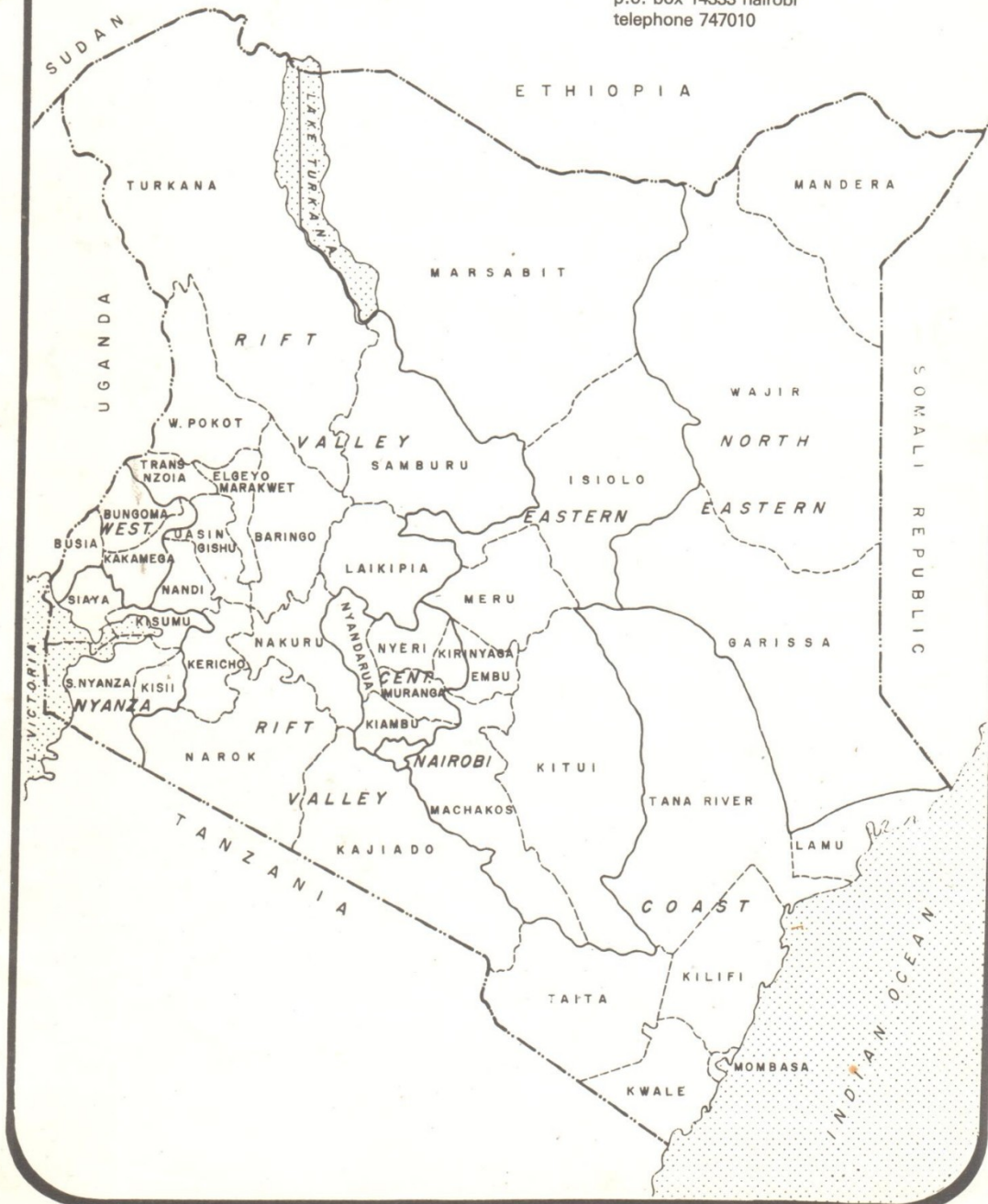


EDITORIAL MANAGEMENT AND FREEDOM OF  
THE PRESS: THE KENYAN CASE



**mutiso consultants ltd.**  
development management  
p.o. box 14333 nairobi  
telephone 747010



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Prepared by Professor G.C.M. Mutiso for the  
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## INTRODUCTION

Most of the critics of Newspapering in the Third World to some extent make criticisms of the Press which are not too realistic either in terms of the growth of Newspapering in the Western World or in terms of even the structural problems which more often than not are the causes of the editorial management problems of these papers. These managerial problems lead to the newspapers becoming less effective instruments of participating in the key debates in the societies they exist in thereby denying the very freedom sought so much by others for them.

The rest of this paper will try to argue the case of the Newspapers in the Kenyan situation from this framework. It is not an attempt to give the history of newspapering in the country but rather a conceptual interpretation.

The paper thus poses the question: What becomes freedom of the press where the structure of management leads to non-journalistic administrators to control editorial matters, where editorial managers cannot agree on the SOCIETAL role of the Newspapers, where the profession is underpaid and underqualified relative to other professions and furthermore where journalistic linkages are to particular politicians rather than to a view of the national political system?

What is freedom of the press if it is not to help the nation find itself culturally, economically and politically? What is freedom if these channels of communication do not move individuals from the village view to a view of the nation? There can only be meaningful Freedom of the Press in the Third World if the press evolves a management structure which is internally efficient and favours editorial innovation. This will allow editorial managers to edit the papers in the redefinition of these nations. Only then will papers help the nation rediscover the uses of their culture, and universal science, for development. This in turn to a large extent depends on the editorial managers being at the cutting edge of knowledge about their societies and more significantly

going out of their way to recruit the best brains available in the country. It is only then that journalists would synthesise the many strands of knowledge, attitudes and conflicts in the wider society and re-present them to the nations to use as knowledge for creating itself.

