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A STUDY OF FOREIGN INFLUENCE ON NEWSPAPERS
IN KENYA FROM 1900 TO 1980

THESIS

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This study gives an historical account of foreign ownership of newspapers in Kenya. Since the establishment of the first newspaper in the early 1900s, to the modern publication of daily newspapers in Kenya, the press has been dominated by foreign owners, writers and advertisers.

Before independence from Britain, foreign domination was expressed by the total disregard of the African by the newspapers. After independence, foreign domination continued as the government, dedicated to the free enterprise capitalist system, has not made any substantial effort to nationalize already established newspaper companies. In 1977 the first African-owned newspaper, a weekly was established.

Today, there is no African-owned daily newspaper. All indications are that only the modernizing process will result in African ownership and control of newspapers.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In many black African countries the press played an important role in the nationalist movements leading to independence. Newspapers were the champions of freedom and defenders of the oppressed. After independence, the press found itself paradoxically cast in the role of mischief-maker. Newspapers came to be thought of as instruments of evil that could be useful only if they were controlled. A 1974 survey found that over half the nations in independent black Africa have an authoritarian press philosophy (17, p. 110).

A major part of the reasons given by Africans for press restriction is the need for unity in developing countries. It is thought best for the mass media to present just one united, unified viewpoint (17, p. 116). Although this may or may not be true, it is important to note that many leaders who criticized the colonial government and press for being suppressive assumed the same roles after independence.

Kenya was one of the few African countries that allowed the continuation of an independent press and did not begin a government daily after independence in 1963. But, since

the Africans were too poor to own newspapers and the government refused to Africanize the press, foreign domination of the press, which had begun in colonial times, continued. The situation led one Kenyan journalist to comment that Kenya was unique in black Africa because its major daily newspapers continued to be foreign-owned (16, p. 4).

The situation was made worse in two other ways: First, there was no strong vernacular press in Kenya to express the views of the masses; and second, there were those in Kenya who claimed that there could not be press freedom as long as there was foreign ownership (16, p. 6), despite research findings that "Kenya is the only nation [in black Africa] classified under the libertarian press philosophy" (16, p. 112).

To understand the great extent to which the Kenyan press owes its heritage to the foreign press, one needs to look at the history of the press in Kenya.

The first Europeans to settle in Kenya were missionaries who arrived in the second half of the nineteenth century. They worked among the coastal people until the turn of the century when the Uganda Railway opened the interior on December 20, 1901. It marked a big step toward the beginning of large-scale immigration of European settlers (9, p. 99).

Along with the Europeans came Indian traders. They had initially been imported to Kenya by the colonial office

to build the East African railways. After their work was completed, many of them stayed on.

One of the most successful Indians was A. M. Jeevanjee, who had made a fortune as a contractor supplier for the railways. He began the first newspaper in Kenya, a weekly called African Standard, which appeared in Mombasa in 1902 (1, p. 99). Jeevanjee brought W. H. Tiller from England to run the paper, which he incorporated with the Mombasa Times and Uganda Argus. Jeevanjee's paper was purchased by Mayer and Anderson (6, p. 201).

In 1910, when the government moved to Nairobi from Mombasa, the African Standard went, too. The Mombasa Times was reopened to cover the coast. In Nairobi, the African Standard faced tough competition from a popular settler weekly, the Leader of British East Africa, which continued until 1923 when the Standard bought it out (6, p. 201).

Meanwhile the Africans had begun to feel the foreign influence on their way of life. Oliver Roland, in his book The Missionary Factor in East Africa, writes:

In the years just before the first world war, the limited form of elementary education introduced by the missionaries had already reached a small group of young men, encouraging in them a common wish to "progress" and enter fully into the new social order. Among them was Jomo Kenyatta (15, p. 18).

Jomo Kenyatta, who was to become the first president of Kenya, edited one of many African newspapers printed during the first half of the twentieth century. They were

printed in many tribal languages and dealt with, among other things, the growing problems of Africans under colonialism (14, p. 211).

At the same time, some Asian papers that had supported the interests of their community began after 1945 to support African nationalist activities. The most outspoken of these were The Colonial Times, Daily Chronicle, and Tribune (4, p. 195).

As the rising nationalist movement began to gain momentum through the press, the colonial government revised the penal code in 1950, giving the courts power to confiscate presses that were thought to be vehicles for the printing of seditious material (17, p. 8).

In 1952, Mau Mau broke out, a state of emergency was proclaimed, and the government closed nearly fifty African newspapers, almost the entire vernacular press (17, p. 79). After independence in December, 1963, only a handful of African newspapers remained (3, p. 218-220).

