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'The Right to Inform and Be Informed' Another Development and the Media

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The production of this issue of *Development Dialogue* has been delayed, which is marked by the fact that its actual publication—in February 1991—has been preceded by the publication of the 1990:1-2 issue in the autumn of 1990. It should therefore be emphasized that part of the material printed in this issue is very fresh and updated as late as in December 1990. This is a short 'bibliographical history' of the contributions to this issue.

Annelies Allain's account of 'IBFAN: On the Cutting Edge' was originally written in December 1989 but thoroughly revised and updated in December 1990.

Some of the articles arising from the Chobe Seminar on 'Democracy and the Media in Southern Africa' held in December 1989—i.e. the contributions by Jo-Anne Collinge, Elsabé Wessels, Gabu Tugwana and Ndimara Tegambwage—were only slightly revised by the authors after the Seminar and delivered for typesetting in the early months of 1990. Patrick van Rensburg's and David Lush's seminar contributions were, on the other hand, revised as late as in November 1990.

Joseph Ki-Zerbo's appreciation of Ahmadou Dicko and his 'Diary of a Defeat' was not finalized until the latter part of 1990.

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Another Development and the Media

The 1975 Dag Hammarskjöld Report, *What Now: Another Development*, which formulated the basic principles guiding the work of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, emphasized strongly the role of information and communication in every aspect of development, local, national, regional and global. No real effort to tackle the overwhelming problems of the modern world could succeed if it neglected the rights of citizens 'to inform and be informed about the facts of development, its inherent conflicts and the changes it will bring about'. Conscientization of the citizens 'to ensure their full participation in the decision-making processes' was, the Report argued, a prerequisite for the achievement of 'a need-oriented, self-reliant, endogenous and ecologically sound' global society, which in turn had to be based on deep-going 'structural transformations'. Hence, it was a natural consequence that the first major seminar sponsored by the Foundation (in Mexico 1976) after the release of the Hammarskjöld Report concerned the need for a new international information and communications order expressing the demands of the people for the democratization of communications as a truly worldwide social phenomenon. No longer should governmental and commercial power structures be in a position to monopolize public opinion to its own ends thereby perpetuating preconceived ideas, ignorance and alienation.

Working in close cooperation with its sister organizations in the Third World—in the areas of rural development and food production, education, health, science and technology, international monetary policy and popular participation—the Foundation has consistently perceived itself as part of what is now increasingly becoming recognized as 'the third system', i.e. the people and their organizations, in contrast to the 'first' and 'second' systems, i.e. governments and business. The latter two have over the past decade demonstrated both super potency and impotence. In this ongoing and intensified struggle between 'princes, merchants and citizens', described by Marc Nerfin in an earlier issue of this journal (*Development Dialogue 1987:1*), health issues have played a significant role highlighting what democratic grass roots initiatives can do to promote the ideas of Another Development and having them legally recognized.

An important breakthrough in international health work was the joint WHO/UNICEF Meeting on Infant and Young Child Feeding, which took place in Geneva in October 1979 and which led to the adoption in 1981 by the World Health Assembly of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. What happened at this meeting constituted a major departure from the traditional relationship between the United Nations and the non-governmental organizations in that it recognized the latter as full

partners in the formulation of an international code aimed at regulating how, literally, one of the most basic needs of humanity should be met. In *Development Dialogue* 1980:1, an important section was devoted to this subject, pointing out the key-role played by third system organizations like IBFAN, INFACT, IOCU and others, in making the world's leading manufacturers of breastmilk substitutes accountable for the destructive effects of their marketing practices on global child health.

A decade has passed since this subject was first placed on the international agenda and it was therefore felt appropriate that one of the leading representatives of the third system, Annelies Allain of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), should be asked to share her experience of a decade of work devoted to the task of maintaining and supporting an international network monitoring the implementation of the Code. But it should not be concealed that her carefully written account in many ways makes for sad reading, showing as it does how the second system and its much acclaimed 'market forces' have tried to evade and counteract the effects of the Code by exercising pressure both on national governments and on international organizations like WHO and UNICEF, which have sometimes proved surprisingly weak in responding to the demands of the third system. But the story of IBFAN has, on the other hand, also shown that international networking can work and that it may in the end gain a legitimate victory by exercising the right of the citizens 'to inform and be informed about the facts of development and its inherent conflicts'.

Another example of the crucial importance of information and communication and the role of international networking is the struggle against apartheid in Southern Africa, which has been an important feature in the international debate over the past forty years. In this context, third system solidarity organizations in many countries and a number of governments, among them the Nordic ones, have made a significant contribution to the liberation struggles in the region. An important role in this work has been played by Dr Ernst Michanek, the former Director of the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) and Chairman of the Board of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, in whose honour the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and the International Foundation for Education with Production organized a seminar on 'Democracy and the Media in Southern Africa' at the Chobe Game Lodge in Botswana in December 1989. It was in many ways a unique event, bringing together for the first time journalists from the alternative or democratic press in South Africa with colleagues from the Frontline States. The objective of the Seminar, which took as its point of departure the ideas advanced by Dr Michanek in his paper on 'Democracy as

a Force for Development and the Role of Swedish Assistance' (*Development Dialogue* 1985:1), was to survey the media situation in Southern Africa and to concretize—on the basis of the experience of the participating journalists—how the right to inform and be informed and the democratization of the media could be safeguarded and supported in the interest of the future development of the region. We are happy to reproduce in this issue of the journal a number of the many valuable contributions made to the Seminar and the Recommendations and Suggestions adopted by the participants. Among the latter, special mention might be made of the importance attached to improving the newsflows and communications between the SADCC countries and South Africa, for instance by expanding the services of the Harare-based news agency Africa Information Afrique, by investigating the modalities of establishing a regional weekly newspaper proposed by the Foundation for Education with Production and by establishing regional media training networks and ultimately a regional media training school.

The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation has, as readers of *Development Dialogue* are well aware, primarily concerned itself with the current problems confronting the Third World and its relations with the industrialized countries. But in so doing, we may have lost sight of the historical perspective needed to understand the roots of the present global crisis, which threatens to engulf the world and which is at least partly due to the lack of respect for the right of the citizens 'to inform and be informed about the facts of development, its inherent conflicts and the changes it will bring about'. In this issue of the journal, we are therefore printing, for the first time, in an English translation by Wendy Davies, a remarkable and long forgotten document by a young African scholar and activist from Upper Volta, who put up a spirited fight against de Gaulle and French colonialism in opposing the Referendum on the Franco-African Community in 1958 and who—shortly before his premature death two years later—published his notes from the Referendum in what he called a 'Diary of a Defeat'. His name was Ahmadou A. Dicko and his experience provides a striking illustration of how the colonial power manipulated public opinion to defeat the Pan-African ideals inspiring the liberation movement and leading up to the fragmentation of Francophone West Africa and its present precarious situation. Still, Ahmadou Dicko lived an exemplary life—as is evident from the moving appreciation of his work by his friend Joseph Ki-Zerbo—and his example will continue to serve as an inspiration for his African brothers and sisters and for third system activists everywhere; and it may, in fact, be even more significant today when Africa seems to be drifting away from the map of the world's concerns.

There are, however, also signs of hope. The precarious position in which the countries of Africa and many other Third World countries find themselves is the subject of the Bellagio Declaration, a major third system initiative for 'Overcoming Hunger in the 1990s', which, on the basis of a meeting in 1989 and projected follow-up activities, argues that it is possible to end half of the world's hunger before the end of the year 2000. This might seem an overly optimistic ambition in view of the portentous events in Eastern Europe, Southern Africa, Central America and the Middle East. It should, however, be remembered that part of the solution envisaged by the Bellagio Declaration is to link those concerned with fate of the hungry with those concerned with fate of the earth seizing the new opportunities for grassroots action initiated by the third system with its emphasis on participation and pluralism and on democracy as a force for development and liberation—be it from governmental oppression or the unregulated rule of the market forces.

IBFAN: On the Cutting Edge

By Annelies Allain

Annelies Allain has written this article in response to a request from Development Dialogue to give a personal account of her experiences during the past decade of the struggles of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) in different international fora, highlighting the arduous task of building an international network, its victories and defeats, joys and frustrations, and its hopes and horrors for the future.

'My contribution', Annelies Allain wrote when sending us her article, 'is just that: an account with a personal touch of a "third system" organizer. It does not attempt to explain the issue or reflect on the legal aspects of Code implementation. It recalls the ongoing struggle of people against the inequities of powerful transnationals' operations and heavy bureaucracies. The views are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of IOCU or IBFAN.'

Annelies Allain has been involved with IBFAN since its inception in 1979. She helped to found the Geneva office of the network, which was started mainly to give support to the baby food activists from other countries who were drawn into the drafting of the Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes by WHO and UNICEF.

Her previous experience in public advocacy around UN agencies, knowledge of languages as well as four years of development work in Africa, were useful skills for the young network. After running the Geneva IBFAN office for four years, she joined the International Organization of Consumers Unions' (IOCU) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Penang, Malaysia, which is a founding member of IBFAN, and continued her work for the network from there.

Annelies Allain's article is preceded by an Introduction by Andrew Chetley, an active member of the IBFAN movement and the author of two books on the infant feeding issue—*The Baby Killer Scandal* and *The Politics of Baby Foods*. His most recent book is *A Healthy Business? World Health and the Pharmaceutical Industry*.



The question of how babies are fed seems an unlikely one to illustrate some of the basic approaches of Another Development or to challenge existing power structures. Yet for more than 15 years it has been an issue which has risen to increasing prominence on the global development agenda as well as

at national and local levels in many parts of the world. It has become a prime example of the way in which the 'third system'—people and people's organizations—has been able to exert its legitimate power as a counterbalancing force to the power of the state and of the market.

It began when health workers first connected bottle feeding with malnutrition and the greater likelihood of infectious disease and other illness and death of young children. By interfering with breastfeeding, bottle feeding was seen as a major world health problem.

The roots of the problem are complex. They involve socio-economic changes, the changing roles of women in society, the medicalization of childbirth, the internationalization of trade. A product—powdered baby milk—originally designed as a life-saving formula for the relatively few infants who were not able to have their mothers' milk, was transformed into a consumer item to be pushed as suitable for every baby.

The transnational food and pharmaceutical industries within which the major baby food producers operate were simply following the recipes for growth which had been tried and tested over the years. Survival in a competitive market equals more sales; more sales come from convincing people of the necessity, the convenience, the economy, the appeal of the product. In short, highlighting its supposed advantages and downplaying its disadvantages. Would you buy a product if you were told it was more expensive, unnecessary, involved more time to prepare, was more likely to cause illness and possibly death than an alternative? Of course not. Yet millions of mothers (often via ill-informed health workers) are seduced into doing just that through very one-sided and manipulative marketing practices.

For many years, most governments sat by ignoring the situation. Business was booming, and economic power is intrinsically linked with political power. Besides, the victims of this abuse of economic power are among the most powerless sectors of society. They were first of all infants who had no voice or vote; second, they were women, traditionally 'invisible' in national planning; third, they were 'non-productive' women, in that they were often 'simply mothers' rather than women who were engaged in more visible production outside of the home; fourth, they were often women and children from amongst the poorest sectors of society, anonymous, faceless statistics.

The campaign to improve infant feeding practices recognized from its earliest days that it would have to focus on *self-reliant* solutions; that it could

not depend on the baby food manufacturers to transform themselves, nor could it depend on governments or intergovernmental institutions to initiate action. The demand for action and the force for sustaining that demand would have to *come from the people* and from the people's organizations.

It is a campaign focused on one of the most *basic human needs*: appropriate feeding of infants and therefore the best opportunities for infant and young child health and development. It is based on the principles of *sound ecological management* and the recognition that resources are scarce and must be appropriately used. Human milk is a valuable resource, one which provides savings for national and personal economies both directly and indirectly.

The campaign is also based on *structural transformations*. It has to deal with several power relationships and find ways to alter those. First, there was the fundamental relationship between women and men in today's society which underlies many of the other relationships. Second, there was the relationship between health workers and mothers, and the far-too-cosy relationship between health workers and the industry. As Filipino paediatrician Dr Natividad Clavano said, 'we allowed the companies to touch the lives of our babies, not because we did not care, but because we did not realize the consequences of granting such a privilege'. Third, there was the relationship between governments and industry which all too often ignored the need to invest in human capital rather than in technology. Fourth, there was the whole geo-political relationship which was being played out between the countries of the North and those of the South, and the manifestations of that being played out in some of the intergovernmental agencies. It necessitated a challenge to the most powerful country in the world, the United States of America, which consistently voted against measures to improve the situation, and which attempted to use its economic might to influence the action of the World Health Organization.

The story of this campaign which Annelies Allain explains in the following pages is full of high drama, high politics, but also the everyday struggles of people in their own local space to protect and promote breastfeeding as the best start for children. It is a success story in many ways, yet at the same time, it demonstrates that maintaining that success requires vigilance and constant work. In the early days of the campaign, the industry was clumsy and naive in its response to challenge; however, for the past five years or so, the infant food issue has become a much-used case study in business schools in Europe and North America and slowly companies are becoming more sophisticated in their responses. They have learned many lessons, have

made some concessions, but have also been looking for new ways to subvert the gains that have been achieved by people's organizations.

There are many lessons here for people's organizations, as well. Perhaps the most important, made evident in the work of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), is the strength which flows from cooperative working, from networking. By sharing information rapidly, by linking people and groups working on similar strategies, the success of one becomes a source of inspiration for others, and the campaign grows and develops and begins to infiltrate new layers of society. International networking is difficult, but as an alternative way of organizing, it has proved capable of challenging some considerable power blocks. It is fast, flexible and furious and provides a voice for those who were previously voiceless. More and more, as the voices of the people are heard, the existing international structures will have to take note, will have to recognize that Another Development is needed both in the Third World and in the industrialized countries.

Andrew Chetley

IBFAN: On the Cutting Edge

Marketing to death

It was the Western way of doing things and this had enormous appeal to these people (in the Third World)... It's such a huge market.. if we could get these people to use these products, it's a vast amount of money involved... We were discussing the marketing strategy behind the promotion of these products... Mothers are very emotional about their children, ...for visual imagery, large-scale posters and so on, we wanted to use a nursing mother with the youngest possible baby... The strategy was formed around the idea that mothers had better things to do with their time than nurse their babies... and there was a cosmetic appeal too, the idea that if you nursed your babies, you might suffer from 'bosom sag'... The information about the terrible dangers inherent...the multinationals did nothing about it, as far as I can see, they did nothing about it... '

These are the words of a marketing expert who, a decade ago, helped the world's biggest manufacturer, Nestle, to formulate the marketing push for some of its baby milks sold in Asia. In October 1989, the marketing man had been watching a documentary made by an Australian TV station in cooperation with the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN). The documentary showed the results of artificial feeding practices in Pakistan and the Philippines. The babies were dying a slow death or being stunted for life, not because their mothers did not care but because they thought they were doing the very best for their newborns: starting them off in life with the new, Western, expensive but 'modern' baby formula recommended on the posters. Only old-fashioned mothers would breastfeed their babies nowadays and modern women must of course be careful about keeping their figure...

Guilt and remorse caused the former marketing director to call a radio station and angrily denounce Nestlé's corporate practices. 'As an advertising agency, we were operating in "medical ignorance",' he said. 'Nobody talked about boiling the water, nobody told us of the advantages of breastfeeding. We were calculating the size of the market.' The call was prompted in particular by a tragic testimony in the documentary of a mother who believed she was using 'the next best thing' for her baby. The baby died. The 'next best thing' was a successful advertising slogan coined by the very marketing expert who now heard it coming back at him from the mother of the dead baby. 'And that was when I felt I was being hit by a large truck', he stated.

The traumatic reaction to the documentary provides a vivid illustration of who causes the problem and why, and who is trying to do something about it and how. While marketing practices are not the only reason why mothers have been shifting from breast to bottle, they are the only deliberate and specifically targeted move to supplant an age-old tradition of which doctors are only now learning the advantages. It is useless to promote breastfeeding

Free and subsidised supplies are not charity, they are a well-known and effective marketing practice which should not be allowed to interfere with efforts to actively promote breastfeeding.

*Professor O. Ransome-Kuti, Minister of Health, Nigeria
World Health Assembly, 1989*

as long as marketing practices are allowed to go on without restrictions, says the International Baby Food Action Network, which helped Australian television to make the documentary. Increased awareness and public pressure are the only way to curb the practices and give breastfeeding a chance.

Once people understand the causes of such a human tragedy, they are motivated to do something about it. The media are a powerful tool to reach out and build public pressure. After all, companies use the same tool to bombard people with promotional messages in order to create markets for their products. Successful use of the media to warn consumers about the hazards of some products has been one of IBFAN's many achievements over the past ten years.

The 'third system', a countervailing force

Governmental power and economic power are, increasingly, feeling the pinch of the 'third system', people's power. It caused a revolution in the Philippines and now throughout in Eastern Europe; it was brutally suppressed in Tiananmen Square; it is latent or disorganized in some places and operating at a low-key level elsewhere. Networks are a new and powerful expression of the 'third system' and IBFAN is the oldest of a range of single-issue networks which started in the late seventies.

When IBFAN was set up, there was no discussion of any constitution, head office or directorship. Now, ten years later, there are still no such things. The people who created the network wanted a new kind of citizen organization, one where each group and each person could do what they were good at and receive help and encouragement from others who shared the same principles. Nobody was forced to do things but all were committed to do the best they could, and through their linkages with others they grew stronger. The common spirit was the most important, there was a variety of skills and a slogan. The slogan, the rallying cry, was to protect as well as promote breastfeeding. The opponent was the baby milk industry which tries to do the opposite.

The single-issue focus was a departure from more generic forms of organizing for change. The flexible, non-hierarchical and international angle was another difference. At the time IBFAN was created, no one expected either the controversy or the network to last for very long. The issue was simple: bottle feeding kills babies, therefore the companies who promote it should stop that promotion. Medical authorities agreed, even politicians agreed. The network was a poor and disparate coalition of activists, each with their own agendas and very different constituencies, their own politics or non-

politics. It was bound to fall apart. But, before that, it had to convince the transnational milk companies to change their ways. The simple battle became a long war.

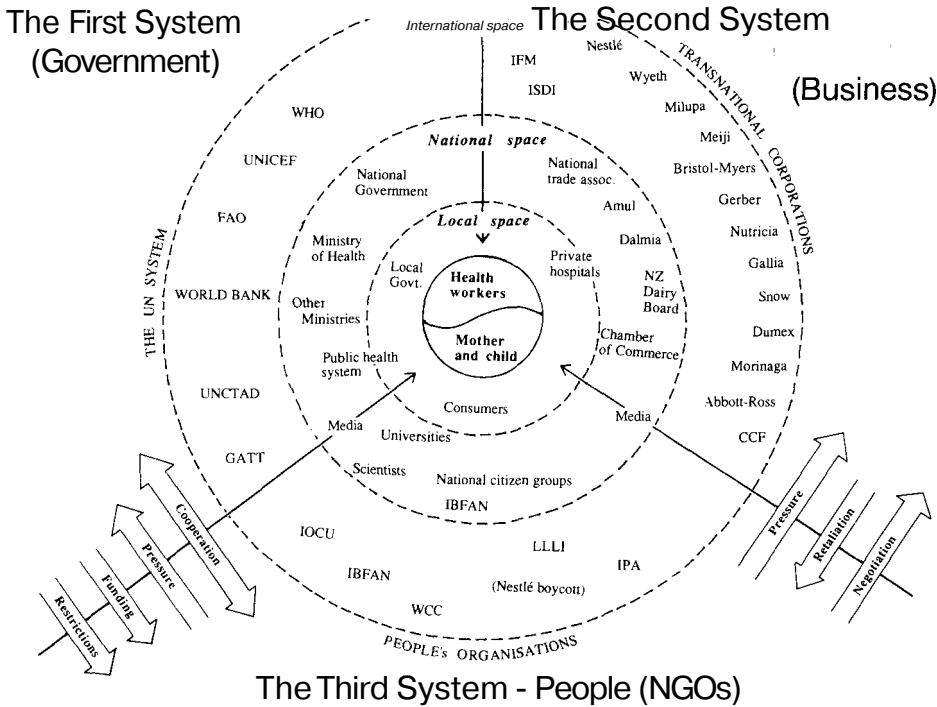
Somehow IBFAN managed to pull through the many fights, stick together and even multiply without changing its structure, without compromising its principles. The relative simplicity of the issue allowed IBFANers to develop expertise, to become a force to be reckoned with. From six founding members in 1979, IBFAN grew to 140 groups in 1989. The network celebrated its tenth anniversary in October 1989 during a week-long Forum which brought together some 350 organizers from 67 countries.

One thing that has become very clear in the course of the struggle is that even such an apparently innocuous matter as breastfeeding is politics. And politics is about power. For the third system to obtain changes in the way it is currently treated by governments and business alike, it has to develop power. The countervailing force IBFAN has garnered over the years is to be measured not just in numbers of affiliated groups but in public awareness and pressure. A difficult but constant effort on the part of the whole baby food campaign has been to keep the issue under public scrutiny, to translate the complexities of campaign demands, marketing subtleties and scientific evidence into simple language and to keep the media informed. IBFAN has always agreed to public debates but not to negotiations behind closed doors.

Power is mostly in the hands of the State and the marketplace but by organizing, people can claim their share and exert their demands and thereby defy the existing structures. This, for me, is the most exciting potential of networking. The on-going struggle around baby foods shows that such challenges are not easy and not short-term. But it also shows that successes can be achieved. People's organizations constitute the 'third system' which should balance out power with the first and second systems, respectively government and business.

If we place the subject of IBFAN's single-issue focus into a theoretical centre, we can draw concentric circles around it representing the local, national and international space. How does the local situation affect mothers and children in their decision-making about infant feeding? We soon find that health workers have a profound effect on this but that they also are subject to different pressures and practices. Hence, on the chart, we have placed health workers in a symbiotic relationship to mother and child, both in the centre of our attention. Three segments affect their actions.

The World of Politics, Power and People



Interaction between the three systems in the world of IBFAN politics

Public opinion, local consumer habits, family and social influences are just one segment of the spectre that influences the mother's choice. On the business side there is advertising, subtler forms of promotion and hospital practices. Hospitals have a set number of strict routines; they usually have a long-standing relationship with specialized commercial suppliers and many, including physicians, are of course in the private sector themselves. Pharmacies, shops, direct mail, media projections all reach out to the young mother.

In the last segment are government policies which also have their bearing on mothers' choices. The public health system may or may not encourage breastfeeding. Medical school curricula in nearly all countries are totally inadequate for training in the proper management of lactation. There may be restrictions on advertising, sometimes even on other forms of promotion, or the government may be committed to 'free trade' with no binding limits for the commercial sector.

At the national level, the same influences from these three systems or sectors have their impact on the centre-subjects. National company marketing policies, ministry of health directives and the influence (or lack of it) by national IBFAN groups, mother support groups, academic, church and media opinion makers. Transnational marketing practices of course have a direct bearing on the national sphere but, barring effective legal restrictions, the decisions tend to be made in the international sphere at the TNC headquarters. Just like national companies or subsidiaries may be grouped into national trade associations, the TNCs also have their international representative associations.

Health workers, consumers, religious congregations, scientists and... baby food activists all have their international linking systems. The media fall between the cracks of the systems; sometimes they are only singing the tune of national governments or are owned and to some extent governed by a TNC like the Rupert Murdoch Consortium. In other cases, the media are ferociously independent. Journalists may have independent judgement but if the advertising department has giant clients to humour, we all know that certain activist stories will not get in.

The international space does not only harbour TNCs and people's networks but also the UN family. Ideally, the UN system represents 'we, the people' but, in practice, power in that sector is exercised by the collective will of national governments, autocratic and democratic alike. And even that statement needs further tempering because some governments are very much 'more equal than others' and in the forty-five years of the UN'S existence, international bureaucrats have developed crafty ways of pre-shaping decisions by governments. In other words, the secretariats of the various UN agencies have become actors themselves for the better or the worse.

The chart is not complete without showing some of the ways by which one sector affects the other(s)). These are pressures and dependencies which vary greatly, from sector to sector, from country to country. Political contributions or pledges of investment may reduce legislative control enthusiasm. Citizens' pressure on government may be lessened by promises of grants or threats of restrictions on activities. In some cases pressure on companies may result in direct or indirect retaliation against the activist leader or even her family. It was too complicated to draw on the chart but the reader can imagine how indirect pressure may be exercised via the government, a local institution or even the media or the UN for that matter on a particular group or an outspoken citizens' organization.

We may not like it but this is the nature of the world of politics, power and people. Some will shy away from it, others will tackle it with gusto, many still ignore it. For international networks like IBFAN, it is indispensable to analyse the whole picture, to identify allies and build strategies, to seek maximum leverage and help the like-minded to construct their own analysis of how politics affect their focal issue at local, national and international levels.

The chart shows three equal segments but that does not mean of course that influence is equally divided. In terms of power it would be more correct to imagine a pie-chart where the 'first and second systems' take up the lion's share, leaving only a small sliver to the 'third system'. IBFAN aims at widening that sliver.

**Shoestring lobbying:
the early years**

During IBFAN's early years lack of money was endemic and many groups operated out of people's homes. Most staff were unpaid. The regional representative for Europe kept her files in cardboard boxes under her bed and in Geneva the whole 'office' consisted of a borrowed desk in the Quaker House library. People hired themselves out as Skypak couriers to get cheap tickets across the Atlantic and within Europe they hitchhiked to meetings. There was no money for printing and in Geneva, whenever we could, we photocopied on 'borrowed' machines in the UN or in rich NGO offices. I still remember the face of an influential International Herald Tribune journalist as he caught sight of an ancient liquid-toner photocopier given to IBFAN and then told me of the huge fully automatic machines he had seen that morning at Nestlé's headquarters in Vevey. And I have always credited our ancient little copier with the long front-page article in the Herald Tribune a few days later which put the controversy into David and Goliath terms.

When UNICEF and WHO agreed to draw up a Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, the North American groups in IBFAN had to divide their very scarce resources and energy between running a boycott of Nestlé and the expensive periodic visits to Geneva for the Code drafting sessions. They stayed in the cheapest hostels or slept on people's floors after spending half the night typing up press releases or comments for distribution to delegates the next day. These were hectic, stressful days combining very-early-morning appointments with WHO staff and late-night brainstorming sessions about the implications of legal wording. But the very stress and constant meetings cemented friendships and mutual understanding that could never have been achieved if everyone had been able to with-

draw to their respective hotel rooms and meet only during office hours. The lobbyists had to invest in a very limited WHO wardrobe. At least three of the IBFAN men had only one suit which lasted them year after year. Most of us loathed having to dress up in 'lobby clothes' but we had quickly learnt the advantages of looking 'respectable'.

In May 1981, IBFAN managed to raise the huge sum of US\$56,200 to bring more than 40 networkers to Geneva to witness the historic event of the Code being adopted by the World Health Assembly. People from Third World countries who had been sending in evidence of unethical marketing practices finally got to meet with those who had pleaded for that information. The IBFAN participants divided tasks amongst themselves to avoid overlobbying of government delegates, while making sure that all were informed of the need to vote in favour of the Code. We knew the USA would vote against it so the strategy was to isolate that vote. Some first-timers were born lobbyists, picking up relevant information and sharing it within hours. Industry lobbyists were out in full strength as well with an amazing number of dirty tricks.² And when the voting started, the third system was watching and recording the positions of the governments, ready to hold them accountable.

**Bushfires and
mirrors: the network
grows**

Immediately following the 1981 World Health Assembly which adopted the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, 90 IBFAN members met in Geneva for the IBFAN Congress. There was a very conscious effort to make IBFAN grow, yet maintain the informal structure and remain on the cutting edge. During the 1981 Congress, 6 regions were established and regional representatives were elected. Each Third World regional representative was given the then 'vast' amount of US\$ 500, mainly for stamps and local organizing. Communications were considered the most important aspect of networking even though that caused some ill feeling with those who felt they were being 'used' by the 'core groups' to constantly feed information on marketing and receive little feedback. 'Core groups' meant the founders of IBFAN, nearly all Western, and they were thoroughly pumelled during the Congress.

They were accused of dominating decision-making, controlling the finances and telling others what to do. Once the anger was spilt, however, all sat down to draw up principles, aims and objectives and a system of democratic decision-making. IBFAN's structure was puzzling to many who came from more bureaucratic and more hierarchical backgrounds and wanted something less jelly-like. Andy Chetley gave an inspiring talk about IBFAN being

mirrors: now it's there, now it's not, and next, it's multiplied everywhere. The lack of a formalized structure was IBFAN's strength, Andy said. By having a flexible system and getting many to join, eventually all baby food manufacturers and government officials would have to look over their shoulders all the time, not sure if they were being watched or not. Ed Baer spoke of the similar effect of a never-ending spread of bushfires. Putting one out here would only lead to another one bursting into flames on the next hill-top. Industry would be thoroughly confused, obliged to be on guard at all times and eventually give up its unethical marketing of baby milks.

Decentralization, democracy and sharing became the basis for IBFAN's expansion. No fees or membership criteria but adherence to agreed principles all aimed at better child health. The more active affiliates were, each in their own way, the more involved they would become in the running of the network. There was awareness all along of the need to build up some of the weaker groups and even create new ones, because like a chain or a fishing net, the structure is only as strong as the weakest link. Policy would be set by the IBFAN Coordinating Council which comprises regional representatives, staff of the service centres and some members-at-large (some founding members or others who could no longer be actively involved). The Council would try to meet once a year and keep in touch via bi-monthly reports to each other. Ten years later, this is still the basic IBFAN structure.

IBFAN's role in the development and adoption of the WHO/UNICEF Code helped give credibility to the network and improve fundraising prospects. The Nordic and Dutch donors looked with a kind eye at the new kind of 'third system' power which could act at the political and at the practical level, especially in the Third World. But although they agreed with IBFAN's principles, they never ceased to be baffled by the lack of formal structure. Some of the groups which did not 'exist' as legal entities found it necessary to draft statutes and become registered for accountancy reasons. And even for the most progressive funding agencies, the infant feeding problem remained in the so-called developing countries, making it next to impossible for industrialized country groups to find any money for their own day-to-day functioning. The Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), Danchurchaid and some of the Dutch church groups eventually broke through this deadlock and SIDA, especially, recognized the need for organizing in the West to undo a problem caused by Western-based transnationals.

Regionally, Asia was the first to involve many groups in IBFAN, no doubt thanks to the International Organization of Consumers Unions (IOCU)

Artificial feeding of infants is, in fact, the largest uncontrolled *in vivo* experiment in human history

Maureen Minchin

action groups and consumers unions have always been staunch supporters of IBFAN. Health associations and women's groups are joining in more and more. In fact, today, IBFAN is almost entirely run by women. We used to eagerly count new groups as a gauge to IBFAN's success but rapidly lost count as expansion took place so quickly. There were always more new people than old ones leaving. While fundraising for the network's tenth anniversary, organizers did a recent worldwide count and found 148 IBFAN affiliated groups in 74 countries.

Information is power

Possibly the single most important activity of the network has been to gather sufficient hard information to make its case. Although millions of babies have died and thousands of medical experts have testified that artificial feeding was the main cause, IBFAN groups have found themselves repeatedly in the position of having to prove that point. Breastmilk had been studied for decades but nearly all the initial research was carried out for the purpose of improving the competing product based on cow's milk. Companies were delighted each time they discovered yet another ingredient, e.g. taurine, to add to 'new and improved formula'. Each time the product would be heralded as the closest to mothers' milk or nutritionally complete, etc. Each time, the competing industries would shower doctors and hospitals with free samples and supplies to try it out. Maureen Minchin, the well-known historian and nutritionist, soberly calls artificial feeding of infants 'the largest uncontrolled *in vivo* experiment in human history'.³

Really independent research on breastfeeding was rare until about ten years ago. Who would pay for it? There is no profit in breastmilk, at least not the kind of money that makes it worthwhile to finance large-scale, randomly controlled, double-blind, multisectorial research that would stand up against nit-picking by company-paid scientists. Still, some headway is being made although it is not easy to select the good studies from the bad ones. Covert financing and other ways of subverting or coopting bona fide researchers are legendary. (To make a dent in this trend IBFAN has opened an Independent Research Fund which welcomes donations.)

Even more difficult was the challenge by industry to prove that marketing practices deliberately increase the number of users (and thereby the incidence of malnutrition and mortality). The short answer to this kind of challenge of course is: if it didn't increase sales, why would industry bother? Longer answers, however, have been needed, all the more so because very few people understand the intricacies of marketing. Most ordinary consumers are only vaguely aware of the 1,001 ways in which their purchasing



behaviour is being influenced. Marketing to them is mainly advertising. Large numbers of health workers turn a blind eye to the attentions lavished upon them and their associations by the milk and drug companies. The arrogance of the medical profession is such that it finds it hard to admit to any external persuasion affecting its prescribing habits. Yet here also the short answer is valid: if it didn't, why would the companies bother?

IBFAN used to antagonize many medical professionals by putting its finger on the unholy alliance between them and the milk companies—a psychological faux-pas which was not easy to avoid. Gradually, however, more and more doctors are saying it for us and are rallying to reduce the often dramatic influence companies have over what medical students learn and what graduates practice. IBFAN representatives have more recently been invited to talk about marketing at paediatric conferences. Reactions vary from silent denial to shocked reflection and the determination to do something about commercial interference.

Challenging trans-nationals

Strategic foresight, a dose of good luck and a lot of hard work kept IBFAN running on two tracks: Boycott and Code, rather than a single one. When critics could no longer be ignored, or dismissed as ignorant rabble rousers or communist plotters, industry, and principally Nestle, readily agreed to in-

volve the UN system as proposed by US Senator Edward Kennedy. Nestlé hoped that once the word went out that WHO had taken over, there would be no more justification for the Nestlé Boycott. From 1979 on, the company refused to take part in public debates and sent out mailings stating its confidence about a just and unbiased solution to the controversy under WHO/UNICEF guidance. Many people fell for it; many genuinely wanted to believe that the UN as an honest broker would defend the right and health of babies and persuade or force the companies to abandon promotion for artificial feeding. The Nestlé Boycott seemed bound to lose its public support. The transnationals actively encouraged this opinion and the Nestlé Boycott organizers within IBFAN needed to muster all their energy to convince millions of boycotters that international recommendations were only pieces of paper. Nothing short of concrete, measurable change would be good enough to call off the Boycott.

Expensive mass mailings, a film, initiatives by the industry association, cultivation of press contacts and even the direct hiring of senior WHO staff were some of the many ways in which the transnationals tried to turn the tide. They were 'shocked' to find that WHO and UNICEF had invited Boycott organizers as well as other non-governmental organizations to the Code drafting sessions. They tried to exclude the pressure groups and even threatened to leave the negotiations altogether. However, the other parties, i.e. the governments, health experts and some courageous officials within the WHO Secretariat were sufficiently aware of the competence of the 'third system' to resist industry's efforts to discredit it. By overlobbying, ultimately opposing the Code ('too restrictive, irrelevant, unworkable')⁴ and notorious influence-buying, the transnationals created their own pitfalls and IBFAN was just waiting for those to occur to help the managers trip over their own words.

Meanwhile hard work indeed was needed to keep the Nestlé Boycott on its independent track. Boycott demands were different from Code provisions. They were wider, simpler in language, easier to understand. They could be written out in a short leaflet urging shoppers to use their economic power to put pressure on the biggest producer of baby milks and promoter of bottle feeding. And so, in spite of the Code or, rather, parallel to it, Boycott organizers stuck to organizing demonstrations, leafleting and collecting endorsements from other groups, churches and individuals. Boycotting was educational and contagious. It spread to 10 other countries.

Finland announced its national Nestlé Boycott in the winter of 1983. It was meant to be launched in a solemn way with 3,000 candles lit for each of the

3,000 babies who had died in the world that day from the consequences of bottle feeding. But instead of a quiet dark night, there were gusts of wind that kept blowing out the candles, sending the vigil holders scurrying about to re-light them. The many passers-by became involved in helping to re-light these flames of sorrow and anger. Soon, there was a huge crowd all handing out leaflets, discussing the issue and keeping the candles burning. It became one of the best, albeit totally unplanned, popular participation events in the international boycott scene. Finland, however, was the last country to join the first Nestlé Boycott.

Nestlé managers were not pleased. They had assumed the Boycott would fade away with UNICEF and WHO working on a code. The lone US vote against the Code had given more prominence to the issue, to IBFAN, and to the Boycott than they had anticipated in their wildest fears. Because of IBFAN, the Code, although a compromise, had more 'teeth' than any other UN regulatory document. And Nestlé had been only marginally successful in 'stripping the fanatic activist leaders from their alliance with religious organizations' which gave them 'moral authority'.⁵ Instead, the call to boycott had become more strident, more targeted (picking on Nestlé's best selling but easily replaceable instant coffee) and more international. The company's reputation was smarting all over the world. In December 1983, the management decided to negotiate with the 'fanatic activists' and two months later a Joint Agreement was signed. The Boycott was suspended for 6 months. In September 1984 it was called off.

Victories and defeats The 7-year, 10-country Nestlé Boycott ended in what has been called 'the most important victory in the history of the international consumer movement'.⁶ The giant Nestlé corporation which has recently become the number one food transnational bowed to pressure from the 'third system'. It agreed to (1) stop advertising in the mass media; (2) take pictures of mothers and babies off the labels (of infant formula); (3) include health hazard warnings on those labels; (4) include all information required by the Code in literature for doctors and mothers; (5) stop personal gifts to health workers; (6) follow WHO/UNICEF recommendations on 'free supplies'. But the Joint Agreement was not applicable to European markets. In other words, Nestlé agreed to abide by the essence of the WHO/UNICEF Code all over the world⁷ but not in Europe.

A weakness in the Boycott demands was that they did not explicitly recognize the universality of the Code. This is where the 2-track system of IBFAN ran apart and it was the cause of the only serious division of opinion within

IBFAN that I can recall. It had deep roots on either side of the Atlantic. The North Americans had started by building an educational campaign to enlist support for change in the Third World, for the dying babies there; they were good at grassroots action and strategic analysis of corporate weaknesses. The Europeans were not so good at boycotts and street action but saw the campaign as an exercise in raising awareness about continued economic colonialism.

In the global village, one cannot stamp out a problem by demanding changes in only one part of the world. If breastfeeding is best, it is best everywhere. Very few babies die in the West as a result of bottle feeding but that is because the health care system is better, not because the babies are different. The Code does not seek to remove the product from the shelf, it just wants to make sure that mothers get unbiased information to make an informed choice. Hospital routines, advertising messages and other marketing practices are exported just the same as products. Thousands of health workers from Third World nations come to Europe for training and take artificial infant feeding models back home.

IBFAN had to find a way to reconcile the two different approaches. Strengthened by Third World support for their position, European groups agreed to lift the Boycott but obtained commitment that North Americans would help fight in any future company campaign for universal application of the Code. A lesson was learnt internally and the network was strengthened by picking the best of organizing tactics. Grassroot action, shareholder resolutions and corporate marketing analysis were adopted by European groups while more global and structural thinking was transmitted to North Americans. Unfortunately, the press and the public at large, helped in no small way by transnationals themselves, still keep on writing and thinking of the Code as applicable to Third World countries only. There is still an enormous amount of work to do to reverse that misconception.

It is easier to rally around millions of dead babies than about women's right to unbiased information and hospital structures which do not interfere with breastfeeding. The international Milupa campaign has been operating for years in several European countries and in Canada. The company is not as well-known as Nestlé and exports mainly packaged cereals to markets outside Europe. Press attention has flared in the past only when groups took to the street as, for example, when they deposited a mountain of samples on the company headquarters' doorstep. But Milupa continues to break the Code in Europe.

Dutch medical students affiliated to IBFAN got headlines when they denounced the Friesland company which marketed all kinds of powdered milk as 'Dutch Baby'. They alerted the owners of the cooperative—staid Dutch farmers—to the way in which their wholesome milk was contributing to malnutrition by being mislabelled and mismarketed. The Friesland management was forced to promise a change in labelling and Dutch Baby became Dutch Lady. It was half a victory.

The Japanese companies are under scrutiny of Japanese consumers who have published books and pamphlets and written letters of complaint. At the IBFAN Forum in 1989, it was decided to highlight Japanese marketing tactics, to study and denounce the way these aggressive companies are jumping in where Nestlé, under pressure, has had to cease some of its promotional practices.

In India, the national companies Amul and Dalmia are being watched and attacked in the press as much as the transnationals. A campaign against the US company Gerber is being coordinated from Costa Rica. The New Zealand Dairy Board has been under pressure from groups in New Zealand and Asia.

A number of these campaigns are small and have been overshadowed by the Nestlé Boycotts (yes, a second Boycott started in 1988). There has been some debate within IBFAN whether to focus all efforts on a single market leader or encourage a wider range of campaigns, like a string of bushfires, all with the same demands but different tactics. The campaigns may not have built up to the same dramatic pitch as the Nestlé Boycott but they have had some impact. More people have had first-hand experience in running a campaign; more transnationals have somewhat adjusted their selling techniques because of the fear that they might be the next target; information about markets, promotion and company profiles now gets channelled to the particular groups which target particular companies; the information about company violations is useful evidence in the struggle for legislation at the national level; the decentralization of smaller company campaigns is a good expression of IBFAN's principle of popular participation and initiative. On the negative side, it can be argued that none of these local or regional efforts received enough support from the entire network to build strategic skills, leadership and financial back-up.

Business enterprises, that 'second system' with all its direct and indirect influence over governments, seek to maximize profits and resent any restriction or critique. Transnational manufacturers are known to build more

loyalty among their employees to the corporation than to the governments of the countries they work in. To camouflage this tendency and simultaneously promote brand names, they often invest in huge public relations exercises by sponsoring government-approved events such as 'keep your city clean' campaigns, sports competitions or cultural activities. These days oil companies invest in ecological issues. Nestlé in Malaysia invests in arts and crafts competitions for young children... Such sponsorship increases the goodwill of authorities towards the corporation and makes for a lot of free publicity. It also makes work for the 'third system' harder. And the expense involved is a pittance for the transnationals. Besides, it is either the taxpayer or the consumer who ultimately pays for it.

The income in taxes, employment, resource development and sponsorship encourages increased dependency (especially of poor) governments on international business. How that stands up against the government's commitment to protect the health and safety of its consumers differs only in degree. Some governments are manifestly more interested in raising tax revenue than preventing ill health. Some of the so-called 'free press' is silent about nutrition scandals because of their income from advertising. In the case of baby food transnationals then, it is not surprising that legislation to control some of the 'bad businesses' has been progressing at snail's pace. The power of Ministries of Health is notoriously subordinate to that of Ministries of Commerce, Trade and Industry. Ministries of Justice, who ultimately are the ones to develop and enforce legislation, often get contradictory demands and may end up shelving the draft laws just to avoid controversy. Power relations between the three systems: government, business and people differ in each country and it is of strategic importance to the 'third system' to evaluate the linkages between them all in their particular political environment.