Unfortunately this may not turn out to be easy in the Kenyan case since the structure of management, its social origins and its dependence on the romanticised model of what they think is and has always been freedom of the press in the West is not possible in underdevelopment. Besides, the model of freedom of the press unshackled by the state and factional interests in the West grew to argue for specific interests. These more often than not were not national. In fact some would argue that a national press i.e. a press trying to address itself to national issues is a very recent phenomena in the West. Where a national press exists and is particularly dominated by media chains there are others who would argue this is not to the interest of the nation and is a denial of the freedom of the press.

There is also the fact that readers in the Kenyan situation tend to take and look to the newspapers not for just news but knowledge. Perhaps the adage, bandied around as a joke, that recently literate peoples do take the printed word as gospel truth is real. Thus the menu served by editorial managers to the nation should be concerned about the fact that it will be believed more and looked at for source of knowledge than such offerings will be taken seriously by society in the West.

To the extent that a society like Kenya needs knowledge for education, agriculture, health, and all other activities going on in it, must be one of the duties of the newspapers to disseminate. Often one finds other agencies in society trying to create communication channels (rural newspapers - departmental handouts, radio talks, etc.) to fill the gap left by the newspapers.



What ultimately gets into newspaper print has to be sanctioned by the editorial managers. That is why we focus on them as the gatekeepers of the profession and as the key determinants of what news and knowledge many offered to the nation. So much of the literature on the press in the Third World has concentrated on the notions of abstract freedom as it has historically evolved in the West. They essentially mean lack of state ownership without paying attention to any of the above as casual factors in the under-development of the press. At the same time a lot of the debates on the domination of the Third World Press by the Western press and external ownership have ignored the basic problems of the inherited management structures and the management abilities of the Third World press - ability to assess knowledge desirable in those countries and its propagation in the context of news.

The recent UNESCO debate about the role of the state in media as denial of freedom is to some extent misplaced in its structure since to date at least in the Kenyan case, the bulk of the print media is in private hands even though the party has started both English and Swahili dailies. Their circulation to date does not threaten the foreign owned papers, neither does it have as much opinion making influence as it was feared on the outset.

#### The Newspapers

Newspapers were created in Kenya simultaneously with the colonisation process around the turn of the century. By the time the British colonial state began to argue that settlers should be introduced to the country to build the economic base of the country there were papers run by the commercial interests. These ultimately became the major organs of the settler colonial society. Their descendants exist today as the Standard Group of Newspapers which are owned by the Lonrho Group, a British multinational with extensive holdings in motorcars, farming, mining, oil and consulting on the continent.

This group publishes Daily Standard, Sunday Standard and between 1939 and 1979 it also published Baraza - a Swahili daily. Currently the highest levels of management of this Group in Kenya have only one African. It is said that the only concern by the multinational is that their papers exist to support the other operations in the country. This in the Kenyan case seems to be backed by the fact that during the Kenyatta years, a member of his extended family had risen to become the Group Chairman. Soon after Kenyatta's death in 1978, not only was he dropped but significant number of executives in the group companies supposedly allied with him were dropped.

There has been other papers which throughout the colonial period made some contribution in terms of specific communities. These were for the assorted racial groups and even small regional settler communities. Since we are concerned about the later part of the post independence press, they are of limited consequence and we shall leave them out of the subsequent discussion as none exist now.

In terms of the existing newspapers the Aga Khan papers which were started in the early sixties are the most important in terms of circulation. The then young Aga Khan initially bought the Swahili Taifa. He later started Daily Nation and Sunday Nation.

The young Aga Khan argued that the colonialist press was not addressing itself to the then emergent Kenyan nationalism. Over time these newspapers became important sources to the nationalism since they reported it sympathetically when the settler Standard Group continued defending the status quo, particularly as it was seen by the settlers and not even the colonialist state.

It is interesting that the first sympathetic reporting of the struggle of the African politicians took place within the pages of the Swahili Taifa. Although the Swahili Baraza had ostensibly been established in 1939 to cater to African readership, it continued hewing the settler line of reporting right to independence in 1963.

We have not had major African owned press in the country until Hillary Ngweni started his papers. The Nairobi Times, incorporating The Financial Times, was launched in October 1977 as a weekly broadsheet. It only circulated in the capital city, Nairobi. It was such a commercial flop that it did recess in December 1981 and resumed as a tabloid in June 1982 and continued until March 1983 when it was bought by the ruling party, KANU (Kenya African National Union). The indigenous press has as yet to evolve to become a contender for mass circulation and influence inspite of attempts by Hillary Ngweni to build a totally Kenyan owned press. This is not to say that his Weekly Review, a news magazine, has not made a major contribution to the development of the Kenya press. In fact one would argue that its interpretive journalism has forced the national elite at times to think. Yet news magazines reach so very few in Kenya.

The buying of the Nairobi Times and its conversion into the Kenya Times by the ruling party KANU (Kenya African National Union) did introduce into the country for the first time a major party paper. In some respects, one year is too soon to know what the impact of this development is going to be on the overall development of the press in the country. Its circulation does not seem to threaten the other newspapers. The fact that it is seen as a 'government' newspaper, is a double edged sword. Some look to it for guidance on what they imagine as the state position on some news. Others do see in it a propaganda sheet and thus not to be relied on for news. It is definitely beginning to lead the other papers in local features.

The world of magazines has always provided many births and deaths. However, the most important news magazine in the Kenyan market now is the Weekly Review. In terms of analysis and breaking key national issues, it is clearly the leader. This can be explained by the fantastic commitment of the owner who has the intellectual and journalistic capacity to closely manage the editorial content of this superb product.



### Newspaper Management in Kenya

Looking at the two multinational groups of newspapers over the past twenty years, it is possible to come up with derived models of their overall management structure. Understanding these is useful in terms of the subsequent arguments about the failures of the papers to develop effective and qualified editorial managers.

Chart 1\* shows the situation as it was at the beginning of the sixties. At that time all the staff who were in any position which could be conceived as managerial were expatriates. The most important aspect of the chart is that there was never crossing of boundaries from those who ran what can be considered business/administrative aspects of the newspaper into editorial matters. This was so even though the managing directors of the newspaper production companies and those of the local holding companies were essentially former newspaper editors who had moved up the corporate structure. They had respect for the editorial department which they more often than not had run before.