One of the newspapers that was to have a strong readership after independence was the Daily Nation, a part of the Nation Group ownership of newspapers that was introduced into East Africa in 1959 by an Islamic sect leader, the Aga Khan. In Kenya, the group launched four papers: the Swahili weekly Taifa Kenya, the Swahili daily Taifa Leo, and two English-language papers, Daily Nation and Sunday Nation (8, p. 203).

The post-independence press of Kenya was marked by the struggles between the government and the newspaper groups over news and politics. At the same time there were conflicts within the newspaper groups between the foreign owners and the African staff.

The Nation Group of newspapers belonged to the Aga Khan, a Persian who was the religious leader of the Islamic Shia sect known as Ismailis. In April, 1977, George Gitchii, an African editor of the Nation Group, resigned after the Aga Khan tried to interfere with his editorial position (2, p. 93).

Rivaling the Nation Group was the Standard Group of papers, owned by Lonrho, described by Barton as "a multi-national property company with innumerable investments all over Africa" (2, p. 86). Lonrho bought the Standard Group in 1967 for more than one million pounds. It was a purely economic move as the Standard was making money from commercial printing and packaging (2, p. 86). Government officials, often suspicious of its aims, would question any article with a hint of what they thought was suspicious.

Frank Barton, writing in The Press of Africa, alleged that one day Kenyatta called the editors of some Nation and Standard newspapers and said, "When I say newspapers, I mean Kenyan newspapers, and although they are privately owned, they are still Kenyan newspapers, and if they are Kenyan newspapers they are my newspapers" (2, p. 86).

There was no popular African newspaper until 1970 when Hilary Ng'weno began his Weekly Review. Data are scarce, but it appears these were at least two vernacular newspapers, Kisomo and Bumanyati (14, p. 93). He followed this with the Nairobi Times, a Sunday broadsheet complete with color magazine (2, p. 95). Its great resemblance to the Sunday Times of London emphasized the extent to which the foreign influence had penetrated the press of Kenya.

At independence, there were seven daily newspapers in Kenya and all of them were published in the two major cities, Nairobi, the capital and Mombasa, the port. Mombasa with a population of 84,746 had the Mombasa Times and the Kenya Daily Mail. The Times was an English language daily with a circulation of 5,500. The Mail was bilingual in both English and Gujerati (an Indian language). Its daily circulation was 3,000 (7, p. 517).

With a population of 297,000, Nairobi had five dailies. The East African Standard, an English language daily, dominated the newspaper industry with a 29,000 circulation and a Standard weekend edition that had a 50,000 circulation.

Of the four newspapers, two of them, the Chronicle and the National Guardian were bilingual in English and Gujerati. The Nation was in English while Taifa Leo was in Swahili (7, p. 517). Although circulation figures for this period are not available, it appears that their circulation was not more than that of the Standard (13, p. 4).

Weeklies and monthlies fluctuated in number so constantly that it was impossible to keep an accurate account of them. Average estimates would indicate that there were around fifteen weeklies and four monthlies (13, p. 57).

Statement of the Problem

What was the impact of foreign influence on the development of newspapers in Kenya from 1900 to 1980?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the role and theory of the press, and the ownership and control of the press.

Questions

To help carry out its purpose of its study, the following questions were posed.

1. Did the British encourage a free press in Kenya?
2. Did the press play a significant role for independence?
3. Did the press system change after independence?
4. Who owned the press after independence?
5. Who controlled the press before and after independence?
6. What was the emerging press theory in the 1970s?

Review of Literature

Books that have been written on the press in Africa have tended to deal with the press in Kenya very generally.

The most resourceful of these were The Press in Africa by Rosalynde Ainslie, The Press of Africa by Frank Barton, Muffled Drums by William Hachten, and Mass Media in Black Africa by Dennis L. Wilcox.

An underlying theme that could be traced in all these books was the great influence that the colonizers exerted on the African press. It appeared that, in most cases, foreign influence continued even after independence.

In 1966, Ainslie observed that, in independent Africa, "the mass media are still largely at the mercy of foreign interests," and as the media developed throughout the continent, "This tendency toward foreign influence and control was not diminishing but increasing" (1, p. 1).

In 1971, Hachten saw that "a crucial element in the development of mass communications in Africa, both past and present, was the nature and extent of European influences" (17, p. 19).

By the late 1970s there was an apparent shift, with the African leaders trying to shake off foreign ideas. Wilcox quoted Kenyatta as saying, "The press should positively promote national development and growing self-respect" (17, p. 25).

