in engineering a greater solidarity with Afro-Americans for their mutual benefit.

If properly planned and organized, Afro-Americans could be active partners in Africa's economic development. The destiny of the Black World rests squarely with such partnership. The lessons of the Marshall Plan must not be forgotten.

In 1970, some 30,640 Afro-American professionals and technical workers were unemployed. In 1973, at least 174 non-White technical consulting firms existed in the US. There were

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73 architectural, building and construction engineering firms, as well as 79 economic development firms. These people and firms are needed in Africa. But the central problem lies in communication, and that is where Africa should attempt to begin its historic transatlantic reunification scheme with Afro-Americans.

Another strategy for Africa is the direct beaming of broadcasts to the Free World. This can be achieved by investing in the installation of highly-powered short-wave transmission stations in Africa or in North America or Europe. Like the Voice of America or the BBC, local broadcasters may be used but key decision-making positions must rest with Africans. Installing a station in the United States will be in accordance with United Nations provisions dealing with the right to communicate regardless of frontiers. However, the US is likely to object to any development in that direction since the Federal Communications Act of 1934 forbids any foreign ownership in American broadcasting, and, by implication, any foreign broadcast installations within US borders. Stated Richard Bunce:

The U.S. government and its broadcasters, to be sure, have long understood the advantage of securing invisible access abroad for business and military propaganda purposes - along with the other advantages which accompany American penetration of foreign broadcasting institutions. That is why the Communications Act of 1934 expressly prohibited any foreign ownership interests in American broadcasting operations.

23 Richard Bunce, op. cit., pp.85-86.
This puts to rest the farcical doctrine of a free flow of information under which the US has been operating her broadcasting stations outside of the US. American communications policy would afford the Africans an opportunity, under the aegis of the Organization of African Unity, to seek American cooperation or request her to dismantle her radio installations on the African continent. Recalling our Nigerian proverb about the wrestler orphan, Africans would do well to ponder the advice rendered in 1964 by the US House Foreign Affairs Committee (see p.56).

Finally, Africa must engage in selective cooperation with the major media outlets of the Free World and Socialist countries of the East. This may take the form of cooperation agreements with the super news-agencies and mass circulating newspapers. Nigeria recently concluded such an agreement with the German DPA, French AFP, American AP and the Soviet TASS. The agreement allows for the circulation in Nigeria of these agencies' English language service. The agencies, in turn, will disseminate Nigerian news derived from the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) to their respective subscribers at home. Other African countries are likely to enter into similar agreements with the giant news agencies. In the event of a Pan-African news agency coming into existence, it may assume direct responsibility for servicing the various national news agencies and dealing with foreign news agencies and other media.

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In regard to newspapers, the Manchester Guardian Weekly arrangements appear attractive. Under this scheme, The Guardian carries four pages of the French Le Monde and 2-4 pages of the American Washington Post weekly. The arrangement renders a refreshing perspective on international affairs as English, French and American views are compared and contrasted. In a world in which the communication flow is unidirectional, in a North to South direction, such a scheme would ensure that African views on particular global matters of the day are aired and compared or contrasted with those of other countries. Since there is no Pan-African newspaper in circulation, reputable national dailies should seek such cooperation. As Dennis Stairs noted, "An American official who succeeds in planting a story in the New York Times can be reasonably certain that it will be read by its foreign target." It is highly unlikely that the Western media, as a matter of routine, would copy anything emanating from the African news media. The choices for Africa are quite clear, or so they seem to this writer. These choices, in summation, are: (1) a greater and serious emphasis in international communication; (2) an aggressive involvement in the international marketplace of ideas; (3) the seeking of cooperative agreements with interested media outside of Africa; and (4) a positive exploitation of Africans in the diaspora.

25 Dennis Stairs, op. cit., p.235.
4:3. Establishment of an African News Agency

Long before African countries realized their political independence, they were well aware of the fact that international economic decisions, often affecting them directly, were not made in Abidjan, Addis Ababa, Lagos or Nairobi but in places like Bonn, London, New York and Paris. At such deliberations, in these economic nerve centres of the world, African interests, until only very recently, have been peripheral. Each centre had its sphere of influence and great pains were taken not to violate the tacit territorial preserves of member-centres. Attempts to break away from this colonial pattern of "Metropolis-Hinterland" relationship were often seen by the Western media as an anti-West and pro-Marxist or Communist move. Western mediamen forgot conveniently that the West once allied itself with the Communists to fight the expansionist ambitions of Nazi Germany whose basic ideology was based on an extreme racial superiority complex. Africans, therefore, perceived the need to establish a medium that will monitor events elsewhere while telling its own story. Hence the need for a continental news agency.