'Multinational companies... represent economic power in (the) politically insecure societies... of Third World countries', stated Raphael Pagan in an address to international public relations executives.⁸ Pagan was President of the Nestlé Coordination Centre for Nutrition in Washington. He used the 'agonizing infant formula controversy' as an example of how to successfully handle 'anti-business groups and concerned critics'. It is interesting to see his perspective of IBFAN's campaign: 'The infant formula dispute—which lasted from 1970 to 1984, and was described by one journalist as the fiercest and most embittered campaign ever waged against a multinational company—was but the cutting edge of what is now an ongoing effort to require MNCs to demarket their presence in Third World nations.'

The end of the Nestlé Boycott in 1984 is seen by Pagan as the end of the dispute, the end of the problem, at least for Nestlé. He then goes on to describe initiatives by IOCU and the World Council of Churches to 'create a climate of support for national and international regulation' (of transnational marketing practices). In the face of this hostility, companies should unify their strategies and work at two levels: 'One is the lobbying level—direct behind-the-scenes negotiations between companies and governments or UN agencies. The second is the level of public relations orthodoxy that seeks to communicate a decent company image to the general public in order to gain support, or at least consent, for the industry's objectives.'

The 'techniques' to make a company 'gain respect for its essential decency, legitimacy and usefulness' rely on proper 'crisis management capability', and 'early warning system and political threat analysis capability' and, lastly, a type of 'independent social audit committee to monitor marketing practices and suggest improvements'. The latter, says Pagan was 'a major factor in Nestlé's gaining the trust of its more moderate and constructive critics'. Socio-political understanding of top management, good P.R., some caution and crisis management would enable companies to operate successfully in the Third World, 'the market of the future'.

This advice to companies gives us both good and sad news. The good news is that pressure has some effect, that company campaigns, such as the Nestlé Boycott will make the whole industry sit up and listen. The sad news is that after listening, they will still not act sufficiently in order to remove the source of the problem. Instead they seek to eliminate or contain the problem by making a minimum of changes and strengthening its links with the 'government system'. Elimination of either the activist 'third system', i.e. IBFAN, or of the baby food problem itself is no longer possible. There is too much evidence, too much awareness and too much commitment. So containment or damage limitation is the order of the day. Since the campaign against transnational marketing is now thoroughly international, one of industry's containment strategies is to juggle, buy or otherwise obtain international recognition and support. The 'third system' basically has nothing to lose, therefore it cannot lose. The big, bad business within the 'economic system' seems to have a lot to lose but realizes it can no longer fight back with a vengeance so more subtle tactics are in order.

Who controls WHO?

Although the UN is actually properly classified under the government sphere because, officially, it is to express the combined will of all governments (rather than *People* as set forth in the UN charter!), some of that com-

mon will is shifting more and more to take in corporate concerns. In the ten-year history of IBFAN, the shift at one UN agency, the World Health Organization (WHO) has become very pronounced indeed.

Back in October 1979 when a meeting was held which led to the development of the Code, WHO officials followed the spirit of the Alma Ata Conference and invited non-governmental organizations (NGOs)⁹ on an equal footing with governments. They included seven groups who had considerable expertise on the subject but were not in 'official relations' with WHO. These later created IBFAN. Other parties invited to that meeting were experts and the 'second system' (14 major infant food transnationals). None of the companies had 'official relations' with WHO either. The Statement and Recommendations produced by that October 1979 meeting¹⁰ represented a fair and unanimous conclusion by all participants. The same four parties continued to meet several times (though not all together) to comment on the various Code drafts. The final text, of course, was a compromise. It was not as strong as the IBFAN groups had wanted, yet much stronger than what industry would have preferred. WHO and UNICEF staff, although badgered by both industry and the 'third system', managed to keep sight of their ultimate goal: better infant health. In 1979, Primary Health Care (PHC) was an important strategy for WHO and the protection and promotion of breastfeeding (notably through the Code and other measures) were prominent components of the PHC strategy.

In the course of ten years both the political climate and the WHO Secretariat have undergone tremendous change. In October 1989, an article in a Dutch newspaper ran the headline: 'At WHO, pharmaceutical companies take over power' with a subtitle: 'Coca Cola is in the Third World, the drugs industry should be allowed to operate there the same way without any restrictions'.¹¹ These headlines encapsulate the new climate and the article traces it to the change in leadership and political backing. The Danish Director General, Dr Halfdan Mahler, decided in 1988 not to run for another term of office and to everyone's surprise, Dr Hiroshi Nakajima of Japan, was elected rather than a Brazilian candidate who appeared to have more countries backing him. The real pressure for WHO to move away from PHC and away from any restrictions on corporations had been building up already years before. The United States, the agency's largest contributor, had been withholding large chunks of its budgetary assessment, thereby crippling WHO financially. Using the budget difficulties as a stick, the US objected to WHO policies, notably the Essential Drugs Programme and work around the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes.

The Action Programme on Essential Drugs was one of Dr Mahler's priority issues. In 1981 Mahler brought in Dr E Lauridsen to head this vibrant programme which attracted generous extra-budgetary funding from Western European countries. Global surveys demonstrated that up to 2.5 billion people did not have regular access to essential drugs; they also showed that the world was flooded with tens of thousands of inappropriate drugs—inappropriate because they are ineffective, dangerous or too expensive. The drug industry did not mind WHO talking about essential drugs but it definitely did not want any reference to inappropriate drugs. The medical profession, the industry argued, had to have a wide choice for the private sector. WHO should not tinker with another Marketing Code. If it persisted in tackling this issue, it would be courting political and financial problems. While all member States can have input in setting WHO policy, the funds of WHO come predominantly from a limited number of countries—the US, UK, West Germany, France, Italy and Japan account for almost 55 per cent of the WHO budget. These are also the most important drug-exporting countries. If WHO developed any blueprint for the control of marketing of the thousands of inappropriate drugs, its funding might be seriously threatened.

Year after year, IBFAN saw how the US State Department despatched delegates to WHO Assemblies and the Executive Board sessions where they threatened to vote against any resolution that might have wording which could worry the big TNCs. Wanting to maintain 'consensus' and remove fears of financial consequences for WHO, Secretariat members and even many delegates were quick to please the US. Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany and a few other conservative governments helped to set a general trend to the right. Leadership and unity of the Third World governments was lacking. Although there were some brave lone voices in the wilderness about the urgency for WHO to address the health perspectives of the 2.5 billion people in need of PHC and access to essential drugs, the panic of the drug transnationals had its effect on policy. Mahler abandoned ship, Lauridsen had his Revised Drug Strategy (which was approved by the 1988 WHA) watered down completely and resigned in protest, the main proponents of the baby food Code had already gone long before.

In 1989, WHO seemed worried about backing its own Code, and concerned to emphasize that it was adopted as a 'minimum requirement' for all countries and that Member States rightfully and officially clarified some of the Code's articles. In less than a decade, one single country—the US—succeeded in setting the stage for a complete switch from WHO'S commitment to PHC to a much more 'hi-tech' policy which accommodates and possibly even welcomes the transnational pharmaceutical and milk companies. It is

hardly surprising that the US was backing Nakajima or that the latter declared he 'understands the problems'¹² of the TNCs. After all, he was a research director for Hoffmann-La Roche before he started working for WHO. Eight years after its adoption, the scene for further implementation of the baby food Code looked bleak. The WHO Secretariat made no efforts to push for legislation at the national level or to clear up some of the Code's loopholes. Fortunately, there were still some eloquent delegates who did not abandon the Code and continued to work with IBFAN.

Getting into the UN system

Several of the pharmaceutical transnationals also produce baby food and must be quite pleased with the changes. Back in 1980, the baby food companies hired a former WHO Assistant Director General, Dr S. Flache, to become the head of ICIFI, the International Council of Infant Food Industries.¹³ ICIFI immediately put in a bid to become 'a non-governmental organization in official relations' with WHO. There are hundreds of such organizations and there is rarely much debate about them joining during the Executive Board meetings which have to approve the appropriateness of such 'official relations'. In 1981, however, the Executive Board was not happy with ICIFI's attitude towards the then draft Code and decided that the application should be 'deferred' for a year.

There were two more polite 'deferrals' in 1982 and 1983 and then Dr Flache gave up. 'IBFAN wins', he told me when the decision of the Executive Board became known. Normally, the proceedings of the Executive are public and anyone can sit in and listen to the discussions. In January 1983, however, the debate around ICIFI's application became so stormy that the Board decided to resolve the matter in a closed session. That meant sending out all observers including NGOs with or without status and a fair number (but not all) of the Secretariat staff. Both industry lobbyists and IBFANers sat outside like school children waiting for exam results. It took ages, something like two hours, and everyone outside was dying to know what went on inside. The net result was a third deferral for ICIFI and the message was clear to Dr Flache who shortly thereafter resigned from the industry council. IBFAN did win. The network had provided alternative information and evidence to the Executive Board about policies and practices of ICIFI member companies.

With ICIFI dead and gone, it seemed safe for a people's organization to apply for 'official relations' with WHO. The only advantages really are that as an NGO with such status, one automatically receives all the public documents, can request meetings with WHO staff to discuss cooperation, and is

allowed to make statements to the Board or the Assembly if the respective chairpersons agree. The International Organization of Consumers Unions, one of IBFAN's co-founders, obtained 'official relations' status with WHO in January 1986. In May 1986 and May 1988, I addressed the World Health Assembly as the IOCU representative and also on behalf of other IBFAN groups. Judging by the response of delegates, both statements were warmly welcomed. Some WHO Secretariat staff and the ubiquitous industry lobbyists were not so pleased!

1986 and 1988 were important years. During even years Code implementation is an item on the World Health Assembly's agenda and we had done worldwide surveys and published the results in two charts, 'The State of the Code by Country' and 'The State of the Code by Company'. The surveys represented a lot of work and it was helpful for governments to see where they stood in relation to the Code and to each other, and to see to what extent industry complied with the Code. UNICEF had funded part of the 1988 surveys and distributed the charts during its Executive Board meeting a week earlier. Since WHO does not allow NGOs with status to hand out materials at the Assembly, I asked delegations to request copies of the charts. They did, and rather overwhelmingly so, immediately after I had ended my statement. There was such a queue that WHO protocol asked me to postpone handing out the charts until break time. That was done and we even had a short meeting with protocol officers to settle the matter. Little did we suspect how certain elements in WHO and industry would exploit it later by suggesting that IOCU did not follow procedures.

During these years political change was building up in WHO and, like a phoenix rising from ICIFI's ashes, a new grouping called Infant Food Manufacturers Association (IFM) came on to the scene. Of course, it applied for 'official relations' with WHO.¹⁴ It hired another former WHO staff member to advise on procedures, was admitted in 1987 and proudly issued a newsletter detailing 'how companies can gain from NGO status'.

Sitting on the fence

By some strange twist of thought, the WHO Secretariat considers it best to sit on the fence between two sides. Having admitted the 'consumers' as an official NGO, the application by 'industry' for the same status was taken as an even-handed gesture. Not much thought was given as to why nearly the same grouping of companies was refused that status three times just a few years earlier. By choosing to stick to a vague but safe middle ground, WHO seems deliberately to ignore the motivation of the two very different parties. IOCU represents consumers worldwide and, as a member of IBFAN,

is committed to seeing the WHO/UNICEF Code and related resolutions implemented as quickly and widely as possible. The 'third system' may use different approaches but it is on WHO's side or rather, on the side WHO should be on. IFM, as a trade association of the main baby food producers, has a vested interest in stalling implementation of those WHO policies.

IFM proclaims loud and clear that it adheres to the Code's aim and principles, but refuses to commit itself to the detailed provisions of that Code. One of the weaknesses industry managed to slip into the Code's preamble when it was being drafted was a mention that 'there is a legitimate market for infant formula'. The same paragraph goes on to say that infant formula 'should not be marketed or distributed in ways that interfere with the protection and promotion of breastfeeding'. The 16 other preambular paragraphs all spell out risks and warnings and need for control. The 'legitimate market' phrase, however, has been taken out of context and is exploited to the hilt by IFM. It serves as a main entry point for consultations with WHO.

Such consultations, of course, also serve other purposes. IFM minutes¹⁵ of one such consultation reveal that WHO staff in charge of the Code and other maternal and child health matters discussed in detail with IFM the relations between IOCU and WHO and that a decision was made for WHO 'to take a hard line' on IOCU and advise the WHO Executive Board (EB) to 'suggest to IOCU to look for another spokesman'. Twelve days after this consultation the WHO Secretariat issued an EB working paper on IOCU relations with WHO. In it, IOCU was praised for its advocacy role, technical expertise and efforts in health education, but there was one sentence complaining about 'confrontational attitudes by IOCU, particularly with respect to the International Code...' and one mention of 'counterproductive activities'.

Nestlé (the largest company in IFM) used the same phrases from the EB internal working paper a few weeks later in a widely circulated publication aimed at discrediting its critics. Interestingly, Nestlé twists the facts by writing that the EB was critical, not of IOCU, but of ACTION, the North-American IBFAN office and principal organizer of the new Nestlé Boycott. After the launch of the Boycott in Norway, Nestlé accused Ammehjelpen (the Norwegian breastfeeding mothers' support group) and others of choosing 'a confrontational line that WHO itself describes as "counterproductive" ' and as proof, the Norwegian press is shown the EB working paper. In Switzerland, when a mother called Nestlé with a question about the Boycott, she received the Nestlé publication with an enlarged extract from the EB working paper. The same paper was also mentioned in response to public questions in Australia.

Following a complaint about public use of internal EB documents, Nestlé was forced to apologize to WHO, but in July 1989 another IFM member used the same restricted document in a letter to a British politician. The same phrase also appeared in a mysterious new publication called *International Health and Development*¹⁶ and IOCU was only alerted to that by questions from friends in Sweden. No doubt the misuse of the internal EB paper is wider than the above instances suggest.

It seemed clear that Nestlé and other IFM members deliberately misrepresented WHO-IOCU relations in a painstaking effort to discredit the wider IBFAN movement and in particular the Boycott campaigns. IOCU complained to WHO and asked for evidence of the points raised in the EB paper about 'confrontational attitudes' and 'counterproductive activities'. The official record of the EB never mentions those words but indicated 'certain difficulties of a procedural nature' and the 'need for a style of action ... to be in line with principles ...'. No clarification of either procedural difficulties or other problems has been forthcoming from WHO during 1989. In fact, all through the year, senior staff seemed intent on covering up the whole matter.

These industry tactics attempting to discredit a vocal critic and to undermine public support for the campaign taught us two important lessons: (a) that IFM did not hesitate to use WHO staff to mislead the Executive Board of WHO and try to upset normal relations between IOCU and WHO, and (b) that Nestlé and the rest of the baby food industry are really worried about the spread of the Boycott and international support for it. Should we allow business to use the 'first system' to discredit the third? It seemed very unfair that the Boycott groups were having to bear the brunt of unsubstantiated accusations against IOCU. On the other hand, we had written several formal letters already and achieved so little in response. Would the Executive Board care at all?

In December 1989, we decide to give it one more try and write to the Chairman of the Executive Board. I also attend its January 1990 meeting and appeal to Board members to voice protest. Some people do care. The Secretariat is asked to take 'appropriate action' and IOCU follows up with yet another formal letter, this time to the WHO Director-General. Finally, in February 1990, the head of External Relations, Mr R J Anderson writes IOCU a clear and unequivocal letter stating that there was no 'question of the IOCU being "reprimanded" by WHO or warned with respect to the loss of its maintaining official relations with WHO'.¹⁷ Clear and simple, the letter satisfies IOCU and relations between the two organizations are up by a

notch. Unfortunately much damage had been done, also to the credibility of WHO's own staff.

**The latest battle:
the issue of free
supplies**

The IBFAN Forum in 1989 did not bother about the petty aspects of 'official relations' with WHO and the ups and downs of IFM scheming. The 350 organizers, old and new participants in the network, did focus on the issue of 'supplies'. Supplies are amounts of infant formula given free or at low-cost by manufacturers to health care centres, ostensibly for charity. They are, in fact, a clever and insidious marketing device, because they encourage routine bottle feeding and 'hook' both consumers and hospitals on the habit of artificial feeding and the brands donated. These 'free supplies' are the most important mechanism to cause lactation failure today.

IBFAN has been preoccupied with supplies for ten years. When the first Nestlé Boycott ended in 1984, a key element in the Joint Agreement signed by Nestlé was that it committed itself to abide by the International Code and any clarification of the Code, particularly on 'supplies', that WHO and UNICEF would issue. The clarification came in 1986 when the conclusions of an Expert Meeting were reflected in a World Health Assembly resolution which was adopted by consensus. The US voted against it in Committee discussions, saw it was once again isolated and was quick to avoid another public outcry as in 1981 when it voted against the Code. So in plenary, when the resolution came up for the final vote, the US kept quiet (all eyes were on them) and it was adopted by consensus. For more than two years, IBFAN had studied the impact of supplies and demonstrated that they are the most effective way of undermining breastfeeding from the start. Hundreds of petitions signed by prestigious paediatricians were presented to WHO and UNICEF and gradually enough pressure was built for the two UN agencies to call for a Meeting of Experts to determine when free amounts of infant formula were *necessary* in health care facilities. The report of that meeting was clear: 'Maternity wards and hospitals should not be recipients of free or subsidized supplies of breast-milk substitutes'.

WHO rehashed the report into longer and more wordy guidelines but the resolution itself is quite clear: Member States are urged to 'ensure that the small amounts of breast-milk substitutes needed for the minority of infants who require them in maternity wards and hospitals are made available through the normal procurement channels and not through free or subsidized supplies'. In other words: the little that is needed should be bought! In our experience, the more words added to legal language, the more loopholes are created. It was hard to convince the sponsors of the resolution

to keep the language as simple as possible and not allow the WHO Secretariat to rewrite it in UNese. Simple, straightforward language somehow is not acceptable in UN documents, yet everyone sighs about the volume of paper to be read.

Stop blaming the victim

Between 1986 and 1988, industry lawyers tried with all their might to discredit the resolution. First they said it was addressed to governments, not to manufacturers; then, that it did not modify the Code and they would stick to the Code; then, that 'normal procurement channels' were the existing ones of donated supplies; also, that it was the responsibility of health workers to accept or not to accept 'supplies'; and, finally, that eliminating supplies would 'create more problems than it solves and would be interference in the health policies of sovereign nations'.¹⁸

Especially the last argument turns the entire problem upside down. All member States of WHO recommend unanimously that supplies be stopped because they are harmful, yet transnationals turn the tables on them and say: we cannot stop because we don't want to interfere in your sovereignty. It reminds me of the very same argument these companies use when artificial feeding results in malnutrition and death, namely, the product was over-diluted, bottles were not properly sterilized, instructions were not followed, clean boiled water was not used ... In other words, they *blame* the mothers who are the victims of their marketing tactics in the first place.

In the face of industry's opposition to ending supplies, the US IBFAN group, ACTION, gave the two worst offenders an ultimatum: set a timetable for stopping supplies or we shall start another boycott. No timetable was given and the new Nestlé Boycott was launched in the US and West Germany on World Food Day, 15 October 1988. Actions against Wyeth and Milupa were also started. As a last-ditch effort to stop the boycotters, industry persuaded WHO to issue a press-release on October 14(!) stating that the International Code had not been 'modified' by the 1986 Assembly resolution and IFM sent copies of that press release to anyone who might support the Boycott. How does a press release weigh up against a resolution of the World Health Assembly? And how does it weigh against the words of the senior legal officer of WHO who wrote in a letter to IBFAN that the Code had been 'clarified' by the resolution?

It was a battle over words, meant to confuse, divide and delay action. It failed. The second Nestlé Boycott is now in effect in a dozen countries and five other companies are targeted for consumer action. The new Interna-

tional Boycott Alliance set up at the IBFAN Forum 1989 provides a channel for individuals and groups from many other countries to sustain Boycott efforts. The 'green' consumer movement in Europe describes Nestlé's unethical promotion as a prime issue for consumer power. The market leader has got to show the way.

Throughout 1989, IFM tried to get 'other parties' to agree to a meeting which ostensibly would discuss the issue of supplies. IOCU, the Christian Medical Commission, the Federation of Gynaecologists & Obstetricians and the International Paediatric Association all declined. Why should they meet when WHO/UNICEF had already held an expert meeting on the subject and WHO policy was clearly set by the 1986 resolution? WHO had agreed to be the host but only on condition that all parties would agree to meet. Since this was not the case, it politely withdrew its agreement to host such a meeting on 'supplies'.

The Boycott, that faithful dual track of IBFAN, continued to grow particularly in Europe. Suddenly, in the middle of 1990 Nestlé announced it wanted to halt supplies and asked for a meeting especially with the US churches. As it turned out, Nestlé only wanted to stop 'inappropriate supplies' and only in developing countries. Neither the American nor the Canadian churches would agree to endorse any plan that would not be universal, have a timeline and be selective. Luckily they all stuck to the same platform and yet another divide and rule tactic was dismissed.

**New paths are made
by walking**

Ten years after its inception, IBFAN is still at loggerheads with the market leader. Links between the first system and the second system seem cosier than ever, in the international and many a national sphere. And babies are still dying. The UNICEF Deputy Executive Director, Karin Lokhaug, told the IBFAN Forum on 9 October 1989,

40,000 young children will die today, just as 40,000 died yesterday and another 40,000 will die tomorrow, and comparable numbers will be disabled for life, the vast majority of them from causes for which we have long since discovered low-cost cures and preventions. A significant number of them would not die nor even become sick if their mothers breastfed.

Yet, every day also, somewhere in the world, baby food marketing managers meet with advertising experts and discuss prospective sales, the most appealing labels, the most successful slogans, useful posters (yes, breastfeeding posters, why not?—as long as the company name gets on!),

With this continuing accumulation of knowledge, with the weight of science constantly confirming that there is no substitute for breastmilk, why should we be here, struggling to promote, support, and protect breastfeeding?

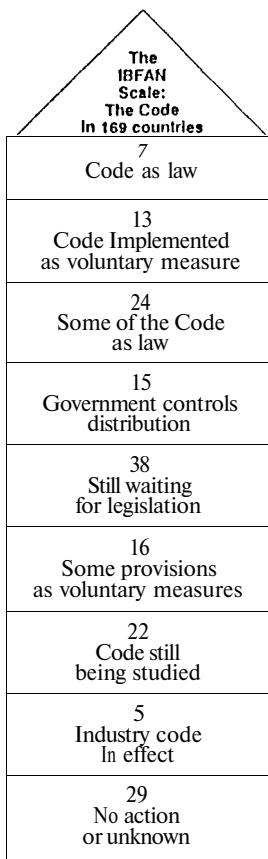
*Dr Hiroshi Nakajima, Director-General, WHO
Address at the WHO/UNICEF Meeting on 'Breast-feeding
in the 1990s—A Global Initiative', Florence 1990*

the best way to maintain and increase brand loyalty, particularly in hospitals. And they will discuss ways to get around the WHO/UNICEF Code provisions and that nasty 1986 resolution. I can imagine them wishing that IFM would just keep those consumers talking, at WHO or UNICEF or wherever, safely locked away in 'consultations' in Geneva. UNICEF, fortunately, will not agree to such tactics. Although there is political pressure, UNICEF has managed so far to steer clear of infiltration by the baby food transnationals. Endless consultations will conveniently keep 'activists' away from the field so that the marketing people can get on with their business of selling.

1991 will mark the tenth anniversary of the Code of Marketing. In preparation of that milestone, IBFAN has launched another major monitoring exercise. In more than forty countries around the world, volunteers will be visiting hospitals, clinics and shops to see how the Code is observed. They will be watching out for advertisements on TV, radio and in the press. They will interview mothers, doctors and nurses. The data collected will be the basics for a new *State of the Code by Company* chart. These practices in the field and the policy as declared by companies in their own replies to the IBFAN survey will be jointly scrutinized.

Questionnaires have also been sent to 164 governments. These questionnaires are carefully designed to obtain the maximum amount of detail about what measures were taken to implement the various provisions of the International Code. WHO reports have tended to consider any breastfeeding promotion effort or labelling act as an indication that countries had taken measures to apply the Code. All were added up to some very positive conclusion, e.g. over one hundred countries are reported to have given effect to the Code, etc. Pleasing information but quite misleading. In reality, IBFAN's 1989 count found only seven countries that have implemented all Code provisions as national legislation and only 13 as a serious voluntary commitment. Many others have been 'studying' the Code for years or have only adopted the easier provisions.

In a major breakthrough at the 1990 World Health Assembly, the Dutch delegate agreed that the WHO implementation records were a little fuzzy. He stated: 'more knowledge about the state of affairs regarding the implementation of the Baby Food Code in all Member States is urgently needed. My delegation would like to have more specific and accessible information about measures introduced and their progress. The good work of IBFAN and IOCU could certainly be matched by WHO. It would mark a new beginning for WHO if requests from Member States were coming forward aimed at helping to create the proper instruments to give effect to the Code. A



State of the Code by Country 1989

Breastfeeding is a unique process that:

- **provides ideal nutrition for infants and contributes to their healthy growth and development;**
- **reduces incidence and severity of infectious diseases, thereby lowering infant morbidity and mortality;**
- **contributes to women's health by reducing the risk of breast and ovarian**

more active role for WHO in trying to generate requests for legal assistance and other forms of advice would enhance a better implementation and monitoring of the Code. It would mark a beginning of a more active role for WHO in monitoring the Code.¹⁹

Another specific mention of Code implementation was made by Dr Nakajima himself at the July 1990 high-level policy-makers meeting at Spedale degli Innocenti in Florence, Italy. This meeting was specifically on breastfeeding so, in a way, it was difficult to avoid the Code. The 'third system' was carefully kept out. Still, the Innocenti Declaration spells out that: All governments by the year 1995 should have ... taken action to give effect to the principles and aim of all Articles of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and subsequent relevant World Health Assembly resolutions in their entirety;...²⁰ Of course, there are many other important recommendations in the Declaration and IBFAN groups can definitely use these in their training and outreach projects, but it was nice to see the Code and the relevant WHA resolutions specifically mentioned.

Future music

The cutting edge is not an easy or comfortable place to be. There is money to fund breastfeeding promotion but for protection by way of monitoring or company campaigns, each funding proposal has to prove its legitimacy over and over again. I admire my colleagues, those who started the second Nestlé Boycott, who took to the streets again, knowing full well that it would ruin their chances of easy funding, that the companies were sailing with the winds of a changed political climate and that the issue was becoming more difficult to explain. But they also know that only public pressure can bring concrete change, that industry worries about bad publicity and that the fight is right.

Conviction is what makes IBFAN tick. Somehow the earnest concern for mothers and children shines through and sets us apart from the company managers who lobby for free trade. I feel strong whenever I speak out for IBFAN because I know that thousands will back me. We've been doing some of WHO's work by keeping track of those governments who have implemented the Code and urging on those who have not made any significant progress on the legal front. We've been watching the companies and reporting on their compliance with WHO recommendations. They say they comply, but who checks? The 'third system' was asked by WHO and UNICEF to help monitor progress. We're doing just that.



IBFAN affiliates worldwide: 148 groups in 74 countries

being a founding member of IBFAN and the capacity of its president, Anwar Fazal, to enthuse IOCU members. In Africa, Margaret Kyenkya took a hazardous plunge by abandoning a secure job and launching full-time into work for IBFAN, starting with her US\$ 500 and little other than promises of help. Painstakingly she built a network throughout East Africa, innovating as she went along. Some of the Latin American and Caribbean groups had been involved from the start but others joined only gradually. The Canadians already cooperated with the Americans in the Nestlé Boycott and as it spread to Europe, boycotting groups almost had a sub-network within IBFAN. In some parts of Europe, groups affiliated and then faded out, would resurface and flex their muscles again or be replaced by entirely new groups.

Many of the most recent IBFAN groups are nursing mothers' groups. Initially they shied away from IBFAN because they were told it was 'political'. IBFAN's staying power and results have convinced many of these groups that one cannot remain apolitical in the infant feeding area. Development

- cancer, and by increasing the spacing between pregnancies;
- provides social and economic benefits to the family and the nation;
- provides most women with a sense of satisfaction when successfully carried out.

The Innocenti Declaration on the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding, Florence 1990

I also admire the health workers who have come and backed us up, who have come and joined us. Many have been blacklisted as 'activists' and will never get company funding for research. Those doctors and nurses and midwives who realized there was something missing in their training and started all over again. The mothers who have stood up to doctors and hospital administrators to tell them what they knew about infant feeding and refused to comply with the rules (because the rules were bad for babies). The lay people within IBFAN who have learnt so much that they can now organize refresher courses for paediatricians. The government officials and the UN bureaucrats who have stuck out their necks to help, to speak up, to write letters, risk careers ...

Many lessons have been learnt and not enough victories celebrated. Each change in labelling, each hospital that banned the bottle and each country adopting a code should have given rise to a global party. Instead, IBFAN plugs on, urging more people to join, uncovering more Code violations, begging for more grants. The effects of 50 years of promotion of bottle feeding cannot be wiped out in five or even ten years and new products and practices appear before there is a chance for legislation. But within the 'third system' a lot more people know how to organize, how to analyse power relations between systems, how marketing works, how much trust to place in the UN system, how much faith to have in documents and declarations and how much in themselves and each other.

About the future we can say there is now an opportunity for renewed action. The Innocenti meeting on 'Breastfeeding in the 1990s—A Global Initiative' was preceded by useful technical meetings and followed by UNICEF's World Summit for Children. Commitment is in the air. Dutch and Swedish government agencies have begun to work on a new substantive initiative to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the Code. A new opportunity is opening in the 'first system'. Will it see fruition? The 'second system' is under increasing pressure and the grapevine has it that Nestlé, the leading protagonist, may soon concede on the supplies issue. The pressure is working. As for the 'third system', the people, we can say that we are going to increase our efforts. At the opening of the IBFAN Forum in Manila, Anwar Fazal, one of the founders of IBFAN, shared with us this poem from Latin America:

Just as children never tire of play
And the condor never tires of flight
So the people will never give up their struggle.

1. Harry Gravet, former Director with an international marketing firm in Southeast Asia, in a radio interview with Andrew Olle on 24 October 1989 on ABC's 2BL programme, Australia.
2. For more details see Chetley, *The Politics of Baby Foods*, Frances Pinter Publishers, London 1986, p. 97.
3. Minchin, M., *Breastfeeding Matters*, Alien and Unwin, Melbourne, 1985, p. 316.
4. Saunders, E., letter from ICIFI to WHO Executive Board members, January 1981.
5. Pagan, R., speech to the Public Affairs Council, New York, USA, 22 April 1982.
6. Peterson, E., Consumer Affairs Advisor to US Presidents Johnson and Carter; IOCU Representative to the U.N., speeches in 1984.
7. Nestlé made a commitment in September 1984 to 'favour, support and work towards implementation of the Code in all countries'. Later on, it exempted countries like Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan. In 1989 it started marketing baby food in the USA and began with advertising to mothers!
8. Pagan, R. D., 'The Challenge to multinational marketing: a public relations response', in Denig, E., and van der Meiden, A., *A Geography of Public Relations Trends*, pp. 374-379, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Dordrecht 1985.
9. Throughout this article, I have preferred to use the term 'third system' or 'people's organizations' rather than the negative 'NGO'. The advantage of the term 'people's organizations' or POs, in Anwar Fazal's words, 'is that one can call governments NPO's, or non-people's organizations'.
10. See *Development Dialogue* 1980:1.
11. van Meurs, R., in *Vrij Nederland*, 21 October 1989, p. 3.
12. *Ibid.*
13. ICIFI was, in many ways, a result of the baby food campaign. The industry's first knee-jerk response to criticism was to set up a flimsy international body to deflect criticism away from individual companies. It was a kind of buffer group-cum-PR machine that really only served the least progressive and most aggressive companies.
14. IFM actually operates under the umbrella of ISDI (International Society of Dietetics, including all Infant and Young Children Food Industries). ISDI was admitted into 'official relations' with WHO in January 1987.
15. IFM minutes, 16 December 1988 (88/502), 'Additional points raised at the meeting with Dr Mark Belsey and Mr James Akre on 22 November 1988 in Geneva'. The relevant paragraph reads as follows: 'The NGO status renewal for IOCU will come up at the Executive Board meeting in January 1989. WHO intends "to take a hard line" and will report to the standing committee that "activists do not talk with WHO". Dr Belsey will advise the standing committee "to suggest to IOCU to look for another spokesman".'
16. *International Health and Development* is published in Washington, D.C., USA. Only three issues have appeared so far; the excellent WHO library only received the second issue and even that one was missing from its box without a trace, in December 1989.
17. WHO letter to Anwar Fazal on 20 February, 1990.
18. Corporate Affairs Department Nestlé SA, *Infant formula donations to hospitals. Questions and Answers*, Vevey, Switzerland, February 1989.
19. Delegate of the Netherlands, WHA, May 1990.
20. Innocenti Declaration, Florence, 1 August, 1990.

Democracy and the Media in Southern Africa

By Patrick van Rensburg

In this report on the discussions at the Seminar on 'Democracy and the Media in Southern Africa', held at the Chobe Game Lodge in Botswana, December 1-5, 1989, Patrick van Rensburg draws attention to the fact that 'sub-regional organizations exist, sub-regional cooperation is a reality that is likely to strengthen and expand and that much thinking about the direction and shape of this cooperation will be necessary'. One important problem is, however, that 'the media of the SADCC sub-region do not adequately reflect even the existing levels and processes of cooperation, and those that attempt to do so are beyond the reach of ordinary people because of their costs'. Hence there is an obvious need in Southern Africa for publications that can be afforded by ordinary people, publications that provide both hard news and improved analyses aimed at facilitating public participation in the discussion of future sub-regional cooperation.



It was in view of this situation that the participants in the Chobe Seminar recommended the expansion and strengthening of a news agency in the sub-region and also that 'investigations be pursued into the modalities of a weekly regional newspaper that could help generate a regular flow of regional analysis and regional news'.

Patrick van Rensburg, who directed the Chobe Seminar, has been active in the fields of education and communication in Southern Africa for more than 25 years. As Director of the Foundation for Education with Production International (FEP), based in Botswana, he has been directing a series of seminars sponsored by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and reported upon in DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE and in books like Another Development for SADCC (1987), Another Development for Lesotho? (1989) and Education and Employment in Southern Africa: Defusing the Time-bomb? (1990). As Director of FEP he was also instrumental in establishing the Botswana political weekly Mmegi/The Reporter, which has gained increasing recognition as one of the liveliest political weeklies in Southern Africa.

The Seminar on 'Democracy and the Media in Southern Africa' brought together press people from South Africa, and from the Frontline States, primarily on two common understandings. They were all totally opposed to apartheid and wanted to see democratic government in South Africa, and

they believed—in line with the UN Charter—that 'everyone has the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media'.

Though most had at some time worked for the large commercial press in South Africa, all but one of the eleven participants from inside that country came from the much smaller but expanding newspapers and news agencies, which prefer to describe themselves collectively as the *democratic*, rather than the *alternative*, press. Four of the eleven participants from the Frontline States worked for government-owned or government-controlled media, whilst another five came from what might—in line with the South Africans' terminology—be called the democratic press; another worked for the commercial press and the eleventh was a former journalist with a government-controlled newspaper, now turned an academic. There were in addition an official representative of the ANC's Department of Information, a prominent Swedish journalist and two specially invited Swedish officials.

For nearly all the participants it was a unique occasion. Few of the South Africans had encountered journalists from the Frontline States in such a gathering, and the reverse was also true of most of those from the Frontline States.

There were many reasons to bring together the press people of the Frontline States and their democratic South African counterparts. The peoples of the Frontline States have also to a greater or lesser degree been victims of apartheid—though many buy products from South Africa or earn their bread there. They have suffered from the overflows of the conflicts and pressures that rage around it and want to see an end to it as much as the oppressed South Africans themselves. South Africans struggling for democratic governance have much to learn from the experiences of their neighbours as independent states, from their successes as much as from their mistakes, and will sooner or later have to forge all kinds of links with them, which they would manage better if they better understood their conditions and circumstances. Currently, both sides are forced to view each other through the distorting mirrors of transnational news agencies and reports of foreign correspondents of the commercial press.

The emergence of the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) inside South Africa, in alliance with the African National Congress (ANC), has made not just possible but necessary, contacts of all kinds between the component organizations of the MDM and their counterparts in the Frontline States. These contacts are especially necessary between the democratic press in South Africa and the media in the Frontline States, to promote a more ob-

jective and penetrating flow of information between them about their respective societies, and to develop mutually beneficial cooperation in the interests of their different organizations and professional bodies.

The restrictions on, and curtailment of, media activities in South Africa may have eased somewhat. But even when fully enforced, they never silenced what Ndimara Tegambwage of Tanzania, referring to democratic journalism in the anti-colonial struggles of the Frontline States, has called the 'guerilla typewriters'. There is a vibrant and dynamic democratic press in South Africa and democratic journalists are even able from time to time to get their copy into the commercial press. There can be no better source of news about what is going on in South Africa today than that which the democratic press there offers.

Ndimara Tegambwage laments what he calls the 'silencing' of the 'guerilla typewriters' in the Frontline States. Discussions in one of the sessions relating to media in these countries (reported on in more detail later) question whether this terminology fits the requirements of journalism in 'post-resistance' conditions. But presentations by Frontline States journalists (also noted later) leave no doubt that the rights of communication enshrined in the UN Charter are not without constraints in their own countries, a source of embarrassment to them and an unwelcome filter on the flow of information about affairs in their different countries.

How the right to information endorsed in the UN Charter is to be exercised has been, like the meaning of democracy, subject to a wide variety of interpretations, even in the age of *glasnost*, between East and West, and especially between North and South, as the international debate about the new world information order has made clear.

The Seminar organizers had emphasized from the outset their own view that the 'right to seek, receive and impart information through any media' was absolutely essential to effective and meaningful participatory democracy, to equitable socio-economic development and to the promotion of international understanding and peaceful cooperation in partnership.

The sponsors expressed the view that real democracy requires democratic content and not just forms. 'It requires a high level of mass consciousness, awareness and knowledge, and a high level of active popular participation in the processes of production, to which not only communication but an appropriate mass education are crucial.'

The participants were invited to review the restrictions and constraints on communication wherever they were experienced in Southern Africa and whatever their sources; to discuss and assess the legitimate rights and roles of governments and different agencies engaged in democratic communication, in the varying conditions, particularly of the Frontline States; and to recommend approaches, measures and projects to extend and strengthen freedom of communication nationally, regionally and internationally.

It was made clear that the criteria for determining how the right to information should be exercised in the Frontline States and for assessing media freedom had to be related to the socio-economic conditions prevailing there.

The dangers of Western models

The pressures on the world from the West to adopt its form of democracy, its economic system and its 'free flow of information' are greater than ever now, as a result of developments in Eastern Europe.

The view of the sponsors was that the transferability of these models has to be viewed with some scepticism. Socio-economic systems and media structures, as well as rights and freedoms, are established in a process of development, frequently marked by conflict and struggle, and do not come into existence with the wave of a wand.

The media of the Western world are vast and complex and very diversified. They include television, radio and print, with different target audiences, served by quality channels and quality papers, as well as popular channels and papers. The Western media are deeply interconnected with their political and economic systems, are highly influential and are about power and profit.

They have their fearless editors and reporters and praiseworthy investigative journalists, and some of their exposes have shaken society. These may topple Presidents, tycoons and individual business empires, but they do not subvert the system: a Nixon is eventually replaced by a Reagan and followed by a Bush, and both are embroiled in new cover-ups. They often assail people's rights and privacy, using deception and stealth, subjecting individuals and organizations to unwarranted abuse and 'trial by media'.

They are fiercely partisan in the protection of their political and economic systems and they effectively censor ideologically unpalatable news and views. They are incapable of acknowledging the exploitative North-South relationship and its dependency systems and structures, and are overwhelm-

ingly jingoistic in their coverage of the Third World. Radical opponents of the social systems, who watch with dismay the rise of a permanent underclass underneath the arches and amongst the trashcans of their societies, are forced to establish their own alternative press.

The role of the popular media in particular was highlighted during the opening session of the Seminar, as a major instance of the misuse of press freedom. It influences and shapes popular consciousness quite deliberately and unashamedly, distracting it from real issues and deadening and numbing it with tarted up trivia and trash. It might be called a 'mushroom culture, kept in the dark and fed on bullshit'.

The 'public authoritarian power structures' which—like their private counterparts in the transnationals—'roam the world', and which manipulate the media and public opinion under the guise of democracy, did not escape criticism. Dr Ernst Michanek spoke of the dismantling of the iron curtains, the walls and the watchtowers which divided Europe but also kept the people of Eastern Europe subjugated in the dark and fed on lies and deceptions. The mass uprisings that were taking place even during the Seminar, were overthrowing authoritarian power structures and demanding plural democracies and freedom of information. Dr Michanek compared this to the mass demands of the people of South Africa and their reaffirmation of the Freedom Charter, saying that 'the basic demands of people are the same everywhere, if only you are ready to listen to them, and people can make their voices heard'.

Among the most stimulating sessions of the Seminar was the presentation of their experiences by a panel of journalists who either had been or still are employed by officially owned and controlled media in the Frontline States, speaking in their capacity not as servants of the state, but as professional journalists. They frankly acknowledged some of the pressures to which they were often subjected in the handling of news items or features critical of their governments. They cited instances of removals from their posts of forthright editors.

The commercial press in the Frontline States is comparatively small and so is the democratic press. There was one speaker from each of the two categories in the Frontline States, who testified to pressures of various kinds. When government-controlled media were critical about opposition parties and their activities, and silent about corruption and other scandals, and university closures, the rumour mills were active. Circulation figures of the commercial and democratic papers which dared to handle such news,

however cautiously, rose dramatically. In countries short of newsprint, there were threats to cut supplies, and newspaper owners were given private warnings by officialdom.

It was perhaps unfortunate that despite strenuous efforts by the organizers to secure participation of official spokesmen of Frontline States, none were present. But the discussions of the role of governments in communication were neither one-sided nor unsympathetic. It was acknowledged that reports about development projects and government programmes were regarded by some journalists as dull and not newsworthy, a view which came under closer examination on several occasions.

Resistance and post-resistance journalism

Peta Thorneycroft of the commercially owned monthly magazine, *Parade*, in Zimbabwe, suggested that 'resistance journalism' is exhilarating, 'there is a moral right to it', but that 'post-resistance journalism' is often less appealing. It takes more skill not less to write excitingly about a sewing cooperative. 'I say this', she said, 'because when it's all over in South Africa you will find it takes some stamina to operate as a journalist when you have been schooled in "resistance journalism".'