A number of studies showed foreign domination of the press in Africa. One study of news coverage in the African press in 1966 surveyed five newspapers from Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa and found that 54 percent of the news in

these papers came from rich nations; 65 percent from China, India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Japan; 26 percent from all other African nations; and 26 percent from Britain (9, p. 61).

Much of the post-independent material on the press in Kenya can be found in the Weekly Review, a Kenya news magazine, and material from the Nairobi University School of Journalism.

A survey of journalism abstracts revealed three master's theses dealing in some way with the press in Kenya. The earliest one, completed by Norman Miller in 1962, was titled "Kenya: Nationalism and the Press, 1951-1961." The thesis analyzes the interaction between the press and political conditions in Kenya during the decade in which Mau Mau took place. Miller concludes that "the overriding characteristic of the Kenya press in the last decade (1950-1960) has been its change in response to the forces of African nationalism? (13, p. 63). In discussing his view of the future of the press he writes, "Political developments will, of course, dictate to a large degree the developments of the press after the British depart" (13, p. 64).

A thesis completed in 1968 by Joseph H. Healey was titled "Mass Media Growth in Kenya." The study analyzed the growth of radio, the press, film, and television in Kenya from 1948 to 1967. These media were described in terms of the historical perspective, source, content, physical facilities, use, and effect (11, p. 28). They were

interpreted in terms of the social, economic, and political conditions. Healey found that the non-growth of newspapers in Kenya was in part due to the misguided leadership of government officials, slow urbanization which "would not increase significantly in the next twenty years," illiteracy and limits to press freedom (5, p. 114).

The third thesis, "Implications of Foreign Ownership of The Press In Kenya," was completed in 1973 by Wamatu Njoroge. Njoroge's thesis discusses the manifold press problems in Kenya. He writes that the "most crucial is the problem that the press created for itself and has continued to live with--lack of credibility" (10, p. 144). Njoroge believes that lack of credibility was for the most part due to foreign press ownership.

Njoroge's study is related to this one in that foreign influence is examined. However, this study is historical whereas the former analyzed the implications of foreign ownership at the time of the writing, and discussed history of the Kenyan press only as background.

Significance of the Study

The news media are social systems that operate according to specific goals, values, organizational style, and technological capabilities (6, p. 257). Therefore an understanding of the news media of a specific society gives insight into the nature of that society and its development

level. Because Africa is becoming increasingly accessible in a shrinking world, Westerners need to know what kind of societies they are dealing with. This is especially so in view of the fact that most communication between the two sides will take place through the news media.

Limitations

This study deals with press-related events within the social and political framework of Kenya. Only newspapers that had national implications were considered.

The study was somewhat hampered by scarcity of material, especially on the early history of the Kenyan newspapers. Generally, no records were kept of the many little publications that existed only briefly. However, the newspapers that survived provided adequate material for the reconstruction of the history of the Kenyan press.

The study did not go into the Indian-language press, which had no national impact and addressed only a minority community, but it did deal with Indian-owned English language publications that were national in scope.

Methodology

All the information used was from secondary sources gathered from Nairobi University Library, Kenya Archives Center, and the Nairobi School of Journalism.

The material was gathered from historical, political socio-economic, and communications references. The study

was more concerned with the general trend of the development of the press and followed major newspapers with large circulations and great influence.

Organization of the Study

The study is divided into four chapters: Chapter I, Introduction; Chapter II, Pre-Independence, 1900-1963; Chapter III, Post-Independence, 1964-1980; and Chapter IV, Conclusion.

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CHAPTER II

PRE-INDEPENDENCE: THE PRESS AND COLONIALISM, 1900-1963

Historical and Social Background

The history of the press in Kenya is basically part of the story of European settlement (3, p. 72). The press was introduced to Kenya at the beginning of the twentieth century as a service to the colonial settlers. Newspapers were, first and last, vehicles for the culture and concepts of the rulers (1, p. 99).

Before the twentieth century, the African people of Kenya had very few external contacts. Some ancient coastal towns had had centuries of communication with Arabs trading in slaves and ivory, but most of the people in the interior remained isolated. They lived simple lives as nomadic pastoralists or agriculturalists. George Bennett writes that it was on them that British power burst and established itself in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth (4, p. 3).

The first Europeans in Kenya were missionaries. As early as in the 1840s, members of the Church Missionary Society had started missionary work along the coastal part of Kenya (9, p. 6). David Livingston's attacks on the slave trade and the needs of the African people attracted the English people obsessed with the cause of progress,

and they did much to promote the wider-than-ecclesiastical policies that missionaries came to pursue (11, p. 9). The missionaries converted and educated the Africans so that by the early 1900s, Roland Oliver writes, "rapidly increasing numbers of Africans were realizing the possibilities before them, most of whom felt that the missions offered them their best chance of rising" (9, p. 66).