It was then possible that when corporate conflicts arose, they sided with their former colleagues. It is important to note that the editor-in-chief was the real boss of the editorial department and he sat on the boards of the local newspaper production company and the local holdings company. He thus was able to represent editorial department interests at all significant decision making levels locally. Where there were conflicts he could even appeal to the multinational board and the owner.

This situation began to change as soon as expatriates began to disengage from the most publicly visible role of the running of the paper as editor-in-chief. This is shown in Chart 2. With Africanisation of that post it began to lose its preponderant role in the corporate structure. Even more important is the breaking of the barrier between the non-editorial and the editorial departments. All of a sudden the money boys and the advertisers and the production boys began to make decisions which had content and product impact on matters which were essentially editorial.

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\*see page 25



As long as some of the managing directors of the newspaper production company were ex-editors-in-chief, there were not serious problems since they tolerated their colleagues who more often than not, they had personally recruited. However, this began to change immediately when strong leadership of local editors-in-chief challenged some issues in the corporate structure. Interestingly enough, all editors-in-chief of the two groups have left on these kinds of issues. The situation got more pathetic when at the levels of the managing directors of the local production companies were Africanised. The locals who moved into those positions were essentially non-journalists recruited to enter into the profession on very high entry points. They saw their main challenge as to tame the editorial departments which initially they did not have experience with. It defied their straight laced management notions. They fought the editors-in-chief for influence at the newspaper production board and at the local holding company level. It is no wonder that by late seventies an editor-in-chief was appointed to one company without being a member of any of these key boards. He used to wait in the corridors to be summoned.

One should also note that as long as the multinationals were subjected to pressure for Africanising they also did a good window-dressing job at local holding and newspaper producing company levels. They appointed non executive Chairmen of the boards and kept expatriates as managing directors of the holding companies. In many cases the real power was with them since so many of the Chairmen did not come from journalistic backgrounds. Chairmen were there to arrange corporate favours with the state and the powerful. They thus became intruders into the purely journalistic process of responding to either state power or personal influence. Where they bungled on the relations with the state they have got the papers into serious problems and of course their patrons.

The point is simply that as Chairmen are supposed to be the ones watching the political temperatures, where editorial departments develop competing interpretations of reality and use it in coverage there is conflict generated between the two levels. The existence of these Chairmen also leads to the lack of editorial department being attuned to the political nuances since at times they see it as a job of the corporate high-ups. Since the job of a Chairman is so defined, the low level editorial people learn to keep their mouths shut since so many have been burned by getting involved on bosses concerns.

Chart 3 shows the model obtaining in the eighties and in this case it is not just applicable to the two multinational groups but also to the KANU papers, although they only have one company with directors appointed by KANU.

The business side of the papers has come of age. The real powers are the non-editorial people. The managing directors of the news production companies have such intrusions into the editorial departments that more often than not, they make editorial decisions. It is significant that other than at the Standard, the very post of Editor-in-Chief has been abolished. But even there, the post has existed at the beginning of this decade. The managing directors who are not journalists, have become so powerful as to abolish the idea of an editor-in-chief. They have an anomolous rank called group managing editor.

The group managing editor is not just a rose by any other name. He is for all practical purposes under the managing director. He does not have automatic powers over the managing editors and the lower editorial staff. They can and indeed are being directed by the managing directors and the other people in the non editorial sides of the papers.

These structural arrangements are of greatest essence in answering freedom of the press to do what? As we have shown, structurally editorial decisions are made by people in non-editorial departments.

The fact that budgets for the editorial departments are controlled by others and personnel is outside the purview of editorial managers means that they have very little flexibility to produce a good product, to plan training, to do meaningful forward planning and indeed to allow the profession to grow.

The evolved structures should be compared with the model shown in Chart 4 which essentially combines some of the many models found in the organisation of American newspapers. Clearly in the American situation the basic business of papers is integrated into the functions of editorial department. Some would argue that editorial departments dominate. But, after all, is that not really the reason for existence of newspapers even if one looks at it from a money making point of view? Which newspaper with irrelevant editorial product for the community it serves will even attract the advertising to make profits?

In the balance of this paper we shall go into the details of developments in the editorial departments because it is there that the business of content takes place.

It is important though to note that when we talk of editorial management in the rest of the paper we mean editors who in the final analysis are the ones who make the managerial decisions which leads to producing a paper daily. It is not usual for many people to think of editorial decisions as managerial. This though should be patently clear to all and sundry since all the editors decide on coverage, who does it, where the various sections of the paper are to concentrate in and finally and perhaps most important edit the paper. All these are part and parcel of the allocation of time, monetary and personnel resources.

In subsequent parts of the paper the editorial management levels of editor-in-chief and the managing editors are treated as level 1 of editorial management. Assistant managing editors, chief sub-editors and news editors are level 2 of editorial management and features, sports, business and foreign editors are level 3, lowest level of editorial management. All below that are reporters or writers usually with little managerial work.



A note on the perennial struggle between the chief sub-editors and the news editor is worth expanding on. When the papers were run totally by expatriates it appeared that the more important of the posts was the news editor, who often moved up to a slot as a managing editor. But as they left and as a fantastic shortage of sub-editors became apparent when work permits for them were refused by the state, it appeared to those who were running the papers that the solution lay along centralising the editing function on one desk and thus the post of chief sub-editor grew tremendously. In fact some would argue that since the seventies when some very strong individuals occupied these posts the position of the news editor was marginalised.

#### Sources of Editorial Managers

It is important to review the sources of editorial management of newspapers. Initially, few blacks were allowed to get into the media. In fact it is not until the forties that some who were almost illiterate did get recruited to menial jobs in the press world. The editors by the nature of the colonial order were whites. So were the reporters and writers. Even for Baraza the Africans were only icing on the cake. For the Standard Group, the stories published in Baraza were no more than translations of the stories from the English paper and then a little bit of colour thrown in by officials from the native affairs department. Specifically during the Mau Mau period a lot of counter-insurgency propaganda was pumped through Baraza. This period incidentally saw a lot of local language papers full of propaganda circulated by the colonial state.