The idea of an African news agency is not new. It has been bandied about since the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. At the first session of the Organization's Educational and Cultural Commission held in
Kinshasa, Zaire, in January 1964, it was decided that an "Inter-African News Agency" (IANA) with responsibility for the collection and dissemination of "fruitful, objective and impartial news about Africa to the African and World press, radio and TV" should be created.26 The various national news agencies had formed the Union of African News Agencies (UANA) the previous year, so that a market for IANA was readily available. Ten years later, the Union of African Journalists at its Constituent Congress held in Zaire, reiterating the OAU resolution of 1964, recommended the establishment of an African Press Agency (APA).27 Between those years, and ever since, individuals, newspapers and other media organizations in Africa including the OAU itself have been calling for an IANA or an APA or its latest acronym, PAFNA (Pan-African News Agency). Meanwhile, several national news agencies were created. Despite all of these efforts, the idea of an African international communication agency is yet to be realized. However, serious plans are underway to bring it into being.

But, first, how feasible is the creation of such an agency, constitutionally-speaking? We attempt an answer below and examine other concerns associated with the scheme.


No problem exists in the constitutional domain. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government is the supreme organ of the OAU. This body is vested with the "power to establish such specialized commissions as it may deem necessary" as per Article XX of the OAU Charter. The following Commissions are specified: 1) Economic and Social Commission; (2) Educational and Cultural Commission; (3) Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Commission; (4) Defence Commission; and (5) Science, Technical and Research Commission. An African news agency could be established under this Article, to fall within the administrative orbit of the Educational and Cultural Commission. Individual countries may raise doubts as to the impartiality of journalists working for such a continental agency. But the OAU Charter addresses itself to this problem as well. It states that member states are obligated "to refrain from exercising any influence or pressure upon any member of the staff of the General Secretariat." While it would be constitutionally improper for any government to seek to influence the Organization's media personnel, it would be professionally unethical for such personnel to allow themselves to be so influenced by a member state or any body for that matter. Administrative channels such as a press council, to regulate the ethical conduct of journalists and hear complaints from injured individuals or member states, and/or a press tribunal

28 Zdenek Cervenka, op. cit., p.68.
29 Ibid., p.43.
that has the additional power of sending erring journalists to jail if necessary, would allay any fears of partiality or potential subversion. Article XVIII demands the "absolute neutrality" of the Secretary-General and his staff, spelling out the obligations of both member states and the Secretariat staff as follows: 30

1. In the performance of their duties, the Administrative Secretary-General and the staff shall not seek or receive instructions from any government or from any other authority external to the Organization. They shall refrain from any action which might reflect on their position as international officials responsible only to the Organization; and

2. Each member of the Organization undertakes to respect the exclusive character of the responsibilities of the Administrative Secretary-General and the staff and not to seek to influence them in the discharge of their responsibilities.

This brings us to the logistics of setting up the agency. Many questions come readily to mind. If founded, what will be the role and functions of such an agency? Will the independence of reporters, columnists and editors - assuming also that a Pan-African newspaper will be established alongside the agency (to be discussed later) - be guaranteed? How much would the scheme cost? Will the agency operate as a political medium or a commercial enterprise? What will its relation be with regard to the various national news agencies?

30 Ibid., p. 44.
The Role and Functions of PAFNA

When the concept of PAFNA was first aired officially in 1964, it was envisaged as a catalyst for the political unity of the continent. Two years later, and for some five years thereafter, Africa's stormy wind of change blew most of the African leaders originally associated with the idea out of office - some, unfortunately, into a permanent state of oblivion. So, for a considerable period of time, PAFNA lost its "engineering" momentum. It was revived again early this year at a meeting of African Information Ministers in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia at which a convention was adopted by representatives of 39 countries to establish PAFNA.31 (A two-thirds majority is required for any OAU resolution to pass. The 39 countries represent about 80 percent of OAU's membership). The convention was endorsed in July 1979 at the OAU summit in Monrovia, Liberia.