The partition and scramble for Africa resulted in the British government's acquiring Kenya in the last decade of the nineteenth century. For some time after this only a few administration officers and missionaries lived inland. The biggest obstacle to European enterprise and settlement was the absence of an easy means of transport inland. It took a caravan with headporters six weeks to walk a distance of 300 miles from coast to the Nairobi area (9, p. 41).

In 1901, the British built the Uganda Railway from Mombasa on the Kenya coast to Lake Victoria, 500 miles in the heart of the interior. It facilitated the immigration of settlers to the colony and induced Asians to settle. This happened after the British government in Africa negotiated with the British Indian government to indenture Indian laborers. Some of these stayed after their indenture ended and were joined by others who set up small shops to supply the Africans and Europeans (5, p. 9). The government did not limit Indian immigration, and from the time of the building of the railway to the time of independence (1963)

their number increased at the rate of 30 percent every year (5, p. 11).

By the time of the first newspapers in the early 1900s the population comprised three racial groups: Africans, Indians, and Europeans. Europeans were the ruling class and comprised mainly farmers, civil servants, traders, missionaries, and engineers. Most of the farmers lived in the White Highlands, which had the most fertile soil and coolest weather in Kenya. European claims to this land caused bitter feelings between them and then Africans, who believed that the land was stolen from them (8, p. 4).

The Indian settlers had grown economically powerful through the trade they monopolized, but they had little political effectiveness. The Africans affected by the colonization process usually provided menial labor and enjoyed neither economic nor political power (8, p. 4).

The Press

The press system was under control of the statutes that allowed a wide margin of local interpretation by the authorities. The law allowed freedom of the press so long as the material did not "threaten the security of the state, offend against public morals or injure individuals" (8, p. 56). The Penal Code defined such material as that which would "promote feelings of ill-will and hostility between different classes of the population of the colony" (6, p. 194).

The control of the press in Kenya was spelled out in the Book and Newspaper Ordinance of 1906. Owners of newspapers were required to register, and every year publishers and printers completed a form giving the title of the newspaper, the names and addresses of the owners, and the average annual circulation figures. The control of the material in the papers was practiced through the Penal Code by the laws on sedition. Under these laws the courts had the power to confiscate presses used in printing seditious material (7, p. 193).

Another means of controlling the press was the posting of bonds. All publishers and printers were required under the Book and Newspaper Law to post a 500 pounds sterling bond against libel and seditious activity. The amount limited to the very wealthy the number of people who could go into the newspaper business (12, p. 8). Libel laws were based on English law before their 1956 amendments, which made it unnecessary to prove damage (12, p. 14).

Colonial newspapers were aimed at the English settler. What constituted news tended to be related to Britain and its empire rather than to the local scene. Reporters were hired from the staff of British newspapers abroad and continued in their tradition (12, p. 3). Frank Barton observes that, "until the morning of independence on the 13th December 1963, Kenya's biggest daily newspaper, the East

African Standards, carried on its masthead the British coat-of-arms" (3, p. 71).

The most influential publishing group of the colonial period was the East African Standard Associated Companies, or Standard Group of newspapers. The East African Standard, established in 1914, was its leading newspaper. From its first publication to the dawn of independence, it consistently voiced the demands of the settlers and raised their hopes and fears (1, p. 100). Unlike many other colonial newspapers, the Standard was read and respected by the settlers nationwide. In its treatment of the African it was described as "smug to the point of arrogance" in The Press in Africa, but it was less conservative than the regional newspapers that were usually strongly pro-settler. An example of the extreme right-wing settler newspaper was the Kenya Comment, a weekly that Ainslie is recorded by Barton as saying, "for sheer bigotry deserves to be recorded as what white-owned newspapers were capable of inflicting on their readers" (3, p. 73). In 1958, when a Kenyan clergyman declared the inevitability of the Africans achieving independence, the paper described him as "bent on pushing a cause which will end us up in the arms of Russia" (3, p. 73).

When the settler newspapers wrote about the Africans, it was usually in a derogatory manner. In 1921, when Harry Thuku (a young freedom fighter) formed the Young Kikuyu Association to protest the mistreatment of Africans under colonialism, the Leader wrote:

Perhaps there is no need to take the native association too seriously; for after all the native tribesmen have not yet arrived at the plane of education and higher thought properly to understand the science of political economy. A glimmering of the thought may be attributed to a few leaders, who are just as likely to lead the native wrong or right (11, p. 12).