She made the point that the 'guerilla typewriters' in Zimbabwe were silenced not by the post-independence government but by successive Rhodesian regimes. 'The phenomenon of the democratic press in South Africa was absent in Rhodesia', she added. She also noted that 'the present state of emergency in Zimbabwe which has been in existence for 25 years does not affect us as journalists. We are not restricted from entering unrest areas and there are no provisions in the state of emergency regulations which are used against journalists.'

Self-censorship

Speakers pointed out that much of the reticence in Frontline media was a form of self-censorship by editors and editorial staff. They were in many cases themselves members of ruling parties and ruling classes, shared the views of their political and class allies, and felt discomfited by student unrest and worker militance, by populist demagoguery and ethnically oriented factionalism.

Self-censorship was motivated by other considerations as well, such as fear of reprisals. But in some cases editorial staff on newly established fledgling newspapers, in countries where none or few had existed before independence or had operated under colonially imposed restraints, recognized that media freedoms and responsible journalism had to be developed slowly and painfully. High profile confrontations might bring crackdowns

that could be avoided by a more cautious treatment of sensitive news.

One journalist, employed by a Frontline State government, was impressed by the courage of democratic press people in South Africa in the face of the massive constraints on the press there. He suggested that professional journalists in government employment in countries like his might be obliged at some time to take the same bold risks as the South Africans do all the time, regardless of the consequences.

Many people in all walks of life take brave stands on grounds of personal or professional integrity that result in isolation and considerable economic or other sacrifices. No one can deny this right and there will be many who might publicly or privately applaud their courage.

Such actions will be more widely applauded and supported when, in the case of media people, they reflect accountability not only to their audiences, but to communities and wider public interests.

Accountability

The question of accountability was discussed and supported, but primarily in the context of the democratic press in South Africa. It was not thoroughly examined in the case of Frontline States where popularly elected governments are in charge. In South Africa, the democratic press emerged out of wider social conflicts, provides a voice for mass democratic movements and serves their need for information to guide popular struggles.

The question arises as to what social and political constituencies democratic journalists in the Frontline States should be accountable. Political commentators tend to see the ruling elites of the Frontline States as primarily petty bourgeois with a narrow class base, allied to rich and middle class peasants who are generally able to carry the bulk of peasantry along with them. Governments are wary of the workers and generally tend to seek tight control over the trade unions. But the workers, too, in little industrialized countries, have a relatively narrow base. Governments are also concerned about the large numbers of educated youth who might become prey to populist rhetoric. Unemployed educated youth may also be a source of recruitment for dissident movements like the MNR in Mozambique.

Such formations may not readily allow the rise of mass-based movements capable of forcing democratic demands—like those that succeeded in Eastern Europe—on their governments, but recent developments in countries like Kenya and Zambia are a reminder of the latent power that resides with the people in any country.

In some states dominated by a single party, the party may project a radical image and progressives there try to find ways of working within it. In others, progressives find some role in government ministries or in NGOs (the third system), or in tiny left-wing parties subject to harassment and banning.

Criticizing democratically elected governments

Of course, even popularly elected governments must be accountable not only at elections, but throughout their term of office. Impropriety and lack of accountability on their part will arouse popular criticism, and angry constituencies and lobbies will make themselves heard when affected. Strong criticisms of governments are in many cases officially resented but are sometimes voiced in their parliaments. In such situations, editors and journalists might find they have enough influential support and protection to publish critical news and views. Even one-party systems may contain their own opposition within them. Like kaleidoscopes they produce changing alliances as contradictions develop, which may create new opportunities for democratic journalists.

Democratic journalists in the Frontline States may have to seek alliances wherever they can, whether within the progressive wing of ruling parties where such exist, in trade unions or in progressive farmers' or peasants' organizations. Journalists have the same rights as other categories of working people to form their own associations or join those that exist. If these are dominated by self-serving self-censors, they are free to form their own associations as democratic journalists in South Africa have done (or for that matter progressive teachers in Botswana). The point is that democratic journalists have a constituency among themselves to which they become accountable and where also they can seek support for expanding the process of free communication. The possibility of linking up with democratic journalists elsewhere in the region (and internationally) also exist. Whoever else they recruit to their cause, democratic journalists must be in the vanguard of the struggle for freedom of information.

David Lush of *The Namibian*, noted that this paper—which had supported SWAPO in its liberation struggle—had criticized the movement over the alleged detention and tortures of dissidents, and asked what its editorial line should be in the new Namibia. There was a fair degree of support for the view that every issue of public interest had to be raised by serious, responsible newspapers that claimed to be democratic, but that reports and articles needed to be carefully worded, and sensationalism avoided in language and headlines. The example of the Botswana weekly *Mmegi/The Reporter* which had used this approach with some success was cited during the discussion.

Attention was drawn during the discussions to the African Charter for Human Rights, in terms of which a Commission had now been appointed to receive and act on complaints about abuses of the Charter. Whilst the Commission's powers to act against offending governments were limited, it was empowered to publicize the refusal of governments to act on its representations and to report offending governments to the OAU Heads of State meeting. There was support for the suggestion that however limited the Commission's powers, mechanisms such as were provided in the Charter should be used to full effect by media in the region.

The commercial press in South Africa

It was clear from the discussion of the commercial press in South Africa that most newspapers in this category are cast much in the mould of the Western press and reveal many of the same characteristics. Jo-Anne Collinge based some observations on her frustrating experience as a democratic journalist working for such a newspaper. They are owned by monopolies, are highly profit-oriented and are staffed mainly by whites. They have been constrained by restrictive censorship legislation, the impact of some of which she describes, and subjected to official harassment, but conservative editors and sub-editors are also the source of much self-censorship, which reflects their own commitments to white survival and well-being.

The Afrikaans newspapers are almost all wholly committed to supporting the ruling National Party which has been in power for 42 years. Elsabé Wessels described the experiences working for *Die Burger*, one of these monopoly owned papers, which finally drove her to quit. But she also showed up the hypocrisy of the comfortable pseudo-liberalism of the English language commercial press where she sought refuge from *Die Burger* for a while.

Apart from the emergency regulations which Jo-Anne Collinge describes and which have recently been relaxed, five Acts of Parliament, namely the Police Act, the Prisons' Act, the Defence Act, the Internal Security Act and the Protection of Information Act, also place restrictions on the publication of information.

The commercial press in South Africa comprises some hundreds of dailies, weeklies and monthlies, collectively producing some 8.75 million copies a week (mid-1989) and read by about 12 million people in a population of some 40 million. These papers generate advertising revenues in the neighbourhood of US\$ 250 million, not including receipts for classified advertising.



Participants in the Chobe Seminar on 'Democracy and the Media in Southern Africa', December 1989

*The Rand Daily
Mail: a shining light*

Just as the Western press has its shining lights, so had the South African commercial press in the *Rand Daily Mail*. This had its heyday under the editorship of Raymond Louw, who was eventually dismissed from his post.

In Raymond Louw's words, the *Rand Daily Mail* 'was the best, most dynamic, most enterprising and certainly professionally the most able paper at gathering, digesting and presenting the news, which was then taken up by people on all sides, to be further developed or attacked, but always absorbed. It was the biggest supplier of information to the South African Press Association (SAPA), was also the biggest supplier of news to the Morning Group of newspapers and those services have simply not been replaced.'

'The *Rand Daily Mail* had a special probing and questioning character which gave an extra dimension and flavour to the news and views it published that had considerable impact on its readers as well as on professional competitors. Its staff was composed of the racial and political mix of South Africa to a far greater extent than any other paper and this gave it a broad South African character that no other paper achieved then or subsequently.'

'It acted as a catalyst in the gathering and publication of news in a way that no other paper could match, partly because of its special brand of journalism and partly because of its geographic position and time of publication. Once it had broken a story, that story could not be ignored by the other media and it became the common property of the country.'

'This lack is particularly noticeable and the extreme political confusion among whites is evidence of its effect.'

'The *Mail* also had a unique "bridging quality" due to its high credibility among blacks and the liberal English establishment, and the respect it attained among political opponents, especially Nationalists, is surely required at this time when real communication has broken down.'

The demise of the *Mail* reflected essentially the contradictions between its profit-seeking owners and the radical crusading stance which made it famous. A monopoly-owned paper, it was controlled by a Board dominated by staunch conservatives, who found the paper's editorial line basically distasteful. As it was losing money, it required a commitment, which its owners and Managing Director were not in the final analysis prepared to give. The administrative and financial measures they adopted to reduce the *Mail's* losses actually increased the overall losses of the group of papers they owned.

One of the Seminar participants who had previously worked for some time on the *Rand Daily Mail* warned against romanticizing the paper's record, suggesting that after Raymond Louw's dismissal a decline set in, under the pressure of the Board and as a result of surrender by its leading editorial staff. 'It had died before it was closed', she suggested.

There are several dozen publications forming part of what has been called the alternative press in South Africa, David Niddrie pointed out. In his view, the development of alternative media was possible only when political forces in society have developed sufficiently to sustain, defend and protect an alternative press and provide its readership.

In the thirties, forties and fifties, there was a quite substantial number of alternative media, selling well and quite vibrant, largely linked to the political opposition gathered round the ANC. But with the banning and suppression of the liberation movement in the sixties these died, and for more than a decade there was almost no alternative press worth the name.

The 1973 Durban strikes were, in David Niddrie's view, the turning point for the resuscitation of mass resistance, which was intensified by the 1976 students' uprisings. *The South African Labour Bulletin* was the first publication to arise out of the ashes of the earlier alternative press, followed shortly afterwards by *Work in Progress* and *Grassroots*. These publications provided a forum for debate on apartheid and the nature of the South African state, as well as for reflection on the nature of post-apartheid society. They reflected the processes and developments within the opposition, and especially the strengthening of community organizations.

People's organization

The re-awakening alternative media was rooted in the communities and written largely by people in them. In the late seventies, youth organizations like the Azanian Students Organization (AZASO) and the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) arose to give a cutting edge to mass resistance and a series of student union publications emerged at the national level, not just campus-based and oriented. The process has continued, and as the opposition formations have expanded and developed in sophistication and complexity, the need for more information, more debate and greater communication within and among organizations has stimulated a response from an expanding alternative media. This has seen the development of a range of publications, with community newsletters at the base and now the seven alternative weeklies at the top of the pile, complemented by alternative news agencies in those areas where there are as yet no alternative publications. This has arisen not primarily as a result of struggles by journalists but out of the development of the wider political struggle, to which journalists, as part of it, have responded.

Avoiding the term 'alternative'

The word 'alternative' does not correctly define this network, and words like 'independent', and 'grassroots' have in the past been used as well, the three interchangeably. They represent different categories. 'Independent' applies most appropriately to the *Weekly Mail* and *Vrye Weekblad*, which—whilst indisputably part of the mass democratic movement in South Africa—are not directly linked to political movements. The word 'grassroots' perhaps better describes the more locally based publications, though these may have political linkages. There are, in addition, publications by the trade unions and the underground publications of the ANC. There are two common points of reference for all these publications. They represent a clear break from the dominant media, the state and business-owned monopoly media. Their underlying, subliminal message is that they oppose the *status quo*, politically and economically, and identify what is wrong with it.

The essential problem of the word 'alternative' used about this press is the implication that it reflects fringe journalism, somewhat in the mould of the papers started by United States' radicalism. Whilst still small, the *democratic* media of South Africa, which comprise only about 3 per cent of all publications in the country, represent political tendencies rooted in the greater part of the population and have moved out of the fringes, having an important influence on the dominant media. There is another problem about the use of the word 'alternative', which is that the state never came to terms with the democratic newspapers and aimed at isolating them from the media as a whole, reducing it to a subversive 'exception', to justify repressive action against it.

Over the last fifteen years, the democratic media has become a major 'propagandist' of democratic ideals and a forum of debate both on the means to end apartheid and on what kind of democracy the future South Africa should enjoy. It has also recognized that the ANC is a major player on the South African political stage with an incontestable central role, entitled to be reported as such. The democratic media took upon itself the role of challenging media restrictions and of giving the ANC and its policies the coverage to which they were entitled. Its journalists were detained and arrested, and they and their papers were banned and restricted. Supported by the trade unions and the United Democratic Front (UDF), they were the first to challenge in court laws and regulations restricting the press.

The democratic press has become a source of journalistic excellence and of probing and investigative reporting, a role it has taken over from the *Rand Daily Mail*. Papers like *Weekly Mail*, *Vrye Weekblad* and *New Nation* have become the leading publications in South Africa. The democratic press has been the initial source of information for the commercial press which has picked up its stories and pursued them.

*Moving into the
centre stage*

One of the objectives of the democratic press is to stop being 'alternative' and to move beyond its initial role of being complementary to the state and commercial media to the centre of the South African information network. Whereas its readers believed before that they would get their ideas from the democratic press and their information from the mainstream press, that is becoming increasingly less so.

The majority of the democratic press proceeds from the assumption that information is politically empowering; it is defined by those who write and by their political and cultural roots. Democratic journalists share the ANC's view of the relationship between the media and society and that in a demo-

cratic society all significant sectors, defined in class terms as well as other terms, are entitled to access to and control of the media.

A number of problems beset the democratic press and must be cleared away if it is to achieve its intended breakthrough to the centre of the country's information network. The problems in this context relate to the lack of resources of all kinds, to financing, to management, to distribution, to recruitment and salaries of personnel and to training of staff, and to costs of and access to printing facilities.

In solving its problems and in moving to centre stage, the democratic press hopes to lay the foundations for a substantial role in the press of post-apartheid South Africa that would be able to confront and challenge the monopoly press.

Sub-regional cooperation and the role of the media

More than 100 million people live in Southern Africa, some 40 million of them in South Africa alone. Many millions of them are literate, and in global terms the peoples of the new countries of the sub-region are poorly served by newspapers and periodicals, and indeed, other media forms. Despite the existence of sub-regional organizations, intra-area information flows amongst the media of the member states, and via the existing sub-regional news agencies, are limited in terms both of frequency and quality. Reportage in all media forms of the sub-regional organizations themselves and their operations is equally limited. So too—as already noted—are information flows between South Africa's democratic press and the media of countries in the sub-region.

Limitations of existing publications

Apart from the Africa-wide publications—nearly all monthlies—which offer some coverage of the sub-region, and SADCC sectoral publications, all of which have limited readerships, as well as various newsletters available only to subscribers, there are only three sub-regional publications. These are the *Southern African Economist*, *Africa South* and the *Southern African Political and Economic Monthly (SAPEM)*. They too have limited circulations, either because of their specialized nature, or because they are relatively expensive; and all three appear too infrequently to carry hard news. Whilst all three are, in varying degrees, dependent on donor funding, they are reportedly meeting with the approval of their targeted readerships. All have some problems of distribution and at least two report hard-to-bear production costs. Only the *Southern African Economist* reports satisfaction with advertising revenues.

None of the three existing sub-regional papers are privately owned, but all aim at economic viability, though there must be some doubt about their likely success. Two offer coverage of developments in South Africa, although none of them has any substantial circulation there.

The review by Seminar participants of existing sub-regional publications and sub-regional coverage in national publications had a clear purpose. It was to assess the adequacy of the sub-regional focus in the existing media in the light of the development of political and economic cooperation at the sub-regional level.

Two different trends must be demarcated here. The first relates to the cooperation of the Frontline States, the countries within SADCC, and those in the Preferential Trade Area. These are overlapping groupings of countries with specific but not exclusive objectives. The second relates to democratic forces in South Africa and their contacts with governments and their counterparts in the sub-region.

At the same time, Seminar participants looked at the existing mechanisms of sub-regional cooperation amongst media organizations, for purposes such as training and mutual support in the development of publications themselves. They gave particular attention to cooperation of this kind within the Frontline States and SADCC and between these and the democratic press in South Africa, and to the possibilities of improving such mechanisms.

The three sub-regional groupings which emerged within Southern Africa arose not only out of their dependence and underdevelopment, and the prompting of the Lagos Declaration, but also out of the particular circumstances and historical relationships in Southern Africa, and South Africa's destabilization of and pressures on its neighbours. The structures and objectives of SADCC and the PTA, which their member states accepted at the time of their formation, were clearly designed to accommodate various national interests and historical commitments, which are likely to change as conditions in the whole region change.

The progress of these organizations to date, and especially that of SADCC, has created solid foundations on which to extend the areas of their cooperation. But despite the successes—of SADCC in particular—and perhaps even because of them, contradictions have emerged. Whilst a fundamental aim was to reduce dependence, many of the successes to date have depended on foreign aid, and the member countries are not less, but as much,

if not even more, dependent on conventional development processes and unequal North-South trade relationships. Formidable problems of rural poverty and of unemployment, especially amongst educated youth, remain and may in some cases have worsened. South Africa remains heavily involved in trade, transport and investment in the sub-region. There is a strong case to be made for alternative development strategies.

Future sub-regional cooperation may require the formulation of a sub-regional development strategy based on mixed economies, for countries in SADCC at least, if not the PTA, recognizing that national markets are limited by their relatively small populations and that their capacity to generate capital is limited by the narrow economic base of each country.

Future trends

The rising tide of resistance in South Africa—more open now than before—and the impact of sanctions have added to the economic problems which arise out of the historical contradictions of apartheid. Future cooperation amongst SADCC countries based on a sub-regional development strategy must recognize that in the short term continuing economic relationships with South Africa will remain problematical. A flexible approach in such a sub-regional development strategy may however envisage cooperation with post-apartheid South Africa at a future date—sooner or later—a South Africa which is likely to pursue very different economic, social and political goals than it does now.

The point that arises strongly out of these considerations is that sub-regional organizations exist, sub-regional cooperation is a reality that is likely to strengthen and expand, and that much thinking about the direction and shape of this cooperation will be necessary. Yet the media of the SADCC sub-region do not adequately reflect even the existing levels and processes of cooperation, and those that attempt to do so are beyond the reach of most ordinary people because of their costs. There is therefore a clear need for publications affordable by ordinary people to contain improved and more frequent analyses as well as hard news to facilitate public participation in the discussion of future sub-regional cooperation.

It will be clear also, that developments in South Africa are of profound importance for the sub-region and require, likewise, adequate constant analyses and news coverage, to ensure public awareness and involvement in the debates about their future.

South Africa's neighbours have been vital to its economy and this could be even more so for post-apartheid South Africa, when mutually beneficial re-

lations on a basis of partnership will become possible. An equitable regional strategy in such circumstances would have to address rural underdevelopment and mass unemployment everywhere in a manner that harnesses energies now wasted, for human progress.

Considerations such as these strengthen the case made at the beginning of this essay for an adequate flow of information into the South African democratic press about developments in neighbouring countries.

Recommendations
Call for sub-regional news agency

It was in this context that the Seminar participants recommended the expansion and strengthening of a news agency in the sub-region to ensure a better flow of information about it to the South African democratic press, and also recommended that investigations be pursued into the modalities of a weekly regional newspaper that could help generate a regular flow of regional analysis and regional news.

It is clear that if the sub-regional media are to respond to these challenges and the democratic South African media are to improve the flow of information about South Africa into the sub-region, publications themselves and their capacity to gather and analyse news, as well as agencies to disseminate it abroad, will all have to be strengthened.

Funding and training

The Seminar recommendations accordingly proposed exchanges of personnel, increased funding and accelerated training in respect of all media operations and management, which could help achieve these purposes.

During the discussion of these issues, it was reported that donors are reluctant to fund democratic newspapers directly and that they tie their contributions to training programmes, which are easier to justify from their perspective. The democratic press, especially in South Africa, is unable to mobilize sufficient resources to finance all their own editorial and production operations and distribution costs, because advertisers refuse to buy space in their publications. They accept funding for training to help cover their costs and are obliged to use qualified personnel, desperately needed to produce their papers, for makeshift training programmes. This puts a strain on the editorial and production staff and results in inadequate training for the purposes of the democratic press.

Regional media school

It was for this reason that participants proposed the establishment of a regional media school covering all media functions and not just journalistic skills. If the flow of information in the sub-region and between it and the

South African democratic press is to become effective, such a school, in the control of which democratic media are involved, is indispensable.

It can also be argued that direct support to the democratic press in South Africa is justifiable, in the face of competition with the monopoly owned commercial press, and should be made available at least until democratic government is installed there.

*Vernacular
languages*

During the discussion of the press in South Africa, it was pointed out that only some 12 million out of 40 million South Africans have access to periodicals and newspapers, probably because many are not sufficiently fluent in English. Throughout the rest of Southern Africa there are also millions of literate people who do not speak, read or write English fluently. Most of these people are excluded from the direct discussions and debates about matters of vital concern to them and are obliged to rely on others if they are to be involved. It is also the case that many literate people are regressing into illiteracy for want of written material. What better way of addressing that problem than by providing them with democratic newspapers in their own languages? Some of the money spent on literacy training is clearly wasted if readers become illiterate for want of adequate materials. There is therefore a case to be made for devoting some of the funds intended for literacy training to production of democratic papers in the vernacular languages.

Hopefully, this essay has captured some of the spirit of the Seminar. Those who participated regarded it of considerable importance to themselves, their papers and their professional associations. For this reason, it was agreed to elect a Standing Committee to promote and facilitate the implementation of its recommendations and suggestions, a task which has already begun.

The Privately Owned Media in South Africa

Villains or Victims in the Struggle for Democracy?

By Jo-Anne Collinge

The print media in South Africa is overwhelmingly commercial and profit-oriented. The 'alternative' press—or 'democratic' as it prefers to be called—accounts for about three per cent of the total number of newspapers sold each week. The mainstream press is exceedingly centralized and dominated by three newspaper groups in which the largest interests are held by the giant corporations of South Africa's highly centralized economy. With 19 dailies (only five of them in Afrikaans) and a great number of weeklies, it publishes an average of 8.75 million copies per week while the 'alternative' or 'democratic' publications, characterized by a strong anti-apartheid stance, collectively sold no more than about 170,000 copies a week (1989).

In this paper, submitted to the Chobe Seminar on 'Democracy and the Media in Southern Africa' in December, 1989, Jo-Anne Collinge examines the contradictions inherent in the development of the privately owned media—primarily the commercial English-language press—in South Africa. Having analysed the prevailing situation and the prospects for the future, she comes to the conclusion that it is difficult to say if the commercial media should be labelled victims or villains in the struggle for democracy. 'The press has always contained within it progressive journalists who have seriously tried to serve the ends of the struggle for democracy—"the public interest" as they construe it. While such journalists have been a minority, it is unlikely that the Mass Democratic Movement could regard the media as a site of struggle without the presence of people who share their vision placed inside these institutions. Of the private media institutions themselves, it must be said that when there is a conflict between the particular interests they represent and the interests of the voteless majority, they have—more often than not—ceased to be the voice of the general public.'

'To redress this situation in a post-apartheid society, it is clear that the print media cannot be left in the hands of monopolistic corporations. There is increasing debate... about how the monopolies can be dismantled and the print media reorganized to ensure fundamental access to the media by a wide range of interest groups, access that would extend beyond the consumption of media, into the realms of control.'

*Jo-Anne Collinge, an editor of **Work in Progress**, is a regular contributor to the Weekly Mail.*



There are many faces to the privately owned media in South Africa. Sometimes the image before the world is that of the embattled editor standing in the dock facing criminal charges merely because his newspaper has published—by daring or by oversight—forbidden information. At other times, what comes to mind is a frenzy of headlines and a dazzling display of electoral fervour lavished on candidates for a minority parliament—according that instrument of oppression all the respectability that should be reserved for structures of democratic government.

Both these images are true. They highlight the contradictory way in which large sections of the print media deal with the issue of minority rule, the racism that underlies it, the repression which maintains it and the privilege which depends on it. This contradiction plays itself out so often and in so many forms that it is almost a hallmark of the privately owned media in South Africa.

It arises from the fact that the dominant section of the private media—the commercial English-language press—is most certainly opposed to the policies of the National Party government. But it is equally appalled by the idea of the true liberation forces taking power and by the mass political action which suggests this is an approaching reality.

To substantiate this broad generalization, a little needs to be said about the general nature of the privately owned South African media.

The nature of the privately owned media sector

To speak of privately owned media in the South African situation, is virtually to confine oneself to the print media. Television and broadcasting are almost entirely in the hands of the state-controlled South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC).

There are four national public television channels, financed by licensing and advertising and run by the SABC. A fifth channel, available on a subscription basis only, is jointly owned by the major newspaper publishers, but is restricted to entertainment material. By agreement with the SABC it may not screen news or actuality.

The bulk of the broadcast media is also in the hands of the SABC, which operates a whole range of services in African languages. The three major 'independent' radio services are dependent on Pretoria for licensing and are at least partly owned by bantustan administrations.

The print media

The print media is overwhelmingly commercial and profit-oriented. Non-profit organizations—such as trusts, foundations, labour organizations and political groups—virtually do not feature as proprietors of daily and weekly newspapers in South Africa.

The largest weekly owned by non-commercial interests is the Natal paper *Ilanga*, sold nearly three years ago to Chief Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha by Argus Holdings (the largest newspaper group). *Ilanga* has a circulation of about 142,000.

The 'alternative' weekly publications, characterized by a strong anti-apartheid stance and by an absence of overriding commercial concerns, collectively sell just slightly more than 170,000 copies a week (December 1989). Combined with *Ilanga* and other non-commercial weeklies they account for only about three per cent of the total number of newspapers sold each week.

Every one of the 19 daily titles and most of the weeklies are owned by corporations and companies whose motive is profit and whose survival depends on it. The fact that most of the large papers are owned by one of three giant corporations has meant that a path of ruthless rationalization of the market has been cut in the last five years, with a number of newspapers being closed down to increase the profitability of their holding companies; and with the expansion of joint printing and distribution arrangements—and in one case the sharing of editorial staff.

The result has been a decrease in the variety of newspapers available and a perception that the independence of individual titles has been further compromised.

Three dominating newspaper groups

The newspaper industry is exceedingly centralized. It is dominated by three newspaper groups in which the largest interests are held by the giant corporations of South Africa's highly centralized economy. Argus Holdings, Times Media Ltd (TML) and Nasionale Pers control more than 90 per cent of the daily newspaper market in which the total daily circulation averaged 1.28 million for the first six months of 1989.

Papers owned or controlled by Argus Holdings accounted for more than half of daily sales during this time. In addition, Argus holds almost 40 per cent of TML shares and the two have joint printing and distribution ventures.

Critics to the right of the English-language press have been almost as critical

Some Figures on Sales of South African Newspapers

Commercial media sales (January – June 1989)

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Average combined sales of daily papers per day | 1,280,000 |
| Average combined sales of daily papers per week, (approx.) | 6,400,000 |
| Average combined sales of weekly papers per week | 2,350,000 |
| Total sales of commercial papers per week | 8,750,000 |

Note: Figures for the commercial media are taken from the reports of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Democratic media sales (December 1989)¹

| | | |
|---------------|--------------------|---------|
| New African | (approx.) per week | 13,000 |
| New Nation | " | 65,000 |
| South | " | 13,000 |
| Umafrika | " | 32,000 |
| Vrye Weekblad | " | 14,000 |
| Weekly Mail | " | 35,000 |
| Total sales | (approx.) per week | 172,000 |

¹ Figures exclude publications published less frequently than once a week.

Note: Figures for the alternative media have been provided by editors/circulation staff/members of editorial collectives of the publications concerned.

Of the 19 daily papers audited by Audit Bureau of Circulations, the three largest in the January-June 1989 period were: *The Star*, with 218,350 sales a day; the *Sowetan*, with 172,256 sales a day; and *The Citizen*, with 125,430. *The Star* and *Sowetan* are both owned by the largest of the press groups, Argus. *Sowetan* has a mainly black readership. *The Citizen*, although published in English is owned by the Afrikaans publishing group, Perskor. *The Citizen* was started as a secret government project, with tax payers' money. This fact came to light in the 1979 'Info Scandal', which led to the fall of Prime Minister B.J. Vorster.

Of the 21 weekly papers listed by the bureau for January-June 1989, the three largest were: *The Sunday Times* (518,354); *Rapport* (382,422); and *City Press* (181,054). *The Sunday Times* is owned by the smaller of the two English newspaper publishers, Times Media Limited. *Rapport*, published in Afrikaans, is jointly owned by the two Afrikaans publishing groups, Perskor and Nasionale Pers. And *City Press*, aimed at black readers, is now also owned by Afrikaner capital, in the form of Nasionale Pers. It started as an independent.

as those on the left of the near-monopoly situation in that section of the commercial print media. After the Competition Board cleared an Argus takeover of the Natal Newspaper group four years ago, former National Party MP, JohnWiley, observed pointedly: 'The English language press can-

not be true if, with three exceptions, it is in the hands of one group which in turn is controlled by mining financial institutions.'

The rejoinder to this comment, contained in an editorial in the Argus's flagship, *The Star*, was: 'The institutional money behind Argus serves to prevent take over "raids" such as that which once nearly put SAAN (now known as TML) into the hands of government front men.'

The generally pro-government Afrikaans daily market, much smaller than the English sector (only five of the 19 dailies are Afrikaans) is almost equally centralized.

While the English press is associated with mining capital (with Anglo-American and Johannesburg Consolidated Investments owning some 26 per cent of Argus shares, for instance), the Afrikaans press has the backing of Afrikaner capital. Close to 30 per cent of Nasionale Pers is owned by Sanlam and Federale Volksbeleggings.

Various factions of capital in South Africa have been associated with particular political parties in the minority parliament. Since the Nationalists came to power in 1948, mining capital has been associated with opposition parties more liberal than those in power, while Afrikaner capital has been closely identified with the rulers. The papers these factions control have (with a few isolated exceptions) reflected in their editorial content these political associations.

A final point to note is that nowhere in the three press giants has there been a concerted move to establish a popular daily. Put in another way, the intense reliance of the private press on advertising revenue has been reflected in its target readership—which is relatively upmarket and overwhelmingly white.

Only one of the 19 dailies is specifically aimed at a black readership—the Argus group's Sowetan. With an average of 172, 000 daily sales, it is the second largest daily in the country. Yet it came into existence as a metropolitan daily almost by default—when the Argus group was forced by the government to close the outspoken Post, the Sowetan was promoted from the weekly to the daily market and its area of distribution broadened. Operating on virtually obsolete technology, without its own printing facilities, the Sowetan has grown almost despite itself and its half-hearted owners.

It is on the level of advertising revenue that English and Afrikaans news-

paper monopolies experience competition. Their competitors are—predictably—the television services. It is not surprising that South African newspapers place a great premium on entertaining their readerships, rather than informing them—for they are not seeking to compete with each other (the language divide and monopolistic apportioning of the print market makes that quite unnecessary) but with the colourful and action-filled world of television.

Confrontation with the state: caught in the cross-fire?

The foregoing suggests a rather grasping and conservative mainstream press—and one finds little in the bare bones of press structures to suggest why the English language papers are often at daggers drawn with the government. Why, one might ask, should these publications, with a demonstrable stake in the *status quo*, be subjected to stringent emergency regulations which kept them away from reporting police action at scenes of political conflict; which curtailed their reporting on mass political campaigns; which subjected them to the threat of suspension or the imposition of a government censor in their offices?

There are two possible explanations. The first is that the mainstream media were being tarred with the same brush as the stridently anti-apartheid alternative media and the often sensation-seeking foreign media. The second is that, from the government point of view, unreliable elements exist within the mainstream press.

The nature of the emergency media curbs suggests that initially the mainstream print media were in effect caught in the cross fire, but that later elements of this sector were seen as specific targets for action.

The emergency press regulations were enacted in three main waves in 1985, 1986 and 1987. The 1985 regulations were aimed mainly at curtailing visual material—preventing photographers and cameramen from capturing images that suggested insurrectionary violence had taken root or those that showed police in confrontation with unarmed civilians. Coming in the wake of a financial crisis triggered by the loss of confidence in South Africa's credit worthiness on the part of a major foreign bank, the first regulations were really aimed at preventing further deterioration of South Africa's image abroad.

Only from December 1986 did the focus of emergency media restrictions begin to move to preventing communications on campaigns of mass resistance—school boycotts, consumer boycotts, rent boycotts, strike actions

(including the political weapon of the general strike). It became 'subversive' verbally to encourage any of these activities which had proved to be effective strategies for the extra-parliamentary opposition. At this stage censorship became part of the state's counter-revolution strategy, which involved repression on the one hand and the winning of hearts and minds on the other. The obliteration of the message of resistance organizations was a necessary component of this strategy, as was the escalation of government 'reform' propaganda. The government's intention was not merely to create a vacuum by censorship, but to tilt the whole system of information in its favour.

Censorship rested on much more than media restrictions in the years of emergency rule. It rested first and foremost on the suppression of popular organizations and their active supporters—on the banning of some 33 organizations, on the detention of up to 40,000 people, on the fact that about 700 leaders have been severely restricted and prevented from talking to the media.

At this stage it could still possibly have been argued that newspapers were simply the casualties of a broader battle going on around them. But in the second half of 1987, the government trained its sights quite specifically on newspapers when it made provision for the suspension of those which, in the eyes of the Minister of Home Affairs, were systematically publishing information promoting revolution.

The Minister concerned—then Stoffel Botha—made it clear what motivated him when he addressed The Star's centenary conference. 'Press freedom must be looked at in the context of an attempted revolution by such violent organizations as the African National Congress and its mentor, the South African Communist Party. When the leaders of these organizations blatantly admit that they collaborate with the mass media to further their violent struggle for the take-over of South Africa, it should be clear to everyone that the role of sections of the local and international press in this revolutionary process is no flight of the imagination on the part of the government.'

He continued: 'My government will not allow the South African press to be used as a tool of war in the hands of foreign or other aggressors. Freedom of expression will not be used to such an extent that it fosters chaos, murder, confusion and revolt in South Africa.'

While Stoffel Botha used the weapon of suspension against several 'alterna-

tive' publications the only mainstream paper he considered suspending was the *Sowetan*. The suspension never actually occurred, although the *Sowetan* was formally warned that it was being considered.

But several mainstream newspapers have been prosecuted for transgressing emergency regulations. The major English newspaper groups have been involved in challenging the legal validity of emergency regulations affecting the media. And there was an attempt by the police to seize an entire edition of *The Star* on the basis that it carried an advertisement which infringed the emergency regulations.

Furthermore, editors of mainstream newspapers stood in solidarity with the smaller publications facing suspension and both editors and managers of the mainstream English press made public their opposition to further inroads on press freedom. One of the few emergency regulations to be retracted by the government, was a provision for a government register of all journalists conducting 'press agency business'. This came after an extensive campaign by journalists and media institutions. Judging from government comment, the participation of prominent mainstream editors and managers in this process was an important factor.

There are several factors which have led the mainstream English media from time to time to risk the government's wrath by writing about outlawed matters, by taking a principled stance on human rights issues and by joining in campaigns with formations to the left of them.

Firstly, some credence has to be given to the fact that many journalists and some of the newspapers themselves are identifiably within the camp of liberal politics in which human rights issues and issues of individual liberty are emphasized. The government's gross infringement of universally held human rights—such as the right to retain citizenship of one's native land, the right of assembly and expression, the right to a fair trial, freedom from arbitrary arrest—had created an overlapping concern between the liberal camp and the democratic forces whose rights have been so manifestly abused. Progressive journalists within the mainstream media, aware of the sensitivity of editorial management to human rights issues, were able to project the various forms of repression fairly effectively in the commercial media.

It is probably this narrow and unpredictable margin of overlapping values between liberal interests and liberation forces that prompted the latter to take the position that the mainstream media—with their huge resources and

their potential to reach out to people in positions of power—should continue to be viewed as a terrain of struggle.

A second consideration for mainstream editors was that the political conflict between mass-based organizations and the government had become so central and so dominant a feature of life that it is almost constantly newsworthy. With strikes, mass stayaways and consumer boycotts of white-owned shops it had also impinged in a direct way on the predominantly white readers of the mainstream press. The credibility of the press is severely compromised if it fails to address these very evident developments. Of course, there is no guarantee that the issues will be addressed in a way that would meet the usual conventions of fair reporting. Indeed, this is just what the government sought to circumvent when it declared it subversive to make any statement that might promote or encourage many of the forms of non-violent direct resistance which had proved most successful for the extra-parliamentary opposition.

A third factor was the internationalized nature of the struggle against apartheid and the prominence it has —by and large—enjoyed in the scale of international news coverage. While it is true that there are destructive facets to allowing the international media to create political agendas and bolster political personalities, it is equally true that certain campaigns against the government have taken off only because of the international dimension. The campaign to save the Sharpeville Six from the gallows was a case in point. Local papers shunned the writings of local reporters, until the issue became an international concern.

The detainees' hunger strike in early 1989—an event that was to prove pivotal to the regrouping of internal resistance forces—also began to be taken more seriously by local press once the foreign media had begun to focus on it.

The South African situation is not unique in having some of its more sensitive—perhaps shameful—secrets exposed firstly by foreign media. For instance the freelance journalist who stumbled on the My Lai massacre in Vietnam was forced to sell it to The Times of London for a mere \$ 100. No United States paper would touch this exposure of wartime atrocities until it had been published elsewhere.

The sheer excess with which some officials pursued their repressive powers also tended to create hostility in a broad group who believed in greater moderation. There is no doubt that the Pietersburg policeman who stated during

his evidence in court that he believed even the Bible could be subversive in certain circumstances did no service to the government cause. Likewise the promulgation of a regulation which made it subversive to publicly enlist support for campaigns against detention opened the government to ridicule—especially when newspapers reported that families of detainees were forced to pray in silence for their loved ones behind bars, rather than run the risk of acting subversively by praying aloud.

No escaping the culture of the political elite

For all the publicity that the resistant moments of the mainstream media win, it must be stressed that these are just moments, exceptional elements in a press that on the whole reflects the interests of a privileged white minority. We have spoken at some length of the overwhelmingly commercial nature of the print media and the profit motive has compounded the difficulties of reporting under conditions of severe censorship and in times of conflict. Instead of increasing their staff allocations at this time, most newspapers were cutting back and ensuring huge profits. The result was a dearth of investigative work when it was most crucial to uncover the truth and expose a facile form of journalism based on press conferences and handouts.

Furthermore one has to stress that it has been an apartheid press in the deepest sense of the word. It is controlled by people in the grip of the particular ignorance bred by extreme racial segregation. It has been argued on more than one occasion—and sometimes as a mitigating factor for political trialists about to be sentenced—that no white judge can fully comprehend the formative impact of apartheid conditions on the men that stand before them in the dock. Just so it must be acknowledged that the men who control the editorial departments of major newspapers have little idea of the experiences of the oppressed and the forces at play in the mass resistance movements during this time of transformation. Most editors have never been to a political meeting of any part of the mass democratic movement. It is probably true that there are assistant editors or senior sub-editors who have scarcely set foot in a black township. How then are these people to know the widespread animosity to the armed forces that was born with the occupation of residential areas by the military, the indiscriminate teargassing of large tracts of homes, the random exposure to lethal violence? How then were they to sense the organic resurgence of support for the African National Congress in townships across the country? How were they to be totally convinced of the reality of torture of anti-apartheid activists?

Perhaps one of the clearest indications of this ignorance was demonstrated when the Argus corporation decided to sell its Natal weekly, *Ilanga*, to In-

katha. What management seemed not to know was that the very journalists whose work contracts were about to be taken over by Inkatha had in fact been placed in accommodation in hotels just days before the sale of the paper (at the paper's expense)—and that the reason for this was that they were forced to flee their homes because of threatened attacks by Inkatha-supporting vigilantes. When forced to face this situation, the first reported comment of management on the reluctance of their staff to work for Inkatha was, 'Well they can resign if they wish to'.

A whole number of indicators of the pervasiveness of the perspective of the ruling elite in the reporting of the mainstream newspapers can be cited. What follows is merely a selection of some factors that have impressed themselves on me.

The first is the degree to which they have accorded legitimacy to instruments of government so thoroughly—and even violently—rejected by the oppressed majority. For instance the debates in the two minority houses of the tricameral parliament are reproduced with all the propriety and prominence that would be accorded to genuinely elected bodies—despite the fact that they have been so roundly rejected in two sets of elections since 1984. Likewise, the 1988 local government elections in black areas were reported not in terms of the overwhelming boycott of the polls, but in terms of how parties with minuscule support 'swept' to power in areas like Soweto. It is almost as though colonial conventions were being adhered to without any thought to the meaning of their employment.

Where a report might lead to legal action being taken by the authorities, for instance in terms of the Police or Prisons Act, there is a marked tendency to tackle the matter conservatively and to prefer official versions of events to those supplied by eye-witnesses or even by their own reporters. The Police Act for instance stipulates that newspapers must be able to show that if they choose to publish information about police action, they must have good reasons to believe it to be true. Instead of devoting the necessary resources to establish without doubt the correctness of the information they are about to publish, the convention has become to report the police and other versions of events in contradiction to each other, without any attempt to indicate to readers which version is the more credible. This arises from a history of collaboration with the authorities rather than insistence on an independent and effective press. Instead of risking a whole number of prosecutions under the Police, Prisons and Defence Acts, editors of the main papers entered into a series of agreements on the administration of the provisions under each of these laws and guidelines for a compromise form of administering the laws

were set out. The result is that the police, army and prison officials are accorded space which far exceeds the usual right of reply.

The treatment of political violence also raises a host of questions. Conflict is reported episodically and even within each episode of violence its genesis is rarely accorded any attention. For instance, it is widely acknowledged that bans on outdoor meetings have given the police reason to act on many occasions and this technical infringement, this untenable provision has cost many lives.

The mainstream media were also responsible for the widespread use of the term 'black-on-black violence'. It referred to the conflict which developed between members of the democratic organizations and rightwing vigilante forces. In a move which obscured the role of the ruling group in this extremely harsh and costly violence, the media chose to highlight to the exclusion of all else the fact that participants on both sides were black. This suggested some pre-political form of savagery rather than a deeply political clash between government collaborators and opponents.

It is of course not curious that protest politics has always been a more acceptable form of action by the oppressed than major forms of non-violent direct action (in the eyes of the mainstream press, that is). The latter poses a real threat to the material interests and cultural concerns of the ruling group. So, for instance, it is difficult to recall a single article arguing out-rightly for the continuation of the sports boycott appearing in the major newspapers.

Equally, while there has been reporting of the views of those advocating trade and financial sanctions (especially when it became clear that papers were not likely to be prosecuted for running such reports) I have yet to see an acknowledgement, in an editorial of a major newspaper, of the efficacy of the sanctions weapon in propelling the government toward change. United States Secretary of State for Africa, Hank Cohen, might believe that sanctions have done their job in 'concentrating minds' in the ruling group on the possibility of negotiations. South African editors have yet to go so far.

Then of course, despite the reluctant concession that the ANC is a major political actor, the press is still ambivalent in its treatment of the movement. Until three to four years ago, the ANC was routinely portrayed in news reports as a 'terrorist' organization. Features tended to be more neutral and informative—and of course to be written by specialized and more sympathetic writers.