In January 1964, the UANA was commissioned to render a report on the feasibility of creating PAFNA. UANA's report was approved a year later, with a note that PAFNA would report on "events, activities and developments in Africa which have not always been objectively and adequately presented to the outside world."32 At the end of 1965, a report entitled "Report on the Technical, Financial and Personnel Requirements for Establishing the Pan-African News Agency" was issued by the OAU. It identified the following responsibilities for PAFNA:

31 West Africa, April 23, 1979, p. 733.

1) it would operate as an international commercial news agency, guided by the Charter of the OAU; (2) its headquarters is to be in Africa and its principal source of news would be the national news agencies of each OAU member-state; (3) to facilitate news collection, there would be five regional newspool centres in North, South, East, West and Central Africa; (4) it would establish relations with foreign news agencies for exchange or purchase of their news; (5) it would have representatives in African countries, on request, as well as in key world centres; (6) it would transmit information in English and French, by radio and teletype.  

Three major problems arise from the above designation of PAFNA's potential role. First, to be guided by the OAU charter in its operations would mean that PAFNA will be faced with the problem of "non-interference" in the internal affairs of member-states. Tanzania's recent active support in the overthrow of Idi Amin is a good example of how legalistic stipulations can frustrate otherwise well-meaning and popularly-accepted actions. Although Tanzania's intervention in Uganda was generally well received, she has been accused by some states including Nigeria - at the recent OAU summit in Liberia - of interfering in the domestic affairs of a member-state. Will PAFNA be "guilty" of "interference" in its coverage of issues and events in a member-state which that state would rather not have covered for one reason or the other? There is a need

33 Ibid.
to clearly define and modify sections of the OAU charter that would tend to undermine the freedom and independence of PAFNA.

The second problem probably arises from a bid to avoid the question of "non-interference". The idea that PAFNA should depend mainly on national news agencies of member-states will no doubt avoid the problem of possible "interference" by PAFNA in the domestic affairs of a member-state but, then, it will at the same time interfere with the independence and impartiality of the agency. In the circumstances, PAFNA will merely serve as a clearing house for the national news agencies.

Regional newspools or distribution centres have already been identified: Nigeria will harbour the West African sub-regional headquarters; Libya, the North African; and Sudan, the East African. Ethiopia, Kenya or Senegal will likely host the main headquarters. Zaire and Zambia will respectively be the regional headquarters for Central and Southern Africa.

If PAFNA is going to rely solely or largely on national news agencies and act simply as a clearing house, then the scheme, when delivered, is likely to be a still birth. Many of the national news agencies are mere extensions of their respective information ministries. They are owned by the government and suffer various forms of censorship. It is doubtful if a Ugandan News Agency under Idi Amin, the present Agence Zaire-Presse (AZAP) or the Malawi News Agency (MANA), to name just a few, can be

34 West Africa, April 30, 1979, p.773.

taken seriously. Circulating dutifully news emanating from these dubious sources is to put its potential credibility on the line and render itself ineffective if not irrelevant at the very start of business. The time and effort involved in running such a "useless" outfit is another disturbing matter that should concern its sponsors.

Thirdly, it is envisaged that PAFNA would have representatives, on request, in member-states. Implicit in this stipulation is the wish of states to regulate the behaviour of PAFNA by negative but subtle sanctions. If PAFNA's presence in a particular state is requested by that state, PAFNA could also be requested to leave should its performance become embarrassing for the host state.

After an uneasy and protracted conception, PAFNA will officially be delivered in 1980. With a modern telecommunications network now in existence operated by PANAFTEL, its work should be greatly facilitated. It is disturbing, however, that PAFNA will not have correspondents of its own but will depend on national news agencies for its news collection and dissemination. 36

As we have already noted, a constitutional framework now exists within which a viable and dynamic PAFNA could operate. For it to compete favourably with the super news-agencies, it must be free and independent, and have its own correspondents. The national news agencies should concentrate largely on local

36 This has been confirmed by West Africa, May 14, 1978, p.828.
news and depend on PAFNA for continental and foreign news. Such a division of labour will ensure that adequate and proper attention is paid to local and foreign affairs. The freedom of PAFNA to independently collect local news should enhance a refreshing diversity of news interpretation. PAFNA may elect not to get involved in news collection in a given state because that state's national news agency is doing a creditable job; PAFNA should, however, have the independence and freedom to make such decisions on its own.