But there were other less extreme newspapers like the Kenya Weekly News. Although they, too, were guilty of the same kinds of racial injustices as the other papers, they survived after independence because they were able to adapt to the changing times (3, p. 73).

In 1940, the colonial government began publishing African newspapers. World War II had broken out, and African support was needed. The aim of the African newspaper was to convince the Africans that their support was needed by the Allies. As a result, Baraza, a Swahili weekly, was published for the government by the East African Standard and Associated Companies (8, p. 10). Baraza was used by the government as a propaganda tool. It always printed the government view, which more often than not was opposed to the black nationalist view. During the 1940s, it wrote continually against the East African Trade Unions and their leadership even though it was in the interest of the African laborers to have trade unions (11, p. 292).

As World War II drew to a close, the African nationalist movement gained in strength. The Standard Group's directors saw the need to change the image of its newspapers to be

more accommodating to Africans. Consequently its papers were instructed to be careful in "airing the needs of all communities," to realize the "dignity of the individual irrespective of race," to omit racial designations in news stories and to print letters from all sectors of the community (1, p. 100).

The attempt at improvement failed during the Mau Mau years (1952-1954). During the struggle, the Standard, like many other settler newspapers, "expressed all the white hysteria and angry settler demands for more effective repressive action by the colonial office" (1, p. 101).

In 1959, the establishment of the East African Newspapers Limited (the Nation Group) and its introduction of national newspapers challenged the Standard Group for the first time. The group operated two English newspapers, the Daily Nation and the Sunday Nation, plus one Swahili daily, Taifa. The Nation newspapers were attractively designed tabloids with many pictures. They contrasted with the grey broadsheet of the Standard newspapers. Another reason for the popularity of the Nation newspapers was their attitude of sympathy for the African nationalist cause (3, p. 76).

In contrast to the European colonial press, the African or vernacular press functioned without government support, adequate financing, or trained staff. Jomo Kenyatta, who became president of Kenya, edited the first well-known African paper in 1927, called Muigwithania. It was the official newspaper of the Kenya Central Association, an

organization fighting for African self-awareness (2, p. 37). The newspaper was a monthly with a mixed content of advice, proverbs, and news items. It was published until the outbreak of World War II (12, p. 100). Other vernacular newspapers that developed from the 1920s to the 1940s were Mumenyereri, Sauti ya Muafrika, Mucemario, Kamogi, Hindi ya Crikuyu, Wathimo Mukinyu Rafiki Yetu, Baraza, Inoro, Muramati and many more. It has been estimated that there were at least fifty vernacular newspapers before independence (2, p. 109).

The war provided the opportunity for the colonial government to publish Baraza in an effort to win African support by persuasion through the press. The vernacular newspapers had decreased due to paper shortages. After the war, it became apparent to the Africans that even though they had supported the government there was no improvement in their status. African veterans who had been exposed to political ideas outside Kenya could not continue to live under limited political freedom. They aired their grievances in the African vernacular newspapers causing the settlers to be anxious (6, p. 192).

The settlers expressed their fears that freedom of the press could not be maturely handled by the Africans. Provincial Commissioners, who ruled the provinces, held a meeting in which they said:

As regards freedom of the press, liberty was begin mistaken for license, and in addition to

deliberate distortion of facts, many of the articles in such newspapers contained a most dangerous and pernicious form of anti-European propaganda (6, p. 191).

It was thought that a free press was more dangerous in the colony than in England:

The effect of an unbridled press amongst uneducated and politically immature Africans was infinitely more serious than that which could be achieved by inflammatory articles in newspapers in England (6, p. 191).

In 1947, the government proposed publishing some government papers that would be more effective than Baraza in putting forward the government view. There were to be four of them, one in each of the three languages of the most populous tribes--Kikuyu, Kamba, Luhya--and one in Swahili (6, p. 193). However, after experimenting with only one of them, Mucemanio in Kikuyu, and failing, the government cancelled the remaining three.

Meanwhile there was an increasing number of vernacular newspapers in the decade following World War II. Influence of these papers spread beyond circulation figures because they were read to the masses by those who could read. It was estimated that, by 1950, fifty vernacular newspapers were published in Kenya, ranging from those that were sponsored by the government or the missionaries to extremist news sheets (2, p. 109). Henry Mworira's Mumenyereri, Achieng Oneko's Ramogi, and Oginga Odinga's Nyanza Times are examples of African newspapers in postwar years that served as political and economic outlets for Africans.