And there is no escaping the deep racism that underpins much news reporting in the major South African papers. One clear conclusion that must be drawn is that black people's lives are regarded as extremely cheap. On Mondays in *The Star* there is a regular feature—a very little feature, consisting of three, four or perhaps five paragraphs. It tells of the weekend's crime toll in Soweto—perhaps a dozen, perhaps 17, or perhaps more people dead—as ciphers, without names. Many fatal mine accidents are treated in the same fashion—if the victims are black and if the accidents are not disasters of mammoth proportions.

Despite all these factors it must be acknowledged that the sheer force of popular resistance has wrought a certain change in the commercial media. It is unthinkable that the press could continue unchanged in a time when the National Party has been forced to seriously contemplate negotiations. At the highest level of the Argus group there is now an acceptance that they (in their own words) have made a 'holy cow' of parliamentary politics and that much serious organization occurs outside the confines of the houses of parliament.

Of course, it has been openly admitted by at least one Argus editor that they do not want to lose their papers on liberation day—as they did in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe—and this is probably a major factor in their accommodation of change. However, just as opposition forces hold the view that F.W. de Klerk is moving to secure 'negotiations' on his terms, in a top-down attempt to manage change, it is probable that the media will attempt to impose a framework running roughly parallel to this. It is clear already that they are promoting various forums of 'black opinion' safely divorced from the mass democratic movement.

The mention of Rhodesia draws attention to the fact that editorial departments are unlikely to solidly back even the limited change of perspective that editors appear to want. Editorial departments in the largest papers are complexly structured. Many have had an unhealthy infusion of ex-Rhodesians who are critically placed in terms of the control of information in the production process. It is common to find conflict between reporters (especially those on political beats whose job has taken them beyond the barriers of apartheid or those who are black) and most sub-editors who process their stories. In the struggle for control of copy, hierarchy counts for little. Those closest to the end product enjoy powers of censorship over which even their editors have little influence. The extreme time constraints, the determination to meet deadlines to the minute, compound this form of sub-editorial sabotage.

In conclusion one might say that the deeply contradictory nature of the commercial media makes it difficult to settle for the stereotypical label of victim or villain. The press has always contained within it progressive journalists who have seriously tried to serve the ends of the struggle for democracy—the 'public interest' as they construe it. While such journalists have been a minority, it is unlikely that the MDM could regard the media as a site of struggle without the presence of people who share their vision placed inside these institutions. Of the private media institutions themselves, it must be said that when there is a conflict between the particular interests they represent and the interests of the voteless majority, they have—more often than not—ceased to be a voice for the general public.

To redress this situation in a post-apartheid society, it is clear that the print media cannot be left in the hands of monopolistic corporations. There is increasing debate—among journalists primarily, but also in the structures of the MDM—about how the monopolies can be dismantled and the print media reorganized to ensure fundamental access to the media by a wide range of interest groups, access that would extend beyond the consumption of media, into the realms of control.

Court Actions against Journalists and Papers during 1989

This table is compiled from the Anti-Censorship Action Group's (ACAG) monthly publication, Update. The list is illustrative rather than completely exhaustive. According to ACAG, by September 1989 there were 24 censorship trials underway, involving no less than 198 defendants. Police dockets of investigation had also been opened on a wide range of journalists, on papers ranging from the democratically controlled community paper, *Saamstaan*, to the giants of the commercial market, *The Star* and *Sunday Times*.

The table is published here as a reminder of the past and in the hope that court actions of this kind will not feature like this in the future.

| Paper/journalist targeted | Nature of court action | Outcome |
|--|--|--|
| Editor and 2 reporters at commercial daily, <i>BusinessDay</i> | Subpoena to supply evidence on murders during strife on gold mines | Evidence given in closed court |
| Editor of news agency, Sapa | Subpoena to disclose source of a trade union statement | Source named |
| Reporter on free sheet | Subpoena to disclose source in story on abortion, which is illegal in SA | Refused to name source. Sentenced to 30 days' jail. Case on appeal |
| Editor of <i>Vrye Weekblad</i> and the paper itself | Charged for quoting SA Communist Party's Joe Slovo | Convicted. Suspended sentences, involving jail for editor and fine for paper |
| Publisher, editor and reporter of major Sunday paper, <i>Sunday Times</i> | Charged for quoting released ANC veteran Harry Gwala | Publisher fined. Editor and reporter acquitted. |
| Editors of <i>Sowetan</i> , <i>New Nation</i> and <i>Weekly Mail</i> | Charged for quoting ANC leader Harry Gwala | Charges withdrawn |
| <i>Weekly Mail</i> editor and reporter plus another reporter | Charged under emergency law with disclosing conditions of detainees | Charges dropped |
| <i>Vrye Weekblad</i> editor | Charged under emergency law with undermining system of military conscription | Matter not settled by year end |
| <i>South</i> editor | Charged under emergency law with encouraging school boycotts | Charge dropped |
| <i>Saamstaan</i> reporter | Charged under Prisons Act with publishing a picture of Mandela | Charge dropped |
| 12 Cape Town journalists | Charged with holding an illegal demonstration for press freedom | Charges dropped |
| 8 Johannesburg residents | Charged with holding an illegal protest against state's suspension of <i>Weekly Mail</i> | Charges dropped |
| Publisher, editor and reporter on commercial Sunday paper, <i>City Press</i> | Charged with publishing unlawful information about a strike | Charges dropped |
| Editor of <i>Sowetan</i> | Charged in 1988 with illegally quoting ANC's Albie Sachs | Charges dropped in 1989 |

The Role of the Independent Alternative Grassroots Media in South Africa

A Personal Perspective

By Elsabé Wessels

In this highly personalized contribution, Elsabé Wessels gives an account of her career as a militant and controversial journalist in South Africa. After taking a degree in journalism, she started working for Die Burger, the fortress of the Afrikaans-speaking establishment, then went on to Beeld, which had been described to her as a more enlightened Afrikaans newspaper, rounding out her early work experience at the English Sunday Times, which sells half a million newspapers every Sunday and where everybody professed to be 'anti-apartheid, liberal and humanitarian'. The reality was: 'They were anti-apartheid in word, not in action. When Vrye Weekblad, the first 'alternative' Afrikaans newspaper, was founded in 1988, Elsabé Wessels joined its small staff and worked there until she recently became a free lance.

In her lively and thought-provoking account of the daring publishing ventures of Vrye Weekblad, Elsabé Wessels pays tribute to all the young independent newspapers in South Africa. 'I have no doubt in my mind that none of the mainstream papers in South Africa would have been prepared to publish Vrye Weekblad's exposure of the death squads which sent shock waves throughout the world. It had to be one of the so-called alternative newspapers.... Without them South Africa's true story would have remained unrecorded. If ever there were any doubt about the role of independent, alternative grassroots media anywhere in the world, these South African publications are positive proof.'



In speaking about *Vrye Weekblad* I have been asked to give a personal impression. So first bear with me through my trials and tribulations in South Africa's mainstream media, both English and Afrikaans. The road which I travelled in South African journalism, which is by now a dusty track travelled by a number of Afrikaans-speaking journalists, is one of the major reasons why *Vrye Weekblad* was born. It also serves to show up the oppressive and unfree nature of the journalism practised by the mainstream media in South Africa historically.

I am an Afrikaans-speaking South African. I went to Afrikaans language schools. My secondary education was at the Hendrik Verwoerd High School, named after the architect of apartheid, Hendrik French Verwoerd, whom we were taught to respect and remember as a great leader.

Following on a Christian nationalistic secondary education I went to an

Afrikaans language university. After completing a journalism degree at the University of Stellenbosch I joined *Die Burger*—the oldest Afrikaans language newspaper in South Africa (and as the fathers of Nasionale Pers, the holding company of *Die Burger* always boasted, the oldest Afrikaans newspaper in the world).

Joining *Die Burger* was not an easy decision. I was well acquainted with the political agenda of the newspaper and had spent years getting annoyed at breakfast at the newspaper's blatant political bias. It was, to say the least, a propaganda sheet for the ruling National Party and intent on protecting and defending statutory apartheid. After all, when *Die Burger* was launched in 1915, soon after the founding of the National Party, it was then with the explicit intention of providing a mouthpiece for the National Party and promoting so-called Afrikaner values. On both these issues it had been remarkably successful.

So I joined *Die Burger* with open eyes. What swayed me was the fact that I could speak, read and write better in Afrikaans than in any other language and I still cherished the notion that one could make a valiant contribution by fighting from the inside. Seven of us from the Class of '79 joined *Die Burger*. They all left for political reasons.

I could go into great detail about the methods of news manipulation for political gain performed there. But they were skilled and resourceful and it would take hours to cite 101 examples. That there was blatant ideological intervention was evident from the front page to the sports page, so-called women's page and the arts columns. Even ordinary hard news events had a recognizably political slant.

Black or resistance politics received no coverage. I apologize for the use of racist descriptions but in order to explain apartheid methodology one has to use the terminology. As is still the case today, *Die Burger* had a large 'coloured' readership. Regardless of this the political aspirations of the 'coloured' readers were ignored. The voice of black resistance was disposed of in either arrogant or patronizing commentary.

Having adopted sound business principles *Die Burger* recognized the potential for higher circulation figures and a *Burger Extra* was created. Extras are common features in the SA media, both English and Afrikaans. They are loose sections added to the main body of the newspapers and concentrate exclusively on the 'non-white', that is, the coloured, black or Indian communities where they are delivered. The editorial content of the *Burger*

Extra was limited to human interest, which basically meant everything else but politics.

So the political line was very crude. For instance, say there was an accident and one white person was seriously injured or killed; it could become a page lead. If the victims were of any other colour the copy was spiked.

It is worth mentioning that on joining Nasionale Pers one was required to sign a form, not pledging one's allegiance to the National Party (NP) but stating that one was not hostile to it. I and a few others refused to sign the document, a stand that was reluctantly accepted. We knew this wasn't exactly going to help our career prospects.

Anyhow, NP ululation and anti-apartheid bashing reached its peak during every parliamentary election. For the observer it was a demonstration in the skilful manipulation of news. The entire news operation went into top gear to give the National Party maximum coverage.

My first general election was that of 1981. At that stage the Progressive Federal Party was viewed as enemy number one. All that I can say is that not one report of a speech by a PFP candidate or of a meeting made it into the paper without being hacked to pieces and distorted.

To add a brief story: The night the election results were announced, all the editorial staff were gathered together in front of a TV set, set up in the tea room. Two doors down the chief editorial staff were discussing the results. Everybody was particularly anxious about the results in the Gardens where Springbok rugby captain hero Dawie de Villiers was fighting Ken Andrew from the PFP. De Villiers was *Die Burger's* golden boy and made it onto the front page almost every day. The constituency was important for *Die Burger*. That was where most of the editorial staff voted (as well as most of the Broederbond). However, what happened on that fateful night was that when the result was announced there were screams of absolute delight from the tea room where we had gathered. The editor and his assistants rushed into the room beaming with delight. We knew he would make it, they chanted. Suddenly there was a pregnant silence and one brave staffer informed them that De Villiers had actually lost the seat.

There was hell to pay and for weeks on end the staff was accused of deliberately undermining the newspaper. We were severely reprimanded.

By that time I had had enough and I decided to leave.

I was advised to go to *Beeld*, the sister newspaper of *Die Burger*, based in Johannesburg. They were far more 'verlig' (enlightened), I was told. It was also, as the directors of Nasionale Pers would boast, the biggest Afrikaans newspaper in the world.

So I joined. Not as a reporter but as a sub. I was editing the chief editorial page and political pages. This lasted a few months until I was one day told that I was required in the arts section. They didn't like my headlines and 'intros'. They didn't have enough colour. That meant that I was under-performing in party propaganda terms.

I realized that if I were to have a career in journalism it was not going to be in the mainstream Afrikaans press.

The only alternative was to go to an English newspaper. I applied to the *Rand Daily Mail*. I was told they were not appointing any new staff. I then applied to the *Sunday Express*. I got the same reply. I was then told that there was a post at the *Sunday Times*. Both the other two papers were closed down soon after this.

I went for an interview with *Sunday Times* editor Tertius Myburgh. I told him my history under oppressive Afrikaans editors and he listened sympathetically and assured me of the strong liberal tradition of the English press and in particular the *Sunday Times*. I felt optimistic.

But this was a completely new experience. Here I was working with so-called liberal-minded people. But the bias was the same, only not as honest. In the Afrikaans press allegiance to the party and specific political ideologies was and still is conducted openly and honestly. At the *Sunday Times*, which sells half a million newspapers every Sunday, everybody professed to be anti-apartheid, liberal and great humanitarians. The reality was: they were anti-apartheid in word, not in action.

It was a time of major reawakening in extra-parliamentary politics—with the formation of the United Democratic Front and the foundation of important grassroots and community organizations. Editorially this was ignored, as were detention without trial, forced removals, the education crisis and state brutality. Instead the editor openly backed the tricameral parliament, which denied the majority of South Africans political participation.

I spent three years there scheming week after week how to humour the news editor into getting real issues into the newspaper. Sometimes I was success-

ful and such a story would have great impact due to the mass circulation of the paper. Yet, it remained a battle. It was evident that human rights issues didn't stand a chance against sex, sleaze and sensation.

After three years I decided that was it.

I was now heading for my last experience of the so-called liberal English media. I was offered the beat of political reporter at *Business Day*, a financial daily. In consulting prior to my appointment I was reassured that *Business Day* had a different approach and that I would be expected to give as much attention to extra-parliamentary as parliamentary politics. I was optimistic.

In fact, it turned out to be untrue. The political agenda was aimed at serving Big Capital. That implied a most critical attitude to Afrikaners as well as extra-parliamentary groups. The news and political coverage and commentary largely failed to give an objective and realistic view of what was happening in the country.

So much for my own history. Now over to *Vrye Weekblad*.

In June 1987 Frederik van Zyl Slabbert and sixty Afrikaners set off for a highly publicized safari to Dakar to meet with the ANC. It hit the South African press like a hurricane. The Afrikaans press in particular treated the event as an act of hostility against South Africa and delegates were labelled as traitors.

In the aircraft on the way back world-renowned theologian Dr Beyers Naudé raised the idea of an independent Afrikaans newspaper. Everybody agreed and by the time they had touched down in Johannesburg a committee was appointed to investigate and develop the idea. Max du Preez, who was to become *Vrye Weekblad* editor, was nominated to head the steering committee.

It was easier said than done. Although there was a great deal of interest, a million obstacles mushroomed overnight. There were serious differences about the political pitch of the paper—whether it should be 10, 30 or 70 per cent to the left of the existing Afrikaans media. The question of who should be included in the planning process created more obstacles. The Rubicon, however, was finance.

A feasibility study revealed a market for an Afrikaans language publication,

critical of apartheid and expressing the views of those in support of a non-racial and democratic South Africa. It has to be stressed here that Afrikaans is not only the language of the white Afrikaner but also the first language of millions of black South Africans. For strategic reasons it was decided that finances would be sought from the business community through shareholding and advertising. It was naively thought that the Afrikaans business community would welcome such a project. The reality is that after first round talks with the captains of industry it became evident that they were not going to support the initiative. Their major fear was of upsetting the government. They were obviously thinking of the government contracts which inflated their bank balances.

Yet, it was still felt that we should not rely on foreign funding, because of the psychological opposition Afrikaners have to international interference in what they regard as domestic affairs.

After weeks and months of drama, which included the disintegration of the steering committee, the paper was finally launched on November 4, 1988. It was an act of faith on the part of editor Max du Preez and the founding editorial staff. The total editorial staff bringing out a 28-page newspaper numbered six.

As predicted, *Vrye Weekblad* was unpopular with the government. A newspaper registration clause in terms of the Internal Security Act was imposed immediately. The registration of a news publication is a normal procedure costing R1G. It is, however, within the ambit of the Minister of Justice to impose a penalty deposit of up to R40,000 if the publication is considered to be a threat to the safety of the state. The minister demanded a R30,000 penalty deposit from us which we stand to forfeit if found guilty in his terms. This was the first but not the last shock in our first few days.

The week that followed was probably the most tense few days in my life and everybody else's life at *Vrye Weekblad*. We did not know where we were going to get the money from to continue publishing—let alone pay the government's R30,000. On the eve of our second edition an anonymous group of businessmen put forward R30,000. Other cheques amounting to R50,000 made it possible to publish for a month.

The fact that the foreign press made a song and dance about *Vrye Weekblad* as the first Afrikaans language newspaper to join the struggle against apartheid helped us tremendously. This coverage, along with the open support from prominent anti-apartheid leaders and organizations, opened up doors

to foreign funding—which we then realized we (like the rest of the democratic media) could not do without.

Looking back it seems as if we were on a constant see-saw between state prosecution and bankruptcy.

The first charges against us were also delivered within the first week. Three related to furthering the aims of a banned organization (the ANC), and another was in terms of the Internal Security Act, for quoting Joe Slovo. The first three charges were dropped later. However, we were brought to court on the Slovo charge and editor Max du Preez was given a 6-month suspended sentence.

We have subsequently been notified of contraventions on several issues set out in the oppressive media regulations introduced with the state of emergency. Formal charges on five counts in connection with conscription have been pressed. The matter has been remanded. It is interesting that the state should single out our strong anti-conscription drive as an area of concern. Ideologically this was quite understandable. Growing resistance to conscription was sweeping the country and it had become the one issue that conscientized young Afrikaners.

We did not only suffer state intimidation. We received personal defamation charges on several occasions. The first person to institute legal action—because of an article on corruption—committed suicide a few weeks later after the scandal was revealed more fully. The second one was more sensational. The State President demanded R500,000 in damages if we didn't retract a report linking him with an incarcerated Mafia boss. We refused to retract or place an apology. He is the State President no longer and is now sitting somewhere in the Wildernis (a seaside resort).

This attitude should not be regarded as merely provocative. *Vrye Weekblad* tries to abide by its slogan 'tell the truth'.

To demonstrate: *Vrye Weekblad* had a security cop, a Captain Jansen, assigned to it. It was his responsibility to deal with *Vrye Weekblad* and he never shied away from pointing out whatever the paper contravened. He was stunned, however, when *Vrye Weekblad* ran a front page article on human rights violations performed by Swapo. The story was backed by affidavits handed to Max du Preez in Namibia. Although the paper had supported Swapo politically up to then, as it still does, it felt duty bound to stand up and be critical of human rights violations.

For the same reason *Vrye Weekblad* published the shocking accusations about death squads made by the former security policeman, Captain Dirk Coetzee. In publishing them, the paper contravened just about every act in the book. But there was no question as to whether it was the right thing to do.

For *Vrye Weekblad* the critical voice was supremely important.

I don't think there is any doubt as to where *Vrye Weekblad* stands politically. The manifesto published in the first edition stated that it stood for a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa. These goals were to be pursued at all costs.

At the same time, the paper would remain critical of any infringement of basic human rights, thereby ultimately serving the people of South Africa and their right to freedom of information, freedom of association and freedom of speech.

My conclusion is a tribute to the young independent newspapers in South Africa. I have no doubt in my mind that none of the mainstream papers in South Africa would have been prepared to publish *Vrye Weekblad's* exposure of the death squads which sent shock waves throughout the world. It had to be one of the so-called alternative newspapers. Perhaps it is because they have less to lose in terms of money, perhaps it is because they can close down on one day and open up under another name the next day. The main reason, however, is to be found in their commitment to the truth.

I believe that the crusading work done by *New Nation*, *South*, *New African*, *Weekly Mail*, *Vrye Weekblad* and community newspapers such as *Saamstaan* cannot be overestimated. Without them South Africa's true story would have remained unrecorded. If ever there was any doubt about the role of independent, alternative grassroots media anywhere in the world these South African publications are the positive proof.

A Note on Funding and Training

The following points are by no means exhaustive and merely sketch out broad areas of concern.

Without foreign funding neither *Vrye Weekblad*, nor any of the independent and democratic press, would have been able to survive. Funding has also proved positive in that it has drawn the international community into the whole question of press freedom in South Africa. Through funding they have a vested interest in press freedom and have become valuable partners in the constant fight for a free press in South Africa.

Linked to funding is the question of training. I somehow wish the two were not linked as they are, and increasingly so.

I have to stress the importance of training. The democratic media in South Africa run a shoe-string operation. Even if *Vrye Weekblad* wanted to appoint new staff there are not enough Afrikaans-speaking journalists available who are prepared to give up the comforts of subsidized houses and work cars for the precarious life of the threatened press. A new generation of Afrikaans journalists has to be trained. If this is not done by papers like *Vrye Weekblad*, nobody else is going to. There are no facilities available for Afrikaans speakers. That there is a demand for training, therefore, is obvious. There have also been many requests, especially from young students from the black and coloured communities. For training to take place, a solid base and substantial resources are required.

I have to express my concern, however, with the ever growing trend of linking funding to training. A growing number of foreign funders are channelling funds away from the media into training projects. The reasons are obvious. The fact is that training can only be possible if those newspapers that the training programme is linked to have the adequate resources. Without the newspaper there will be no training schemes or job opportunities for those trainees. Funders should seriously reconsider this new trend of forcing publications to embark on larger and larger training schemes in order to have access to funds. Further training and the employment of those trainees are dependent on the growth and stability of those publications.

The New Nation

By Gabu Tugwana

In this account presented to the Chobe Seminar on 'Democracy and the Media in Southern Africa', Gabu Tugwana, Deputy Editor of New Nation, outlines the dramatic history of the newspaper. Established in 1986 under the editorship of Zwelakhe Sisulu, who has since been detained twice, once for two weeks and once for two years, New Nation has gained increasing popularity as a newspaper.

Founded and supported by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference and having only four journalists at its inception, New Nation at first had to rely for its news gathering on community activists who were trained as reporters in the process. As the State noted the ability of New Nation to penetrate communities both in townships and rural areas, where repression was heaviest, the paper was increasingly harassed leading not only to the detention of the editor-in-chief but also to searches of the editorial offices and interferences with the printing and distribution of the paper. In order to counteract these moves on the part of the State, the staff developed a series of ingenious devices aimed at improving the management, training the journalists and safeguarding the distribution of the paper.

Turning to the relationship between New Nation and the Catholic Church, which is the owner of the paper, Gabu Tugwana had the following to say: 'Whilst we on the editorial staff are trying to diversify our funding sources, and are not rigid about the involvement of the Church, we believe it has a continuing positive role to play. In the past, liberation struggles elsewhere may have left the Church out, finding that it later becomes reactionary. We want to pursue a mutually influencing relationship that keeps the Church involved and maintains its presence in our project. After all, the overwhelming majority of the Church's membership comes from our communities. The Church must not stand apart from the struggles and has an obligation to serve the majority of its members and their material as well as spiritual interests.'



New Nation arose out of an investigation undertaken by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference into the feasibility of an alternative newspaper shortly before the closure of the Rand Daily Mail in April 1985. It began publishing in January 1986.

But as far back as 1976, a number of people, particularly activists, had complained about the way in which the major student protests of that year had been covered in the commercial press. Even black journalists, working at such newspapers, were not happy with what was finally printed in them. Activists, who were in touch with people in the General Secretariat of the Church, knew what was happening on the ground from personal experience and that this was not reflected in the daily reporting of the commercial press.

The investigation by the Church established that there was a market for an alternative paper and the editor-designate of the proposed *New Nation*—Zwelakhe Sisulu—travelled through all four provinces of the country and met with many organizations to sound them out on the nature of the paper, which would be closely tied to communities. He took with him a dummy, which in terms of its content and coverage was very different from the commercial press. Its leading story was about Victoria Mxenge who like her husband was a lawyer activist and was murdered—as the democratic press has suggested—by people from official death squads. There was a good response to the editor-designate's approach and he received many useful suggestions from different quarters.

New Nation first started as a fortnightly with a circulation of about 30,000. By the end of the year, circulation had risen to 65,000 and in 1987 the paper became a weekly. It remains a weekly with a fluctuating circulation averaging 70,000. Whenever the State has threatened the paper, circulation has shot up substantially.

When *New Nation* began, it had only four journalists on its staff. It depended mainly on community structures to supply news. People in various areas, particularly rural areas, were requested to compile reports about events there. These were then given a journalistic form by staff members at *New Nation*. In some cases, staffers went to the areas to further investigate the incidents and events reported. The process provided a measure of training for these community reporters. Each week in which we were not publishing we called together our informants to discuss and analyse their reports, indicating their strengths and weaknesses and what we had been able to use or not use, and why.

A major reason for pursuing this course was our recognition that repression was not going to stop, and our belief that in this way people within the community would not only help shape the democratic press but also be able to create their own grassroots media in the event of papers like *New Nation* being prevented by the authorities from publishing. They would be able to



Samples of the democratic press in Southern Africa

produce pamphlets and newsletters and so disseminate information. That was fairly successful until the State of Emergency. Most of those compiling reports and producing grassroots publications were activists, who were either detained or forced underground. Not only were their own grassroots media suspended, but they could no longer supply us with news and reports. Fortunately, we had identified other people within their organizations, so we were able, though to a much lesser extent, to continue to use this method of information gathering for a while.

However, when *New Nation* became a weekly in 1987, we were not able to operate as we had done earlier. We no longer had a free week to pursue the kind of discussion with informants that had proved such a useful method of training. This, combined with the impact of the State of Emergency, forced us to look to other means of gathering news. One source which we were able to use effectively was the alternative news agencies which were developing in different parts of the country. Another was progressive journalists in the commercial press who were unable to get their stories into their papers and who supplied reports voluntarily or for less than commercial rates.

As *New Nation* gained in popularity, it attracted increasing attention from the State itself. They noted our ability to penetrate communities both in townships and rural areas, where repression was heaviest, and to report what was happening amongst those communities and what the State machinery was up to. The commercial press had given such developments in these areas little attention. Repression here was far from the gaze of their mainly white readers and hidden from the diplomats who lived elsewhere. Our editor, Zwelakhe Sisulu, was detained for two weeks in June 1986, and then later in the year for two years. Individual editions of the paper were banned from time to time. We were also harassed in other ways. In one case, one of our photographers was arrested in a sensitive area and interrogated by the police, who tried to turn him into their informant. He refused and we sent him to our lawyers. We also made it clear to the police that we would hold them responsible if anything happened to him.

Another form of harassment was police searches of our offices, often timed to take place close to our printing deadlines, when we were under intense pressure to get our material to the printers, and resulting in many lost hours and distribution problems. Lawsuits initiated by policemen and even by the Minister of Home Affairs, arising out of reports in *New Nation*, were a further form of intimidation.

The Publications Committee is a State organ which monitors newspapers

not registered with the National Press Union (NPU), such as *New Nation*. They can ban publications, including newspapers, on the basis of complaints. But there is also a Publications Appeal Board, to which we appealed when individual editions were banned, and which in each case reversed the bannings. Our success was, we believe, a major reason for the introduction of media regulations under the State of Emergency to empower the authorities to censor and ban publications reporting the kind of information that alternative papers like *New Nation* were carrying. We have been less successful in the courts in our attempts to challenge censorship under these regulations.

One of our major problem areas has been that of funding and financing. Being funded by the Catholic Church has given us some advantage over other alternative newspapers, but such funding is not unlimited. Whilst our financing problems make for underlying insecurity, we have been somewhat reassured by the increased popularity of the paper, and oddly enough by the emergence of other alternative papers. Now the government has to give attention to other papers besides us. It appears that donors feel happier about funding the alternative press as a whole.

Financial insecurity creates a constraint on recruitment of experienced and able professional journalists. We cannot guarantee them long-term employment. We also cannot offer them competitive salaries, so we have had to fall back on training, however difficult this may be.

We have employed a variety of distribution strategies directed at increasing circulation. We use the mainstream distributors which also handle the commercial papers. But in the early stages of the establishment of the newspaper, we also used Church structures. There were, however, similar problems with both, namely that conservative businessmen and conservative priests refused to sell our paper properly. In fact, customers seeking the paper in shops owned by such conservatives were often told that they had sold out. We therefore tried out community organizations throughout the country as additional distributors. We sold them *New Nation* at 50 per cent of the cover price, allowing them to keep the difference as profit. This also eliminated the difficulty of collecting money from newsvendors and other outlets. We also began exploring the possibility of cooperating with regional alternative papers in improving distribution. Bannings of our paper caused serious problems for distribution. Having reached an average circulation of 55,000 before a banning, we had to start all over again after that banning was lifted. It also took time for us to re-establish all our channels and outlets and for our readers to be alerted that *New Nation* was available again.

We have begun to monitor our distribution channels and outlets more actively and we have adapted strategies learned from the commercially owned papers. They have full-time staff in distribution, who work in different centres and who are in touch with headquarters by computer. If the paper is running a big story, it might increase its print-runs and it alerts its distributors through these area circulation representatives. After 'putting the paper to bed' we have been sending our staff reporters out to monitor vendors and outlets and we have compiled a table to show how the paper is selling through different outlets.

While we do have subscriptions, they are mostly taken out by people abroad and in neighbouring countries. People in South Africa can get the paper more quickly and easily in other ways than by post. Some South African subscribers have complained that they have received right-wing newspapers wrapped in our folders, suggesting tampering at the Post Office, about which we have raised complaints to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Success in distribution, as in so many other operations involved in running a newspaper, depends on good management. This is an area which we have neglected in the past, and in which we have been weak. Even in running an alternative paper we need business skills and accounting skills, especially if we want to survive and make an impact at the centre of the information network. We have recruited skilled management staff and are improving training not only of our journalistic staff but of those involved in the other, equally vital, newspaper functions and operations. Our communities lack the necessary management skills in their own activities and we want to provide a lead that could eventually also guide and help the grassroots media.

As our paper is owned by the Catholic Church, the directors of the controlling company have all been bishops. The bishops did not dictate to the editors what should or should not appear in *New Nation*, although they have from time to time reported criticism made to them about particular articles, and discussed these criticisms with us. Generally, we have been able to satisfy them. But, although some 80 per cent of Catholics live in townships and rural areas, there is some kind of organized right-wing in the Church opposed to liberation theology, which has tried to get the Church to disassociate and extricate itself from *New Nation*. Up to now, the majority of directors have supported the continued involvement of the Church with *New Nation*.

Whilst we on the editorial staff are trying to diversify our funding sources, and are not rigid about the involvement of the Church, we believe it has a

continuing positive role to play. In the past, liberation struggles elsewhere may have left the Church out, finding that it later becomes reactionary. We want to pursue a mutually influencing relationship that keeps the Church involved and maintains its presence in our project. After all, the overwhelming majority of the Church's membership comes from our communities.

The Church must not stand apart from the struggles and has an obligation to serve the majority of its members and their material as well as spiritual interests.

With regard to training, it must be emphasized in the first place that our needs are different from those of the commercial press. Formal training institutions may have something to teach us but we have to adapt training so that it meets the needs of the democratic press. Initially we have kept trainees out of the newsroom, largely because of the pressures our small staff is under. If trainees pick up a story, they can write it in the training room and bring it to the newsroom. If they prepare a supplement, they do it in the training room because they are not yet able to cope with the deadlines of the newsroom and with its sophisticated technology. We have used specialized skills from the community as well as our own staff, for training. We have limited the number of trainees to those we can employ and we were rigorous in our selection on that account. The training is separately funded and, given the way we are handling it, does not directly and immediately solve our financial problems as we still have to keep the paper going. Certainly our experiences support the need for specialized training in a specialized institution.

The Role of the Media in the Struggle for Liberation

The Case of *The Namibian*

By David Lush

When the first edition of The Namibian was published on August 30, 1985—as an alternative to the mainstream papers guarding the status quo—the United Nations independence plan for Namibia, Security Council Resolution 435, had existed for seven years but was fast fading into oblivion. The Namibian set out to revive it while at the same time mounting a campaign for the human rights of the population, which was still struggling for liberation. Since the independence plan had worldwide recognition the international community would have been 'hard-pressed not to support the newspaper's aims'.

International support was—and still is—of crucial importance to alternative or democratic newspapers like The Namibian. Founded and edited since its inception by Gwen Lister, it has had an extraordinarily dramatic history. Harassed by the South African authorities and flooded with death threats during the pre-independence period, Gwen Lister and her colleagues still managed to produce the paper day after day dispelling, among other things, the vast ignorance of the war that was waged in the far north of the country. 'It was', writes David Lush in this short history of the paper, 'The Namibian and The Namibian alone which started documenting the bloody toll the war was taking on the people living in the war zone—nearly 60 per cent of Namibia's entire population—and the atrocities being committed by the South African security forces'.

One might have expected that The Namibian would have been allowed to develop under more peaceful circumstances once Namibia became independent in the spring of 1990, but no. In a postscript David Lush reports on how on August 5, 1990, the new offices of The Namibian in Windhoek were fire-bombed in an attack coming a few days after the publication of a 'top secret' police document outlining information reports that former South African security force members were planning an armed rebellion against the new Namibian government.

David Lush is a British journalist who joined The Namibian in 1988. He is also a regular contributor to the London-based Africa Events and occasionally files for the BBC World Service.



They might not always have the power, but we will always have the pen. A nation without conscience is a nation without hope.

Gwen Lister, 1987.

The current political situation in Namibia allows me to speak about 'The Role of the Media in the Struggle for Liberation' with a certain amount of hindsight. I will try to analyse the role of the media, and in particular *The Namibian* which has been Namibia's only 'alternative' (or democratic) newspaper in the country's liberation, and also the problems it faced along the way.

Although there is no tried and tested 'user's guide' for media campaigning to free a country, we can all learn from one another and try to apply what others have done in similar situations. *The Namibian* might be about to end one chapter, but it will have to start another immediately if it is to keep pace with the rapid change taking place in Namibia and keep a check on those carrying out that change.

The Namibian

For those unfamiliar with *The Namibian*, let me start by telling how the paper has evolved and the problems it has faced along the way.

It was founded as a trust by its editor Gwen Lister and human rights lawyer Dave Smuts in 1985. Lister had previously been a controversial politics writer with the *Windhoek Observer* but was sacked when the paper's owner grew tired of her constant criticism of South Africa's colonial regime. *The Observer*—until then Namibia's only campaigning newspaper—joined the ranks of those assisting the *status quo*, leaving the majority of Namibians once again without a media remotely interested in their views or aspirations.

When Lister was sacked from the *Observer*, she took with her a group of like-minded colleagues who resigned in solidarity. Without work and certainly with no desire to join any of Namibia's other media, there was no alternative but to start their own newspaper. For a year, together with Smuts, they fought to raise the necessary cash, and on August 30, 1985, the first edition of *The Namibian* hit the streets, immediately winning the hearts of the country's news-hungry black community.

But the South African authorities and their supporters were not so appreciative. Before the first edition was even printed, *The Namibian* was ordered to pay a R10,000 registration fee when the usual cost of registering a newspaper was R10. The case was contested in court and the newspaper won. Round one to *The Namibian*.

After that, life at the paper was one of tension, and yes, struggle. Attacks

against the staff, their property and that of the paper became regular events. Car tyres were slashed, bullets and rocks shattered the office's bomb proof glass, staff were hassled and detained while going about their work, their films and cameras confiscated, phones—both at home and at the office—tapped, mail intercepted, and on one occasion, teargas put in the office ventilation system.

Not soon after the paper started, reporter Chris Shipanga had dexedrine planted in his camera bag at a police road block. He was arrested and charged with possession, but the police case was shown up for what it was under the most rudimentary of legal cross examination and charges were dropped. Round two to *The Namibian*.

In June 1988, Lister was herself detained without trial after the paper published details of a top secret police report calling for a state of emergency to be declared in Namibia. Lister, four months pregnant at the time, was kept in solitary confinement for five days as the security police tried to make her reveal the source of the document. She refused and was released after national and international pressure made it impossible for the authorities to hold her any longer. Round three to *The Namibian*.

Four months later, the right wing extremist group the White Wolves claimed responsibility for a fire bomb which gutted the paper's offices, destroying hundreds of thousands of Rands worth of equipment. Yet not an edition was missed. Computers were salvaged and spares borrowed, staff and a legion of dedicated friends working for two days and nights to get that week's paper to the printers on time. Round four to *The Namibian*.

And so it went on, up until this very day. In June 1989, the paper's freelance photographer John Liebenberg survived an assassination attempt when he was shot at from a passing car after receiving a tip-off about what turned out to be a hoax bomb explosion. The bullets missed him by inches.

After that, the death threats flooded in to both the office and, in particular, Lister's home. Extremists issued a death list at the top of which was white Swapo leader Anton Lubowski, followed in order by Lister, Smuts and Liebenberg—all 'traitors to the white cause'. Lubowski was gunned down outside his home in September 1989, marking the start of a tense waiting game for Lister and her staff. The morning after Lubowski's murder, an anonymous caller telephoned the paper to say 'you are next'. Similar calls were then made to Lister's home almost hourly, day after day, night after night. Unarmed private security guards were posted at both Lister's home,

and the paper's offices where the production team worked nightly to bring out what was by then a daily paper. The guards twice stumbled across armed intruders in Lister's garden, while the night shift flinched at every sudden sound and movement inside and outside the undefended workplace.

Today, the security guards remain, but gone is the omnipresent fear of violent death which haunted every staff member in those months before, during and, for a while, after November's elections—all predicted a right wing backlash after Swapo's victory at the polls, but thankfully this never materialized. The intensity and frequency of the threats and attacks against *The Namibian* increased as the paper's circulation rose. For more than a year the print run hovered around the 5,000 mark (Namibia's population is an estimated 1.6 million), the low understanding of English amongst the majority of a population fed and educated on a diet of Afrikaans preventing it from rising higher. So, in April 1988, *The Namibian* launched 'Focus'—a section of the paper written in Afrikaans and the most widely spoken indigenous language, *Oshiwambo*—and within three months, sales of the paper had doubled.

There was another sizeable leap in circulation the following year when *The Namibian* became a daily newspaper to coincide with the start of the independence process. These changes were always rapid and seldom planned, stretching staff and resources still further to the limit. But, miraculously, the paper has survived to tell the tale. Rounds five, six, seven and eight to *The Namibian*.

When *The Namibian* was launched, the United Nations independence plan for Namibia, Security Council Resolution 435, had existed for almost seven years. It was the only proposal on the negotiating table and had been agreed to by all parties involved in the dispute. Yet the plan was fast fading into oblivion.

The Namibian basically set out to campaign on two issues—the implementation of the independence plan, and the protection of human rights. It was perhaps fortuitous that Resolution 435 gave the paper a ready-made, well defined target to aim for. The plan had worldwide recognition and the international community would have been hard-pressed not to support the newspaper's aims.

Overseas funding has kept the paper afloat throughout its four years, while

diplomatic pressure has come in handy on the occasions when staff are detained, their lives threatened or the paper faced with banning.

In return, overseas politicians and diplomats visiting Namibia are given countless briefing sessions at the paper's offices, and those subscribing to *The Namibian* are kept in touch with 'the real version' of events in the country.

The democratic media in South Africa does not have an equivalent to Resolution 435 and lacks a hard and fast programme for change waiting to be taken off the shelf and set in motion. Instead it has to set its sights on more general aims such as an end to apartheid and universal adult suffrage.

However, Resolution 435 needed *The Namibian* just as much as *The Namibian* needed Resolution 435.

The Role of *The Namibian*

By 1985, South Africa had all but buried Resolution 435, while the international community had suffered apparent amnesia on the subject. Inside Namibia, the almost exclusively pro-Pretoria media had also pushed the plan into the background which meant the majority of the population was losing sight of its only real chance of freedom. Therefore it was up to *The Namibian* to revitalize Resolution 435 both inside and outside the country.

At the time, the Namibian liberation movement Swapo was the only political party effectively campaigning for the implementation of Resolution 435, and so *The Namibian* naturally highlighted what the party was doing and what it was saying. Because of this, the South African authorities immediately branded the paper as the 'Swapo paper'. But at no time has *The Namibian* been funded by the liberation movement and to this day the paper stands by its independent editorial policy. When Swapo's own newspaper, *Namibia Today*, was launched inside the country in August 1989, *The Namibian* announced the event with the tongue-in-cheek headline 'And now for the real Swapo mouthpiece'.

Admittedly, there has been much soul searching when it has been necessary to criticize Swapo, in particular over the detainee issue when the paper shocked some readers by publishing revelations about the maltreatment of political prisoners held in Swapo's camps in Angola. However, the paper has weathered the storm and continues to be held in high esteem by the liberation movement and its supporters, testimony that the truth does not necessarily hurt in the long run. We also admit *The Namibian* has given more

coverage to Swapo than any other party, but it must be remembered that, until recently, no other media would mention Swapo's name unless it was followed by the word 'terrorist', let alone publish party comment. After all, the United Nations did declare Swapo 'the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people', and the election results prove that *The Namibian* was acting on behalf of the majority of Namibians.

Before *The Namibian* was launched, this majority of the population had no media expressing, or through which to express its views. The only alternatives were mass meetings—which went unreported and were often violently broken up by the security forces—or else word of mouth, which is both a limited and unreliable means of communication. In short, the majority of Namibians were becoming increasingly frustrated at their inability to express themselves.

Added to which, those living in one part of Namibia had no idea what was happening to their compatriots staying elsewhere in what is a huge but sparsely populated country. In particular, there was ignorance of the scale and brutality of the war being waged in the far north of the country. It was *The Namibian* and *The Namibian* alone which started documenting the bloody toll the war was taking on the people living in the war zone—nearly 60 per cent of Namibia's entire population—and the atrocities being committed by the South African security forces.

Likewise, many more were ignorant of the plight of rural black Namibians who were living—and continue to live—in abject poverty under a quasi-feudal system run by their landed white employers further south. It became *The Namibian's* responsibility to bring these and other such issues to the attention of the country as a whole.

Having highlighted the realities of colonialism for Namibians, it was then necessary to tell the story to the outside world. Journalists at *The Namibian* became 'stringers' for overseas media, while the paper's photographs—vivid images of the conflicts, contradictions and chaos of Namibian life—appeared in books, journals, and on gallery walls and TV screens throughout the world.

Swapo and anti-apartheid campaigners at last had material evidence to present to governments and conference delegates, and before long *The Namibian's* staff members were themselves being invited to address conferences called, once more, to discuss the Namibian issue.

Slowly but surely, life was pumped back into Resolution 435 and the pressure for an end to South Africa's illegal occupation mounted both within and outside Namibia. *The Namibian* had, in short, worked as a catalyst in this revival.

The paper also had an important educational role. By campaigning for a new order, *The Namibian* also had to practice what it preached. Above all, the paper could only break down the barriers of racism by becoming completely non-racial itself. Colonialism being what it is, there were virtually no black Namibian journalists inside the country, so it was up to *The Namibian* to train some. Raw, aspiring hacks were employed and worked under the guidance of Lister and a couple of other experienced colleagues. All the paper's original trainees—ranging from ex-miners to college graduates—now hold senior posts at *The Namibian*, or have progressed to greener pastures and have been replaced by a steady stream of new recruits.

The paper also set out to try and make up for the pitiful colonial education system by dedicating sections of the paper to educational features. Although this has been limited by lack of available expertise, *The Namibian* can certainly claim to have helped promote English as the official language of an independent Namibia, although success in this area has been less than was originally hoped.