The so called African journalists in Baraza were no more than translators. They did not get trained in those aspects of journalism which need initiative and creativity. No effort was made to teach them their emergent nation. No tradition of formal training and then conversion into journalism evolved in this context.

The key editorial managers during all of the colonial period were Europeans for the Standard Group. Even when the Aga Khan newspapers got going the first editorial managers were Europeans. It was not till mid-sixties that the first African editor-in-chief was appointed.



Most editorial managers below him were non-African. The Standard did not get an African editor-in-chief until the seventies.

As independence came, the pool for recruiting future editorial managers therefore was the former inkboys, teaboy and others who had been in menial positions.

This is in sharp contrast to the traditions of West Africa where for years before independence they had qualified journalists who had risen to all levels of editorial management as well as general business and administration of the papers.

The other salient point about the sources of editorial management problems in the newspapers has to do with the few numbers of individuals who have been in the top positions and their oscillations among the papers. It is interesting that of the five locals who have risen to be editors-in-chief since mid sixties three have worked for the two main groups. They take their conflicts and personal rivalries to the extreme when the issue is cracking that exclusive club. It is a club which opens all social, political and business doors in the country. It is therefore jealously guarded.

The first African editor-in-chief of a local newspaper was Hillary Ngweno, a physicist trained at Harvard, who was picked since Nation Newspapers wanted to have a local undoubtedly reaching to pressure of the times. He does not discuss why he left Nation, but it is clear from those Europeans who had run the paper and had moved on to the higher levels of the Aga Khan operations did not particularly fancy his local orientation. He argues in his publications that foreign ownership strongly limits editorial freedom. The second editor-in-chief for the Nation Group was George Githii. He had come to the paper from being personal secretary to Jomo Kenyatta, then President of the Republic. He had read politics, economics and psychology in Oxford. He again quit Nation Newspapers on conflicts with those who had run the paper before him, who argued he was politically partisan. Others argue he resisted the diminution of the power of

editor-in-chief. He ultimately ended up in the same position in the Standard Group after the demise of Kenyatta. Again he left because one national faction felt he was partisan. Henry Gathingira, the current editor-in-chief of the Standard has also worked with Nation Newspapers. Peter Mwaura, who was editor-in-chief of the Nation Newspapers until 1983, had earlier quit the paper over internal conflicts with Githii, gone to lecture at the University and wrote for the Standard for years before doubling back to the Nation as editorial boss. He left under pressure from both within the company and the political arena. Joe Rodrigues, who had worked for years in Nation before becoming editor-in-chief, had to leave under similar circumstances. Since 1983, there seems to be a fashion that papers should not have an editor-in-chief as the Nation Group and the KANU papers have none. Some argue this fashion is based on the desire of the paper administrators to actually run the editorial departments directly.

Two points are worth making about these highest posts of editorial management. The first and perhaps most significant one is that the owners never really identified and groomed people within the profession to ultimately take up these positions or else there would not have been this incestuous movements. Two reasons explain this. First the foreign owners seem to have believed they could always bring in expatriates to fill the posts. Of course by mid sixties this became untenable as the wider society correctly argued, if all national positions could be Africanised, there could not be a case for allowing expatriates to continue being editors-in-chief. Ironically, Joe Rodrigues, who from the technical production point of view was the most qualified, had to run the Nation Group editorial department for years without being confirmed to the post. He is not an African.

None of the editors-in-chief who were in position in the decade of the sixties and seventies made systematic attempts to recruit more academically qualified and therefore potential successors under them. The few graduates who ventured into the profession were relegated to some obscure functions. When some rose to significant editorial management positions usually on the basis of having trained and worked as journalists outside Kenya, were either frustrated into leaving or fired. Some left the profession into other jobs which offered them

positive career opportunities commensurate with their age cohorts. Others went into public relations firms. Others into state media and bureaucratic institutions. Some, by the decade of the 80's are doubling back into journalism by starting a string of specialised magazines. Some have found meaningful editorial management work in the newly started KANU papers.

It would be forgivable if this is all these senior editorial managers did. Everytime they changed from one group to another, they concentrated on raiding their cronies from the paper they had left. This repeatedly disturbed the editorial management of all papers since it created a scramble at the lower levels of management as cliques tried to solidify their positions. Of course it was the old pool who were doing the scrambling as they were usually supported by the editorial top managers. These manoeuvres have left such bitterness if a recent talk at the Press Club by a very competent journalist who then was a middle level manager and was treated shabbily is anything to go by. The point one is trying to make is simply that there was never systematic recruitment training of people in the profession to set up the continuous upgrading system of professionalism which would allow for the generation of editorial management internally.

There has not been systematic attempts to recruit better trained editorial people from outside the profession either. Low education level individuals were continually recruited into the profession during the sixties and seventies inspite of the fact that there were better trained people in the market. One suspects that it was either a deliberate policy of the owners of orientation of the local top managers since journalism as a profession had in the forties and fifties attracted some of the most aggressive nationalists and thus there was not any obvious low status attached to it. Of course some of these were in the marginal local papers, like Paul Ngei, Jesse Kariuki and even Jomo Kenyatta claimed to have been journalists and their appeal to other younger men must have been substantial.



Of course if the profession wanted to compete for the talent which was being competed for by the emergent national institutions after independence, they could have done so and thus raise the social status of journalists. Rather than do this they held salaries down, as the Kenya Union of Journalists has repeatedly pointed out, relative to other professions. Similarly, they did not attempt to get the professions higher academic training institution in the country. It is interesting that when the Faculty of Arts, at the University of Nairobi insisted in mid seventies that the School of Journalism, which was only taking four high school graduates and at times even lower, should only take post BA students, the newspapers who were represented in the management board of the School of Journalism resisted. They argued, supposedly in the tradition of British Journalism, that the profession did not need to take on graduates specialists. Ironically these first post-graduate journalists are making their mark in Levels 2 and 3 of editorial management of the papers. The argument for non-academic journalists (rather subject specialists), only served the low education level people who by the middle seventies had begun to creep up the management ladder. Many of them were in Level 1 of editorial management.