PAFNA's declared objective of disseminating news "on the social, economic, cultural and political situation in Africa, on regional cooperation and on African political unity" is a noble assignment indeed but as Elihu Katz points out, "only if the agenda for what is news is set indigenously, only if it can be made to have relevance, only if it aims to inform genuinely rather than merely to entertain, only then does the issue matter. Otherwise, it makes little difference who shot the 60 seconds of film or where it came from." PAFNA's news value orientation must, therefore, be tailored to fit African circumstances if the institution is to render any meaningful service. Such news value orientation must embrace "journdev". Besides, regional cooperation and political unity are not going to be promoted and sustained if PAFNA is virtually rendered impotent by placing the kind of restrictions identified above upon the agency's "front-line" personnel.

Financing PAFNA

The delay in getting PAFNA off the ground has been blamed on a lack of clear operational strategy, its political conception and the "staggering" cost involved. Although no figure was given, some "guestimate" can be made. About two years ago, Nigeria established a national news agency (NAN) at an initial cost of about Cdn$5.2-million.39 At least that much will be needed to get PAFNA started. However, as PAFNA's operations will no doubt be more extensive than individual national news agencies, costs are likely to be much higher.

We noted in Section 2:1 that Agence France-Presse received an annual government subsidy of about $12-million in the 1950s; it is still substantially subsidized by the government. Today, it costs AP and UPI $3.4-million and $3.8-million per annum respectively to maintain their private telecommunication lines alone.40 When personnel and administrative costs are added, it is possible that PAFNA will need at least some $15-million annually to function effectively. The OAU has set aside an initial budget of $1.75-million for PAFNA's first year of operations. Member-states of the OAU will be responsible, via contributions, for the financing of PAFNA. The agency has also been mandated to accept grants from international bodies. UNESCO has already offered a $500,000 contribution toward founding the agency.41 The small initial budget for PAFNA is indicative of

41 Africa Research Bulletin, op. cit., p.5219B.
the limited role that it is likely to play: a dependence on national news agencies and, therefore, a mere clearing house operation with no independent sources of news collection.

It has been suggested that PAFNA's political conception and the "impression that foreign news agencies would be eliminated undermined goodwill for the project and probably generated opposition to it." To combat this, the writer recommends that PAFNA's financing, management and control be open to international participation. Perhaps, in making this suggestion, New African, run by Africans in London (England), was indirectly indicating its interest in the scheme. Most certainly, Africans in the diaspora should be given a chance to invest (as opposed to acting as fronts for other investors who may have different interests) in such an important continental institution. But if international participation means extra-continental multinational ownership and control, then the gesture would have to be reciprocated. Africans, for example, should be allowed to buy into the super news-agencies, thereby affording them a say in the decision-making processes of these organizations. International participation in that sense is a non-issue as it is very unlikely to materialize.

As for political conceptions, the fear expressed is unfounded. National and transnational newspapers with origins in the Free World commit themselves, consciously or otherwise, to the propagation, promotion and protection of certain fundamental

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socio-political philosophies. They have the admirable independence and freedom to do so, and claim objectivity as their cardinal trademark. There is no reason to view PAFNA any differently.

On the management front, if and when necessary, cooperation could be sought with interested parties. The World Press Freedom Committee of the Unites States, for example, has a $1-million fund raised specifically for the purpose of aiding the modernization of the media in the Shackled World. Its aid comes in the form of conducting seminars, lectures and installing communication equipment. The Freedom Committee, of course, has a vested interest in espousing a particular news value orientation as a central product of their "aid". UNESCO and other development agencies offer technical assistance in this direction as well.

Although to be financed by a pan-African political organization, PAFNA would do a creditable job if its administration and operations remain clearly independent. To ensure greater professionalism, PAFNA should have an orientation or training centre for its staff and operate, as we have already suggested, a press council or tribunal. PAFNA correspondents should be free to cover member-states without unnecessary government interference. With time, operating commercially, PAFNA could become fully or nearly self-sufficient. In the short run

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however, African governments must ensure that it stands a fair chance of competing with the foreign agencies by giving it their fullest and unflinching support.