Also by documenting, for example, the 'other side' of the war, and in particular the atrocities of the security forces. *The Namibian* will provide first-hand source material for those writing the history textbooks of tomorrow.

The problems

By campaigning for change, you are inevitably fighting those with the power, thus making the democratic media's role an uphill struggle.

For a start, the authorities have the power to legislate against media which it feels is out of line. There was never (quite) a state of emergency in Namibia and anti-media legislation was never as stringent as it is in South Africa, although the likes of various Defence and Police Acts still meant reporting was done in a legal minefield.

Instead, right-wing extremists tended to do the authorities' dirty work, as I explained earlier, and—needless to say—the culprits were never brought to justice.

But by bearing the brunt of such attacks, both 'legal' and illegal, the media

focuses attention on repression in the country as a whole. After all, who better to write about such acts first hand than journalists themselves?

The democratic media also find themselves up against those with financial muscle, making it difficult to run as an independent, economic concern as businesses are either too scared to advertise or else refuse to do so on ideological grounds. One of *The Namibian's* main advertisers, a supermarket chain, suddenly stopped placing adverts because the company's main customer, the army, threatened to buy elsewhere unless the former stopped advertising in the paper. However, it was not a no-win situation. Most business people tend to care more for money than they do for ideology and there is nothing which convinces people to place advertisements more than a newspaper's large circulation. Once *The Namibian* employed a full-time advertising salesperson (the appointment coincided with the launch of 'Focus' and the consequent leap in sales), the message soon got around that the paper had the biggest readership (an estimated 100,000 people) in the country and advertising ratios jumped from around five to around 50 per cent.

The prospect of political change acts as another big incentive to advertisers who, as we found out in 1988 when the Namibian peace talks gained momentum, want to be seen to associate with those who will have future credibility.

Of course, there is no point in producing a newspaper if you cannot get it to your readership, and printing and distribution have proved to be constant headaches.

Namibia has two newspaper presses, one owned by the publisher of two of the country's most right wing publications and the other by the DTA, Swapo's biggest opponent. *The Namibian* is printed by the former and the relationship has been stormy to say the least, and fraught with mysterious mishaps. Notably during the two weeks around the election, the newspaper was late off the presses every day and therefore missed the flights to the north of the country where the bulk of the paper's readership lives.

Namibia's size also make it difficult and expensive to transport the newspaper throughout the country at the speed needed for a daily publication. Added to which, shops in some of the smaller, more rural towns are controlled by reactionary business people who refuse to stock *The Namibian*.

The ideal solution is to own your own presses, run your own distribution service and have offices in all regional centres, but such an arrangement re-

quires huge investment and carries equally large running costs. And, as *New Nation* editor Gabu Tugwana has pointed out, printing presses are not only expensive, they are also extremely vulnerable to sabotage.

The Namibian cannot yet claim to have successfully overcome these problems and the impact of the paper has suffered as a result. As with alternative media almost everywhere, *The Namibian* is run by highly-motivated journalists and not entrepreneurs and, in hindsight, more emphasis should have been placed on trying to make the paper economically as well as ideologically sound from the outset. External funding cannot be guaranteed for ever and as the money dries up, so radical changes will have to be made to ensure *The Namibian* survives. The alternative will be to sell out to those who might want to use 'the people's paper' to further their own ends.

Conclusion

Resolution 435 has now been implemented and this, judging by the praise heaped on the paper and its staff after the elections, was at least in some part due to *The Namibian*.

Having achieved its main goal, the paper must now look to the future and lay down new guidelines. The aim is to become Namibia's national newspaper with human rights and press freedom remaining as guiding principles, a stance which could see *The Namibian* becoming the voice of opposition should future governments try to clamp down in these areas. But as long as the paper remains 'the conscience' of the people, then it should survive.

The first priority will be to appoint experienced staff in key positions. It will be essential to find a business manager whose job it will be to keep a tight rein on the likes of truculent printers, slap-dash distributors and spend-thrift journalists, while examining workable ways to cut costs. The main advertising rep. resigned, so *The Namibian* has had to go head-hunting for a top canvasser who will reap the harvest of a new crop of advertisers who will be looking to open accounts with the paper in these times of political change. The people to fill these two crucial posts will not come cheaply and, Namibia being a small place, those with the necessary expertise do not grow on trees.

To become the national newspaper in Namibia, *The Namibian* must also expand its coverage—particularly of overseas and non-political topics—and increase its pagination. This in turn will require more reporting and production staff and inevitably bigger premises. Again, we are talking telephone number amounts of money.

But we are also aware of a new responsibility for the future. In the euphoria of their new-found freedom, Namibians may be quick to forget those who still have to win their liberation. It will be the job of *The Namibian* to remind them and do what it can to see that the rest of Africa is liberated in the near future.

'They might not always have the power, but we will always have the pen.'

Post scriptum

Almost a year on from the Chobe conference, Namibia is now independent and expansion plans at *The Namibian* are in full swing. But, as those at the newspaper recently found out, some things have not changed.

In the early hours of August 5, *The Namibian's* new offices—the newspaper's headquarters since January 1990—were fire-bombed. The main newsroom was wrecked when five phosphorous grenades were hurled into the building by intruders. The attack came days after the newspaper published details of a 'top secret' police document outlining information reports that former South African security force members were planning an armed rebellion against the new government. Three days after the report was published, police confiscated copies of the leaked document and threatened to charge Editor Gwen Lister with breach of the Official Secrets Act. Sixty hours later, the newspaper's staff and supporters were clearing up the debris of the blast and salvaging computer equipment with which to continue producing the newspaper.

As it was, not one edition of the paper (published on five days a week) was missed, 15 journalists and production staff working on a handful of terminals and telephones crammed into the relatively undamaged reception area and editor's office, while reconstruction work carried on around them.

A month after the bombing, eight young white men were arrested and charged with treason after huge quantities of weapons—most of which had been stolen from police and army arsenals—were found at the defendants' homes.

In November 1990, *The Namibian's* offices had been rebuilt and re-equipped, though finding another insurance company to cover what, through the persuance of free speech, has become an insurer's nightmare will not be easy.

This year, *The Namibian* has been putting its expansion plans into operation

with key appointments made to the editorial and advertising departments. Advertising revenue continues to rise slowly but surely, encouraged by steady circulation figures (average daily sales of 12,000 copies) and expanded business and economics coverage (*The Namibian* is the only newspaper in the country to carry the daily stock market prices).

However, a business manager still has to be found, so distribution remains chaotic and the paper's income fails to keep pace with rising expenditure fuelled by steep inflation. It is unlikely *The Namibian* will achieve its aim of breaking even in this financial year, so again funding will have to be sought.

On the journalistic front, the paper is treading the fine line of constructively criticising the new government while also giving praise where praise is due. *The Namibian's* exposure of the luxurious lifestyles of government ministers and the apparent abandonment of thousands of still-unemployed former freedom fighters has met with popular approval, while the paper has paid special attention to highlighting continued apartheid practices country-wide, in particular in the rural areas.

Working out the newspaper's new, post-independence role has been a gradual process, mostly by trial and error. But many—former opponents included—agree that today *The Namibian* is more of a newspaper than it has ever been before.

Rights and Responsibilities of the Press in the Frontline States

By Ndimara Tegambwage

One of the participants from the Frontline States in the Chobe Seminar on 'Democracy and the Media in Southern Africa' was the Tanzanian journalist Ndimara Tegambwage, editor of the lively political monthly Radi, published in Dar es Salaam. In his outspoken and hard-hitting contribution to the Seminar, Ndimara Tegambwage emphasized the somewhat paradoxical fact that the struggle for political independence in Africa had not led to a recognition of the importance of the right to inform and be informed but rather to a situation in which these rights have been neglected or even suppressed. In many countries the Government has taken on the responsibility of running or controlling the media, radio and television stations, newspapers, magazines and publishing houses, leaving little or almost no space to independent media. And in other countries, the cost of paper and printing have sky-rocketed, depriving small but serious publishers of the opportunity to reach their target audiences. Under such circumstances, says Ndimara Tegambwage, 'it is meaningless to continue shouting for a free press per se'. Publishers must, for instance, come together in associations to 'press for changes in tax and cost systems that take much of their revenue' and, most importantly, 'join hands with human rights activists in their countries to press for their democratic rights and freedoms which include the much talked about freedom of the press'.



Introduction

In the Frontline States, as in the rest of free Africa, the 'guerilla typewriters' are no more. Those journalistic ambushes that kept the fire of the struggle for Uhuru burning have lost the staccato frequency that characterized the radicalism of the nationalist press. In many countries governments, recognizing the power of the media, have taken on the business of running radio and television stations, newspapers, magazines, and book publishing firms. Where none of these existed, they have been started and run under the state; and where nationalization of the press, or the media in general, has not taken place, governments have created barriers in the form of laws, or have publicly called on owners to be 'sane, rational and responsible'—all in an effort to create what rulers call 'one voice, one country'.

But 'oneness' during the time of the struggle for independence did not mean that all people had surrendered, once and for all, their interests and social and economic status. No. They had responded to the dialectics of the struggle that demanded unity for the elimination of colonial rule. Nor did

the coming of independence and liberation mean that those who first came into power were unerring, ideal rulers who had the right to clamp down on opposition and free expression and single-handedly to determine the way new nations should be governed.

Unfortunately, that was the case. Those who had the audacity to declare themselves in opposition were branded 'political malcontents' and 'power-hungry', and were either condemned into exile or 'disappearance'. Constructive ideas became the preserve of those few in power. Workings of governments were shrouded in secrecy, while people's participation remained an empty slogan as the people were severely denied information.

It is no wonder, therefore, that Africa has since known cannibal presidents: Idi Amin of Uganda, and Jean B. Bokassa of the Central African Republic. It has known satellite states like that of despotic Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire; the late Ahmed Abdallah who was brought to power in the Comoros by mercenaries from South Africa and France; and Kamuzu Banda of Malawi who runs the country like a personal animal farm. Africa has known food deficit areas where presidents, instead of buying food for the starving population, have bought or borrowed arms and ammunitions in a bid to quell the empty stomach demonstrators.

States have failed to feed their people, presidents have failed to give convincing explanations, and people have lost patience. Take the example of the Sudan. The leader of the despotic regime in 1981, Jaafar Nimeiri, confronted with repeated mass uprisings and bankruptcy, decided terror, oppression, guns and tanks were the answer.

In the *New Standard* of 17 March, 1981, under the heading: 'Reagan Told: Sudan Bases are Yours', we saw further evidence of impatience and desperation. Nimeiri did not say the Sudan was a vast country that needed food, communication infrastructure and democracy. He said 'We need military airfields. We would like the United States to help us build them ... and they would be used by both if anything starts ... We have large manpower, when anything happens they will be able to work in a joint group of armies.'

Elsewhere presidents refuse to step down until they die, while others, like Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, get intoxicated with the unimaginable wealth derived from cruelly exploiting the people and their resource-rich countries.

In all these circumstances, the information flow has been hampered and freedom of speech completely curtailed.

This presentation seeks to link rights and responsibilities of the press to the struggle for human rights in free Africa. And while addressing itself to the Frontline States, it also seeks to challenge the states that helped the liberation struggle in Southern Africa to provide an example of democratic governance to be emulated by emerging nations.

Rights defined

It is important to state, right from the start, that the rights of the press are numerous and interlinked, but the fundamental one is the right to go to press. This means the right to inform; all the rest are attendant rights. It is imperative to state here, too, that the responsibilities of the press are many, but again, the fundamental one is the responsibility of publishing the truth.

There are other rights that add weight to those stated above: the rights of the people to know, to be informed and many other attendant rights. The right to know depends greatly on the press fulfilling its responsibility: to tell the truth. It may sound absurd for one to demand an avoidance of 'untruths' from an institution which is legally recognized and charged with seeking and delivering information. Equally, it is considered unethical for a professional or any institution charged with the task of informing the people to engage in telling lies.

But what have governments done about their duty to inform? We know too well that they have released little or no information; they have kept quiet on issues that demand their word; they have used their hand-picked editors as strict filters of news and information; or have shouted down those who demand to know more and threatened them with torture and/or imprisonment.

In Tanzania, for example, several months before independence, Julius Nyerere planted a seed of fear:

Too often the only voices to be heard in 'opposition' are those of a few irresponsible individuals who exploit the very privileges of democracy—freedom of the press, freedom of association, freedom to criticize—in order to deflect the government from its responsibilities to the people by creating problems of law and order... The government must deal firmly and promptly with the trouble-makers. The country cannot afford, during these vital early years of its life, to treat such people with the same degree of tolerance which may be safely allowed in a long established democracy.'

Here, Nyerere allows himself to declare, even before independence, that the freedoms and rights of the people in a democratic society are mere

'privileges'. Besides being a warning to the opposition, this was also a declaration of intent to stifle all discordant voices, a step that disregarded the role of all those who had come together to deal a blow to the common enemy—colonialism. The intent became clear years later with the adoption of the one-party system and state ownership of the press. (The official press in Tanzania has a combined circulation of about 1.1 million.)

Over the years, with the growing need for more information, many privately owned publications have emerged, notably *Radi*, a monthly with a circulation of 20,000 copies that comes out irregularly because of financial constraints. Others are *Business Times*, a relatively new broadsheet, *Family Mirror*, a monthly tabloid, and the old bi-monthly *Kiongozi*, a Roman Catholic tabloid which has been vocal on many an issue, and *Fahari*, a political tabloid. There are over a hundred other government owned publications which are of less significance.

It is imperative to note that the Tanzanian press is known for its crusade for the liberation of Africa. The fervour is still evident in both the state-owned and privately owned press. This is a result of an earlier political commitment by almost all the early African presidents (except Kamuzu Banda of Malawi) who pledged to see Africans next door freed from colonialism and apartheid.

But how about the local scene in recent years? With a literacy rate of a little over 85 per cent and a reading habit almost unequalled in free Africa, the population of Tanzania has high expectations. It is not surprising, therefore, that both the public and private press have failed to quench the thirst for information even in Dar es Salaam—where they are all based—let alone in the whole of Tanzania. This is not only because the publications do not reach the people, but also because there is little or no coverage of the things the readership expects to see in newspapers, and what there is lacks any serious treatment. The years of crusading on the local scene were the early 1970s, but today the post-independence 'guerilla typewriters' have been silenced.

Writing on the role of privately owned media, mostly the press, this author says in a recent publication:

The silence on many issues, the publication of funny and sloppy material under the guise of 'entertainment', is a kind of escapism for which owners of the private press must be severely censured. Not only do these newspapers and magazines negate their role, they also serve to tell the public that 'those things don't matter'. Here not only do they side with the alarmist mystifiers, who cry 'enemy! enemy!' on every

word that does not originate from them, but perpetuate backwardness and the system that breeds rumour.

In fact it is the private media that must question the withholding of information and news; that must query officials for issuing unclear and unsourced statements, and demand an immediate end to the spasmodic, bit-by-bit release of information, because, in monetary terms, it makes little returns as customers tend to equate the progressive private magazine with the blunt, handout-bedecked, rumour fanning buy-or-leave-it official publications.

And David Wakati, a member of the National Executive Committee of the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi, and Director of the state-owned Radio Tanzania (RTD) tells it all and with pain when he laments before Nyerere: '... Even when we had established the truth, we continued to be told: don't announce, don't announce, don't announce at all...'³

He was enumerating incidences where authority suppressed information and thereby marred the credibility of both government and the media.

Looking at the above, one can clearly see that there is a demand for freedom in both the private and public press. One recognizes there are fetters that must be done away with to allow full coverage and exposé. What is obvious, too, is the growing need to know, which is never accomplished without questioning. The Tanzanian publisher Walter Bgoya says:

I have observed that in our societies in Africa, children are not allowed to ask questions as often as in other societies. Questions appear to upset the African father. In our nations the people are treated like children and are not allowed to ask questions which would imply dissatisfaction with the *status quo*.⁴

Here then is the link between the struggles for change, for the elimination of oppression, for human rights, for democracy, and the struggle to free the press. In free Africa, these struggles can never be separated.

Let us look at a few examples in Tanzania where the press has condoned state action but where a combined struggle would have helped bring about change along democratic lines.

In Dar es Salaam, between 1st and 3rd November, 1989, policemen rounded up women and sent them to court for 'loitering'. A female magistrate convicted them and sentenced the poor young girls and old women to six months imprisonment each. Facts are that the women were picked up at

various points in the city between 18.30 and 22.00 hrs. What the official and private press did was simply to state the bare facts, without making any comment. The press failed to probe in any way.

The constitution guarantees freedom of movement provided there is no violation of the laws. Now, why should the women be arrested in the early hours of the evening and at places where it is not prohibited to be? It is alleged they are 'loiterers'. OK then, why should there be a law that contravenes the fundamental law of the land—the constitution? How about allegations that some policemen told the women to plead guilty to the charges and that they would be released or fined? No investigation at all.

'Idleness' and 'disorderliness' as offenses which encompass 'loitering' are punishable under Section 176 of the Penal Code which provides for a fine not exceeding Tanzania Shs. 500 or imprisonment for a period not exceeding three months or both fine and imprisonment.

Why then should the magistrate of a primary court mete out six months jail sentence and T. Shs. 5,000 fine instead of the appropriate sentence provided under the law? Why shouldn't the district magistrate intervene immediately, correct this gross misdirection by the lower court magistrate and review the sentence? These questions cannot be dismissed as matters of law and therefore left to lawyers only. They are matters for every conscious citizen; they affect the rights and freedoms of the people; they are crucial to our democracy.

In a case like this, the press cannot fight it alone. It requires the cooperation of other conscious members of the community and human rights activists to launch investigations, to consult with advocates and together protest the magistrate's action, and/or demand the erasure of the law that collides with the constitution. When one case is won, one human right is secured and some freedom of the press is achieved.

Another example. This concerns *Radi*. In August 1988, the Minister for Information in Zanzibar tabled a bill in the House of Representatives seeking to give powers to the President of Zanzibar to expressly declare ceased any newspaper, magazine, book or any other publication he considered not to be 'in the interest of the people'.

Radi magazine got the information well before the bill was sent to the House and the editor sent a message by way of an editorial titled: Stop this Bill! The editorial read in part:

... Honourable Minister, to censor or control press and information is an enormous task, but in the first place, it is a dirty job. To censor news and information is to deny the people the right to know the truth; it is to elevate oneself to a level where you think you are the only one with correct ideas and no one else knows better; it is killing the people's freedom of expression; it is sabotaging or weakening democracy; it is reducing the people's ability to contribute ideas and participate fully in governing their country ...

... Censorship dries up fountains of good thought which we find in many artists: singers, poets and carvers; it stunts good thinking among intellectuals ... The Bill, Hon. Minister, may pass, but we would not be surprised if one of you in the House will be among the first victims of the law you want to make.⁶

The Bill passed and was made law. But we had made an effort and still think the message might have an impact on the same law in the future as we continue to write on similar subjects. This is yet another area where the press cannot afford to go it alone, for to defeat a bill of this nature demands the awakening of legislators to the dangers of the law they want to make. And awakening legislators could be done by human rights activists and other conscious members of the community at interpersonal communication level and at rallies if they are permitted.

With the examples given, it is only safe to say that these rights—the right to know, the right to be informed, the right to be heard, the right to hear others, and the freedom of the press—all come under the umbrella of human rights as enshrined in the constitutions of free Africa.

Our contention is that the rights of the press in the Frontline States have, to a great extent, been taken away. Executives and politicians have tended to tell the press what it should do—through appointed editors, or through business executives who wish to maintain the *status quo*.

Rights have been confiscated as the cost of paper has rocketed to unaffordable levels, thus depriving small but serious publishers of the opportunity to reach their target audiences. Furthermore, printing costs have gone up, especially in Tanzania, and it is the very rich and the monopoly state owned press that can afford to publish regularly.

Let us argue here too, that when rights of the press are taken away, the concomitant responsibility of telling the truth suffers as well. For the media are in the hands of those who dictate the *dos* and *don'ts*, and to them responsibility means publishing what they like to read; what they like the people to read about them, what would keep them in their offices.

At this stage it is meaningless to continue shouting demands for a free press *per se*. Here it calls for understanding that the official act is, in fact, a suppression of truth and infringement of human rights and betrayal of democracy. It is then, through a more defined and encompassing struggle for human rights that the rights of the press could be won.

What is to be done?

Writing on the theme 'publish and survive' this author has stated:

But, even in times of censure, unwarranted interference, and even censorship, the publisher can and must still stand firm and count on the trust of his audience in whose hearts he lives; on truthful coverage and analysis; on professional integrity and freedom of mind; and on the democratic principles and rights enshrined in the fundamental law of the land.⁷

It is suggested that:

- Crusading newspapers and magazines should continue, and even re-double, their efforts to publish truthful news and information.
- They must ensure the highest standard of journalism that will earn them and their profession the honour they rightly deserve.
- At the national level: publishers who are not in the 'mainstream' should form an association that will bring them together to press for changes in tax and cost systems which take much of their revenue.
- At the regional level: publishers should come together in an association, to campaign for change (as above) and organize for regional cooperation, e.g. in providing materials and services which are not available in other countries.
- Organizations—at the regional and international levels—should be requested to help in providing facilities for and assist in the training of journalists.
- Most importantly, publishers should join hands with human rights activists in their countries to press for their democratic rights and freedoms which include the much talked about freedom of the press.

In this way, the 'guerilla typewriters' of the post-independence era will come to the field to fight for democratic rights in the Frontline States and in the rest of Africa.

1. Nyerere, J.K., in *A Century of African English* as quoted in 'Publish and Survive, The Experience of a Magazine Publisher' by Ndimara Tegambwage, *Southern Africa Political and Economic Monthly* (SAPEM), Harare, October, 1988.
2. Tegambwage, Ndimara, in *Who Tells the Truth in Tanzania*, Tausi Publishers Limited, Dar es Salaam, 1990.
3. Wakati, David, in *Mzalendo* (Party's weekly), June 12, 1988.
4. Bgoya, Walter, 'Building Capacities for Resistance and Reconstruction' in *Another Development for Lesotho? Alternative Development Strategies for the Mountain Kingdom*, Foundation for Education with Production, Gaborone, 1989.
5. The material for this example is derived from research by Professor Issa G. Shivji, Professor of Law, University of Dar es Salaam. The research titled *State Coercion and Freedom in Tanzania* are intended for publication as a monograph, by the Institute of Southern African Studies, National University of Lesotho. Permission to quote from the research granted by the author.
6. Editorial in *Radi*, August, 1988.
7. Tegambwage, Ndimara, in 'Publish and Survive, The Experience of a Magazine Publisher', op.cit.

Education and Employment
in Southern Africa:

Defusing the Time-Bomb?

*Report on a Seminar on Education and Training for
Employment and Employment Creation in the SADCC
Countries, held in Zimbabwe, April 1989*

With contributions by President R G Mugabe,
Zimbabwe, Professor Nicholas Kuhanga, Tanzania,
Ms Fay Chung, Minister for Primary and Secondary
Education, Zimbabwe, Dr Kenneth King, United
Kingdom, Mr Patrick van Rensburg, Botswana,
Dr Bernard Chidzero, Senior Minister for Finance,
Economic Planning and Development, Zimbabwe,
and others.

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SEMINAR ON DEMOCRACY AND THE MEDIA IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Chobe Game Lodge, Botswana, 1-5 December, 1989

Recommendations and Suggestions of the Seminar

The Seminar on 'Democracy and the Media in Southern Africa' was held at the Chobe Game Lodge in Botswana from December 1 to 5, 1989. Thirty-one participants gathered for the Seminar, 26 being journalists from both democratic media within South Africa and from media organizations in the SADCC countries and five coming from outside the region. It was organized by the Foundation for Education with Production (FEP) and the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and was also held to honour Dr Ernst Michanek, former Director-General of the Swedish International Development Authority. The 'Recommendations and Suggestions of the Seminar', printed below, were formulated by three working groups and submitted to the plenary at the end of the Seminar. The participants spoke in their personal capacities and the following document represents a broad consensus of their views, though every one of them may not necessarily agree with all the points made.

Standing Committee

Seminar participants agreed that a Standing Committee be elected from amongst themselves to promote and facilitate the implementation of the suggestions and the recommendations of the Seminar, two from amongst participants from inside South Africa and three from amongst participants resident in the region.

1. Journalists' Organizations and Cooperation

In majority-ruled Southern Africa, the level of organization and journalists' participation in unions or associations appears very weak. Most journalists' unions are only a few years old and few are really effective. Journalists are reported to be disillusioned with the failure of the unions to take up issues and problems. Meetings are said to be infrequent and attendance is low.

In most of these countries, governments are the major employer of journalists. This was seen by the participants as a factor influencing journalists' willingness to stand up for professional ethics and to defend their working conditions.

In South Africa, journalists are divided into three unions, largely determined by ideological and political considerations. These are the Association of Democratic Journalists (ADJ), Media Workers Association of Southern Africa (MWASA) and the Southern African Society of Journalists (SASJ).

The Seminar saw this division as a reflection of the political conflict in SA, and thought it would be unrealistic and presumptuous to suggest that SA

journalists should turn their efforts to unity at this stage. However, it was pointed out that there has been united action between the unions around issues of common concern. Participants felt that this process should be encouraged.

The African National Congress (ANC) also has a journalists' circle, which is affiliated to the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ), based in Prague, and to the Federation of Southern African Journalists (FSAJ). Links between South Africa based journalists and exiled journalists are currently being strengthened. It was emphasized to the Seminar that the ANC stood firmly against a government controlled press in a future South Africa, and that it would encourage a free press in a non-racial democratic South Africa.

In terms of existing regional cooperation, all Southern African unions have joined together to form the FSAJ. The ADJ has observer status. Excluding South Africa, the unions in the region belong to the IOJ. But in South Africa, for example, the ADJ has chosen non-alignment (belonging to neither the IOJ nor the IFJ).

Consideration was given to strengthening links between unions in a bid to help strengthen national union structures. Seminar participants felt the FSAJ should pay attention to promoting debate among journalists on issues of common concern, and bring them together more frequently than is currently the case. At a practical level, the FSAJ could keep a register of harassment of journalists in the region and take up their cases where possible.

2. Accountability

It was felt that 'accountability to readership' of those working in various media organizations was not adequate. Participants felt that in the changing societies of Southern Africa journalists are part and parcel of the process of change for democracy. Therefore, they are accountable to the democratic principles that the people aspire to.

On the exercise of accountability, seminar participants had no firm views on structures which would ensure accountability. However, some comments were made and cautions expressed.

- (a) The assumption that particular organizations represent the people often needs to be carefully examined. In independent Africa, the organization to which media people have usually been responsible is the

government and the ruling party. The Seminar highlighted the dangers of government control of the media, emphasizing instead the need for an independent press and other media.

- (b) Participants were interested in examining the possibilities of setting up boards of trustees or directors, representative of society, which could facilitate the exercise of accountability. However, such boards should not interfere in day-to-day editorial decisions, but should rather ensure that media for which they were responsible adhered to the principle of accountability.

3. Exercise of Power within the Media

The traditional structure in the media—which tends to persist today—is largely one of editors deciding independently of their journalists the content and editorial policy of their organs. The concept of the prerogative of management or editors tends to prevail.

Participants felt that greater participation by editorial staff was needed in the process of news gathering and editorial policy decisions.

Participants felt that newsrooms should aim at being microcosms of the society that people are trying to build, and in this way newspapers would necessarily be arenas of struggle.

The seminar did not reach conclusions on how greater democracy and participation could be exercised. It was felt that journalists had to take up the responsibility of getting more democratic structures established within their organizations. It was emphasized that the unions could play a role in this process.

4. Language and Widening of Access of Democratic Press

If people have a right to information, it follows that the information should be available to people in the language they speak and understand best. Where there is a large variety of languages, however, economies of scale in the production of newspapers can be lost. But considerations of profitability should not wipe out the right of people to information.

5. Funding

It is suggested that:

- (a) a guide to funding organizations and how to use those organizations be produced;
- (b) there is a need for a 'Media Bank', one for the SADCC region and one for the South African democratic media, into which donor agencies can channel funds rather than into individual projects;
- (c) avenues be explored for the media to become more viable, in particular through business and staff shareholding and government subsidies, along the lines of the Swedish model. It is further suggested that SIDA fund a delegation to go and explore the Swedish subsidy system;
- (d) individual news organizations investigate joint business ventures.

6. Training

It is suggested that:

- (a) a media training digest be drawn up so that the region is aware of the facilities currently available;
- (b) regional media training networks be set up, in the short term as training exchange programmes but in the long term in the form of a regional media school. The latter could be achieved by expanding existing media training facilities ('media' refers to all areas of operation and not just journalistic skills);
- (c) there be active 'quality control' of training in that representatives of organizations involved in the training programmes meet regularly to assess results.

7. Distribution

Many media organizations rely too heavily on amateur distribution networks. It is suggested that media organizations follow a more aggressive subscriptions policy, in particular by:

- (a) targeting aid and government agencies;
- (b) circulating subscription lists;
- (c) increasing overseas subscription rates (relative to newspaper/journal costs in those countries and not just to cover price and postage).

Considering the apparent success of the distribution system of the Zimbabwe monthly *Parade*, it was suggested that *Parade* be asked to write a paper on their network and circulate it to participants.

8. Advertising

It is suggested that:

- (a) media organizations, particularly the democratic media, pursue a more aggressive advertising policy, in particular by exploring 'advertising aid' whereby donors pay for advertising campaigns for funded organizations in need of publicity and that they:
 - make greater use of advertising features;
 - have regular circulation audits and subscribe to audit circulation bureaus;
 - by-pass often hostile advertising agencies and canvass clients direct;
- (b) an advertising code of ethics be drawn up.

9. Regional Information Networks and Projects

I. The Seminar assessed the needs for additional projects and observed that:

- (a) the SADCC countries need more information from South Africa from a democratic perspective;
- (b) there is need for improved communication between the SADCC member countries;
- (c) there was a considerable interest inside SADCC countries about other SADCC countries;
- (d) except in Zimbabwe, there were very few publications available in most countries;
- (e) there was reciprocal need for information to flow into South Africa.

II. The Seminar also assessed existing resources and observed that:

- (a) the independent press agencies, including the Southern regional pool of PANA news agency and IPS, had achieved only limited success in the SADCC region;
- (b) the small Canada-linked, Harare-based AIA had stringers in all countries except Angola and Swaziland and were providing a service of high quality;
- (c) the regional publications *Africa South*, *SAPEM*, *Southern African Economist*, *Edicesa News*, *SADCC Energy* and *PTA Business* did not cover hard news; and
- (d) the small national weeklies in the various countries could use more regional news if they received it.

III. Conclusion

After considering various options to increase information flows within

SADCC and between South Africa and SADCC, the Seminar concluded that:

- (a) participants from Zimbabwe should discuss with AIA the feasibility and costs of expanding its services to serve the needs of the democratic press in South Africa and other publications in the region;
- (b) two representatives of the democratic press in South Africa should be mandated to discuss with the democratic press the use of an expanded AIA service;
- (c) the Foundation for Education with Production (FEP) should continue its investigations into the modalities of a weekly regional newspaper;
- (d) FEP should liaise with AIA to establish an expanded news agency to include an editor to produce material suitable for the democratic press in South Africa; and
- (e) a meeting should take place in Harare or Gaborone between representatives of the democratic press, AIA, *Africa South* and FEP to discuss the work of the news agency.

10. Mechanisms for Regional Cooperation

It was proposed that:

- (a) there be an investigation of the potential for staff exchanges of administrative and editorial workers for periods ranging from several weeks to three months. Such exchanges could be intra-regional and between South Africa and the region, with the following objectives:
 - spreading of specialized skills;
 - deepening knowledge of conditions and issues in the host countries;
 - contributing to a regional awareness among journalists.In addition, exchanges beyond the region for specific training requirements should be examined.
- (b) the attention of the Federation of Southern Africa Journalists, national journalists' organizations and media institutions be drawn to:
 - the need to expand the formal organization of journalists as formations with the capacity to pursue the ends of press freedom;
 - the need to acquaint themselves with and utilize the provisions of the African Charter of Human and People's Rights in so far as they relate to freedom of expression;
 - the advantages/potential of securing popular support in defense of freedom of expression.
- (c) appropriate representatives of the South African democratic media meet representatives of the southern pool of PANA in Lusaka to discuss:

- the possibility of increasing the flow of information written from a democratic perspective from South Africa to PANA;
 - the potential for South African democratic publications to enter into a joint contract with PANA to increase the flow of regional news to South Africa;
- (d) there be an assessment of the achievements arising from this gathering and a review of the need for a further broad consultation of this sort. Any such future conference should be planned as far as possible in consultation and cooperation with journalists' organizations and media institutions.

Participants

Jennifer Cargill (*Zimbabwe*); Bornwell Chakaodza (*Zimbabwe*); Jo-Anne Collinge (*South Africa*); Paul Fauvet (*Mozambique*); Sven Hamrell (*Sweden*); William Harper (*South Africa*); Michael A. Kahn (*South Africa*); Methaetsile Leepile (*Botswana*); Raymond Louw (*South Africa*); David Lush (*Namibia*); Ingrid Löfström-Berg (*Sweden*); Ernst Michanek (*Sweden*); Naphtali Mlipha (*South Africa*); Latiefa Mobara (*South Africa*); David Niddrie (*South Africa*); Olle Nordberg (*Sweden*); D. Ntwaagae (*Botswana*); Geoffrey Nyarota (*Zimbabwe*); Alaudin Salim Osman (*Zimbabwe*); Govin Reddy (*Zimbabwe*); Patrick van Rensburg (*Botswana*); Tom Sebina (*Zambia*); Judy Seidman (*Botswana*); Andrew Sesinyi (*Botswana*); Cecil Sols (*South Africa*); Ndimara Tegambwage (*Tanzania*); Peta Thorneycroft (*Zimbabwe*); Gabu J. Tugwana (*South Africa*); Chris Vick (*South Africa*); Elsabé Wessels (*South Africa*); and Per Wästberg (*Sweden*).

Secretariat: Kerstin Kvist (*Sweden*) and Birgitta Toresson (*Sweden*).

Ahmadou A. Dicko: A Star in Our Sky

By Joseph Ki-Zerbo

In this essay, Professor Joseph Ki-Zerbo, world renowned historian and an outstanding leader in the struggle for the political and cultural liberation of the Third World introduces Journal d'une défaite (Diary of a Defeat) by Ahmadou A. Dicko, a compatriot from Upper Volta and a comrade in arms in the anti-colonial battles in Francophone Africa in the late 1950s.

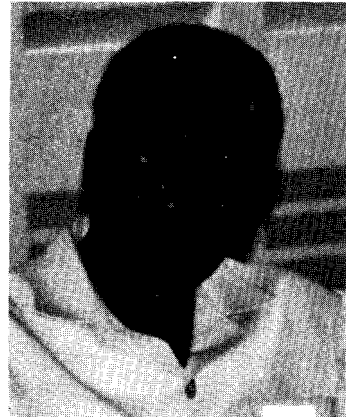
The Diary was printed and published privately by Ahmadou Dicko in late 1959—shortly before his death—in a small and inexpensively produced edition. It has been almost unobtainable for many years, and it is now made available for the first time in English translation in this issue of DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE.

'Diary of a Defeat' provides a unique account of the Referendum organized in September 1958 by President de Gaulle to establish whether the French colonies in Africa should be part of the Franco-African Community as conceived by de Gaulle or opt for full independence—a choice made only by Sékou Touré's Guinea. Ahmadou Dicko's Diary provides many concrete illustrations of how the Referendum was administered in Upper Volta and many telling examples of how morally and politically courageous actors were deceived, betrayed and ultimately defeated by authoritarian traditionalists and cowardly opportunists. It is striking that in helping to unmask the perverse process of neo-colonialism, the Diary has the same kind of relevance today as three decades ago.

Joseph Ki-Zerbo draws in his essay a portrait of Ahmadou Dicko as a brilliant young academic and political activist, placing him in the context of the political situation in Francophone Africa in the 1950s and paying tribute to his Diary as 'one of the most authentic testimonies to a period in African history where everything seemed possible ... whereas everything was already barred to us'.

In the latter part of his essay, Professor Ki-Zerbo reviews the major problems facing Africa today, drawing parallels with how these problems were perceived by Ahmadou Dicko in his Diary and in his political work. What Africa needs now is 'a few hundred militants like Ahmadou Abdoullahi Dicko'.

Joseph Ki-Zerbo is the author of Histoire de l'Afrique Noire, D'Hier à Demain, editor of the first volume of the UNESCO General History of Africa and a member of the Council of the UN University. He is a Professor at the University of Dakar exiled from his country Burkina Faso, where he has held many important political and administrative positions.



Ahmadou A. Dicko
—a magnetic
personality

He was a delicate, almost fragile man, and in this fragility he resembled his fellow Fulanis, clinging to their wandering flocks on the scorched Sahelian steppe. Delicate, but resolute and utterly tireless. Distinguished and elegant in Western dress and prophetically simple in appearance when wearing his African cotton boubou, his bearing was always unaffected and natural. His clear complexion, high brow and a face that was ascetic in its purity, all betokened an individual who was free of petty preoccupations. Ahmadou possessed a brilliant intelligence which was both penetrating in its analytical rigour and dialectical in its ability to break free of any trap set for him and to tie the adversary up in his own contradictions. He was a noble-minded man who knew how to listen and spoke with restraint. While his generation engaged in innumerable heady debates, Dicko spoke rarely and his words were eagerly anticipated. His tone of voice, which was calm and gentle, could rise fervently when the essential was in question. This was the nature of his intelligence: not a cold, sterile microscope, but a beam of bright light emerging from a spirit of pure fire.

In his presence, one felt the aura of a man who was dedicated and devoted: generous to a fault, radical but not fanatical, vigilant without being narrow-minded. I encountered this magnetic personality only about twenty times and I will never forget it. What was calmly fascinating about him was this rare combination of lightning-like perspicacity, a fine sensitivity to the problems of others and a spirit raised towards the highest causes. Ahmadou Dicko's personal humility served simply to justify and legitimize the proud intransigence of his great ambitions for Africa.

Such was this man who, as it were, hastily trod the paths of life without tarrying long enough to get dirty from the dust of the road.

A brilliant student, who received his Diploma of Higher Studies in Spanish letters at the University of Toulouse, he went on to teach for scarcely two years at the lycee of Bobo-Dioulasso in Upper Volta. Then an incurable disease brought him to the Necker Hospital in Paris, where I visited him. From there he was taken to Bobo hospital where I went on two occasions to offer help and support, to be met with that stoical serenity that one finds only in heroes and saints. When I said good-bye to him on that last occasion, he took my hand, looked straight into my eyes and said: 'And above all, tell the comrades to take courage!' A few days later, a phone call informed me of his death. I leapt into my car and drove the 360 kilometres from Ouagadougou to Bobo. Alas, when I arrived it was all over. I entered his modest house and was unable to hide my acute sorrow from his family. A brother in arms, an African patriot, who was as pure and irreducible as

a diamond, had gone. A man of essentials, Ahmadou Dicko had no time to waste on trivia.

Indeed, for the young African generation of the time, the 1950s were the decade of struggles of every kind: a cultural battle, preached in particular by those Francophone leaders who supported negritude; a political battle, proclaimed above all by the champions of the 'African personality'. The defeat of the colonial 'dirty wars' (Vietnam, Algeria, Madagascar); the anti-colonialist rivalry between the two superpowers; the cold war; the gathering of the world's pariahs at Bandung and elsewhere: everything contributed towards the birth of a time of defiance and rebellion. To hasten this delivery, midwives were needed; and Ahmadou Dicko was one of these. He seemed to be born for this precise moment in history. As an irreproachable militant he was ideally suited to a historical moment which required quick and irrevocable decisions. Members of the *Fédération des Étudiants de l'Afrique Noire en France* (FEANF) still remember the responsibilities placed on our comrade in the Toulouse section. His articles in the Association's journal were received with enthusiasm. So were his speeches at the time of the great student demonstrations; for example on 21st February, the day of anti-colonialist solidarity. His writings, as well as his thesis for the Diploma of Higher Studies, on the subject of the history of black slaves in Spain, deserve to be collected and annotated for the edification of the young people of Africa. So we must pay tribute to the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation for publishing here for the first time a translation of *Journal d'une défaite* ('Diary of a Defeat'), one of the most authentic testimonies to a period in African history where everything seemed possible... whereas everything was already barred to us!

**Africa in 1958:
the stakes and
challenges**

A brief historical sketch will put the stakes in context. During the Second World War the peoples of Africa had given the Western allies invaluable geo-strategic, logistical, material and human support. The African front, together with the British Isles and the Soviet front, were the physical bases from which decisive offensives were launched, that broke the back of the fascist regimes. As for the offensive against the fascists' Japanese ally, it seems that the uranium used to make the Hiroshima A-bomb originated in the Belgian Congo. Prompted by self-interest, the United States and the Soviet Union exerted pressure on the colonial powers, who were already shaken by the war, to bring their colonial domination to an end. The United Nations Organization argued along the same lines.

In the colonies, the intellectuals, trade unions and ex-servicemen in particu-

lar, demanded freedom as an unconditional right. Nationalist movements and parties were formed everywhere. Francophone countries were initially at the vanguard of the movement, with Houphouët-Boigny's *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (R.D.A.) which did not hesitate to seek affiliation with the French Communist party. They were quickly overtaken, however, by the Anglophone countries, or rather by those colonies exploited for their raw materials. In the case of the settler colonies (Kenya, Southern Rhodesia) Great Britain remained intractable and only changed its position because of the liberation struggles. This was also to be the case with the Portuguese colonies.

Independence in the Belgian Congo, which was tossed like a bone to the indigenous people so that their divisions could be better exploited, was more like a 'poisoned gift'. So it was too in the Francophone countries after Houphouët-Boigny had turned his back on his Communist allies and agreed to collaborate closely with the French plan for gradual evolution, controlled within the framework first of the French Union and subsequently of the Franco-African Community. Meanwhile, Ghana, led into battle by Kwame Nkrumah's People's Convention Party, was the first to accede to independence, declaring immediately that 'Ghana's independence is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent'. Thus two fundamental political choices for African liberation were professed with all the force of theory and practice. These were: independence and unity.

There were many differing views as to what tactics and which classes determined the course of history. For Frantz Fanon it was the peasants; for the *Parti Africain de l'Indépendance* it was the workers; Amilcar Cabral placed the emphasis on groups of the petty bourgeoisie backed by the people; while the Mouvement de Liberation Nationale (M.L.N.) staked its bets on the organized 'intellectuals' and the peasants. Such were the differences between the nationalists, differences which were sometimes exaggerated by those with an axe to grind. An example was the question of whether to give chronological priority to independence or to unity. In the concrete conditions of the struggle the M.L.N., like Nkrumah, had opted for independence first; for to give priority to unity would have been to defer independence to an indefinite future date, since the work of division had already dismantled the colonial blocs (French West Africa, French Equatorial Africa, British East Africa). In reality, the 'independence or unity' debate once again gave African nationalism a theoretical character which the colonialists' stooges were able to exploit as a diversionary tactic in order to gain time and foment confusion. It was in this way that some of the leaders who

were most wedded to the French system, like Leon Mba, spoke of African unity being at the very heart of the R.D.A. and at the same time demanded that Gabon be given the status of an overseas department of France....