#### Struggle over Coverage of Culture

Those who have been paying attention to the Third World media have no doubt noted that in the decade of the seventies when the pressure for newspapering in the West was for less politics and more leisure and living - purely as a result of the depoliticisation of those societies - the thrust has been for more activist newspapers which are not only muckrakers in the original American sense, but also as part and parcel of the solidification of the nations they are part and parcel of.

Carl Deutsch and his students have over a long time pressed into America social science the role of communication in development. Simply put, it is argued that one cannot create an effective nation unless one creates those channels which tie the nation together. To some extent, in the Third World, those who argue that the media ought



to be nationalistic, push this argument with a variation. The papers are supposed to be the agents of consciously focusing the nations thinking into itself. Of course once one says thinking, one is talking of a different kind of newspapers from their Western counterpart. One is saying one consciously edits a national paper for desirable national knowledge. This includes culture, economics and politics, in short development. But it must be development which is not sectionalist or, as was the tradition of the newspapers of the West, speaking for a section of society as, for example, the Los Angeles Times spoke for the property developers of California at the expense of labour and the water rights of the adjoining states for years. The argument is simply based on the reality that to be sectionalist or a special interest mouthpiece is to encourage the further fragmentation of these nations. It is in this sense that to even continue the domination of those papers by the externally generated cultural and consumption patterns is to take part in creating the slow death of these fragile nations.

Variations of some of the above arguments began to intrude into the editing of Nation and Standard Newspapers towards the end of the seventies. They were made by some people who were in Levels 2 and 3. They were important in terms of daily operations of the paper. Similarly, many journalists and writers in the newsroom argued the same position. The participants did not always agree on content and stylistics, but they were united on the point that the papers must report the national debates and also physically cover the nation.

The struggle in the focus of the papers was more clearly marked on two issues. The recruitment of graduates and the direction of features department. On recruitment there was the clear preference by those at Level 1 of getting those who had lower educational levels and job experience and by those at Levels 2 and 3 of getting recent University graduates who were specialists in some areas and not necessarily trained journalists. Where some were specialists and trained, they were clearly favoured by those in Levels 2 and 3.

When I joined the Nation Newspapers as an assistant managing editor, Daily Nation, late 1978, the editor-in-chief then was Joe Rodrigues, a Kenyan of Goan extraction, who had paid his dues in the paper for years having joined in the early sixties and worked his way up the paper for years. He was a man of deep liberal convictions in the mould of International Press Institute and he was very active in it. He took the formal position of the Institute in terms of intellectually opposing the UNESCO thrust of the argument for the need of a Third World Journalism.

Locally the man believed that Kenya was essentially multiracial society and as such he did not see why the debates which were raging in the wider society about the need to make the African position in culture and the arts the major focus of the features section as the central concern of the paper. More basically the man believed that the paper should be used as an entertainment instrument. All these were to be apportioned  $\frac{1}{3}$  each to the African, European and Asian communities - as the jokes in the newsroom put it.

The commitment to the entertainment role of a newspaper is also shared by those who write about the newspapers of the West. Witness the fantastic growth of the so called living or leisure sections of the papers in America over the past few years. Of course it is possible that this was the view of the owners and not necessarily of the man. However, he articulated it effectively.

The tutelage of Joe Rodrigues did not solve these problems to create an integrated editorial management team. His successor Peter Mwaura pretty much inherited the same spirited group splits on the basic orientation of the paper. Mwaura's period was significant in some ways since at least the local cultural orientation of the paper was not something he was opposed to intellectually. Nobody made any jokes about his believing in the one-third rule. Having been responsible for training the few graduates who were infiltrating the profession, he was seen as somebody who could push the major concerns at least as far as local features orientation were concerned.

Between 1978 and 1982 the same kind of struggle over the content of features in the Standard Newspapers also took place but not in as dramatic fashion as Nation essentially since the bulk of the feature regular columnists were the same Europeans from many decades ago.

The African feature writers in both papers had been contemporaries at the University School of Journalism and those in Standard who did not get much support in localising features from Levels 1 to 3 editorial managaers were particularly vocal in public journalistic circles. It is interesting to note that after Mwaura left Nation Newspapers in July 1983, some of the features which were based on the current cultural debates do not get prominence. At the Standard, the old type features go on with constant reminders of those who civilised this society. One of the more amusing aspects of the content of features at the Standard is the repeated complaint by their Kenyan European cultural writer that African cultural groups do not want to get publicity since they do not get in touch with him! Ironically, the same groups he complains about, get reviewed the following day in the same paper! The sub-editor was one of the key local cultural writers in Nation until 1983.

#### Business Training for Editorial Management

As far as training is concerned in the Kenyan case, there is up to now the feeling that it is not necessary to train editorial managers in the normal management skills. These are time and resource budgeting, personnel, and administration. They do not make their budgets and thus their allocation of resource use are determined by the administrators of the papers. The argument is always made that there is little which goes in the editorial department which any normal journalist cannot pick up by way of the job training as far as management is concerned. This leads to fantastic operational, assigning and recruitment problems when the budgeting and accounting functions are outside the purview of the editorial managers. Few editorial managers have any notion of formal management skills. Even disciplinary matters are with administration. This lack of training and their assorted backgrounds makes the different editorial management levels accentuate personal rivalries which usually camouflage the substantive issues of content assigning, the allocation



of personnel in sections, hiring and firing. Some of the personality cover-ups are usually handled in terms of the so called University clique and the non-university professionals. At times the non-university professionals argue that there is a craft of journalism which one acquired out of experience which the university types could never fathom. Endless management hours are spent in handling such squabbles. It is made worse by the fact that the Kenya Union of Journalists contracts, which peg salary increments on years of service, reward deadwood often. Pay increase incentives as a management tool are ineffective since they are contracted. One journalist reporter has bounced around various papers without anybody wanting him, but nobody could either fire him or effectively critique his work,, since he was an 'experienced' journalist. He was among the most highly paid even though he could not write a story. Editorial Managers have little to do with pay as this was the concern of the non-editorial administrators.