**International Competition**

The super news-agencies may suspect that the emergence of powerful news agencies in the Shackled World would result in their being shut out completely from operating in those regions of the world. Such a development would not help the Shackled World. A variety of competing views is necessary if we are better to understand our world. However, considering the pre-emptive position of the super news-agencies, it would be necessary to give PAFNA selective preferential treatment over its older, well-established counterparts for a given period of time. Otherwise it would be like pitting a baby who is only just beginning to crawl against the best athletes in a professional track meet. That is not what "free enterprise" is all about. The idea is not foreign to the Free World. Infant establishments, like the textile industry in Quebec, received such understandable protection at one time in their development. Such industries now enjoy protection from unfair competition by their counterparts in low-wage countries. Economic theories, of course, change as economic conditions change. Developing countries need to protect their commercial establishments from unfair competition by establishments in industrially-advanced countries which enjoy greater economies of scale - in other words, the developing countries must guard against the phenomenon of "dumping".
If national governments operate a socially accountable press system, it would greatly facilitate the work of PAFNA. Under social accountability, the fear of the press subverting the state would be averted as the press would have a democratic base - which makes it both representative of and responsible to clearly identifiable constituencies, both private and public, and a constitutional authority, The Fourth Estate. As we have argued in Chapter III, "Sapsism" provides the best framework within which "journdev" can be fruitfully undertaken. Presumably, a key element in PAFNA's operations would be a "journdev" philosophy.

With, perhaps, the exception of Al Ahram of Egypt, no one newspaper in Africa is big enough to utilize a large portion of the massive information that PAFNA is likely to churn out daily on a routine basis. It would be wise, therefore, as a commercial proposition, for PAFNA to start a continental-wide weekly newspaper. Let us call it "Pan-African Weekly" (PAW). Unlike national newspapers that legitimately devote a much greater space and attention to local news, PAW will be a truly international newspaper, complementing the locals, and rendering news about Africa and the outside world. Again, an independent and free PAW should be able to compete favourably with such reputable newspapers as The Manchester Guardian Weekly.

A paper that carries largely African domestic news is unlikely to attract a wide following in the Western world.
The reason for this is simple. Except for special audiences, which are small indeed, people cannot readily identify with such news which is far removed from their immediate circumstances and experience. As an American media consultant lamented, "...it is difficult to wean the American audience and those executives who decide what goes on TV, from the steady diet of Tarzan, wars, Idi Amin they have been fed on." The writer further quotes the remarks of a correspondent "of a major American newspaper" who "disclosed that routinely only 10% of the stories he files from Africa ever get into print." To correct or overcome this reality, special editions should be issued for key regions of the World, e.g. North America, Western Europe and The Caribbean. These special editions would carry substantial local news to make them attractive. Maintaining foreign correspondents abroad is a very expensive undertaking. But with Africans in the diaspora, cooperative partnerships could be effected by opening bureaux abroad in the major centres of the Free World and hiring local journalists to cover their respective beats. Selected African media specialists should be placed in charge of overall corporate decision-making as is the case with American news agency bureaux in Latin America.

46 Ibid.
47 As Juan Somavia points out, "...All the members of the boards of directors of UPI and AP are United States nationals, as well as most of the bureau chiefs, at least throughout..."
This would ensure that its basic news value is not distorted. Only by aggressively entering the competitive media world can Africa hope to redress the news "injustices" of the past. Simply creating a white elephantine propaganda machinery will not help. Such things usually do not work. Besides, the world has had enough of such ventures. The South African "Muldergate" adventure should serve as a good lesson. Goodwill, understanding and cooperation come only from openness and objectivity in our worldview. If the Voice of America is regarded in Greek media circles as the "Void of America,"\(^{48}\) it is only because, in part, it lacks objectivity.

The free flow of information doctrine need not be a curse unless the Shackled World chooses to make it so.

To conclude: historically, Africa has received and continues to receive a bad press by the dominant Western-controlled international media. The fact that Africa remains virtually voiceless in the corridors of international communication makes it possible for the Western media to give Africa away, so to speak, Latin America" (Cees Hamelink, op. cit., p.146).