Just prior to the outbreak of Mau Mau in 1952, the Kenya Vernacular Press Company was set up by the government. It was intended to counteract the effect of the African newspapers that were spreading nationalist ideas. The editors, who were white, were told to encourage the Africans to express their views in their papers, but in fact they censored information so that only ideas favorable to the government were printed (2, p. 108).

On October 21, 1952, a state of emergency was proclaimed; a Temporary Provisions Ordinance gave the Registrar of Printing Presses the power to cancel a newspaper license after consultation with the Member for Law and Order (6, p. 193). The result of this for the African press was disastrous; almost all the African newspapers were suspended, whether they were anti-government or not. All past issues were banned and possession of banned newspapers could lead to prosecution, as happened in the case of Nganga Kamau, who was given a six-year prison term for possessing a banned vernacular newspaper (8, p. 27).

After suppressing the African newspapers, the government recruited several pro-government African editors to work for the Kenya Vernacular Press Company, established by its government to pacify its Africans. They were to operate newspapers at the district level with government control and aid. In 1957, when the Mau Mau crisis had passed, the project was abandoned (8, p. 30).

The post-Mau Mau period saw some African publications revived, although the whole group was never to come back as strongly as it had been before. These newspapers continued to function under poor economic and understaffed conditions. The political scene that had fired these publications remained strained as the restrictions on the formation of political parties continued until 1959 in some areas (1, p. 110).

During the African nationalists' struggle, the vernacular newspapers were supported by Indian publications because in some cases the Indians had similar grievances against the British. The Indian press was sympathetic to the African cause because the struggle for independence in India had been fought against the same enemy. But they had to be careful because their stay in Kenya was dependent on their good relationships with the ruling Europeans (8, p. 9). Indian support for the Africans was expressed either in their own papers or through Indian publishing companies printing several of the African vernacular newspapers (6, p. 195).

The major Asian-owned publications during colonial times were the Kenya Daily Mail of Mombasa, the National Guardian, and the Daily Chronicle in Nairobi (3, p. 73). The more radical ones that joined the nationalist movement were the Colonial Times, Daily Chronicle, and the Tribune (7, p. 201). The Chronicle was so suspect by the colonialists that it was suppressed and its editor, Pio Pinto, detained

along with the other African political prisoners in 1952 when a state of emergency was declared (4, p. 73). The Colonial Times managed to survive the emergency and to sponsor two vernacular publications, Habari and Mwalimu (6, p. 195). Its editor, G. L. Vidyarthi, was sentenced to four months at hard labor for comparing colonial conditions in Kenya to conditions in Nazi concentration camps (11, p. 132).

In 1959, after the emergency situation had cooled down the Aga Khan, the religious leader of the Ismaili Muslim sect, established the East African Newspaper Limited, or Nation Group of newspapers, comprising three major newspapers in Kenya that made the company rival the European East African Standard and Associates Company (Standard Group). These papers were the Daily Nation, a tabloid morning newspaper; the Sunday Nation; Taifa Kenya, a Swahili weekly; and Taifa Leo, a Swahili daily (7, p. 203). The success and popularity of the Nation newspapers were due in part to their liberal and more fair presentation of news for all three racial sectors (3, p. 76). Journalists comprised Europeans, Africans, and Asians, and the newspapers made it clear from the beginning that they would stand by the independent movement. John E. Brenman, the Nation's first editor, stated:

Our policy is to do our utmost to help Kenya and other East African territories to make the perilous transition to African majority rule and full independence as peaceably and constitutionally as possible (8, p. 50).

The Nation newspapers maintained a high standard of news coverage and utilized the latest mechanical production methods available. At the time of its installation the printing system was the most modern in Africa, and a unique prototype in the world (1, p. 105). As a result, Taifa Leo captured the African vernacular market that had never before known such a high level of sophistication in its newspapers.

As Kenya moved closer to independence in the early 1960s, three conditions existed that favored foreign press domination: The African press was virtually dead; no Africans had the capital and resources to compete with the foreign publications; and a new foreign press group, the Nation Group, appealed to all racial segments for the first time. The new government faced a dilemma: If it did not nationalize the press, Kenya faced continuation of foreign domination of its newspapers.

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CHAPTER III

POST-INDEPENDENCE: THE PRESS AND UHURU, 1964-1980

Background

On December 12, 1963, after a long, bloody struggle for freedom, Kenya became independent. The new nation became a two-party state led by President Jomo Kenyatta, head of the ruling party, the Kenya African National Union. For a few years, an opposition party, the Kenya People's Union existed but it was never really effective or powerful and dissolved itself in the late 1960s, making Kenya a one-party state by choice.