Since finances are usually outside the purview of the editorial managers it is not possible to get the cost of the operational effects of all the dead weight journalists, be they reporter/writers or managers. It is further not possible to get an idea of the executive time spent planning and arguing things which a more integrated management with a budgetary control system related to news gathering would do in a short time.

To illustrate how much some of these conflicts cost in terms of energy and time, it is important to re-focus on the features department. Several years ago a graduate features editor was recruited into Daily Nation to replace one who had grown into the job having worked in all areas of the paper. Of course there was very immediate reaction since the subject matter of the features pages and lay-out very dramatically changed from the items which were of consumption by the Kenyan expatriate community into feature articles on rural life, agriculture and the most controversial ones being on life in the little markets outside Nairobi, the capital.



This led to a whole outcry among the old type editorial managers as too intellectual and boring. After all it was not the usual stuff about Hollywood stars and their lives which at one time used to dominate these pages. Features were supposed to be light reading. The counter argument was that they should be addressed to the local population which did not even know towns outside their immediate localities.

One of the permanently problematic issues in all local features pages is whether to serialise materials which are usually initially serialised in English papers. These are things like the writing of Maria Callas on Onassis or the Jumbo Jet which almost dropped into a volcano. Level 1 and Levels 2 and 3 usually line up on opposite sides and spend endless corporate time arguing about the issue. Ultimately, Level 1, which feels that the soap opera side of the newspaper is important from a marketing point of view usually wins. The various papers have serialised a great number of these materials with strong backing from the higher non-editorial members of the company. They supposedly sold papers.

Space so taken is space lost for writing about the country. It is, more significantly, space taken at the expense of serialising some of the local books which fall into that mould but whose saving grace would be that they make important local commentaries as well as supporting a national debate on the nations cultural orientation.

The national cultural debate between 1979 and 1983 was essentially whether the European based cultural system of classical music, the European novel and the European dominated organisation of drama were to remain as the central national focus or there was to be deliberate fostering and adaptation of national culture and institutions for the propagation of such, emanating from the African traditions. Several ministries, the national archives and many university departments were involved in all this and yet, although the Nation and the Standard Groups had people who know how to report the debate, it never really got prominence either as news or as part and parcel of features. Standard did not even acknowledge the debate was going on. Its editorial managers and the non-African cultural writers were solidly of the view

that the Euro based cultural system should be the national.

So much animosity was created by ignoring this debate that the intellectuals and bureaucrats debating this saw the papers as deliberately killing a national issue in favour of neo-colonialist forces. To date, there does not seem to be any hope that the papers role in reporting culture attracts readership by the local intellectuals in the arts.

The Daily Nation features department started a rather good book review page three years ago. The idea was to review what was published on the country, whether it emanated from local or external publishers. Interestingly enough, it is only the Sunday Nation which has tried to keep up the book review after July 1983 when Mwaura left as editor-in-chief.

If the struggle over the features pages was messy at the Nation, the start and demise of personally signed columns was a total disaster. Before Mwaura's time there were three. During Mwaura's tutelage in an effort to make the paper more lively in terms of debating some of the then current national issues four extra ones were introduced reflecting spectrum of society. These were assigned to writers who were specialists in their areas. It is interesting that the killing the columns did not come about because of pressures of the state but the non-editorial management levels of the company who saw them as covering issues which were not important. It was the holding company's New Zealanders, Managing Director who spearheaded the killing of these. He personally talked to some of the columnists in uncertain terms about their worth. He had just come out of the Times! He argued that the pieces were unfactual even when all those with more extensive knowledge could show that they were based on solid research going on in the country. Similarly to him, they were not journalistic. They did not read like the Times! Such columns would have directly helped the paper to report and comment on key national issues.

### Political Links and Costs

Journalists over the world have some linkages with politicians who are some of the most important sources. Yet in a Third World situation the risks of this linkage are tremendous. I have seen both editorial and administrative managers kill a story since a particular reporter had argued that the story would not go well with some politicians many times.

Too many editorial managers settle content issues on threats of what they were told by the powerful when saunaring, drinking or eating. They thus misuse the deep backgrounder, a useful tool in any serious editorial management setting. On the other hand, I have seen management so concerned about the linkages of one level 3 editorial manager that they have had him transferred from the news desk. He was brought back to the same job when it was felt his patrons were on the wane!

Yet the most important aspect of journalist linkages with politicians remains their failure to complete some assignment since they want to protect some politicians. Of course if the higher levels of editorial management consistently accept gifts from politicians - watches from Middle East were the trade mark of one such politician - not to talk about a bunch of Christmas turkeys being dumped in the news room for a level 1 manager as the accepted norm - reporters feel they must also trade-off.

Of course the converse, where managers refuse to protect reporters from politicians or the state on some story leads the later to the buying of political protection. They feel that the only way they can assure their professional safety is to build individual links with politicians. They can therefore at times intimidate their editorial managers.

These unacceptable practices of the press and the politicians take place essentially for two reasons. To begin with, the incomes of the reporters and most editorial managers do not allow them to mix freely with the elite members they cover. Thus one finds significant numbers



asking for a few pounds to keep up with the Joneses (or locally Kamaus) when they are drinking. Some go to the extreme where they actually promise coverage for a few pounds. One chief sub-editor routinely asked for scotch from public relations companies. This will never be solved until the remuneration of journalists is such that such petty sums are made irrelevant. Simultaneously, until the profession is respected, there will always be the feeling in society that they are all corrupt and can be bought.