However, AP claims that 83% of its staff abroad are non-Americans while UPI states that its Latin-American desk in New York is staffed entirely by Latin-Americans ("Some of the News That's Fit to Print," McLean's, July 16, 1979, p.40). In the absence of any further information, these claims are misleading. The fact that 84% of South Africans and 96% of Rhodesians are Black is not an indication that they run those countries or, indeed, have any say in how they are run.

\(^{48}\)Helen Vlachos, Greek publisher of the Kathimerini in an interview on CITY-TV programme "The Editors", April 7, 1979.
as the pawn in the international chess board of power calculations without any serious challenge. To correct this abnormal and needlessly offensive situation, it is suggested that Africa must operate, as a matter of urgency, a continental news agency which will be capable of competing favourably with the super news-agencies in news collection and dissemination. Furthermore, Africa must seek to penetrate the media frontiers of the Free World.

A Pan-African News Agency (PAFNA) is being established by the Organization of African Unity and will begin operations in 1980. Its role, however, is limited as it will not have independent correspondents of its own but will have to depend on national news agencies for its news collection. If PAFNA is to have any meaningful impact on international communication, it must be free to operate independently and as a commercial enterprise. To this end, the agency will need substantially more financial support than has hitherto been allotted it. It will also be necessary to redefine the OAU charter with regard to "non-interference" in the internal affairs of member-states if PAFNA's freedom is not to be undermined.

An African news agency like PAFNA is one way of ensuring that the imbalance in the present international flow of information is minimized. Furthermore, as far as international news reporting is concerned, it will afford readers an opportunity to get the African perspective on world affairs, as well as African affairs proper.
We are today witnessing a critical period in the history of man. Social upheavals and tight economic pressures make politicians a very defensive lot, a defensiveness that is centred around parochial, and narrowly if not ill-defined national self-interests. This state of affairs is either motivated by a messianic concept of destiny or by the brutal lessons of history. The nervousness of an Angola that was bloodied in the most gruesome manner imaginable for some five hundred years can be readily understood. We can also understand the disappointment of a people who, once upon a time, ruled the seas and most of the lands on earth but now find themselves having to make an honest living, so to speak. Politicians can play on these emotions in their lust for power and influence. The ultimate destiny of man can hardly be left exclusively in the hands of such people. This thesis has, therefore, advanced or reiterated the notion that man's potential hope for peace lies with the media because of their enormous power and ability to influence and shape our opinions. In a free and democratic society, these opinions cannot be underestimated; they can be formidable. Properly exploited, they could help to overcome the parochial nature of the policies of governments and society's elites.

But, unfortunately, the media have not quite adjusted to the realities of a changing global political system. The problem has to do with ideological and cultural values which severely inhibit the ability of pressmen to view the world around them in
a dispassionate fashion. This would lead us to conclude that an increasing lack of cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity on the part of journalists may have serious implications for international relations. To recall and quote Ruth Benedict again, "There has never been a time when civilization stood more in need of individuals who are genuinely culture-conscious, who can see objectively the socially conditioned behaviour of other peoples without fear and recrimination." To bring this about, schools of journalism in particular would have to re-examine and re-define the philosophy or purpose of journalism in a changing world.

Press freedom and the freedom of information are at the heart of the debate for a New International Information Order. Countries of the Shackled World are suspicious of the intentions of the Free World. The Free World, for its part, has not properly addressed itself to that concern. Instead, it has insisted on universalizing its news value system. But, as we have argued, that value system cannot be taken seriously if an internationally granted freedom is not used in the interests of the international community. And as we have also noted, it is impossible for the Establishment press of the Free World to move in that direction - a direction we described as the philosophy of "journdev" (the journalism of development in its various ramifications) - because, essentially, they are neither truly free nor independent. Nationally, contrary to their professed watchdog role in the interest of the public, they are responsible first and foremost to very narrow economic interests which may not be
compatible with the larger interests of the society as a whole.

Press freedom in the Shackled World is unlikely to be realized if the countries of that world continue to adopt or strive to achieve and operationalize Western concepts of the notion. A social accountability theory of the press has been advanced as the most egalitarian and democratic press system that countries of both the Free and Shackled Worlds should strive to have. Under this system, the press will have to be elected and accorded constitutional recognition as legitimate active participants in the process of protecting the public interest. It would make for more open government and prevent national and international disasters - such as Watergate and the Vietnam War - or at least subject the issues involved to a serious and informed public debate before any commitment is made for better or for worse.