But the surge of freedom fighters carried by the wind of history was so great that liberation wars flared up everywhere in the course of the fifties: Vietnam; Algeria; Cameroon, with the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (U.P.C.); Kenya, with Mau-Mau; Madagascar, and so on. For the colonial powers there was a real danger of general conflagration. Even more widely than within European countries, anti-colonial liberation wars sowed divisions between die-hard colonials—particularly in the settler colonies—and liberals and progressives who willingly took up the cry of the National Convention during the French Revolution: 'Let colonies perish before principles!'

In the midst of this pathetic scramble, there rose for the second time in France the forceful personality of General de Gaulle, an exceptional combination of strategist and tactician. Was it better for France to opt for the colonial status quo with its trail of wars and its burden of imperial expenses or was it better to break adrift and consign the 'colonial epic' to history? De Gaulle had indicated his choice as early as 1944, at the Brazzaville Conference on the future of Africa, in an unambiguous declaration: 'The aims of the civilizing mission accomplished by France in the colonies preclude any idea of autonomy, any possibility of evolution outside the sphere of the French Empire. Self-government in the colonies, even as a distant possibility, is out of the question.' But since Brazzaville there had been the incredible proliferation of debates and battles for Africa's freedom, associated in particular with two principal institutional frameworks: the French Union of 1946 and the *loi-cadre** of 1956.

The French Union was, as its name suggests, an ambiguous entity. True, the preamble to the 1946 Constitution proclaimed: 'France intends to lead the peoples in her charge to the liberty of administering themselves and of managing their own affairs democratically.' But, after this preamble, which legally is only a declaration of intent for the long term, article 8 of the Constitution reaffirmed the imperial unitary option by decreeing that 'the

* The *loi-cadre* is a legal text voted upon by parliament, defining the broad principles and general orientation regarding an important problem. This law allows the government (the executive power) to regulate more easily and directly different aspects of the problem by the use of executive orders issued within the framework of the law.

French Republic, which comprises metropolitan** France and the Overseas Departments and Territories, is one and indivisible'.

Moreover, it is the French parliament which has legislative powers in the overseas territories in such essential areas as criminal law, the control of public liberties, and political and administrative organization. Representation of overseas citizens in the French parliament was not set up on the basis of the egalitarian principle of 'one man, one vote'. Overseas nationals had the right to one deputy to 800,000 inhabitants, and the citizens of metropolitan France to one deputy to 80,000 inhabitants. Moreover, in the overseas Territorial Assemblies, a system of dual electoral colleges was established. The first college, which brought together citizens of French civic status, allowed French people living in the colonies to be represented regardless of their numbers. Thus it was that a Frenchman living in Central Africa was elected senator by just 15 people. There was no overseas national in the French Government until 1955, and the ministers of overseas France were invariably metropolitans.

The positive aspect of this system was that by making all nationals within the French Union citizens of France it finally did away with the practice of forced labour which 'subjects' had been compelled to do, as well as the legally and militarily discriminatory status of native citizenship. Nevertheless, the French Union retained serious political injustices, as we have just seen.

During the 1950s, the fires of liberty were lit as if in a chain reaction. In 1954 there was Dien Bien Phu and France's defeat in Vietnam; it was also the beginning of the liberation struggle in Algeria. In 1955, it was Bandung; in 1956, the independence of Morocco and Tunisia, aided by the courage and lucidity of Pierre Mendes-France.

This is why, in the face of an avalanche of freedom movements, France's Minister for Overseas, Gaston Defferre, and the Health Minister, Felix Houphouët-Boigny, conceived a *loi-cadre* of reforms for the overseas countries. The major positive innovation of this contrivance was the introduction of universal suffrage and the single electoral college. But the decentralization of legislative and executive powers remained ambiguous since the overseas Territorial Assemblies had limited powers and were generally sub-

** The French metropolitans (les Français métropolitains) are those who are born in the territory of France in Europe in contrast to those coming from Overseas Departments and Territories who, while citizens of France, have been born outside European France.

ordinated to the National Assembly in Paris. As for the Executive Councils in the Territories, they had a merely consultative status compared with the governors appointed by the French Government, which itself maintained control over key domains known as 'state services' such as examinations and educational curricula, the money supply, customs and excises, broadcasting, the police, the military, the diplomatic service, etc.

But most serious of all was the fact that the *loi-cadre* decentralized certain elements of executive power, to the sole advantage of individual Territories like Niger, Ivory Coast, Congo, Gabon, Senegal, etc. In contrast, no executive power was provided for on the federal level.

By allowing the processes of autonomy in individual African territories, France refused to create autonomous federal governments which could take the place of the executive bodies governing French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa. This policy of 'divide and rule' (*divide et impera*) was designed to satisfy the African leaders of those countries with rich natural resources, such as Gabon and Houphouët-Boigny's Ivory Coast, who did not want their countries to be the 'milk-cows' of the federations. Eighty per cent of the plantation workers in Ivory Coast came from Upper Volta. The balkanization of the federal blocs was thus intended to create political micro-organisms tottering under the weight of state budgets out of proportion to their actual revenues. As for those territories with rich natural resources, they were to be made into neo-colonialist prototypes as outlets for European manufactured goods and providers of raw materials.

Thus, as far back as 1956, two big questions were being posed, both of great consequence for the future of Africa.

- (1) The question of how inter-African relations and African integration could be furthered by a refusal to dismantle the existing federal blocs.
- (2) The question of Franco-African relations, i.e. the problem of the immediate march towards independence.

Independence and African unity were the great ideals which roused the spirits and hearts of those concerned with the future. Two essential rights, which would have a great impact on future development. But very swiftly the catchword of independence gained the ascendancy. Surely this was because unity was no longer realistic? Indeed, at the time of the R.D.A. congress at Bamako, in 1957, Houphouët-Boigny succeeded in driving into a corner his principal lieutenants—Modibo Keita, Sékou Touré, Quezzin

Coulybaly, Emile Zinsou, etc—all of whom supported the idea of a federal executive. It was the death knell for African unity. But at the same time the struggle for independence was weakened since each territory had to make its own choice and to negotiate individually with the Metropole.

Within this context, the military putsch from Algiers on 13th May 1958 prompted the government of the 4th French Republic to appeal to General de Gaulle for help. De Gaulle, who had the advantage of being well liked and admired by a good number of African ex-servicemen from the 2nd World War, decided to put an end to the surge towards independence in the French territories of black Africa, by organizing a referendum which offered a choice between independence and a 'Franco-African Community' made up of autonomous Republics in Africa. A powerful process was underway in which history was losing its shape like molten metal; it had to be recovered and set firm in pre-fabricated moulds. The referendum was, in fact, in the tradition of the *loi-cadre* in that the results of the ballot were to be reckoned by territory, thus setting the seal on the balkanization of Francophone black Africa. No collective response was forthcoming from African leaders in opposition to this way of posing the question for them, or to the essence of the question itself. Losing all sense of order—despite hastily called meetings hampered by absenteeism and resulting in confused resolutions—they all, or nearly all, ended up ushering their countries down the road to a 'yes' vote on the day of the referendum. Only the Democratic Party of Guinea and its leader, Sékou Touré, were to lead this country towards the historic 'no' to the Community and, *ipso facto*, to accession to independence in September 1958. As for African unity, the mere fact of replying 'yes' to the referendum's question implied acceptance of the dismantling of the former collective entities.

We can see, then, just how high were the stakes involved and why it was that numerous African students, intellectuals and senior officials, but also workers and peasants, threw themselves into the political fray, often for the first time, in order to end the absurdity of history being remote-controlled from the outside. New parties and movements were created and old ones expressed themselves more forcefully. At the student level there was the *Parti Africain de l'Indépendance* (P.A.I.), Marxist-Leninist in its orientation and supporting immediate independence; and the *Mouvement de Libération Nationale* (M.L.N.), of which Ahmadou Dicko was one of the co-founders and whose Manifesto, *Libérons l'Afrique* ('Let's liberate Africa'), proposed a three-point programme: national independence, the formation of the United States of Black Africa, and African socialism. Other groups like the *Parti du Regroupement Africain* (P.R.A.) ended up, on the instigation of old

Lamine Guéye, opting for immediate independence. But this decision was not implemented in any territory—not even in Niger—as Bakary Djibo's 'no' campaign failed in the face of massive intervention by the colonial authorities who mobilized, in particular, the traditional chiefs to remain loyal to France. Indeed, one of the frauds of this anti-independence propaganda was to distort the choice proposed by the question in the referendum. Instead of a choice 'for or against the Franco-African Community', that is 'for or against independence', it raised the spectre of the old dilemma of being 'for or against France'.

Amongst the intellectuals, four main groups chose to campaign for a 'no' vote, pointing out that this did not prohibit friendship with France, as was evident from the case of countries in Africa and elsewhere which were already independent. These groups were: 1) the P.A.I. (*Parti Africain de l'Indépendance*)—communist; 2) the M.L.N. (*Mouvement de Libération Nationale*)—nationalist and socialist; 3) the P.R.A. (*Parti du Regroupement Africain*) whose leaders included Assane Seck and Ahmadou Moktar M'Bow, the future Director-General of UNESCO; 4) other groups (or individuals), either independent or R.D.A. dissidents, who threw themselves into this unequal battle, almost with their bare hands, against the formidable political machine of a colonial power still at the height of its powers. This is why Senegal's main political leaders preferred to be absent from Dakar (they were in Paris and Geneva) at the moment when General de Gaulle passed through on his campaign for a 'yes' vote. Those Africans who dared to say 'no' publicly were, so to speak, political kamikazes who had no illusions about what the result would be. They were, however, keen to act with honour and to sow some seeds for the time after the 'defeat'.

'Diary of a Defeat'

The will to act honourably and to prepare for the time after the defeat is reflected in Ahmadou Dicko's 'Diary of a Defeat'. In the course of a number of decisive meetings in France and at the University of Dakar, Dicko had been actively involved in the formation of the *Mouvement de Libération Nationale* (M.L.N.) and was a member of the board—whose Secretary-General was Joseph Ki-Zerbo; Organizing Secretary, Cheikh Hamidou Kane; and Publicity Officer, Albert Tévoedjré. The board examined, amended and approved the text of the Manifesto, '*Liberons l'Afrique*', which had been written by the Secretary-General. A Parisian printer produced the booklet. In its last section the Manifesto called, in the most vigorous terms, for a firm 'no' to the 'Community of horse and rider' and for commitment to the achievement of independence and autonomous development based on unity and on a socialism built by Africans themselves.

Propaganda work for the referendum campaign was divided amongst the comrades in France and in the African Territories. The Manifesto was banned by the French authorities and the Secretary-General was visited by the *Police Judiciaire* (Criminal Investigation Department) at his residence in Paris. The movement began to go underground. Despite all the difficulties, the tremendous enthusiasm of the militant founder-members made up for their initially small numbers. We sold the Manifesto at the entrances to sports grounds, conference halls, cinemas and theatres, for example at the time of the Pan-African Youth Congress at Bamako in 1958. The M.L.N. spread in terms of membership, if not at the organizational level, as far as Cameroon and the Belgian Congo. But the three principal sections were created in Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), Senegal and Dahomey (Benin). After a short, energetic campaign in the main towns of Upper Volta, I left the comrades to continue the campaign there so that I could head for neighbouring territories and implant the Movement there. En route to Togo and Dahomey it was essential to meet President Kwame Nkrumah in order to talk to him about our struggle. This meeting was arranged in record time, thanks to the good offices of George Padmore, councillor in Accra at the time. Nkrumah received me for an hour and a half. He was enthusiastically impressed by our programme and our commitment, and this was the first of a number of meetings with him up until 1966. I set up sections in Togo and Cotonou before coming back to vote in Dakar, where I had a teaching post and was on the electoral register. It is during my trip abroad that I situate Ahmadou Dicko's militant campaign, which he records in his Diary. He campaigned alone, as most of us did at this time. He went down into the arena and met his formidable adversary on the ground in order to challenge him to single combat, like David and Goliath. But solitude does not mean isolation. Dicko knew that he was campaigning from the very heart of the M.L.N. He makes several references to this in his Diary, for example on 25th September, 25th October, 5th November, etc. In the capital, Ouagadougou, he replies to the mayor of the city: 'I speak not in the name of the students but of the M.L.N.' and in Bobo he declares: 'It is to this struggle that the M.L.N. urges you, comrades!'

In the magnificent profession of faith with which the Diary ends, entitled 'A year later', he brilliantly defends the M.L.N.'s position and adds after his signature, Ahmadou Abdoullahi Dicko, 'Executive Member of the French Section and member of the Central Committee of the M.L.N.'. Yes, Dicko was the best amongst us and the brevity of his life was like the passage of a shooting star which lights up the night sky. The central idea that inspired him, and the elite of his generation, was the absolute necessity of redressing the distortions of African history and of rehabilitating this continent by re-

storing its chances of autonomous development. It was a simple question of vital dignity.

Dicko's itinerary is mentioned only in the daily reports in the Diary. He travels through four great strategic regions of the country.

Firstly, his own home country: the Fulani region of Djelgodji, in the North of Burkina Faso, close to the border with Mali; Filifili, his native village; Dotoka, where he goes to vote; Baraboullé, the traditional centre. It is in this region that Dicko exerts his militant energy with the greatest devotion, in the midst of defeatism and duplicity on the part of most officials. Civil servants, traditional chiefs and local businessmen, not to mention religious chiefs and politicians, were often being paid to achieve the results expected by their masters, no matter what the cost. But Dicko, with his characteristic intellectual honesty, does not fail to observe that some of his political opponents are acting in good faith and are not on anyone's payroll. They held the view that independence was premature and that it would be unwise to drop the 'quarry' of French aid for the sake of an uncertain independence. Besides, some were pro-Community only because they were ignorant of the arguments in the dossier.

The second area visited is the Ouahigouya region, a hub of political activity in Upper Volta, particularly amongst traditional chiefs and ex-servicemen from the Second World War.

The last two areas chosen by the M.L.N. were obvious targets: Ouagadougou, the political capital, and Bobo-Dioulasso, the economic capital; two centres of the R.D.A., supporters of a 'yes' vote, but also two cities that were swarming with progressive young people and were real sounding-boards for new ideas. Even in Dotoka, in the bush, Dicko was surprised to discover 49 'no' votes. But it was in Bobo that the M.L.N. militants gave him the most enthusiastic reception. Despite everything, though, the result was 'defeat', although we must not be deceived by this word. The defeat was sensed in advance, expected and—as it were—built into the plan, placed in the long chain of events of a battle whose final victorious result was beyond doubt. It bore witness, too, to a partial success: the virtually unanimous 'no' vote in Guinea which thus became, in Dicko's words, the 'conscience' of Africa. Hence the serene, ironical tone of the Diary, sometimes understanding and almost indulgent but always optimistic. Dicko's anger is reserved for the imperialist forces and their principal local allies who were utterly treacherous to their people and parasitic on interests designed to strangle Africa. He is not inordinately troubled by the fraudulent ma-

noeuvres to cram the ballot-boxes with 'yes' votes, to move them from one place to another, to hide the 'no' ballots. He is not surprised by the sheep-like behaviour of the masses; but he boils with indignation at the 'black sheep' who dare to lead the flock astray.

He is particularly damning of the shameless lies of those who present the M.L.N. as crypto-communist and who raise the spectre of chaos as an inevitable result of independence, with the threat that 'aid will cease'. Already evident here is the beginning of the unfortunate political attitude that will become prevalent after the independence of African countries: a childish addiction to foreign assistance.

In the course of my campaign in Ouagadougou, I personally encountered politicians from my country whose response to my call for independence was invariably: 'How do you expect us to be independent? Economically, we have nothing!' My retort was always: 'By saying that, you are condemning yourselves as you are acknowledging that after eighty years of colonialism we have nothing! Rather than condemning colonial rule, do you wish to continue to subject yourselves to it?'

It is true to say that the referendum gave us a platform from which we were able to convey some essential messages. This explains Dicko's didactic tone although he did not see himself as a prophet bearing dogmatic truths. His Diary, therefore, has an exemplary historical significance. As a chronicler and a militant, Dicko both reconstitutes history and helps to make it. This combination of retrospective and perspective is particularly striking in the epilogue of the Diary. 'A year later', as Dicko records, the Franco-African Community was showing its true colours. Nothing had changed: flag, official language, nationality, national anthem, almost everything remained French, including the control over security and defence. In terms of the economy, it was 'business as usual'. With the examples of Ghana and Guinea close at hand, African politicians felt the ground being taken from under their feet. And in December 1959, at St. Louis in Senegal, it was de Gaulle himself who precipitated the independence process. However, the neo-colonizers' great windfall was in being able to grant independence to politicians who only a year before, at the time of the referendum, had themselves campaigned against independence.

In Dicko's country, Upper Volta, the first President of the Republic was the very same man whose response to my arguments had been: 'How do you expect us to be independent? Economically, we have nothing!' With 'rulers' such as this the colonizer could continue to rule, all the more so because ob-

jectively no African territory is able, on its own, to aspire to any kind of economic independence. The interest of Ahmadou Dicko's *Diary* is in the way it helps unmask the perverse process of neo-colonialism. The most docile sheep was ordained leader of the flock under the watchful eyes of the big shepherd. Those who objected—Lumumba, Cabral, Moumie, Nkrumah, Mondlane, etc.—were generally eliminated. Others, like Modibo Keita, were politically paralysed before being overthrown by the military, who were often considered more efficient in maintaining the *status quo*. A few years before the referendum there appeared a famous book entitled *Liberia, a joke republic*. Such was the deep conviction of those who mercilessly put down the nationalists in the 1950s and the 1960s. For them it was a question of 'joke republics' even before these were transformed—shortly afterwards—into sad dictatorships, particularly where the one-party system became the system of state control. This even happened with Sékou Touré of Guinea who had for several years borne the heavy burden of African dignity with such panache.

Mute and wounded Africa

Which social groups have paid the highest price in Africa's history of repression, exclusion, exile, torture and summary executions? The very groups who struggled for independence and who, for this reason, were the best placed to give it a direction and genuine substance: trade unionists, students, patriotic and progressive intellectuals, economic actors concerned to ensure African autonomy, peasant women and men who were the foot-sloggers, the base material, in the wars of liberation. In contrast, many of our leaders have run the African business house like a back-street shop or a game reserve, or a new form of slave auction.

Furthermore, ideological conflicts—which Ahmadou Dicko perceived so lucidly as early as 1958—have also opened up great yawning sores on the body of Africa, in the form of a cold war, and of fratricidal clashes, of which the cases of Mozambique and Angola, maintained by South Africa, are only the most recent miserable examples. In its Manifesto the M.L.N. had rightly opted for genuine non-alignment, which does not mean non-involvement, and which is inconceivable without unity.

On the other hand, what did most of Africa's rulers see as their primary objective? As at the time of Dicko's *Diary*, they are still obsessed with economic development: 'Economically, we have nothing!'. A process of mystification is evident in a certain argument which has swiftly travelled round Africa: 'It's no longer a question of political struggle. Partisan divisions are out of date. Everyone should be united *behind* the leader in the

battle for economic development.' In other words. 'Silence! We are developing.' This attitude has actually stifled both development and democracy. 'Silence! We are killing'—whether through the overt violence of kalachnikovs or the hidden violence of the structures.

Stabilization funds, which were intended to protect the peasants from the fluctuations of world prices, have in reality been a means of accumulating surpluses drawn from the gains made in years of plenty, without paying back the producers during the years of crisis. They have often become private safes for the rulers, who have used them to nourish their personal bank accounts abroad, thus contributing to disinvestment and to the plundering of their own countries.

As for the professionals, they are emigrating in huge numbers. Why? Because the educational system inherited from the colonizer remains largely unreconstructed and industrialization of the economy is structurally blocked by the lack of a large market and a demand based on solvency; in these circumstances African schools are mere factories producing unemployed people. But also because political conditions are often suffocating, even lethal, for intellectuals. Accounting for 50 per cent of the world's refugees, Africa is suffering a real brain drain, a haemorrhage of grey matter. Eighty-five per cent of research on Africa is done outside the continent.

The structure of foreign trade for the majority of African countries remains based on the exportation of raw materials and the importation of manufactured goods from the North, exactly as it was at the time of the colonial Pact. In Zambia, copper represented 85 per cent of export earnings in 1987. In the Congo, where oil accounted for 89 per cent of export earnings in 1986, the fall in oil prices caused a drop in these earnings by 42 per cent during 1987. Debt is the inevitable result of this neo-colonial economic system which creates no significant additional value and no self-managed surplus within the framework of an internal and collective process of development. Africa remains wedded to the economy of picking and gathering, which for centuries has been depleting the vegetable, mineral and human resources of the continent. Slaves exported across the Atlantic were also a form of 'black mineral wealth'.

In the face of ecological impoverishment, alarm bells have been sounded about the threat to elephants and rhinoceroses. But what about the threat to human bipeds? Some people think it is all a problem of over-population. While demographic growth is reaching and exceeding an annual rate of 3 per cent, economic growth often drops below 1 per cent, particularly in Sahel-

ian countries repeatedly devastated by famine. Food security—the 'independence of the stomach'—which was often guaranteed even during the colonial era, is frequently jeopardized, despite the valiant efforts of the peasants and of those operating within the informal sector, particularly women.

In the domain of communications, dependency is almost total. Many African countries have no independent newspaper, so official obscurity emerges into obscurantism. Publishing houses are rare and often spineless. State television channels serve mainly as showcases for presidential ceremonies or sometimes as dustbins for audio-visual cast-offs from the overproduction of the North. They provide very little information on neighbouring African countries but plenty on Pigalle, Chicago and Texas. The sub-regional economic organizations are bureaucratic institutions straining from the burden of hugely overstretched budgets; and even when unanimous decisions are occasionally made, when they come to be applied they founder on the veto of one or other member state. But is there any sovereignty in famine, or when 85 per cent of a country's investments are provided by foreign loans?

With a very few exceptions, almost every sector of the African economy is sick. After brilliant beginnings, Tanzania is rejoining the rest of the flock. Zimbabwe seems to be following suit. Certain neo-liberal economists consider that Africa's ills arise from it not being sufficiently integrated into the world market. When the remedy appears to be as serious as the illness, is it not suicidal to increase the dose? When the rules of the market game depend exclusively on the North as the only partner, is it possible to speak of a game at all?

There is no point in saying to Africans: 'Just do the same as us, and copy Japan!' This is to overlook the crucial point that these countries accumulated wealth in conditions that are diametrically opposite to those that weigh on Africa. Even today, agricultural production in Western countries is heavily protected by numerous controls and subsidies, while they continue to preach the doctrine of 'real prices' to African countries. Finally, when all these constraints are taken into account, in particular the burden of debt servicing, African countries often end up as net exporters of capital to the North.

For all that, should we conclude that the source of all our ills is the integration of the continent in the capitalist market, and prescribe severance from the West and the North as the only valid remedy? That would be too simple

an answer. To break with the North to go where? The case of the Eastern bloc countries demonstrates the fallacy of the argument. Even locked up as they were in an immense space, they could not escape the market. Crumbling Africa is all the more vulnerable, as permeable by foreign influences as a sponge in the ocean. We need only think of the hundreds of bilateral agreements—military, monetary, technological, educational and other—which unite more than 50 African countries to the countries, organizations and transnational corporations of the North. Africa has been occupied from top to bottom, including by those who claim not to want to interfere in the internal problems of African countries. But those who rail against dependency are too dismissive of the internal dimensions of Africa's ills. Even if the entire continental debt were eliminated with the stroke of a pen, while the structures that cause it remain—whether external or internal (particularly lack of unity)—debt would swiftly rise again from its ashes. The African sickness is a deep internal sickness, a serious disturbance of the fundamental metabolism, which means that even the aggressive structures from outside are adopted and internalized by Africans, especially at the top of the social pyramid. The dividing line between the endogenous and the exogenous is not a geographical line but a line of battle passing through the spirit and the heart of every African; a struggle between on one side the selfish interests of individuals or classes, and on the other a collective endeavour which should be encouraged rather than undermined by the state. Oppressed civil society must stand on its feet again, have faith in its own identity, sort out its priorities and march towards its own freedom.

What now?

Thirty years after Ahmadou A. Dicko's *Diary*, nothing has fundamentally changed. Today, even more than yesterday, Africa is faced with the same questions: questions requiring urgent answers as the relative influence of the continent in world affairs is diminishing.

Five overriding problems, each with enormous implications, must be energetically addressed by Africans:

1. The question of nationality or identity—or the historico-cultural question. Who are we? Where do we come from? What should be our place in the world? What do we have to say and do?
2. The question of the framework and the space. How should the continent's environmental and economic space be managed? How can an inter-African division of labour be organized and production and trade be concentrated on a continental basis?

3. The question of which road to take to democracy and social equity. What kind of State? Consisting of, and existing for, what kind of civil society? It is time to invite the people to occupy the sovereign's throne; and if the usurper has to be removed from the throne, to do this by taking on the arms of reason and, if necessary, the arms of political reasoning.

4. To achieve this, a Copernican revolution in education, training and communication is required, in order that here too the people regain their rightful position at the centre of the system; in order that the power of knowledge become the most shared asset in the world and not the privileged possession of those who, today, exploit the synergy of power, material goods and knowledge.

5, Finally, it is a question not of a quantitative increase in links with the rest of the world but of changing the nature of these links; by replacing the role of Africa as auxiliary, as a useful tool, with a role as an active participant in planning and realizing tomorrow's world.

What would it take to bring about this qualitative transformation? On the one hand, it is like moving mountains. On the other, it requires only a handful of clear, correct ideas, a handful of women and men determined to be the vehicles of a passion more precious than gold and as indestructible as diamonds: the absolute right of the African peoples to dignity, in solidarity and shared responsibility with the other peoples of the world.

A scholar from antiquity once said: 'Give me a lever and I will lift the world'. The lever for our circumstances is a few hundred militants like Ahmadou Abdoullahi Dicko.

(Translated from the French manuscript by Wendy Davies.)

Diary of a Defeat

Concerning the Referendum of 28th September 1958 in Black Africa

By Ahmadou A. Dicko

*To the peasants of Filifili, my holiday companions,
To the young independent Republic of Guinea,
conscience and soul of my Africa,
I dedicate this diary of struggle and hope.*

I had the privilege to be in Africa in 1958 during the university vacation and to take part in the Referendum campaign in Upper Volta, as did many of my fellow students in other African countries. From day to day as the electoral battle raged, I wrote this diary, without any literary pretensions and without affectation, seeking neither to spare sensibilities nor deliberately to wound anyone. The diary's imperfections do not entirely escape me, and are due to my own shortcomings and inexpert skills as a writer and also to circumstances. In writing this testimony, I wanted in no way to cast myself in the role of a hero; my one concern was faithfully to record the events of the Referendum campaign as I lived and experienced them, to demonstrate (albeit imperfectly) how and why it was that we who opposed the Referendum were defeated, and to contribute, in however small a way, to the continuing struggle.

A.A.D.

Filifili, 3rd September, 1958

The traditional chiefs of Upper Volta are all heading towards Ouagadougou with feverish haste. Whatever are they hoping for? His Majesty the Moro-Naba Kougri, their President, seems to have promised them the opportunity of avenging themselves on those of their subjects who had begun to shake off their yoke. Sinister rumours are already circulating and the chiefs' agents are speaking in a particularly arrogant way.

6th September

At last we have found out the contents of the 'very fine speech' delivered by His Majesty before the Union of customary chiefs. What nobleness of heart, what lofty sentiments, and what a fine awareness of the gravity of the moment!

My dear colleagues and chiefs,

First and foremost it is my duty, in this chamber, to inform you of the unequivocal declaration that I made in my own name, and on behalf of all of you, to the President of the French Government during his visit to Abidjan.

Africa today finds itself in a tragic impasse, and grave problems confront our continent.

Guided by sound political judgment, fervent patriotism and love for his people, His Majesty is in no doubt that only our 'traditional leaders' can find the remedy for all our ills.

It behoves us, traditional chiefs, to find a better solution to our problems, so that Upper Volta, of which we are the traditional leaders, may prosper and advance freely within the Franco-African Community.

If the 'dear colleagues and chiefs' do not respond to this statement by applauding until their turbans fall off their heads, it is only because almost to a man they understand not one single word of French.

In my mind's eye I can see the Moro-Naba drawing himself up in all his majesty to pronounce these 'historic' words:

Our first concern is to hold the Referendum, because the Referendum invites the whole of Africa to declare its preference for or against the present Constitution.

The sole aim of my meeting with General de Gaulle was to assure him of our sincere affection for the people of France, along with all the people who are in our charge.

Here's the biggest feudal overlord in Africa talking about his attachment to 'the people of France'. You ought to be talking about the masses, Your Majesty, for whom you constitute a heavy burden, a very heavy burden indeed; those whose toil and sweat have allowed you to possess a luxury palace, Your Majesty; a luxury car, Your Majesty; an outrageous monthly salary. Your Majesty; free champagne. Your Majesty.

Let me continue reading this 'very fine speech':

I believe that very many of you will share my opinion and find my declaration to be true.

But they all, absolutely all, share your opinion, Your Majesty. Otherwise they would not be traditional chiefs.

After this, can anyone persuade me that our 'traditional chiefs' represent anything other than the most corrupt aspect of Africa today: systematic parasitism and servile collaboration with the colonialists?

4th September

The R.D.A. Congress is making its preparations. The R.D.A. section of the district, with its band of dignitaries, praise-singers, courtiers and court-

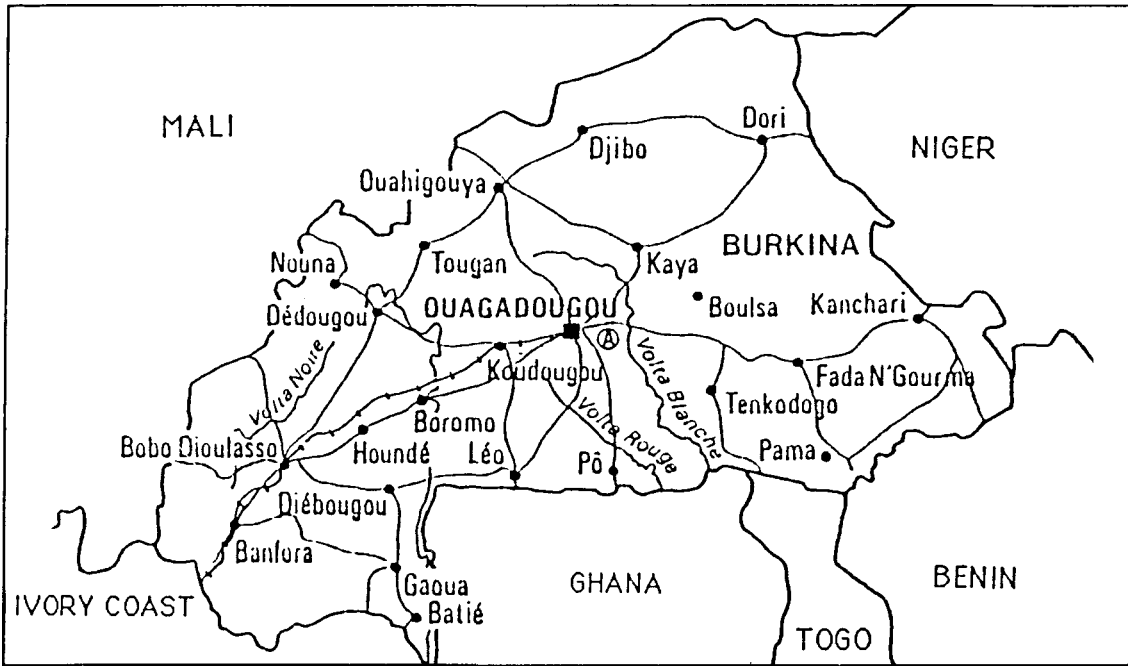


Ahmadou A. Dicko

esans, has just sent its delegation to Ouagadougou, led by its 'secretary', a well-known Djibo prostitute. This is a Congress whose results are known in advance. We have been aware for a long time that the *Rassemblement Democratique Africain* is no longer either democratic or African and that it is essentially a collection of traitors and opportunists. Mr Houphouët-Boigny, the president of this party, was at pains to warn us, back in 1949, when he declared: 'Fellow Africans, the day that you see me reach out my hand to the Whites, eat at the Governors' table or address one word to the colonialists, is the day you can call me a traitor to Africa!' Heaven knows, for years now Mr Houphouët-Boigny has been eating at the governors' table and sleeping in their palaces!

10th September

Our good R.D.A. friends are declaring everywhere that those who do not vote yes on 28th September will be shot by General de Gaulle. Not very flattering to the future Community.



Burkina Faso (Upper Volta)

We hear that His Majesty the Moro-Naba Kougri is threatening to 'bring down' anyone who dares to speak of independence in 'his' city of Ouagadougou. I hope to be able to give him the opportunity to carry out his threat.

13th September

The schoolteacher S.T., former principal of Djibo regional school, who has been suspended for over a year and is awaiting trial, is eagerly accepting the role of general dogsbody of the governing party. He has just been rushed over to Djibo to keep up the momentum of the local R.D.A.'s yes propaganda. This will certainly confirm the opinion of those who accuse him of having expelled pupils in exchange for cattle or large sums of money allegedly given him by these pupils' parents—a practice which was thought to have disappeared from our bush schools. There's no point in the government dragging out the trial of S. T., or even letting him off without a trial; no-one here will any longer believe in his innocence.

17th September

The Niamey Congress of the *Parti du Regroupement Africain* (P.R.A.) has brought to light what many people have been suspecting since the party held its founding congress in Cotonou; most of these men who shouted and screamed and yelled so much for *immediate independence* were opportunists and demagogues. With their backs to the wall, they have deflated

quite pathetically. Only the Niger branch of the party—the Sawaba—and the Guinean branch have decided to vote no on 28th September. As usual, Senegal's political leaders have given proof of their 'radicalism'. They've used all their considerable skill to demonstrate how a politician could, by his actions, betray all his professions of faith and all his commitments, without in any way having a bad conscience.

There has never been any doubt in my mind that the Upper Voltaian section of the P.R.A. will vote yes. Its delegates have not yet taken account of the Cotonou Congress for the simple reason that Captain Dorange, founder and kingpin of what purports to be the local branch of this party, is violently opposed to any idea of African independence and unity, and has always drawn his inspiration from General de Gaulle. Many militants in his party are unaware of the very existence of Cotonou and the P.R.A.

19th September

The radio and the press are making a real racket about a declaration made by a 'grand marabout'* in Senegal, El-Hadji Ibrahima Niassé, an 'officer of the Legion of Honour'.

According to this gentleman, who claims to have learnt about the Constitution in a conversation with General de Gaulle and France's Minister of Overseas Affairs, the Community is holding open to us the 'door to peace' and God is urging us to step inside before it closes again. El-Hadji Ibrahima Niassé is no doubt endowed with special visionary powers to be able to discern this door. The divisions in our motherland, the renunciation of national sovereignty, the subordination of our national interests to those of the capitalists of the Republic of France, the abdication by Africans of all responsibility and all dignity: is this peace? Is the bestowing of a few 'honours' by the French government enough to transform certain religious leaders in French West Africa into the praise-singers of colonialists? All you 'grand marabouts'—don't prostitute the Koran. Leave the dishonour of being the mercenaries of France to our professional politicians. Don't compete with Mr Houphouët-Boigny, who has changed from being a soldier of Africa into a grand eunuch of the French Empire. In the struggle that ranges us against those who enslave Africa, we can be beaten, but our defeat can only be temporary. All you 'grand marabouts' of Senegal and elsewhere, if you lack all patriotism and dignity, let calculated self-interest prevent you from going

* Islamic religious leader

over to the enemy, lock, stock, and barrel. Nobody is asking you to be heroes and to follow the way of those who came before you—those who, in various different ways, said no to colonialism and, heeding their duty as Muslims and Africans, died to defend their country: El Hadj Omar, Samory, Cheikh Bamba, Cheikh Hamallah... No, we can't expect a 'grand marabout', an officer of the Legion of Honour, to be a hero. But is it too much to ask him to remain silent on questions about which he has no knowledge, and not to barter his influence with the masses, crushed under the weight of ignorance and poverty, for 'honours' conferred by the colonialist government and its administration?

Your numerous 'faithful disciples' all over Africa will respond to your call, El Hadji. On September 28th they will go and vote for de Gaulle, in other words against their country and against themselves. Their excuse will be ignorance, that ignorance which makes many of them believe that you are holding a perpetual dialogue with God and that you only need to give a simple sign for Allah immediately to reveal himself to you. But they will soon understand that the Community does not mean peace, but 'pacification', war, torture, misery and humiliation. Then, with all of conscious Africa, they will again take up the struggle for true peace and true liberation.

May God forgive you, El Hadji Ibrahima Niassé. But men will be less merciful.

18th September

All the agents of the colonial administration (traditional chiefs of all ranks, self-seeking civil servants, marabout families, informers...) are suddenly discovering an overwhelming love for France and its 'civilizing mission'.

Fear has finally gripped this district, after taking over the rest of Upper Volta. Old F.S. turned up in a very jittery state to tell me her fears. For once, the R.D.A. and Captain Dorange's party can lead an electoral campaign without squabbles and injuries on all sides. Both of them are expounding the same themes: 'If the no vote wins the day on September 28th it will lead to the departure of the whites along with the money, the cars, the railways, the factories. Forced labour and native citizenship will be reintroduced. Dairy cattle will be requisitioned. There will be looting and civil war.'

Whereas there's a proliferation of yellow (yes) ballot papers no-one here has yet been able to find out what colour the no voting papers are.

Djibo, 19th September

It's proving impossible to convince the two P.R.A. territorial councillors (one of whom, alas, is a law student at the University of Dakar) to campaign for a *no* vote. As very half-hearted yes supporters, their judgment is clouded by the fact that after the Referendum legislative elections are likely to take place in Upper Volta and they are desperately keen to be elected members of parliament. They are all the more keen since, like almost all Upper Volta's councillors, they need several months' salary in order to finish paying the bills for their cars. So! —blind obedience to the captain's wishes.

The Paris-Dakar newspaper contains a statement by Father Fulbert Youlou. According to this good priest who has left the priesthood (but still wears his cassock since it makes more of an impression on the electorate) the few *no* votes that may be counted on 28th September can be put down to voting errors by illiterates. Not very flattering to 'literate' Africans and the 'education' they received from the colonialists.

Djibo, 21st September

The press and the radio have given us a statement by the self-styled 'Association for the Defence of Muslim Pilgrims'. In favour of the Constitution, needless to say. There's certainly a great bout of servility amongst the religious 'dignitaries' in Senegal. It is true, though, that the Muslim Cultural Union, which is opposed to glorious Gaullism and to the phoney Franco-African Community, is not for its part honoured by coverage in the Senegalese press or on the radio in French West Africa.

Many an African 'spiritual leader' is discovering a political vocation. Here's the *cadi* of Timbuktoo leaving the city where he is the Islamic judge (no doubt because of his submissiveness towards the Government), leaving Mali and going off to preach the sacred yes vote in Niger. In the name of what and of whom? In Islam there are three categories of *cadis*: the person who, knowing the truth, upholds error; the person who is incapable of distinguishing between truth and error; and, finally, the person who knows the

truth and upholds the truth. The first two go to hell, the third to paradise. I am reluctant to put the *cadi* of Timbuktoo in any of these three categories. But I hope that however formidable this man may be, the Muslim Community of Timbuktoo will not hesitate to carry out its duties. I also hope that an independent Mali or an independent Niger will not wait until the Last Judgment to judge this *cadi* and find him guilty.

Filifili, 22nd September

Gathered the men of the village together in the town square this evening to try to explain to them what the referendum is about. Numerous questions reveal their fear and anguish. These peasants are hearing talk of independence for the very first time. If they were sure that independence would bring back neither slavery nor the dreadful practice of native citizenship which was set up by France and continued until 1946, they wouldn't have the slightest hesitation about voting *no* on September 28th. But my voice and my protestations are too isolated in the midst of the chorus of voices of the R.D.A. and P.R.A. However, I'm convinced that an appreciable number of inhabitants of my little village will vote *no* next Sunday.

24th September

From 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. yesterday, an exhausting tour on horseback to try to pit myself against the hurricane of servility which is sweeping through the region. It's no good looking for the hounds on the day of the hunt', runs an old Fulani proverb. Nor is an hour's conversation on the eve of the referendum the way to arouse a patriotic conscience in men who, all their lives, have known only colonialist servitude and who are weighed down by a long history of exploitation and slavery.

In the villages of Dotoka and Doouré, the men seem to me to have glimpsed what it's about. (I say glimpsed rather than understood so as not to minimize the political work that remains to be done.) They will certainly abstain on Sunday.

In Woudouga they 'put on quite a show', as they say here about anything picturesque. The inhabitants of this little village have always been known for their pride in themselves, their courage and their quick temper. I have hardly finished speaking before two opposing groups have formed and are arguing violently. The village chief—who is a family friend—is clearly ill at ease. He honestly cannot understand how I can 'compromise myself like this if I am not interested in standing in the next elections. This reminds me

of a certain marabout, a well-known member of the R.D.A., who, suspecting me of P.R.A. sympathies, advised me (hypocritically) 'not to reduce my prestige' by supporting either the R.D.A. or the P.R.A. He was delighted when I gave him my word that I would remain aloof from both these political groupings. Today this fine marabout, with no fears for 'his reputation', has become a fanatical supporter of the sacred yes vote.

After a brief informal lecture in Baraboullé, the main town of the canton, two antagonists come to the fore:

- D.D., the fattest man in the canton, mouthpiece of the R.D.A. and the customary chiefs. He declares with satisfaction that 'he couldn't give a damn' about the Referendum, independence, African unity, the poverty or wealth of the country. What interests him, he protests with all the force of his lungs, is the survival of the traditional chieftaincy. According to him, my sole aim is to overthrow the current chief of Baraboullé canton and take his place myself!

- K. speaks in the name of the M.D.V. (*Mouvement Démocratique Voltaïque*). He doesn't know that this party has become the M.R.V. (*Mouvement de Regroupement Voltaïque*), a section of the P.R.A. He's a zealot, a hard-line militant, and when he speaks he bears down on you as if he were going to butt you in the stomach. He's reputed to be the most intelligent man in the village. He's certainly the most loquacious. Distinctly more likeable than D.D. Without beating about the bush he declares that he will never trust a black, that the only person he believes in is the captain, that he 'couldn't give a damn' for the other leaders of his party.