#### The Cost of not Training

Earlier I had pointed out that the decline of the social status of the profession is recent. It must be tied to the recruitment patterns which obtained in the last years of the decade of the fifties and the sixties when the Africanisation of the profession only took the lowest level Africans. One teaboy rose to become the senior editorial manager in one newspaper. Many ink boys also rose up in the co-operate levels. This would not necessarily be bad if the ancilliary training was taking place. There is little evidence in all the papers that formal training of the journalists took place as it did in many papers in other countries, where the various managements consciously upgraded their personnel as the state of the art changed and as new technologies came to the fore. There was no effort to recruit the many more qualified Kenyans who have been coming into the market since independence. The issue is not just an argument for a conspiracy between owners and their departing expatriate editorial managers, but rather one of missed opportunities in upgrading the profession. In other private sector institutions and in Government, as the expatriates left, they were replaced by Kenyans, who, over the last twenty years, have come out of the educational system and moved to the higher levels, with the requisite qualifications.

If the profession of journalism is to get out of the miasma of editorial mismanagement in the sense of not addressing itself to the evolving national societies, it has to first get professional, that much abused word. It has to set known standards which will have to be adhered to by all who get recruited to it. Of necessity, they must be people who have the intellectual ability and specialised knowledge of



and about their society which will be competitive with other occupations in society. It is interesting that there is an argument current in American journalism that the profession did not become quite respectable and begin to attract the very best graduates from American universities until the Watergate Reporters became stars. This may be one way of improving the profession but I do not foresee it happening quickly in Kenya.

The more likely route has to be a conscious attempt by the editorial managers to recruit qualified people in the country and to allow them the necessary freedom to grow within the profession. In some respects this will become a more significant contribution to the freedom of the press since it will allow the creative genius of those in it to indulge in the national debates taking place as Kenya struggles to define itself. It is only then that substantive issue of "freedom of the press for what?" will at least be debated.

It has been argued by some owners and some donors that what is needed in the quest for improving the quality of journalism in the Third World, and, specifically in the Kenyan case, is the creation of thinking time for the editorial managers to reflect on operations. Of course there is the question what are they to reflect on if some of them do not even have the ability to read the major issues of the country unless they are simplified into journalistic cliches?

At the same time one wonders about schemes which only take editors to other countries for their training. I would still argue that a basic knowledge of the country journalists are supposed to cover and interpret is of greater import than some of these courses so favoured by most of the owners and local managers.

Consider the following. Of the 10 top editorial managers in one of the newspaper groups, only one had been to all the forty two districts of the country. Six had been to their home district and the capital city, Nairobi and the port town, Mombasa. This is a serious indictment of the nature of leadership found in some of the papers. The owners have an obligation to teach their managers about the country they manage the papers about.

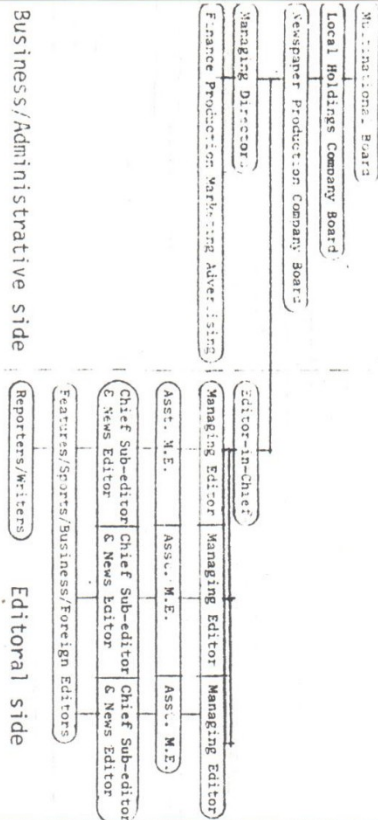
On the suggestion of donors getting involved in the training and allowing some research time to the editorial managers, one needs only to look through the papers and raise the question of how much of the materials prepared by journalists who are in some donor agencies has found way into the press. Significant materials on agriculture, development, environment and the like are prepared by journalists, some of whom have been employees of local papers, but they on the whole never see daylight simply because the editors do not see their import.

It may be there is a role for donors to train editorial managers on the substantive issues which afflict nations like Kenya but if that is done the training must be within the country since all the training experience of the last twenty years in Kenya overseas has led to a local conviction, which I share, that is, it presents some disorientation which has to be fought consciously.

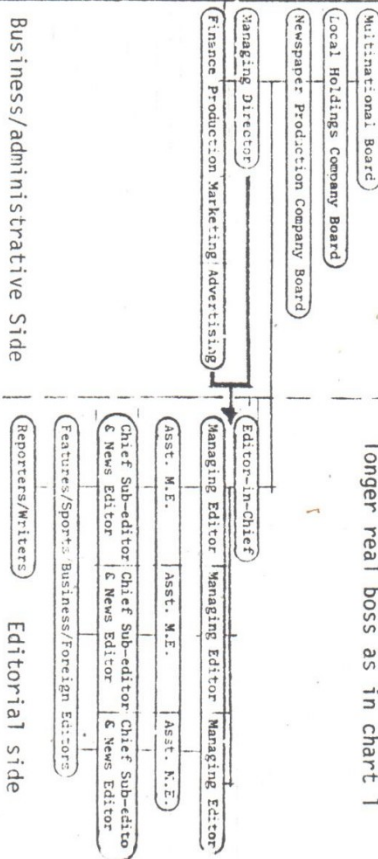
Freedom of the press to become meaningful then has to involve the intellectualisation of the press in terms of ongoing societal issues. We in Kenya are lucky to have the Weekly Review, created by Hillary Ngweni, who has for years struggled to create a national model of the press. It is something worth emulating by others. To just point at a small example, he is the only publisher, worried about children's knowledge about substantive issues of development like deforestation and teaching of sanitation. As a result, he publishes specifically on those issues for children. If they are not commercially viable, he has the courage and the guts to go out and solicit donor funds for making sure some of these publications reach some of the young who will never be able to afford them.

That is the press utilising its freedom to build the nation. For in the long run, it is the issues of tomorrow's mental attitudes which mass media influences sometimes unwittingly.