The system, which is labelled as "sapsism", is also most conducive to the practice of "journdev". The crusading journalism of the colonial era which most of the developing countries still practise would have to give way to "journdev" as the latter is likely to lead to more responsible journalism at this stage of their political and socio-economic development.

In responding to the politics of the Shackled World, the Free World media seem to ignore, rather conveniently, certain facts of history. It is imperative that we understand the historical relationship between the rich and poor countries; "It was the expropriation of wealth from most of those areas of the world which today make up the so-called Third World which permitted
industrialization and the concentration of capital elsewhere." To make sure that foreign correspondents are sensitive to the sensibilities of the have-not countries, it is suggested that they be admitted into these countries on the basis of a foreign correspondence admission test (FCAT).

Some of the developing countries, especially those of Africa, are several decades behind the advanced countries in social and economic development. Before rushing to condemn their every "negative" move at development, it is necessary to recall Western history and development in order to put matters in their proper perspective.

The First Amendment of the US constitution was not effected until after the US had, comparatively speaking, settled as a strong and unified state, making possible a greater tolerance of liberal views which eventually gave concrete expression to the press freedom that they now have. The same press had earlier "tenaciously defended (slavery) as a morally social institution and helped to justify its existence by misquoting and misinterpreting some portions of the bible." It was, however, instrumental in the fight to abolish slavery. In other words, the media acting as reliable agents for social change reflects, in Uche's words, the "intelligence, values and mood of the (American) people" at any given period in her history. The Freedom of Information Act of 1967 did not come into effect two or three decades after

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49 West Africa, January 15, 1979, p.80.

independence but close to 200 years thereafter. It would be ridiculous to ignore these facts in pointing to the lack of freedom of information in the Shackled World.

In France, an ordinance of August 26, 1944 indigenized the French newspaper industry; it required complete ownership by French citizens. It was essential, at the time of the Liberation, to bar newspapers "from becoming mouthpieces for foreign pressure groups, as many had been under the Third Republic."[51] The developing countries face even more pressing problems today; it should not come as a surprise when they institute similar measures to protect their interests.

And until about a hundred years ago, man's inhumanity to man was expressed in legislation such as the Masters and Servants Act (in the United States and Canada). This Act made it a criminal offence under the conspiracy sections of the criminal code for an employee to move from one job to another. Employees who violated this Act were tried and jailed.[52] This is not the development route that developing countries wish to take. Neither should they nor is it desirable to enslave other races or their own people to work their mines and plantations. In their struggles they only hope that history does not repeat itself. The Free World media are yet to understand that position.

Rather than wishing and hoping that the Free World media

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51 William J. Small, op. cit., p.92.

would understand their cause, it is suggested that for Africa to bring about a change in the present emphasis on negative news reporting by the Western media, it must strive to strike a reasonable equality of opportunity in the free (international) marketplace of ideas by effecting a counter-penetration of the media frontiers of the developed world. To do this, it must have a distinct voice in the form of an independent continental news agency and seek meaningful cooperation with interested parties in the Free World. As Martin Dent of Keele University wrote recently,

The most important events in history are often those to which the world pays least attention.

Referring to current events in Africa's most populous and powerful country, he continued:

The careful and calculated steps by which Nigeria is returning to civilian rule under democratic government have attracted none of the attention in the world's media given to riots, monstrosities and disorders; yet historians a hundred years from now will possibly see the majestic progress of the largest nation in Africa through a manifestly fair series of elections to constitutional government as a new birth of freedom for all of Africa.  

Africa, like the rest of the Shackled World, cannot afford to wait a hundred years to have its story told, and possibly distorted by people who had ignored it all along. It must tell its story now. As we move into the 1980s, the stage for the fight against electronic cocacolonization has been set. How it is resolved will depend on the common sense of both parties.

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to the dispute. Fruitful cooperation among nations can only come out of a climate of mutual respect and a genuine understanding of the unavoidable interdependence that is the reality of the present global political system. The days of gunboat diplomacy are gone. It is hoped that sanity will prevail, and that the world media will play its important role in uniting the human race.
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