- Why are the two members of parliament of the district opposed to us voting *no*? Because they're not like you, from a family of chiefs. You want slavery to come back and traditional chiefs to wield the power. That's to be expected, since your dearest wish is one day to be chief of this canton.

Like a bull in the bull ring, K. moved backwards and forwards in the middle of the circle of spectators: 'If you want the Whites to leave, why do you stay with them? Why don't you give up studying in France? We've known the captain for over ten years. When he came he put an end to forced labour and the requisitioning of dairy cattle. He was sent to us by General de Gaulle. And now that General de Gaulle is going to assume power, you talk nonsense to us. We know that if the Whites left, they would be replaced by Black civil servants. And they're worse than the worst of the Whites. All we want is for General de Gaulle to send us another captain when this one dies. If

this country becomes independent, de Gaulle will send his aeroplanes so that we can join him in France, with the captain.' He ends by swearing that even the English and the Russians will vote yes on September 28th.

At this, my old friend from primary school chimes in: 'We can't even make a needle or a machine-gun or a bank note and we say we're taking on the French!'

Another man comes up and whispers gently in my ear: 'What you are saying is utterly ridiculous.'

After such an appropriate put-down and after ten hours without a morsel to eat, I must have looked pitiful enough for old H.Y. to take up my defence. But D.D. and K. swept away the remaining doubts amongst the audience by maintaining that, despite my assertions, Ghana was not independent and Guinea had not decided to vote *no*. I've fixed a meeting with Baraboullé village in 1963. By then it will have had the time to live and to understand a lot of problems which today elude it.

I have had a struggle not to be unjust towards Captain Dorange, the only politician in Upper Volta who has struggled over the years against the arbitrary behaviour of the Administration, who has consistently opposed the illegal practice of forced labour and has always stood up for the peasants against the chiefs. Only he did this as a 'left-wing Gaullist', that is as a man who believed in 'equal rights and duties for all *French citizens*', but who simultaneously ruled out any idea of independence for one of the territories of the 'French Union'. I don't know whether he really summoned all the 'hard-liners' in his party—i.e. the ex-servicemen—to Ouahigouya. I don't know what he could have told them, but I do know that they believe it is vitally important for the yes vote to win the day. What on earth do they think it will achieve? Apart from the threat of seeing their pensions wiped out if independence should come, what rich pickings do they expect from General de Gaulle's victory?

Before I left Baraboullé, a number of men gave me to understand that they would vote 'for me' if I gave them money. Yet another practice the supporters of the 'Community' are attached to.

Not able to go to Pawaoundé, whose inhabitants wanted me to come. P.M. and A.Y. have agreed to explain to the inhabitants the reasons for voting no on 28th September.

Some women from Woudougou, going to Djibo for the *Mouloud* festival, stop by here on their way. According to them, my visit and my 'ideas' have caused only confusion and panic among the men of their little village. They are accompanied by an *El Hadj* who was not amongst the audience yesterday. Intrigued by the impassioned and contradictory report that some friends have given him of my talk, he wants to hear me 'with his own ears'. He listens to me very attentively. Before making up his mind, he goes to consult with a friend, the old schoolteacher A. G., a very nice man who is about to retire and who is 'against upheavals', as he wants to spend the rest of his days in peace and to see his already promising business interests bear fruit. I'm really not in luck as everyone in Djibo knows that A.G. is a vehement opponent of independence.

I hear that officials of the P.R.A. (or the M.D.V. or the M.H.V., as one no longer knows what they are called) rushed to send some propagandists to Dotoka and Doouré to declare that I had been sent by the chief of the canton to foment confusion. Marvellous! My poor friends, you who sneer today, you will weep when the 'Community' is victorious, because the R.D.A. will unceremoniously devour you.

Djibo, 25th September

There is no lorry leaving Djibo for Ouahigouya or Ouagadougou. My friend O.D., the P.R.A. member of parliament, who solemnly promised a week ago to lend me his car, has completely changed his mind. As he does not yet know how to lie skilfully, I could see immediately that the cause of this last-minute reversal was quite simply my 'ideas' and my intention to hold meetings advocating a *no* vote, in the Upper Voltaian capital and the villages en route. I can understand that O.D. is not keen to have his party on his back but I find it hard to forgive him for causing me to lose all the opportunities that arose last week.

I am happy to record that the two young schoolteachers, B.D. and D.D., have been quite won over by the idea of independence, although their fear of reprisals means they don't want the government to know.

Conversation with a 'liberal'

25th September

10a.m., in the office of M.R.G. who is in charge of the Djibo district, to request authorization to hold a meeting on the referendum. M.R.G. rubs his hands in delight.

- Of course, of course. An excellent idea. Up until now none of the political parties has had a public meeting here. Urge the population to cast a massive yes vote. (M.R.G.'s office is covered with notices saying 'Vote yes', 'Yes to de Gaulle'). Besides, I've given an official order to the polling officers to see to it that there are no abstentions this time. As the R.D.A. and the P.R.A. are in agreement, there's no problem. You realize of course that the bigger the yes vote the greater the interest France will take in Upper Volta.

- I'm sorry, Sir, I do not share your view on this question.

M.R.G. nearly fainted, then sat down again: You mean you're not in favour of a yes vote?

- I certainly am not.

- You must understand me—I'm a liberal. I believe you are mistaken. The African politicians who rule Upper Volta are the real nationalists. You know that the government bombards me with directives every morning: 'Make them vote yes'. Make them vote yes.' 'No abstentions! No abstentions.'

M.R.G.'s friendly tone suddenly turns cold: Let's see now: your surname, first name, date and place of birth? So it's you, is it? (He continues with a look of triumph): You live at 24, rue de Touraine, Toulouse, don't you? You see I'm well informed.

- No, you're not well informed. I don't know of any street called rue de Touraine in Toulouse.

- But the Government Information Service...

- No, the street you're after is rue d'Aquitaine. There's no secret about it. It's written in black and white at the bottom of the M.L.N. Manifesto. As it

happens, I've never lived there, if that's of any interest to you. At the moment I live about fifteen kilometres from here, at Filifili.

- Let us look at the directive on public meetings. Only those to do with the referendum are authorized. That's undeniably the case, but I think the directive implies 'meetings advocating a yes vote'.

- That would be in the true spirit of the Franco-African 'Community'. So you're refusing me authorization?

- Yes, I think I shall have to. You understand that I have no personal opinion. And I only earn 41,000 C.F.A. francs a month. With the F.I.D.E.S. money, France could re-absorb us if the country became independent.

- I would like you to know that this meeting will take place.

M.R.G. changes tack: he calls up the district police chief to help him to make a decision. But our gendarme washes his hands of the affair. It's nothing to do with him. If it's a question of maintaining order, that's fine, but decision-making is not a matter for the police. A delightful fellow, this young Frenchman.

M.R.G. ponders long and hard, then makes a proposal: Let's reach a compromise: you have a little meeting with a few people, address them for the sake of form only—and there you are! (He smiles engagingly).

- I find it rather strange that you are telling me how I should defend my own point of view. You've done everything you could on your side: you've gone around preaching a yes vote, you've put up Vote yes posters all over the place, you've instructed the polling officers to stuff yes voting papers in the ballot boxes themselves...

- All I've done is carry out the government's orders. I have no opinion myself, I tell you.

At this point O.D., member of parliament, walks into M.R.G.'s office. M.R.G. feels obliged to rail at me. It's a way of paying court to the M.P. What cowardice and what a jumble of insults! After evoking the spectre of 'communist massacres' and 'Budapest in flames', M.R.G. somehow manages to move on to a pathetic eulogy of the 4th International and ends up expressing holy indignation at 'anti-French' types like me, who condemn everything France does and approve of 'the Russians' worst horrors'.

After the M.P. has gone, M.R.G. instantly calms down and apologizes for having become 'a bit heated'. It's being overworked that makes him irritable, he claims. Then he goes on: Anyhow the government of the country is better qualified than you and I. Before your arrival—you no doubt heard

about it—a violent row blew up between the M.D.V. and R.D.A. It even came to blows. You risk being attacked by both parties.

Finding me as determined as ever, M.R.G. ends up conceding: All right. You're a die-hard. If you'd been an opportunist... Believe me, you have my sympathy. But you must understand that you are interfering with my work.

I'm rather sorry that I had to make it clear to M.R.G. that the role he has to play arouses no sympathy in me. As a person he deserves pity rather than anger.

Before my meeting, M.R.G. gathers together all the polling officers and renews his orders to them. Speaks to them at length about me, claims that I frighten him, that I'm dangerous. He's worried about B.D., the polling officer at Filio (or Belehede), as he suspects he's a *no* supporter.

A very quiet gathering. Only one person asked questions. A civil servant whom I believe to have been sent by the district commissioner (who did not provide me with the policeman he had promised me for the sake of my 'safety'). The audience was extremely attentive and serious-looking. What is that supposed to mean, I wonder?

26th September

Had a long chat with some local civil servants and Ministry of Health officials. Most of them sentimental supporters of a *no* vote. But greater supporters of their own advancement. Don't want the government to have a 'bad opinion' of them. Will probably vote yes just like a herd of sheep.

Saw M.R.G. again. He seems to bear me a particular grudge. So do local leaders of the M.D.V. and the R.D.A. God forgive them.

28th September

Dotoka, where the polling station is situated, is a few kilometres from Filifili. Arrived at 10 a.m.

First office. A grand reconciliation going on here. The M.D.V. official and the R.D.A. official, who used to be at daggers drawn, chat almost cordially. They count and re-count the ballot papers and stuff them in the ballot box. The polling officer is secretary to the chief of the canton. The mauve (*no*) ballot papers are tied up in a tight bundle and thrown in a corner.

The saddest thing is that each of our two fine parties is convinced that 'General de Gaulle's victory' will be its own victory! Poor weasel and poor little rabbit! Grimalkin will make you agree when he gobbles you both up.

Second office. The polling officer is sitting peacefully on a mat. He chatters away with the representatives sent by the chief of the canton, and a crowd of curious people. It's impossible to get to the ballot box.

The P.R.A. official (a former rifleman—like all the P.R.A. officials in the region), assisted by a kid, checks the voters' polling cards and stuffs the yellow ballot-papers in the box. No polling booths and no secret vote.

My arrival is greeted frostily. The atmosphere changes. Which ballot-paper do you want? asks the polling officer. It's the first time he has asked anyone this question.

- Which is one supposed to take?

The polling officer and his assistants look embarrassed and say that everyone has taken the yellow ones. They unearth the mauve ballot-papers from the corner where they have been lying banished until now. When I take one, a peasant sighs: 'At last!' After me, a young man ventures to vote *no*. As soon as he has left the room the chief's representative goes after him and hauls him over the coals. The voter comes back in and asks to correct his vote. Malicious titters break out on the assistants' side.

The leader of the Fulani group in Filifili arrives with 50 polling cards. That makes 50 more yes votes.

2 p.m. - Arrival of the leader of the Fulani group from Mena with all the polling cards for his village. Votes yes on behalf of 'his people'.

3 p.m. - Fine rain falls on Dotoka. The improvised shed that has been put up outside the village to serve as polling station for Dotoka 2 provides inadequate protection against the rain. With the ballot-box on his head, a kid makes his way towards the houses, followed by the polling officer, his assistants and some gawpers.

3.30 p.m. - The rain has stopped. The polling stations start to function again.

5 p.m. Astonished not to see one woman cast a vote since I arrived. I am in-

formed that outside the big towns 'these things are only of interest to men', who vote for their wives when voting takes place in a normal way—'which is not the case', I am told—'because the majority of polling cards have remained in the hands of the chiefs'.

The count

Dotoka 1: 1,534 on the electoral roll. 1,050 voters. Votes cast: 1,050.
Yes: 1,050.

Long live Dotoka I! Long live the Community!

Dotoka 2: 1,456 on the electoral roll. 905 voters. 856 *yes*. 49 *no*.

It's a miracle there were so many *nos*, especially since I left the polling station quickly in order not to 'influence' the 'vote'.

Filifili, 29th September, morning

I am told about this incident which took place at Baraboullé polling station:

First thing in the morning, a young man from Pawoundé had wanted to take a mauve (*no*) ballot-paper. The polling officer station and the former combatant representing M.D.V. start to rail at him:

- Where do you come from, you? Can't you see that everyone is taking the yellow papers? Are you trying to be smart?

- I was told that voting was free. So I'm voting no, retorts the young man.

- No, this time it's not free. Take the yellow paper.

The heretic takes the *mauve* ballot-paper. The chief of the canton intervenes in person and takes it back from him:

- Do the same as everyone else, you idiot!

After that no one dared to take a mauve ballot-paper.

At the count it emerged that everyone (apart from three citizens) had taken part in the vote and had freely opted for the 'fraternal and egalitarian' Franco-African Community, even shepherds on the move with their flocks, even people who had died since the last population census, even men who

left years ago to work in Ghana or Ivory Coast! They all voted because the village and canton chiefs had their polling cards.

If France doesn't take an interest in Baraboullé after this... it will mean that she in her turn has become ungrateful!

I award the grand prize for servility to the delightful hospital attendant, A.S., polling officer for Baraboullé.

29th September

At Filifili, there are discussions about the 'vote' lacking all seriousness. Old P.B., a *no* supporter, has a struggle to refrain from crying in the village square. I do my best to soothe emotions and to direct thoughts towards building the future. From now on, many men and women will break away from the traditional parties and stop killing each other so that the upstarts and opportunists can have their American cars. It's a significant step forward.

30th September

In the Djelgodji (Djibo) district 177 yes votes, as follows: 2 schoolteachers; 1 shop assistant; 1 student; and 173 illiterates, farmers and shepherds (peasants).

A man who comes from Djibo explains to us how the population 'voted'. A complete farce! The chief of the canton and the administrator supervised the whole thing.

What petty means General de Gaulle adopts—or has others adopt—to prop up his grand policies! This is the end of the admiration his name used to evoke in Africa. This is the end of trust. The jar has been cracked and all the water will seep out of it—slowly maybe, but surely.

3rd October

Results of the vote, already foreseen, now known. Upper Volta has responded to General de Gaulle, absolutely freely and enthusiastically, with a massive *yes*.

Triumphant speech by the Prime Minister, Maurice Yaméogo. He couldn't resist calling me a 'foreign agent' because I campaigned (in a very limited way, alas) for a no vote. He accuses me (the plural he uses is pure form, it's

obviously me he's referring to) of having attempted to disturb the minds of the people living on the edge of the territory. Having known Mr Yaméogo when he was a copying clerk working in Djibo, I would never want to say anything about him that might seem slanderous. May he simply give public proof one day that his successive journeys from one place to another, his frequent promises, as consistently broken as they are made, his vehement and contradictory speeches—that all this to-ing and fro-ing and these repeated betrayals have been motivated only by love for the Upper Voltaian people and a passion for justice. May he prove that the desire to occupy the post of Prime Minister has nothing to do with it; that the desire for a monthly salary of scandalous proportions for a country like Upper Volta has nothing to do with it; that the love of power has nothing to do with it; that the sadistic joy of hurling abuse and calumnies at his opponents, without risking being slapped in the face in return, has nothing to do with it.

Yes, we've been 'beaten hollow', as the Prime Minister says. However much I try to take a rational view, I haven't yet got over it, because this is the defeat of all our people, of all Africa. But my hope is that it will not be long before this people, which today has been deceived, will realize who the real foreign agents are: those who sell their lives and their honour for luxury cars and air-conditioned houses, those who, despite all the 'honours' showered on them today, are nothing but the mercenaries of colonialist France and 'Senegalese Riflemen' under another guise.

I know perfectly well that this 'dignified speech' delivered by the Prime Minister is aimed at our French masters in the 'Community' and not at the Upper Voltaian masses for whom Mr Yaméogo couldn't care less. But those who heard or read it will not have failed to laugh till their sides split. The Prime Minister feels himself called upon—because it looks good—to congratulate the shepherds who, despite difficult conditions etc... What?! The shepherds from Djibo district, and those from Dori district, didn't even give a thought to the referendum on 28th September, Mr Prime Minister. I'm sorry they didn't, too. But they were on the move with their flocks, seeking water, pasture or salty soil on the other side of the border, in Mali. They're still there. If I dared to make a suggestion to the Prime Minister I would ask him, for the love of all the cattle of Upper Volta, to come to an understanding with the Malian authorities so that our animals can continue wintering in this territory, as they did in the past. But I know Mr Yaméogo would consider it a stupid suggestion. The young Republic of Upper Volta, under the infallible guidance of the immortal R.D.A., does not need to do business with Mali, with which it has nothing in common (except, of course, economic, cultural, religious, ethnic and linguistic links, which are un-

important). Let our young Republic, with the valorous Maurice Yaméogo and the beloved Moro-Naba Kougri at its head, conquer by force the regions of Sikasso, San, Hombori, Douentza... regions that it considers an integral part of itself. The punishment will be to see its shepherds and flocks desert it for all time. Better still: let's push the people of Mali into the Sahara. But no further, because after all, even though they're foreigners they too are part of the great Franco-African Community.

Confirmation of Guinea's independence. There's great enthusiasm in the village, even among those who voted yes. They all long to know about this country and bombard me with questions. I have to translate several newspapers that talk about the *Parti Démocratique de Guinée* and reproduce the speeches of Sékou Touré and Diallo Saifoulaye. Long live the P.D.G.! Long live independent Guinea! Henceforth the inspiration and conscience of Africa under French rule. Confidence is reborn all around me and the struggle continues.

I've only just learnt in detail about the results in France. What a disaster! That 'the most intelligent nation on earth' should abdicate all responsibility and hand itself over, with hands and feet bound, to the whims of one man, that it can quite simply reject Democracy—even in name—and expect the spells of a great sorcerer to bring it deliverance, that it should place greater trust in one man than in itself, that it should link its destiny to the life of one single man: this should really galvanize the Left in France to undertake a rigorous self-examination.

10th October

Tragi-comedy in the Fada N'Gourma district.

A traditional chief, who mistakenly made his staff vote *no* on September 28th, tries to commit suicide. Couldn't find out any more details.

Ouhigouya, 20th October

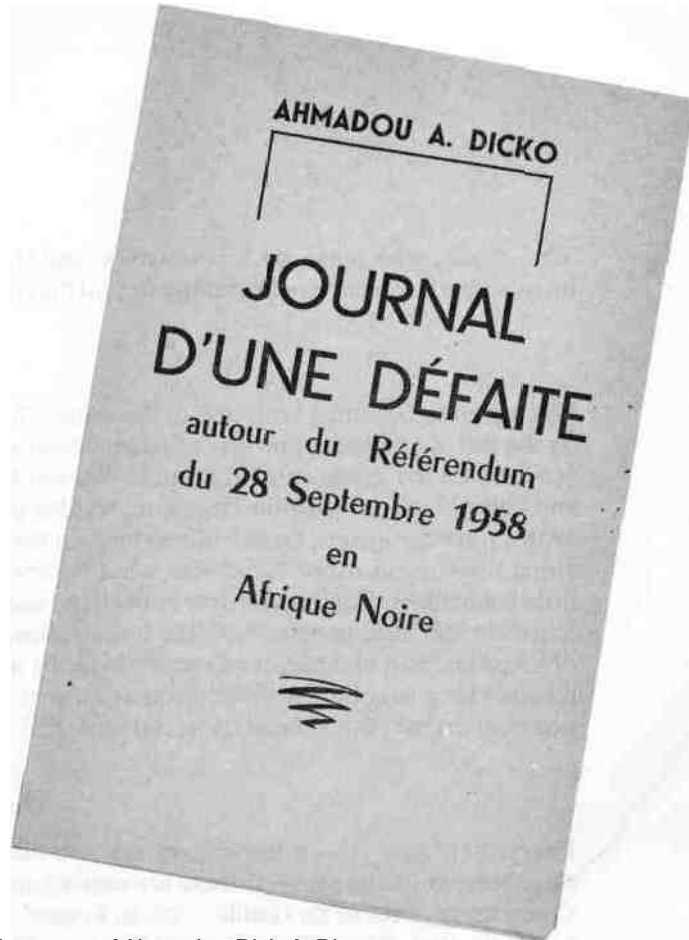
Under the big tree in the commercial district, a sizeable group of men is discussing the referendum while drinking large quantities of green tea. A particularly voluble man criticizes Sékou Touré vehemently and predicts catas-

trophes of the worst kind in Guinea. According to him, everything is going well in Ghana because 'Nkrumah has a doctorate' whereas 'Sékou Touré hasn't even got a school certificate' and 'there are no elite classes in Guinea'. Sitting next to the orator is our landlord who gives public proof that his opinions are orthodox by noisily indicating his approval. Poor S.T.! You're seriously mistaken. Sir, if you think your submission will allow you to gain influence, which you often say the government refuses you and grants only to the Whites.

My friend A.D., a young revolutionary from Mali, very skilfully leads the 'anti-Guinean' to contradict himself all over the place and to change the subject. Quite obviously intending to please us, he starts attacking Modibo Keita, whom he accuses of being a dictator. He becomes absolutely reasonable when he learns that despite my humble cotton boubou I am a student. He almost ended up admitting that the elite aren't collaborators with university degrees but are the people at the forefront of the struggle for liberation—political, economic, cultural and social. Basically a nice man, who gets a bit tipsy on green tea, but redeemable.

Here the current catch-phrases are 'reconciliation' and 'national unity'. The official leader of the P.R.A. in Upper Volta, M. Kango Gerard Ouédraogo, has just made a vehement appeal to the population. From the comments I've been hearing, people are beginning to grow weary of all these speeches. No-one in Upper Volta is deceived by this 'national unity'. It is dictated by fear and greed. The R.D.A., thrown into a state of panic by His Majesty the Moro Naba's attempt to use force to install the monarchy in Upper Volta (whether constitutional or not) and by the show of force he had his hired assassins put on around the Assembly on October 17th, has agreed to open up the government to the 'opposition' P.R.A. The P.R.A. officials are visibly delighted to share 'the responsibilities of power'. This party has never been a cause for concern to our valiant territorial councillors—and with good reason! At the time of the formation of the first Upper Voltaian government, 42 out of 70 councillors felt a vocation to be ministers and put themselves forward as candidates.

It's known in advance that there's bound to be a cuckold in this union, and that's the P.R.A. The R.D.A, the 'dynamic party', the 'progressive party', the party with all the mercenaries, traditional chiefs, courtiers and court-esans, the party which has betrayed Africa's interests without feeling any scruples or remorse, is going in the 'Community' direction. Just as a hungry



The cover of Ahmadou Dicko's Diary.

hyena can easily swallow a stray horse, it will swallow up the Cotonou loud-mouths.

The office of the Association of Upper Voltaian Students in France did well to show its solidarity with the Assembly, which was surrounded by His Majesty the Moro-Naba's bully-boy policemen. The Assembly shouldn't be mistaken, though. We do not hold it in any particular esteem. However, as it now stands opposed to the great African feudal exploitation of the people, we prefer to support those who, at least formally, admit the principle of democracy. What a pity that His Majesty should help give a bit of lustre to an Assembly and a government which the unanimous scorn of honest people was turning mouldy. This is what comes of taking yourself too seriously. However, his Majesty knows that his 'Empire' ends with the Ouagadougou district, that it does not stretch to all the Mossi in Upper Volta, and even less to the Bobo, Lobi, Grunshi, Fulani, Samo, Fulsi, Songhai,

Silmi-mossi, who make up this territory, and that even in Ouagadougou many of his 'subjects' are beginning to find his crown too heavy.

Officers of the colonial army are all the same. The first White man to tread on the soil of Ouagadougou was a French officer who came to offer the then Moro-Naba the 'friendship' of France. 'We will fight against your enemies and help you to govern your kingdom', was his proposal. On 17th October 1958 it was once again a French officer who, in the opinion of the public, provided the current Moro-Naba with what he needed in order to scare our little councillors. But the Moros are not all the same. While the latter rushed to accept this 'disinterested aid', the former drove the intruding officer out of his palace and told him in no uncertain terms that he had been governing his state for a long time without the assistance of France. Yesterday's Africa was no paradise. But at least its feudal lords had another outlook.

Ouagadougou, 24th October

Everywhere you go—in the city, in the entrance hall to the government chambers, in public squares, there are notices on display saying 'Yes to the Community', 'Yes to de Gaulle', 'Yes to France'. For once the government hasn't cheated. With a little more 'skill', it could have paraded its yes as a 'Yes to Upper Volta', a 'Yes to Africa'. It prefers to admit publicly, with a cynicism some people call courage, that its actions have never been dictated by the interests of Upper Volta or Africa, which it couldn't care less about. Had it acted in any other way it would have scared its French masters—and its courage doesn't go that far.

25th October

For the last two days I've had long discussions with R.D.A. and P.R.A. militants, particularly the young people. The overwhelming majority is in favour of immediate independence and talks scornfully about the 28th September vote being a complete sham. They are all prancing around, impatiently champing at the bit, and less and less able to bear being restrained by their parties. Although many are civil servants and are afraid of being 'sacked' by the 'government of national unity', they will increasingly break away from the two traditional Upper Voltaian parties. I am prevailed upon to speak at some length about the *Mouvement Africain de Liberation Nationale* for the first time since it was established. The group I am talking with already knows a little bit about this organization. They know that its

militants in the city of Ouagadougou are closely watched and that their every move is known. Despite that, many of them are ready to join the M.L.N.

Asked the mayors of Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso for permission to hold a public meeting on 5th and 6th November in their respective towns, on 'The significance and implications of the referendum of 28th September in Black Africa'. In the name of the M.L.N.

Filifili, 28th October

M.R.G., head clerk who until the referendum was acting as district commissioner of Djibo has been replaced by a 'real' administrator—despite all the promises the R.D.A. had made him—because his results on 28th September were not judged to be satisfactory by the government. The newcomer is a great psychologist. Knowing how terrified our peasants are of the police, he took advantage of my week-long absence to unleash two gendarmes on Filifili. Faithful to their French masters, these dogs arrived in the village, armed, helmeted and booted, and proceeded to cause havoc. When they saw my brother Idrissa and me leave Djibo for Ouahigouya, they demanded that the people tell them where we were. The village chief prostrated himself before them. He scraped off the food stuck to their trousers and almost licked the mud from their boots. My sister-in-law, Toufado Yéro, who has been seriously ill since a particularly difficult labour, further complicated by the lack of all maternity care, had to drag herself, half-dead, to the village square to reply to the interrogation. The spectacle of the village chief lying on his belly in front of the two policemen disgusted her and she shouted at him to get up, or let heaven crush him. She couldn't refrain from pouring scorn on the two dogs for the affectation of speaking only French when no-one in the village understood this language and it would have been much easier for them to speak their vernacular languages which everyone understood and spoke. She asked them if they thought they would 'disappoint' the people by speaking 'like natives'. The two 'guardians of the law' couldn't believe their ears and turned away from this 'trouble-maker of a woman'. One of our '49', H.G., came forward to bear witness that we weren't at Filifili but in Ouagadougou, and the two dogs departed, their mission accomplished.

All our friends uttered a great sigh of relief when they saw us arrive back. They thought we'd been arrested and imprisoned in the Upper Voltaian capi-

tal, and had also been expecting to see H.G. arrested at any moment. Just to think that in Djibo not one 'official' told us about this incident. I wouldn't even be surprised if the district commissioner claims to know nothing about it when I go to his office to ask why he had policemen search for me.

Congratulations to the servants of the colonial Administration. They are spreading the rumour round the district that I am to be expelled from the district and the country in a week's time, that all those who voted *no* in the Referendum would have their taxes doubled, while waiting for General de Gaulle to send an army to exterminate them. It's good timing, as the university vacation is coming to an end.

3rd November, my last day in Filifili

Despite the pressure and threats, my friends have vowed to 'hold fast' and to spread the idea of independence. They are no longer '49', but many more, as men and women who even yesterday were hesitating are swelling their numbers today. This is the crucial task: to prepare for the 28th Septembers to come.

How can I find a way of sending some newspapers with simple information to the peasants in this village, as they have asked me to do, without the Administration intercepting them? And how, since they are almost all illiterate, do I find them a translator who is not an agent of the colonialists?

Djibo, 4th November

Men from all parties and all classes have been coming spontaneously to tell me how disappointed they are with the traditional parties and their officials. It's an excellent sign as a month ago no-one dared to speak out openly against 'the princes who rule us'. The era of resignation is over. The hour of victory is near and the 'Community's' days are numbered.

Bobo-Diolasso, 4th November

I maintain, in my conversations with members of the R.D.A., that Mr Houphouët-Boigny is becoming more and more unpopular, even with the men in his own party. The myth is crumbling. So much the better.

Meeting at Bobo

5th November

The practical arrangements for my meeting are all absolutely satisfactory, thanks to the cooperation of my own host and officials from the Cultural Centre in Bobo, although these are all signed-up members of the government party. At 9 p.m. the room is full to bursting. The Europeans have stayed away. It appears that the most important amongst them have been invited to dine with the Governor of Upper Volta, who is passing through the town. (This Governor is in fact a fairly liberal Frenchman. At least that's the impression I received when I heard him speak last August at the inauguration of Djibo district. In comparison with the threatening and falsely authoritative speech of Mr Yaméogo's and the turgid and demagogic harangue of the P.R.A. councillor, the Governor's remarks seemed a masterpiece of dignity and skill, although his position meant that he had to talk about the 'disinterested aid that France gives to African nations'). The only Frenchman in the audience was a police inspector who had to remain standing as there was nowhere to sit down.

It is very regrettable that even in Bobo-Dioulasso, the most democratic town in Upper Volta, women do not take part in public demonstrations. Another of our weaknesses. The R.D.A., when it was anticolonialist in character, realized this and used to encourage the active participation of African women in political affairs. This work should be resumed and taken further.

Audience consisting mainly of young people. Just as I'd hoped, the discussion was absolutely frank, even brutal at times. More than the chance to express my own point of view, the interest of this evening for me was in gaining a precise and close understanding of the views of the people of Bobo, and in starting a dialogue.

The R.D.A. has once again succeeded in acting in a truly anti-African way. It has managed to turn a small part of African opinion against the students. I had already noticed this at Bamako, in early July, when I was listening to a broadcast of a speech by Modibo Keita, and also in discussion with some passengers in the train from Bamako to Dakar. The intervention that M.B.D., propagandist of the R.D.A., made this evening, is significant. This orator makes a savage attack on African students who, according to him, all marry White women, while claiming to liberate Africa. I found myself called upon to launch directly into the problem of mixed marriage which, apart from being a very thorny topic, had only very tenuous connections with the

subject in hand. If one were to believe M.B.D., who expresses his point of view with great conviction, every African who marries a French woman is 'lost for all time', and has 'completely betrayed his motherland', outrageous views which earned him jeers from the audience. This damned R.D.A.! It shoots from all sides. During the Referendum campaign, I was informed, without being able to do anything about it, that one of the most prominent ministers was saying something along these lines: 'The opponents of the Community are racists. Now I am a Marxist, which means I'm also anti-racist; therefore I will vote for the Community'. Until I'm proved wrong, though, I refuse to believe M.B.D. capable of speaking like this.

M.A.L.'s intervention shows tremendous courage, faith and generosity. What youthfulness and fire from a man who is no longer so young himself! Only the young A.D.'s tribute to Guinea matched his for fervour.

If he's true to himself M.K.S. ought immediately to join the revolutionary struggle, since he seems to understand the pre-conditions for our liberation when he says: 'We will cease to be exploited the day those at the bottom of the heap no longer wish to be exploited' and when 'those at the top are no longer able to exploit'. There's not a moment to lose, comrade. Your contribution is absolutely necessary so that 'those at the bottom of the heap' no longer wish it and 'those at the top' no longer can exploit. A national consciousness, which you rightly say is not strong enough amongst all Africans, will only develop through practical revolutionary struggle. Don't waste your time, comrade, wondering about the differences between 'reformism' and 'revolution'. Take action.

A question from K.J.B. was an implicit invitation to take sides in favour of the United States or the U.S.S.R. The fear inspired by Communists, viewed as 'enemies of freedom and of God', is a powerful ally for the opponents of the liberation of Africa. I decided to evade this point in order not to wander too far from the subject—and to wait for more auspicious circumstances.

M.G., you are right. Africa was divided before 28th September. It was even divided before the arrival of the colonizers. But should we therefore accept division, when it's contrary to our feelings, our aspirations and our interests? Should we therefore increase division and sanctify it for ever?

M.A. raised some very interesting questions. He was trying to figure out—and asked us if we could figure out—why the 'leaders' did not agree on a unanimous response (*yes* or *no*). He was concerned that the recent expulsion of Togolese and Dahomeans would put all African states in a bad light.

He also wanted to know who were responsible for the ignorance of the peasant masses and if independent Africa could be self-sufficient. But why on earth does he suspect African nationalism of being a new form of imperialism that doesn't dare call itself by its name?

M.S. is one of those who believes that 'General de Gaulle was quite sincere' in offering independence to the overseas territories and who thinks that it's thanks to him that Guinea was able to achieve the rank of sovereign state. It is vitally important for the sake of truth that we proclaim that the people of Guinea were sincere, not General de Gaulle. It is vitally important that we destroy the legend that has been created around the 'man of Brazzaville' and that we remind or inform our compatriots of the meaning of this much-lauded Brazzaville Conference—a conference whose opening declaration included the words: 'The aims of the civilizing mission accomplished by France in the colonies, preclude any idea of autonomy, any possibility of evolution outside the sphere of the French Empire. Self-government in the colonies, even as a distant possibility, is out of the question.' Not only the people of Bobo but all African people should be told the reasons why de Gaulle opposed the Constitution adopted in April 1946 by the First Constituent Assembly and why he rejected the idea of 'freely agreed union', insisting instead that 'the Constitution should, on the contrary, confirm and impose solidarity with France on all the overseas territories'.

M.A.L. reminded the audience about the behaviour locally of the R.P.F., the party which was founded by General de Gaulle and whose leaders were distinguished by their ultra-colonialist positions.

M.S. is unfortunately by no means the only African to harbour illusions about General de Gaulle's 'sincerity'. One of the tasks that we, the revolutionaries in this country, must undertake is to let the masses in our country know why de Gaulle cannot liberate them from hunger, ignorance and humiliation, and what the links are between his best-known supporters and the Bank of West Africa, between his closest collaborators and the iron and copper mines. We must convince them that it is not by chance that, since the arrival of de Gaulle, 'pacification' has been intensified and torture is becoming common practice, even in France.

I grant you, dear S., that 'the referendum has had some positive elements' (but not thanks to General de Gaulle or the French government):

- It has enabled one part of Africa, the most democratic part under French rule, the country that had abolished traditional chieftaincy and set up dis-

strict councils and agricultural cooperatives—it has enabled Guinea to emerge once and for all from foreign domination, without a drop of blood being spilt, and henceforth to be the soul and conscience of Africa, an oasis in the midst of a barren desert.

- It has shown in the most glaring way that a certain number of our compatriots—shady politicians, collaborating traditional chiefs, vacillating religious chiefs—have resolutely linked their personal fortune to the maintenance of the colonial regime.
- It has revealed—and this has to be said as it's an indictment of our professional politicians and not of the people, as some think—it has revealed the lack of political education of the great mass of peasants who, most of the time, were hearing the word 'independence' for the first time.

Several speakers expressed the fear that France will rig the referendum once again when we ask to leave the Community. But we should take note that the attempts made by colonialist France to falsify the elections in Guinea failed dismally and its agents' provocative acts were thwarted. Why was this? Because the Guinean people were fully conscious, organized and disciplined. When a whole people becomes responsible for itself and rises up against slavery, no power in the world can prevent it from becoming a free nation. In the M.L.N. we do not seek applause, even though I was moved by the applause of the Bobo audience. We are convinced that demagogy is a form of cowardice and that in politics as in morals it is very dangerous and should be condemned. So I prefer to 'disappoint' those who hoped to see the M.L.N. employ magical means to hasten the unity and independence of Africa. The M.L.N. knows no conditions for popular liberation which are exterior to the people themselves—to the people's actions, to the political commitment of the people, to the relentless struggle of an organized people. It is to this struggle that the M.L.N. urges you, comrades. Show your contempt for the threats and pressures of your mercenary governments, and you, B.B. and P.S.T., remind yourselves that the 'dishonesty of the Constitution when it speaks of our opportunity to gain independence' is not an insurmountable obstacle, that our destiny is in our own hands and that above all it is up to us to ensure it is the finest of destinies.

The friendly conversation I had with M.L.N. militants and sympathizers as I left the meeting room strengthens my feeling that Bobo-Dioulasso will play a prominent part in the liberation of Upper Volta.

Several of my friends are distinctly uneasy about my publicly denouncing the heinous role played by certain marabouts. Let's be clear about this: I have never attacked Islam and am firmly attached to it myself. Islam is the Koran and the hadiths, not these turbaned feudal overlords, adorned with prayer beads and medals, not these passive instruments of the colonial government which lavishes them with care and attention in order to lull the Muslim masses to sleep more effectively. Can someone show me what there is in common between these men who preach the cult of their own personality and claim to be able to grant entry to Paradise as they please, and the Prophet Mohammed who never ceased telling the Muslims, 'I am only a man like yourselves'? Can someone show me what there is in common between these men who cultivate ignorance in 'the faithful' and dismiss knowledge as 'the work of Satan' and the Prophet Mohammed who declared, 'The wise will be the heirs of the Prophets' and told the Muslims, 'Go as far as China to seek knowledge'. Can someone show me what there is in common between the Prophet Mohammed who taught the Muslims, 'Patriotism is part of faith' and these men who zealously vie with each other each time it is a question of betraying Africa. I have never claimed that all the marabouts were traitors, ignoramuses and servants of the colonialists. It's the feudal overlord I'm fighting, not the Muslim schoolteacher. It's the trafficker of religion I'm fighting, not the Soufi, although the Soufi is inclined to forget the first part of these words of the Prophet: 'The Muslim should work for this life as if he were going to live for ever—and, beyond that, as if he were going to die the next day.' It's the professional cajoler of the masses that I denounce, not the learned Muslim who has spent most of his life in prison or in exile. Coming from a region which suffered particularly badly, I know that colonial repression hit the best of the Muslim African leaders very hard, as every kind of absurd accusation was levelled against them. Throughout the colonial era, they were accused of Islamic expansionism; in 1940, of Gaullism and Bolshevism; after the Liberation, of Vichyism. I know that many of them died in the prisons of Ouahigouya, Mopti, Kidal and Dakar, because they would not accept colonialism as something irreversible. So it is not these people we are concerned with but only with 'maraboutism', in other words the cult of ignorance, the cult of irresponsibility, the cult of the personality, the cult of honours, the cult of resignation, and permanent collaboration with all the slave traders. It is this enemy alone that I pledge you to combat without pity, my friends, for it has no pity at all for Africa. I would be betraying the M.L.N. if I attacked or defended any philosophical or religious conviction in its name. But, equally, I would be betraying the M.L.N., if I did not attack the allies of colonialism in Africa, even if they invoke religion to conceal their evil deeds.

Meeting in Ouagadougou

6th November

Journey from Bobo to Ouagadougou by rail, in the company of a member of parliament and a trade union leader (U.G.T.A.N.). I get the impression that they are both going to an R.D.A. political meeting. The U.G.T.A.N. man indignantly shows me an article by a 'trade unionist', F.O., from Ivory Coast, who maintains that the enemy to overcome is not the employers but the major central body for African unity: the *Union Générale des Travailleurs d'Afrique Noire*. Then we get round to talking about the Referendum. Contrary to the decision taken by its headquarters, the Upper Voltaian section of the U.G.T.A.N. voted yes. I seek in vain for some clue as to why they did this, but my trade unionist companion is content to tell me that in Upper Volta they did not consider themselves obliged to follow the instructions issued by the central executive. What instructions did they follow then? Quite simply those of the R.D.A. government. Why? For two main reasons, as far as I can see:

- The first has to do with the absence—until the recent creation of the *Mouvement Africain de Liberation Nationale*—of a revolutionary party in Upper Volta. A progressive party is absolutely indispensable to a revolutionary trade union. The experience of the Referendum shows that wherever there was no party of this kind in Africa, the workers were quite simply unaware of the U.G.T.A.N.'s instructions to vote *no*. Some of the trade union leaders claim to have had a 'crisis of conscience' when faced with the necessity to betray either their party (R.D.A. or P.R.A.) by voting no, or their union by approving the Constitution. In fact, this crisis of conscience was resolved in almost every case, to the detriment of the revolution and in favour of the forces of reaction.

- This is where the second reason comes in: this concerns the very nature of our trade unions. I don't have any statistics to hand, but I know that the overwhelming majority of our workers are civil servants, in Upper Volta as in the whole of French-ruled Africa. This gives the Administration every opportunity to interfere with the decisions of the trade unions and to influence them by means of arbitrary transfers and dismissals or simply by intimidation and threats. The damage wouldn't be so serious if it weren't for this 'civil servant mentality' that K. implicitly denounced at Baraboullé with his insulting declaration that black civil servants were 'worse than the worst of the Whites'. Throughout the era of native citizenship and forced labour, the African civil servant—symbolized by the clerk, the interpreter and the local

policeman—was the most zealous assistant to the occupier. He was the ersatz superintendent, the distributor of slaps and beatings to our dignitaries and to our peasants. It was he who demanded more and more presents from a people living in poverty, who liked to eat chicken while hunger decimated the little children, who had to bathe three times a day while the village was dying of thirst, whose horse had to drink fresh milk while the babies went hungry. This civil servant was distinguished by his contempt for his own race, the desire to become 'White'. the desire to promote himself and by his passion for money. This man whose gods had always been the district commissioner, the governor and the governor-general, finds himself today with prospects beyond his wildest dreams. He sees the possibility of taking the place of his district commissioner, his governor and his governor-general, of being both rich and 'highly regarded'.

Just look at this civil servant who served colonial France with the utmost servility and who had nothing but contempt and insults for the people—look at him currying favour now with the people, and listen to him speaking of democracy and 'the will of the people'. What a transformation! What sudden gentleness and kindness in his voice! But if the outer appearance has changed, the exploitation remains as ferocious as ever; and he is as subservient as ever to the French master who has granted this bargain. The little clerk who for years dreamt of a new bicycle, the little clerk who throughout his career was obedient to the cantankerous whims of a megalomaniac district commissioner, now glimpses the possibility that he himself might become a member of parliament or even prime minister, that he too might own a luxury car and have a chauffeur and be able to put money away in the bank. And all this will cost him nothing, because betraying his country and his people means nothing to this man who has spent his whole life doing just this. A huge contest is underway as to who can gobble up the most from the peasants' taxes. The majority of our present-day ministers were formerly 'working class' trade unionists; several of them have promptly given up their responsibilities as unionists to take on the 'responsibilities' of government.

Anyone who wants to know what the 'civil service mentality' is in everyday life should pay a visit to the hospital, the town hall or the post office and there they will see hospital workers hustling sick people, clerks replying insolently to the timid questions of tax-payers, and everywhere the eagerness to serve the White rather than the native person, the African in European dress rather than the African in traditional dress.