The Kenyan people adopted a democratic form of government that had a combination of libertarian and authoritarian elements. The press was used both to express different opinions and by the government to unite the people ideologically. Freedom of the press was defined under the "Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms of the Individuals" in the constitution:

Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of expression, that is to say, freedom to hold opinions without interference, freedom to receive ideas and information without interference, freedom to communicate ideas and information without interference (3, p. 49).

The government made a conscious effort toward Africanization to build a healthy spirit of nationalism. Norman

Miller, in his thesis dealing with nationalism and the press in Kenya, describes it as "the assertion of rights, claims, and aspirations of a given African society, in the name of a nation and in opposition to foreign authority (8, p. 6).

In post-independence Kenya, national development became the principal form of nationalism (6, p. 27). It was summarized in Kenyatta's call to the nation, "Harambee" (Let us pull together). In the effort to pull together, the news media were to be agents of social change. Kenyatta said the mass media were to be used to "build unity, to keep the people well informed, educated and entertained" (7, p. 2).

The Government and the Press

At the time of Kenya's independence in 1963, there was no established African press. The vernacular newspapers had suffered a severe blow with the declaration of the emergency in 1952, and since then a situation had developed that was unfavorable to the African publications. Foreign-owned newspaper groups had been firmly established; Europeans and Indians continued to control the commercial and economic sectors of society, and Africans who were educated took to buying and reading English-language papers (5, p. 203).

To minimize the foreign hold on the news media. Consequently a ministry of information was divided into two departments: the Voice of Kenya, which dealt with television and radio, and the information department, which included

the government press information services and the new Kenya News Agency, or KNA (5, p. 206). In every region of Kenya an information officer was assigned to distribute information and to collect news (2, p. 205).

The Kenya News Agency was originally operated with the help of communist advisers, technicians, and equipment (6, p. 50). Zdenek Kubes, a journalist from Czechoslovakia, was the agency's first editorial advisor (2, p. 206). Russia provided the teleprinters, radio receiving machinery, and technicians to maintain the system. Through the agency, the government gained control of domestic and foreign news, censoring and editing information considered detrimental to Kenya's image. The KNA became the only national news agency in the country and provided the majority of all news carried by newspapers (6, p. 50).

In keeping with its free enterprise policy, the government did not nationalize any of the foreign-owned newspapers. However, to counter the influence of the foreign-owned newspapers, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting published several newspapers and periodicals or subsidized them. Nyanza Times and Sauti Ya Mwafrica ("Voice of the African") were two of the most popular government-subsidized newspapers (6, p. 35). Kenya Today, an English-language quarterly that had an average circulation of 7,000, and Kenya Yetu ("Our Kenya"), a Swahili quarterly with an average circulation of 100,000, typified government-published periodicals (6, p. 38).

The new Kenyan press system was a combination of both the authoritarian and libertarian press theories. The KNA was responsible for the distribution of news from the Soviet TASS and the British Reuters wire services. Yet, independent newspapers were permitted to subscribe to the Associated Press and other news agencies (6, p. 39). The press was required to be responsible rather than free so that the spirit of "Harambee" ("togetherness") would prevail and the modernizing process would not be disturbed. Consequently, foreign-owned publications were careful to use constructive news and avoided criticizing the government. The KNA provided news that was mainly about national development, presidential activities, and government achievements (6, p. 39).

During the first decade of independence the most noticeable change in the press was in the content of the newspapers that began to reflect the new one-party African government (5, p. 210). Main headlines were reserved for government statements, and photographs on the front page frequently featured the president. International news provided by South Africa's Press Association was abandoned in favor of news collected from the international news agencies. Whereas letters to the editor had previously been from European readers only, there were now increasing numbers of African and Asian letters (1, p. 103).

These changes in the press in general could be seen in the leading newspapers. The East African Standard settled

for a policy of responsible support for the government. In its content the paper showed a greater involvement in local affairs (1, p. 103), regularly running government news releases. The Nation Group newspapers worked toward Africanizing their staffs. The Nation supported the new Kenyatta government but was more critically outspoken than the Standard (5, p. 212).

The Government and Standard and Nation

The post-independence press of Kenya was dominated by the Standard and Nation group newspapers. Each group worked to place its newspapers at the top in the country, and at the same time the government sought to control their power.

The Standard group's leading newspapers were the Standard, an English daily with circulation of 40,600 in the 1960s (4), and Baraza, a Swahili weekly with a circulation of 58,000 throughout East Africa (5, p. 211). The Standard's special Friday edition had the highest circulation of any newspaper in Kenya: 50,000 in 1967 (5, p. 210). Baraza, the Standard group's Swahili newspaper was the most read weekly in East Africa. It had a circulation of 58,000, read in Uganda and Tanzania, especially by the rural people (5, p. 211).