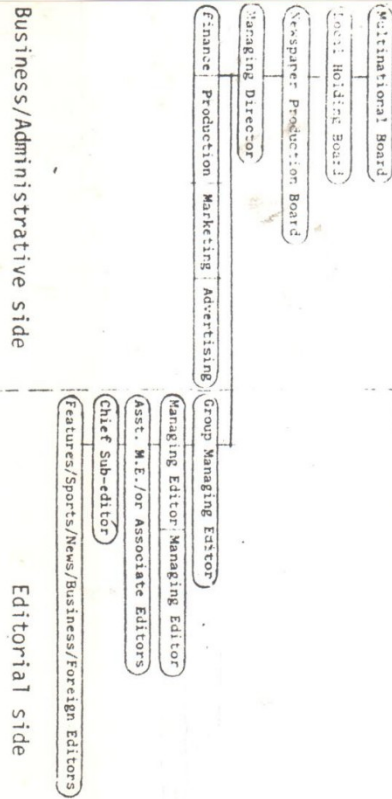
Editor-in-Chief real boss of editorial side, No intrusion from business/administrative side



business/administrative side makes intrusions into editorial side at all levels. Editor-in-Chief no longer real boss as in chart 1



Editor-in-Chief replaced by Group Managing Editor. Both business/administrative and editorial sides placed under Managing Director unlike charts 1&2



Both business/administrative sides placed under Editor in contrast to charts 1,2&3

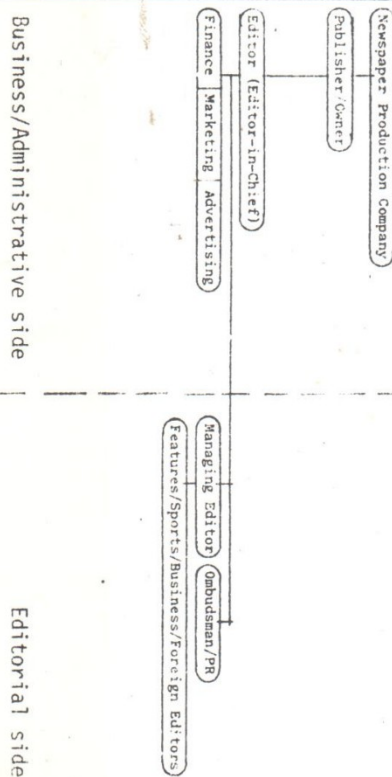




CHART 1  
MANAGEMENT MODEL WITH EXPATRIATES IN PLACE - Editor-in-Chief real boss of editorial side. No intrusion from business/administrative side

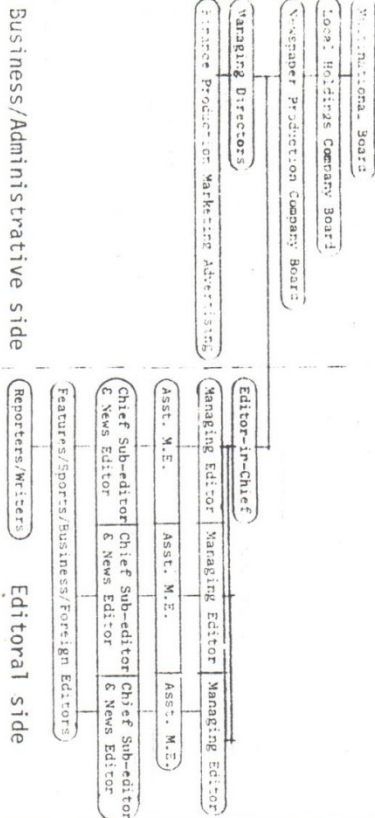


CHART 2  
MANAGEMENT MODEL WITH EXPATRIATES DISENGAGING - business/administrative side makes intrusions into editorial side at all levels. Editor-in-Chief no longer real boss as in chart 1

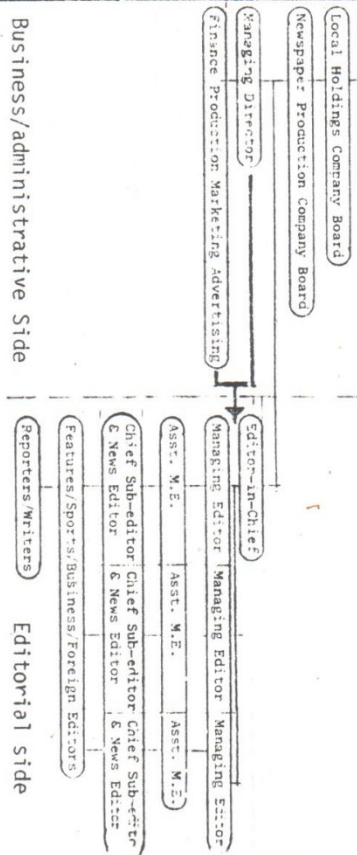


CHART 3  
1980'S MODEL - Editor-in-Chief replaced by Group Managing Editor. Both business/administrative and editorial sides placed under Managing Director unlike charts 1&2

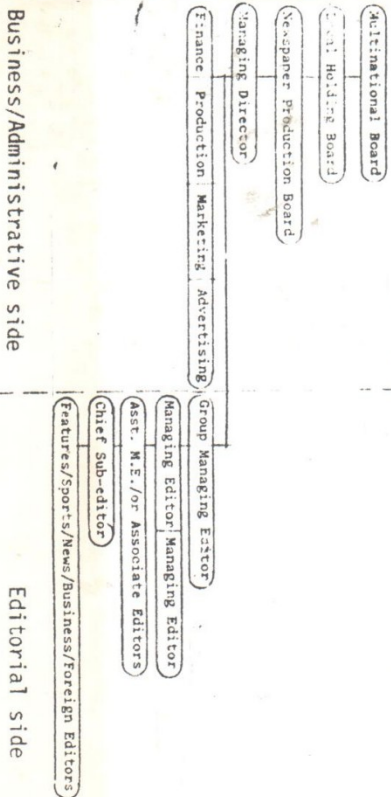


CHART 4  
WESTERN MODEL - Both business/administrative sides placed under Editor in contrast to charts 1,2&3