I know that among civil servants there are patriots who have never exploited anyone. I know too that the most conscientious amongst them are opposed

to the current policies of our rulers. Because they understand that these policies remain fairly and squarely those of the French master. Because they understand that if this master raises his slave to the rank of coachman—wearing a uniform with gleaming braids—he is careful not to give him the coach. These civil servants are not yet in the majority but their existence is reassuring nonetheless.

(A comparison could be made between our unions and our youth movements. These are made up exclusively of young civil servants who are very often energetic, progressive, in no way afflicted with a 'civil service mentality' but at the mercy of the Administration because of their very nature. Essential then that our Youth Councils should be genuine mass organizations, that is that they should include in their ranks young workers and young peasants if they really want to be popular and revolutionary.)

Ouagadougou, 6th November

The mayor of the city—who is also the Minister of the Interior for Upper Volta—has authorized me to speak in the conference room of the town hall at 6 p.m. But despite numerous efforts on the part of my friends while I was in Filifili, Upper Volta's only daily newspaper, the government's *Bulletin d'Information*, has categorically refused to announce my meeting. On Mr. Yaméogo's orders. The Prime Minister is quite right to fear the people being well informed. But, as one of our proverbs says, however long the night is, day breaks in the end. The Head of Government ought to pay attention to our proverbs.

Despite our poor finances we have been able to inform many of the inhabitants of Ouagadougou of the subject, time and place of the meeting. Thanks to the commitment of the young people who for the time being are members of the R.D.A. or the P.R.A., and thanks to the energy of S.D., amongst others.

I prefer to believe that it is an unfortunate coincidence: our brave, witty D.H., who was chairing the meeting, had hardly finished his brief introduction before a power cut plunged the whole town hall into darkness.

There are depths to which even I don't believe the government capable of stooping.

We learn that the lights will not come on again until 9 p.m. The majority of the audience asks for the meeting to be adjourned and to start again in three hours' time.

On the way out, an R.D.A. member informs me that some people were opposed to the adjournment because the executive board of their party is due to meet in the same room at exactly the same time, 9 p.m. Wonderful. So, my good R.D.A. leaders, you wanted to make me look ridiculous, did you? You thought you had pulled off a fine trick, did you? Well, it has failed, and later on we will find each other face to face. I can promise you that your party managers will not spend the evening digesting their dinner in a tranquil meeting room. And you will be entirely responsible for any trouble that breaks out.

The meeting began again at exactly 9 o'clock. The R.D.A. maharajas arrived one after the other, belching from a heavy meal. They all have an air of utter complacency and seem to be without a care in the world. Several ministers and principal private secretaries are wearing 'the latest (winter) fashions from Paris', although the temperature is 40 degrees in the shade. Once again this 'civil servant mentality' which, amongst other absurdities, has inspired the authorities to name the street leading to the government buildings, *Champs Elysées*, and the main park in Ouagadougou, *Bois de Boulogne!* After a brief moment of surprise, they all flop down on the chairs at the back. Many of these dignitaries are visibly the worse for drink. When I am almost at the end of my speech, the Mayor and Minister of the Interior arrives in shirt-sleeves. One or two members of the R.D.A. executive leave again. Amongst the members of the executive, I can make out—from their more humble bearing—the delegates from the bush, in other words the doctors who have left their patients, teachers who have abandoned their pupils and clerks who have closed their offices to come and palaver in the capital for a few days and weigh up their chances of one day becoming members of parliament, principle private secretaries or ministers. Perhaps, though, they are not all 'lost for all time', as B.D. would say.

The Minister of the Interior is the main antagonist of the evening. As he passes for a relatively 'progressive' man—which cost him the office of mayor a few years ago—some of his opponents, in his own party, have accused him

of being 'the M.L.N.'s pimp', as he puts it. So he seizes this opportunity to rebut this accusation. Personally, I am convinced of his 'innocence'. The Mayor may be sufficiently 'progressive' to worry his ultra-reactionary colleagues in the government of Upper Volta, but certainly not sufficiently to feel any sympathy whatsoever for a revolutionary movement. He has not forgiven us for founding the M.L.N. He is convinced that we should have joined the existing traditional parties (R.D.A. or P.R.A.), accepted important posts, given our backing to 'the efforts governments are making' and transformed these organizations from within, 'like a worm crawling into a fruit to make it go rotten'. It's a defensible point of view. This way of operating was tried in Senegal in particular, where the *Union Démocratique Sénégalaise* (U.D.S.) merged with Mr Senghor's party with the intention of transforming it. It was a dismal failure. Why? The Mayor will not agree, but it was because the fruit was already rotten and any worm that dared to climb inside it was bound to be asphyxiated. So, rather than risking being 'transformed' and absorbed themselves, the healthy forces within Africa must dissociate themselves immediately from both the R.D.A. and the P.R.A.

Although he reproaches 'intellectuals' with talking for the sake of talking, the Mayor's interventions were interminable. But I waited in vain for him to produce a single argument against independence that wasn't either a sophism or demagogy. 'Africa is not yet mature enough', you say. In my view, it never will be, as long as it is ruled over by governments such as yours. 'Africa must be united before it becomes independent', you tell me. You know perfectly well. Sir, that that's a fallacious argument: unity doesn't necessarily guarantee independence, otherwise all of French West Africa would be independent today, as would French Equatorial Africa, as they were both unified blocs up until September 28th. Rejecting independence doesn't guarantee unity either, since these blocs are fragmented today. Africa will be united again because Africans need unity: we will work for unity with all our strength. But we will unite independent Africa. Independence first! Then unity, in a second movement. To argue for the other way round seems Utopian to me and to play into the hands of the opponents of both African independence and unity.

The Mayor accuses me of 'not taking account of the opinions of the masses', of 'wanting to do good to Africa regardless of the people's wishes'. According to him, the people expressed their views democratically on 28th September. If my opponent is sincere in what he says, I can only wonder at his capacity for credulity! 'The people expressed their views democratically!' Come off it! Quite apart from the scandalous way in which the vote itself was conducted, and the power of a parasitic feudal system, I declare that

there is no democracy in African territories under French rule because our politicians do not consult with the citizens, because citizens have no effective way of participating in the management of the wealth of society, because they have no power to intervene in the decisions of governments, and because these governments are not sensitive to popular aspirations and not concerned with satisfying them.

The Mayor is undoubtedly sincere when he maintains that he gave up the chance to study in France in order to 'work for his country'. But does this justify his virulent attacks on students? More than once I had to remind him that I was not speaking in the name of the students but of the M.L.N. What sweeping statements! For example: 'The students prefer to stay in France and refuse to return to their country'. At an international university whose courses were taken by the representatives of 14 nationalities, I have already heard a French lecturer state coldly, to a scandalized audience, that 90 per cent of African students settled in France after finishing their studies. He wouldn't actually disclose the source of his statistics, as I asked him to do. The Mayor won't do so either. Another example: 'You students claim, when you've finished your studies, that you should have the same allowances and advantages as Bretons and Normans when you are in your country'. You know you're raising a false problem, *Monsieur le Maire*. Let us become independent and it won't arise. But since African teachers in secondary schools are still 'metropolitan staff, dependent on the French Minister of National Education, don't ask them to make sacrifices for which there is no justification. A facile form of argument which nonetheless (or because it's facile) can be persuasive: 'We may not have done anything, but we have allowed you to study'. A Minister in Upper Volta should have the sense of decency not to broach this subject since this country gives grants for study in France to fewer than twenty students, half of whom are the sons of European civil servants. Yes, he should have the decency to remain silent, since the government spends more on maintaining a Minister of the Interior than it does on grants for all its students in France.

Another 'argument' the Mayor thinks is irrefutable: 'When they have demands to make, the workers go to see the mayor and the MP, not the students.' It's strange that the Mayor, as a former trade unionist (ex-leader in Upper Volta of the C.A.T.C.: *Confédération Africaine de Travailleurs Croyants*) should speak in such a way. Terribly sorry to have to remind him that this is precisely what the mayor and the deputy are elected and paid to do.

I apologize for not taking seriously the Mayor's question about the differ-

ence between 'metropolitan socialism' and what the M.L.N. calls African socialism. The first of these terms is completely beyond my comprehension.

The Mayor has been very understanding. He didn't try to interrupt my meeting and he preferred to postpone the meeting of his own party's executive. I couldn't expect anything more from an R.D.A. minister, even a 'progressive' one.

I really do not understand his evident complacency or his faith in the future of his party. Why should the Upper Voltaian people be particularly grateful to the R.D.A.? Where are the schools constructed by the government? Where are the dispensaries and the roads it has built? Where are the new maternity hospitals? Will a citizen of this country, who is more and more highly taxed and whose annual income is less than 10,000 francs, cling to the R.D.A. simply because this party misappropriates public money to satisfy the voracious appetites of our ministers, private secretaries and members of parliament?

What I understand much better is the bitterness the Mayor harbours for Sékou Touré and Guinea. All these lily-livered gentlemen threw down their shields in the midst of the battle and abandoned the combat. And now, to cover up their treachery, they accuse the leadership of the *Parti Démocratique de Guinée* of committing every possible sin. This is why they insist on denouncing the 'forced labour instituted by Sékou Touré's government' and 'Sékou Touré's popular democracy'. Meanwhile, the Mossi peasants are obliged to cultivate the fields belonging to the Moro-Naba and his 'ministers'. Meanwhile, these fine champions of liberty hunt down the opposition and make corruption the order of the day. Meanwhile, too, they set up the most unpopular 'democracy' imaginable.

A young man from Ouhigouya also starts attacking the students but in such terms that the chairman has to deny him the right to continue. My friend, I grant you that we are far from perfect. You think we talk more than we act? I admit that our revolutionary *practice* does not always match our revolutionary *intentions*. But have you stopped for one moment to consider the difficulties that confront us? Do you find that the holiday classes we provide free to young school and college students are inadequate? I promise you, we will do our utmost to improve them.

There is much to reprove the students for. Some made peace with the enemy and are ministers in Mali, Ivory Coast and Senegal. Others capitulated before the enemy and chose to abstain or remain silent at the time of the Referendum. Don't you think, though, that they are the minority, a tiny minority? Don't you think that on the whole, each of us, according to the means available, strove to convince Africa that it should say *no* to dependency on 28th September? Do you know that several of us were beaten and imprisoned during the referendum campaign? Don't be deceived, comrade. It is precisely because of our struggle for the unity and independence of our country that we have always been the target of the colonialists and the Africans in their pay.

The 'intervention' of a member of parliament from Tenkodogo is only worth mentioning in passing. His questions were so stupid and unusual that I preferred not to answer them at a meeting organized in the name of the M.L.N.

'He's a student, too', some members of the audience called out mockingly. I've just acquired some more detailed information: he is the son of a big feudal chief and was sent by his father on a 'trip' to Paris where he distinguished himself by his frequenting of night clubs and his scrupulousness in never paying his debts to the *Association des Etudiants Voltaïques en France*. Needless to say, no university or higher institute had the honour of his name on their register. I wonder what kind of advice he gives his 'constituents'. Anyway, his political friends who told me about him have no illusions about his intellectual capacities (which he himself rates highly).

I find it very painful to have had this discussion with young M.M. I know that some customary chiefs ruined themselves in order to pay their subjects' taxes. I know that others went to prison to protect their village or canton. They are the exceptions. But it also grieves me to see what these men, who should be the guardians of Africa's traditions of honour and courage, have become. Perhaps, M. you are unaware that I too come from this kind of family, on both sides. You are a sentimental revolutionary. How do you expect to struggle for democracy without eradicating from the minds of the people the belief that there are superior races and inferior races, superior castes and inferior castes? How can you do that without 'desacralizing' certain families—including your own, if needs be—families whose only achieve-

ment since the conquest of African soil has been to assist the occupier in robbing and exploiting their own people and their own motherland?

At the end of the meeting, a member of the audience expressed regret that I didn't reserve all my severity for France. It would certainly have been easier to do so, the only Frenchman in the audience being the police inspector on duty. This is in fact what the Cotonou loud-mouths did. After years of collaborating with the colonialists, they attacked the French in the most demagogic manner from the heights of their Congress and were greeted with warm applause from the crowd. The M.L.N. leaves them the monopoly on this method. For us, alongside official France, colonial France, there are the workers and the people of France who remain allies in our struggle for the emancipation of Africa. Our brothers are not African politicians and feudal overlords, but the French workers and intellectuals who voted *no* on 28th September. Their France is our France: a humanist and revolutionary France.

7th November

I have just had a visit from my old primary school friend H.T., who represents Djelgadji (Djibo district) on the executive of the R.D.A. 'You are a Communist and you peddle Communist ideas because you approve of the P.A.I.', he accuses me. I wonder what 'ideas' he peddles. I expressed neither approval nor disapproval for the *Parti Africain de l'Indépendance* yesterday evening; I simply mentioned it along with the parties and organizations that voted *no* in the referendum. If I shared its position I would have been militant in its ranks. I see it as an ally in so far as it represents something. The M.L.N. is not a Communist movement. Both in its policy making and in carrying out its programme it guards its independence from all political parties, African and foreign, and all external power groups. The M.L.N. is not an anti-Communist movement either, because anti-Communism is the weapon of tyrants, anti-Communism is the crushing of the people, anti-Communism means the colonial wars and crusades of the 'free world'. Hitler's hoards spreading over the world. North America making and unmaking the governments of Latin America, Batista starving his political prisoners, the lynching of Blacks and racial segregation, the flag raised high by all the well-to-do, all the explorers and all those who contribute to human misery: all these things are anti-Communism. The M.L.N. is an anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist movement. This means that unlike your party we are not, in any form whatsoever, accomplices to colonialist France,

colonialist Belgium, colonialist England or colonialist Portugal and that we intend to drive them off our territory and homeland. This means that unlike your party we are not, in any form whatsoever, accomplices to imperialism which we intend to expel from our continent and replace with a socialist economy. This means that, without giving up our struggle for independence and without following any external orders whatsoever, we take sides between imperialist powers and anti-imperialist powers. How can you ask us, my friend, not to take sides between our enemies, charming as they may be, and our allies, worrying as they may be? I know that basically none of this interests you. Well, don't worry, you will soon give up your post of assistant teacher. You have all it takes to be a member of parliament in Upper Volta today.

I leave for France in half an hour. The inspector given the task of watching my 'movements' in Ouagadougou has rendered me a great service: thanks to his car and his amiability, my journey has been an easy one. I hope the same can be said for his report.

Short stop at Bobo-Dioulasso airport. Two African gendarmes recognize me and congratulate me warmly on the meeting the day before last. They were there, wearing civilian clothes. They tell me it was out of respect for my host, a local R.D.A. personality, that I was not 'bothered' by the police. According to them, life has become even more difficult since 28th September, and none of the promises made to them have been kept. They complain in particular about being paid much less than their white colleagues although they have the same number of years of service and the same family commitments as them (or twice as many, according to them). They swear they are ready to give up half their salaries and even to go back to their villages and cultivate the land—so that their children can live in an independent country. They seem absolutely sincere. I can hardly believe my ears.

The 'Community' is quite definitely condemned, since even the gendarmes no longer believe in it.

The people of sovereign Guinea are beating the drum of victory, and all our grasslands and forests tremble with its vibrations. Soon the sun will shine on a completely free Africa.

A Year Later

Three months ago, with an unparalleled sense of theatre and spectacle, with a dazzling unfurling of flags, a mass of military parades and a shower of fireworks, the 5th Republic held its 14th July celebrations in the name of the 'Franco-African Community'.

In September 1958, Africans were being told that this Community would bring peace, prosperity, a swift flow of capital towards our territories and a large increase of investment in Africa. They were told that from then on there would be true Liberty, true Equality, true Fraternity. Our politicians and our 'spiritual' leaders, decorated with the Legion of Honour, recited this incessantly and asked their respective 'disciples' to prostrate themselves with gratitude before the 'Saviour', 'the Supreme Being'. A year after the 'Community' was established, what has become of all its promises? Has the 'pacification of Algeria' ceased? Is torture less widespread? Have the detention camps disappeared? Have the killings in Cameroon come to an end? No. The 'Community', supported and lauded by our 'heads of Government', is waging a pitiless war against the Algerian people and continues to carry out a desperate struggle against the Cameroonian patriots. There is not the slightest sign of any investment, as everyone knows, even our 'spiritual' leaders and the 'faithful' rulers of Ivory Coast, Niger and Upper Volta. Everyone knows too that in the 'Franco-African Community', the national anthem is French, citizenship is French, the flag is French, and economics, strategy and diplomacy are conceived and controlled by France alone for the benefit of France alone.

Of course we now have an 'A bomb which—with a concern for the African masses which only they themselves can appreciate, and with the enthusiastic agreement of our 'heads of government'—France decided to explode on our soil. It remains for our ministers, always greedy for travel and special allowances, to go all over Africa in their luxury cars to explain to our peasants, who are under-nourished and worn down by taxes, that this bomb (of the type that reduced Hiroshima to ashes), will bring them health, security and happiness.

After the Referendum of 28th September 1958, we were also told that independent Guinea would no longer be anything but chaos and anarchy. But in just one year this State has built more schools than France built in the sixty years it ruled over the territory. With an enthusiasm and discipline unsuspected by the colonialists, the Guinean people has built more than 8,000 kilometres of roads without the State spending a centime; dispensaries and

maternity hospitals are multiplying on Guinean soil; and Guinean men and women are turning prejudices upside down, breaking free of racial shackles and declaring themselves, not Soussous, Fulanis or Malinkas, but simply Guineans and Africans. How different from the Ivory Coast, where 'foreigners' from Dahomey and Togo have no place.

We were assured too that Guinea would be a dictatorship whereas fraternity would thrive in our 'Community'. But it is the government of the Ivory Coast which, in the name of 'the sacred fraternity', throws the dissidents into prison; it is the government of Niger which, with its ultra-submissive Assembly of yes men, dissolves the workers' unions and suppresses the opposition, in the name of 'Democracy, the Republic and the Community'; it is the despised government of Upper Volta which, having subscribed to the principles of dependency and the division of Africa, declares unconstitutional any party or movement in favour of African independence and unity, sets up internment camps for its opponents, imposes emergency restrictions on the press, supports—in the name of democracy!—the feudal overlords and the Union of customary chiefs, and is ready to use the death penalty 'in the case of a coalition of civil servants against the constitution and the law'.

It's not surprising that the 'Community' is cracking and disintegrating already and that it is viewed only with mistrust, disillusion and anxiety even by many of those who preached a yes vote on 28th September 1958. If the most reactionary African governments, under the crozier of Houphouët-Boigny, were able to use corruption, blackmail and terror to install a fundamentally anti-people's governance, ironically dubbed the Entente, the independence of Mali can only be a matter of months away, even if certain rulers are wasting their time discussing the comparative virtues of federation and confederation and express reservations about this independence in order not to displease the French government and not to be called 'secessionists' by General de Gaulle.

What the popular masses of Africa want, what those in Mali are henceforth capable of imposing—and determined to impose—within the framework of their Federation, is the unconditional independence and the unconditional unity of our land. This does not mean either autarky or isolationism and certainly does not exclude links of mutual interest with all the countries of the world, and in particular with France. In the name of the *Mouvement Africain de Liberation Nationale*, I had cause to make the following declaration to the French democrats who came to show their solidarity on the Anti-

colonialist Day held last February 21st in Toulouse: '... to the people of France, whom we consider our allies, to the people of France whose defeat on 28th September was also our defeat, we declare that we are struggling against the same enemy, exploitative capitalism. Our aspirations are the same, and when we Africans have freed our motherland, when we have driven out the imperialists and liquidated their African valets, we will turn towards you and will maintain economic and cultural relations with you. We say this to you, not for purposes of propaganda, not even because those among us who have received a French cultural education remain sentimentally attached to the France of Montaigne, of Descartes, of Voltaire, Rousseau, Schoelcher and Jaures, but quite simply because it is in the national interest of African countries and in the national interest of France.'

A fact that the rulers of Mali do not yet seem to question, but which popular pressure will oblige them to question, is our membership of the 'Free World'. What, tell me, do we have in common with the lynchers of Blacks? What do we have in common with the upholders of apartheid? What do we have in common with those who specialize in torture? What do we have in common with the New York bank moguls, with London's financial barons and France's gangster tycoons, with Germany's steel mandarins? Nothing. Let anyone who fails to understand us listen to the testimony of a young Algerian student, Djamila Bouhired: 'From 9th to 25th April I was interrogated without a break, and tortured, at the military hospital Maillot and in the two villas where the parachutists confined me. For three whole days, the 17th, 18th and 19th April, I was subjected to electric shock torture. Electrodes were placed in my vagina, nostrils, ears and mouth, under my armpits, on my nipples, which still have burns on them, and on my thighs, which still bear the marks of the torture. On the nights of the 17th and 18th April the session lasted from 9 p.m. to 3 a.m., until I fainted and became delirious. Those who tortured me had no right to inflict humiliation on the human being as they did, physically on my person and morally on themselves.'

Who then are these butchers of Djamila? These are the heroes of the 'Free World', the knight-errants of Western civilization, the crusaders of respectable Europe. Where then is the respect for human dignity about which the champions of the capitalist West speak to us with such lyricism? The zealots of the 'Free World' have never felt respect of this kind, and have respect only for oil, coffee, cocoa, bauxite, uranium, gold, groundnuts. A curious spirituality, in fact. A writer of international repute like Albert Camus, respected even by his adversaries and a Nobel prizewinner, declared a little while ago a propos the Algerian crisis, 'Between justice and my mother, I

choose my mother'. Whether it sprang from the depths of the subconscious or was the result of a theatrical debate, this little statement, which has the merit of sincerity, has far-reaching implications: 'Between justice and my country, I choose my country. Between justice and self-interest, I choose self-interest. Between justice and my party, I choose my party. Between the colonized who are robbed and my government, I choose my government. Between the native who is tortured and my army, I choose my army. Between the worker who is exploited and my social class, I choose my class...' Moreover, is not this surrender before the ideal the normal practice of this world, which nevertheless claims to serve the ideal and the spirit?

But for the M.L.N., rejecting the 'Free World' does not mean either slavishly falling on our knees before the socialist camp, or giving allegiance to this camp, or complacent approval of all that goes on there. This position is not a result of wild imaginings but is dictated by the current situation in Africa and by fundamental objectives. It is not by chance that Guinea, the most progressive state in our motherland, while carrying on a fierce struggle against imperialism, keeps itself apart from the two blocs and cooperates actively, in an equal-handed way, with the countries of the East and of the West, whatever their regimes. Just before the Referendum, when the M.L.N. advocated a similar policy, it was interesting to listen to the reaction of our 'Marxist-Leninist' comrades who go about reciting Marx like certain marabouts reciting their Koranic verses, who think they can bring down colonialism with curses and use the weapon of slander to try to destroy anyone who does not share their infantile dogmatism. Our fine 'Marxist-Leninists' excelled themselves in making grotesque insinuations. As we had some Catholics in our ranks, the 'Marxist-Leninists' were triumphant. With gargantuan stupidity, they went around spreading the rumour that the M.L.N. was a Catholic movement whose purpose was to serve the Vatican's interests in Africa. Our good 'Marxist-Leninists' couldn't see that Catholics were members of the M.L.N., which is fundamentally a secular movement, not in their capacity as Catholics, but strictly on political credentials. They couldn't see that only genuine patriots—Catholic or not—could have a place at the heart of the M.L.N. and that anyone approaching us with objectives other than the independence and unity of Africa and the building of a socialist society in Africa would quickly find their way out. But our strange 'Marxist-Leninists' preferred to judge us, not by our manifesto and our actions, but on the basis of *intentions* we didn't even have. Guinea's foreign policy shows us today that our 'Marxist-Leninists' political sense was not exactly dazzling and that they were in fact neither Marxist nor Leninist. General de Gaulle's government was distinctly alert to Marxist ideas than they were, as it was very quick to seize our Manifesto. Though this was certainly

schematic in various parts, and had plenty of scope for improvement, it was dangerous enough for colonialism.

The idea of an anti-imperialist Front is now making great headway in all the States of the 'Community'. All the political and labour organizations are convinced that a Front of this kind has become a necessity for us. The progressive parties and movements are advocating unity of action in relation to precise objectives such as independence, the struggle against atomic explosions in the Sahara, support for workers' demands for improved wages, the struggle against feudalism, etc... Mutual suspicion, an obsession with exaggerating our differences and a frequently abstract approach to problems are all delaying the effective establishment of this Front. So, for example, there are day-long discussions on scientific socialism and African socialism. But when we move on to the purely practical stage of our struggle, we will see that the socialism we build in Africa will necessarily be both African and scientific. I'm simplifying and distorting the argument a bit to show that it's not impossible that the Front to be established soon will lead in the near future to a unitary party, bringing together organizations that are separate and distinct today. Let's remember Jalal-Eddin-er-Roumi's fable: 'A Persian, a Turk, a Roumi and an Arab had received a *dirham* and were arguing about how to spend the money. One wanted to buy *angiur*, another wanted to buy *uzûm*, another *estafil*, and another *anab*. In the end they realized that all four wanted grapes.' We will have many problems to overcome, not all of which have been created by the colonialists, but we will succeed in establishing an anti-imperialist Front to lay siege to the 'Community'. It is a necessary condition for achieving our immediate objective: independence; for achieving the next objectives: African unity and socialism; and for achieving our ultimate objective which the others simply lead up to: the emancipation, happiness and rehabilitation of African men and African women victorious over poverty, ignorance, injustice and humiliation, and their active participation in building a world of peace, fraternity and humanity.

September 1959

Ahmadou Abdoullahi Dicko
Executive Member of the Federation of African
Students in France and Member of the Central
Committee of the M.L.N.

(Translated into English by Wendy Davies.)

Document

The Bellagio Declaration: Overcoming Hunger in the 1990's*

The 1980's have not been kind to the world's poorest and hungriest. Work toward the elimination of hunger pursued with great optimism and energy during the 1960's, has slowed drastically. During the 1980's, economic and environmental conditions in hungry nations have worsened dramatically, and efforts at solving the hunger problem have proven grossly inadequate. Sadly, hunger persists in a world of great abundance.

In November 1989, twenty-three leading policy makers and hunger specialists from around the world met at Bellagio, Italy, to consider this unhappy paradox and chart a course of action. Their conclusion: It is possible, by the end of the 1990's, to halve the amount of hunger in the world.

In most areas of the world, industrialized or not, the poor and hungry do not have natural allies in their governments. During the last decade, new voices of support have emerged slowly—religious organizations, international voluntary agencies, populist groups. Cutting hunger in half is an ambitious goal and will require much greater mobilization of public support.

Toward that end, and on behalf of the Bellagio conference participants, we are pleased to publish the conference report, 'The Bellagio Declaration: Overcoming Hunger in the 1990's'.

The conference convened by Akin Mabogunje of the Nigerian Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure, and by Robert W. Kates of the World Hunger Program at Brown University in the US, included men and women from the United Nations, Africa, Asia, Latin America, Western Europe, USSR and the USA.

Although this is, of course, not the only international meeting to have been held on world hunger, it was one of the most comprehensive, bringing together people representing different countries and different political viewpoints, who were able to reach a consensus.

For further information about the World Hunger Program or the Bellagio Conference, contact Robert W. Kates, Alan Shown Feinsein World Hunger Program, Box 1831, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912, USA. Several books arising from the Program as well as translations of the Bellagio Declaration into French, Spanish and German are now available.

It is possible to end half the world's hunger before the year 2000. We have only imprecise numbers to take measure of the hungry, but those numbers tell us that: (1) a billion people live in households too poor to obtain the food they need for work; (2) half of those are too poor even to obtain the food they need to maintain activity; (3) one child in six is born underweight and one in three is underweight by age 5; and

* The Bellagio Declaration was produced and adopted by a group of 23 planners, practitioners, opinion leaders and scientists meeting at the Rockefeller Foundation Study and Conference Center in Bellagio, Italy, on November 13-16, 1989. Participants came from 14 countries, both north and south. They are affiliated with 9 national or international agencies, 8 advocacy and grassroots organizations and 5 universities and research institutes, but participated as individuals sharing their expertise and concern. The Declaration reflects the content of the original background document for the meeting and the views expressed in different rounds of discussion during the conference. It represents the consensus emerging at the meeting but not necessarily the individual views of each participant. A list of all participants is attached.

(4) hundreds of millions of people suffer anaemia, goiter, and impaired sight from diets with too little iron, iodine or vitamin A. In a world of potential food plenty, we have collectively failed more than one billion of our people.

Hunger wears many faces. It may be acute or chronic, visible or hidden, food or disease related, but it is typically rooted in poverty and in the economic and social processes that perpetuate it. The elimination of hunger, therefore, is a formidable and long-term undertaking. Recognizing this, we still believe that reducing hunger by half in the 1990's is a realistic objective for the world. We can act meaningfully to end hunger in the short run without losing sight of the continuing need in the long run to address its basic causes.

The decade now ending has been described as 'the lost 80's', a time when efforts to overcome hunger have been grossly inadequate in the face of deteriorating economic conditions in Africa and Latin America, persistent hunger in South Asia, and increased incidences of hunger in wealthy countries. Overall, the 1980's has been a period of growing realization that most development efforts have failed the hungry and poor in the Third World and that current uses of natural resources are unsustainable. Less visible, but more encouraging trends in the 80's include a fresh understanding of the origins and causes of hunger, lessons learned from recent attempts to improve nutrition, the evolution of a worldwide logistical system to provide emergency food aid, rapid progress against childhood and nutritional diseases, and the maturation of grassroots movements and development groups.

As we turn into the 1990's the world is in great ferment. Fears of imminent worldwide economic collapse have abated. Peace and efforts for peace are emerging in all regions of the world. In many countries, both industrialized and Third World, a wave of democratization, participation, and pluralism is evident. On the other hand, unequal trade relations between the North and the South, growing and already heavy debt burdens, environmental degradation, and continued rapid population growth make life miserable and particularly difficult for poor people in Third World countries.

It is against this background of new opportunity and persistent problems that organizations—governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental—concerned with hunger have begun to identify necessary directions for the 1990's and to propose new initiatives for public action. Specifically, the Bellagio Declaration proposes four achievable goals for the 1990's.

Achievable goals

We believe that it is possible and imperative in the 1990's (1) to eliminate deaths from famine, (2) to end hunger in half of the poorest households, (3) to reduce by half malnutrition in mothers and small children, and (4) to eradicate iodine and vitamin

A deficiencies. Together, they comprise a comprehensive yet still practical program that can end half of world hunger in the 1990's.

These goals are achievable because they build on the best experiences with programs and policies for overcoming world hunger. The most promising ones are those that empower people to assess their condition and to act on their own behalf, provide short-term hunger relief while addressing deeply-rooted causes, and that can be sustained over long term.

1. Eliminate famine deaths

An attainable target by the year 2000 is the virtual elimination of deaths due to famine among the 15 to 35 million people at risk of famine in any year through improvement of early warning and response systems and international efforts to provide safe passage of food in zones of armed conflict.

Many of the tools needed to prevent deaths due to famine are already in place. Efforts to cope with drought, flood, war, and famine in the 1980's have led to major improvements in the global system for providing emergency food aid. Some Third World countries have created early-response mechanisms to take advantage of early warnings. Continued effort must be made to improve these programs by taking into account local indicators of increased vulnerability among groups at particular risk.

Another achievement growing out of experience with the famines of the 1980's is the widespread awareness of the need for relating short-term relief measures to longer term development objectives. Although emergency food aid often is the most critical intervention, agencies and organizations engaged in famine relief now know that they need to couple it with measures to reduce dependency on such aid and to promote self-reliance.

The major obstacle to eliminating famine remains the destruction or interdiction of civilian food supplies in zones of armed conflict. The rudiments for international protection of civilian rights to food exist in international law, most specifically in the 1977 protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 that prohibit starvation of civilians as a means of combat. More recently, there is renewed interest in an international or regional convention for the sanctity of civilian food supplies and the safe passage of emergency food relief. Such a covenant could bind nations to provide safe passage and might permit convoy by United Nations peace-keeping forces within their national territory.

2. End hunger in one half of the poorest households

Also attainable is the goal of augmenting purchasing power and food production levels so as to enable half the hungry people in the world to buy or grow enough to eat.

For many poor farmers in the Third World, a key need is maintaining access to the natural resource base and the inputs needed for cultivating, herding, or fishing in the face of growing population and increased competition for land. Increasingly, poor

households have had to cope with the deterioration of their resources, the loss of crucial access to common resources, and restriction to all but the most ecologically marginal land. The task of rehabilitating degraded ecosystems and restoring to the most vulnerable groups their access and control of productive resources of land, forest, and water must be accelerated. A variety of sustainable agricultural and forestry techniques with demonstrated ability to sustain productivity, provide fuelwood, limit soil erosion, and increase food and income can also be applied.

Measures to increase small farm agricultural production and to create new income and work activities could end hunger for a third to a half of roughly 450 million people who now live in rural households too poor to minimally feed themselves. Programs that provide wage and food income in return for labour to construct needed agricultural infrastructure and to restore degraded resources show particular promise. They reduce poverty in short run through direct supplementation of incomes and in the long run through sustained increases in agricultural productivity and income. Programs that have provided self-sustaining sources of credit to start small business or produce local products and services, especially for women, have also proven quite effective in many countries.

Food-security programs, given targeting and effective application, could by the end of the decade end hunger for half or more of the 150 million people in urban households too poor to minimally feed themselves in present circumstances. There is widespread agreement that untargeted food assistance, carried out by means of price control, overvalued exchange rates, import controls, or cash subsidies is ineffective or cannot be sustained because of its high costs. Yet ample experience with food-security programs demonstrates that careful targeting can be accomplished by subsidizing foods that are consumed primarily by the poor and by distributing food and coupons in poor neighbourhoods and to vulnerable groups such as mothers and children. The use of existing marketing networks to distribute food can often lower costs and improve participation. Community-organized mass feeding programs are also effective, low-cost ways to target and distribute food.

3. Reduce by half malnutrition among women and children

Women of reproductive age and children under five years of age are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition. Although many of the measures listed above will help improve their situation in the decade to come, special measures are still needed to reduce their special vulnerabilities. Sustained breastfeeding, expanded supplemental feeding, and growth monitoring, in combination with limiting the effects of childhood illness, could reduce by half the common forms of childhood wasting and stunting. The prevalence of breastfeeding is stable or even increasing in many Third World countries, perhaps assisted by continuing efforts to encourage and maintain it. Innovative programs that combine monitoring of child growth through regular weighing to detect wasting with supplement feeding hold promise to address the weight loss of children with recurrent bouts of illness and the difficult weaning transition from breast to the adult diet.

Many such initiatives for the benefit of children place an increased burden on already overworked mothers, even though they may be somewhat compensated by the reduced care required of healthy children. Community-based programs that include child-care and other supports can lessen this burden while enhancing mothers' efforts. Reducing by at least half through iron supplements the nutritional anaemia endemic in women of reproductive age can further strengthen mothers. Continued promotion of improved birth spacing will benefit both children and mothers.

4. Eradicate iodine and vitamin A deficiencies

Through the use of current techniques, most of the 190 million cases of goiter could be eradicated and the 280 million children at risk of vitamin A deficiency protected by the end of the century. Selected regions and countries have made major progress in eliminating iodine deficiency disorders—marked by goiter, mental impairment, and, in the extreme, cretinism—and the visual impairment of vitamin A deficiency diseases. For goiter, most countries can provide iodized salt to most areas endemic with the disease and injections of iodized oil for inhabitants of more remote mountain and desert regions. For vitamin A deficiency, a capsule taken two or three times a year can protect a child throughout the critical ages of one to four years. Evidence is also increasing for wide-ranging health benefits beyond eye protection from vitamin A therapy.

Strategies and resources

Any strategy to overcome hunger in the 1990's must be conceived and implemented in full awareness of the array of fundamental changes and trends that will characterize the coming decade and shape the context in which hunger persists. Indeed, if we fail to relate efforts to end hunger to these broader forces—which represent both obstacles and opportunities—short-term gains may well be swamped by long-term increases in hunger.

The outstanding situation that must be recognized as we move into the 1990's is the inequitable economic relationship between the North and the South, which withdraws net capital from the South, diverts agriculture in Third World countries from producing food to meet local needs, creates contentious food trade barriers, underprices food commodities, and often encourages capital investment that undermines rather than advances sustainable uses of agriculture and resources.

No less challenging than the worldwide economic picture is the precarious state of the global environment. Deforestation, desertification, soil erosion, water shortage and salinization, chemical contamination, and global warming will adversely affect the sustainable food production capacity of the planet. But embedded in this threat is also an opportunity. Worldwide attention, from heads of state to the general public, is now strongly focused on the endangered planet. We who combat hunger must put a human face on the environmental issue: unless we restore and maintain viable ecosystems and ecological cycles, we will increasingly threaten our ability to feed hu-

manity. Opponents of hunger must embrace their environmentalist allies in a common cause.

Exacerbating the environment/hunger problem is the continued growth of the world's population. During the 1990's, the world will need to feed another billion mouths, most living in the very countries where the ability to curb hunger is already severely strained. Family planning programs that have slowed the overall rate of population growth in the world must persist and expand with international support to reduce the vulnerability of the poor to hunger and famine.

A particularly welcome evolution has been the rapid chain of events in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. This has reduced tension between the East and the West and opens up new opportunities for trade and investments. These opportunities for cooperation on a global scale should be used to strengthen North-South cooperation as well. For instance, a social compact might be agreed upon whereby funds that become available through reduction of East-West arms expenditures would be used to assist both Eastern Europe and the South.

From the perspective of these anticipated global trends, what then are the strategies to overcome hunger that will be most effective?

Particularly important is the creation of new opportunities for the hungry themselves, together with their leaders, advocates, mass movements, and local organizations and resources. In this context, it is especially important to empower women who grow most of the Third World's food and feed its families. More needs to be known about the full development potential of the wide range of non-governmental organizations, especially for the multiplication and aggregation of grassroots initiatives and the advocacy of needs and interests of people who normally find no ways of expressing their demands through formal government channels. But much more needs to be done even by well-intentioned governments and aid agencies to incorporate into their modes of operation greater sensitivity to modes of participation that enable people to act on their own behalf.

Although many governments in Third World countries are under severe financial pressure and often lack capacity to implement extensive programs, they must play a growing role in a renewed effort to combat hunger. Decisions to decentralize responsibility to lower echelons of administration and local government institutions or to use the distributional capacity of the market that gained momentum in the 1980's must continue. Such local agencies can play a major role in developing and restoring necessary rural infrastructure and services. To make these investments worthwhile, however, governments must also take important steps toward the creation of an enabling environment in which citizens and their organizations can make more effective contributions to overcoming hunger.

Finally, any achievable reduction in hunger in the 1990's will require substantial new financial resources above and beyond the maintenance of current levels of donor

and national support. The costs of the achievable goals range from a high of \$25 per person to provide famine relief or to build rural infrastructure through food-for-work programs to 57c per person to provide the vitamin A and iodine supplementation needed to prevent blindness and goiter. Much of these costs are already partly met in current national and international expenditures. Thus, a realistic program to combat hunger in the 1990's might require US\$ 5 to 10 billion per year in new or re-allocated funds.

The most common source proposed for additional resources is a substantial reduction in the annual military expenditures, currently nearly US\$ 1 trillion worldwide, as great power rivalry and conflict diminish and serious efforts are made to resolve regional disputes. A reduction of one per cent in these annual expenditures could more than fund a comprehensive program to overcome hunger in the 1990's. Additional food aid, if properly used, can not only meet emergency needs in extreme deficit situations, but when carefully marketed, can provide new sources of funds for local initiatives. Other new sources of funds could include the 'swapping' of actions against hunger in exchange for outstanding debts, the redirection of existing development expenditures by identifying poor people rather than poor countries as the relevant target of interventions, and the linking of efforts to overcome hunger with those to improve health care, enhance poor people's access to productive resources, and promote sustainable environmental development.

Although the objectives of the program to end half the world's hunger before the year 2000 are global, strategic emphasis will differ between regions and countries. In sub-Saharan Africa priority may be given to strengthening early-response systems to famine, including exploration of an accord, sanctioned by the Organization of African Unity, on safe passage for relief supplies; targeted support for increased production by the poor, including efforts to control pests that significantly reduce harvests and stored food; and efforts to break the disease-undernutrition nexus. In Asia, where the food problem is often less a matter of production than redistribution, priority may be given to restoring and increasing access and control by the poor of necessary resources and to encouraging development strategies that are socially just and environmentally sustainable. In Latin America priority may be given to alleviating the disproportionate share of the debt burden that is currently carried by wage earners and the self-employed in the informal sector; reforming food systems so that they better meet the needs of vulnerable groups of women, urban poor, indigenous populations, and small farm households; and improving the health and nutrition infrastructure to enable governments and other organizations to meet the targets for mothers and children and for the major nutritional deficiency diseases.

Call for action

An ambitious program to attack hunger in the 1990's requires most of all the mobilization of public support for this cause both in industrialized and Third World countries. In most of these, the hungry and the poor do not have natural allies in their governments. Their needs are considered and their voices heard only to the extent that

they are mobilized into their own organizations or that their cause is adopted by others. The last decade has witnessed a slow emergence of new public voices for the hungry and impoverished in rich countries based in churches, development organizations, and populist groups. Such groups have mobilized constituencies for the hungry, utilized the mass media, and developed long-term relationships with governments wherever appropriate. In Third World countries, opportunities for influence have been different. Mass media and lobbying efforts have been less important than efforts by religious and political organizations. These emerging voices need to be strengthened, particularly in countries where the voices of the hungry are faint.

Faced with potentially competitive concerns, the call for ending hunger must be strengthened. But the clarity of the message needs to be strengthened as well, reminding constituencies of the enormity of the need, creating alternatives between the acceptance of hunger as always with us and the postponement of action until the world can be set fully right, and weighing in with promise on the fine balance between hope and despair. Pragmatic as well as altruistic arguments need to be used. The billion hungry people are effectively outside of markets for anything but the lowest valued foodstuffs. It is in the long-term interests of economies that live by trade to help those households move beyond the threshold of hunger. By placing political leaders at all levels under constructive pressure to consider overcoming hunger as both an achievable goal and an inescapable concern of the 1990's, individuals and organizations can make a lasting contribution toward the emergence of a new political vision and a renewal of social energy to ensure places at the table for the hungry of the world.

For the first time in human history, the end of famine is achievable. The worst forms of hunger in both rural and urban areas can be halved. Most nations, even poor ones, could provide for the minimum nutritional needs of mothers and children. Goiter can be relegated to a glandular disorder of the few rather than the iodine-starvation of the many. Blindness can be prevented in the 42 million children with vitamin A deficiency. A focused attack on these four faces of hunger—drawing on new resources and combining the better and best of efforts that have worked well for the poor—can end half the world's hunger over the next decade.

Participants

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