The leading newspapers of the Nation group were the Nation and Taifa Leo. The Nation carried twenty-four pages while Taifa only had eight. Taifa Leo, the only Swahili

daily in Kenya, addressed less-educated people and carried news similar to that of the Nation, but it was simplified and sensationalized (5, p. 213).

Unlike the Standard group, the Nation group newspapers worked toward Africanizing their staffs quickly. By 1968, just five years after independence, two Africans, Hilary Ng'weno and George Githii, had worked as editors on the staff of the Nation. The Standard continued to have European editors until the middle 1970s. The Nation was the first to Africanize its staff and became popular with the African readers (5, p. 212).

Whereas the Standard supported the new government to the extent of publishing its press releases, the Nation was apt to be more critically outspoken (5, p. 212). For example, when in 1966 the Preventive Detention Act was passed to give the government "broad powers to detain citizens and censor newspapers" (7, p. 69), the Nation was the only newspaper to oppose the act (5, p. 213).

Criticism of the government was carried out not only by the Nation but also by some smaller newspapers. One of these newspapers was the religious weekly Target. This newspaper had a great impact on public opinion and was sponsored by the National Christian Council of Kenya. Its Swahili counterpart was Lengo, and they had a combined circulation of 20,000 (5, p. 215). Both papers were outspoken and constantly criticized the economic inequality and lack of

unity among the leaders in the ruling party. The Reverend John Schofield, who edited Target, was asked by the Attorney General to resign his position for causing disunity in the country through his editorial positions (5, p. 215). After he left, both papers continued but with fewer political articles.

What happened to Schofield and the fact that he could do nothing to defend himself were indicative of the little protection the Kenya constitution offered the press. There were no provisions in the constitution to define press freedom, but there were statutory controls restricting the press. If the government suppressed a newspaper, the newspaper had no legal procedures or precedents to plead its case (5, p. 216).

Press control had come to be an informal, unwritten agreement that worked as long as the newspaper did not antagonize the government (5, p. 215). Journalists could criticize the country and government only if they could provide a constructive alternative to the problem; but even then there was no guarantee that the journalist would not be jailed or, as in the case of foreign correspondents, deported. Kenyatta once said in 1968:

The press in Africa can have tremendous influence in nation building. It may constantly inspire, or could set out to frustrate the spirit of Harambee or national unity which every young country needs as the fundamental of its progress (16, p. 25).

To enforce the unwritten restrictions on the press, high government officials would let the editors of the newspapers know, usually through telephone calls, if they had overstepped their bounds. Sometimes the Ministry of Information would call in the editors and remind them of their duty to unite the nation (5, p. 218). The government found it cheaper and easier to pressure existing foreign newspapers into doing what it wanted rather than establishing its own daily newspaper. At the same time, government allowance of these newspapers to continue without nationalization complied with Kenya's free-enterprise system (2, p. 278).

The capitalist economy in Kenya meant that foreigners could compete in the newspaper market. The press became particularly dependent on foreign advertisers. A report in the New African said, "The Advertisement news ratio is 30/40 which is quite high for a developing country, and the highest in Africa after South Africa and Zimbabwe" (13, p. 22). The article said ten advertising agencies dominated the market and they had the power to decide whether a publication would survive or die. Ogiluy and Mather, a subsidiary of Ogiluy and Mather International, is the largest and, as long as it is foreign-owned and foreign-staffed, Kenya's press remains vulnerable to foreign company decisions (13, p. 22).

The only newspaper owned and edited by Africans was established in 1970 when Hilary Ng'weno started the Weekly Review, which was considered by some as "quite the best

news magazine produced anywhere in Black Africa." Ng'weno followed the Review with a Sunday broadsheet in 1977, called the Nairobi Times, which was like London's Sunday Times. Both publications aimed at the elite and urban population of Kenya (3, p. 95). The Weekly Review specialized in interpretive reporting which was, as the Nairobi Times put it, "to look at ordinary stories appearing in the local and international press and try to give readers . . . some background analysis which would put the events in a historical or wide political perspective" (12, p. 2).

The Nairobi Times was celebrated as a big step forward in the development of the indigenous newspaper industry. The Minister of Information and Broadcasting said at its opening:

With the establishment of the weekly I earnestly hope that Kenyans in particular can at least look forward to a press that portrays their national aspirations in their proper perspectives. This essentially means that the Nairobi Times will have a noble role to play in stimulating wanainchi (the nationals) to participate positively in all aspects of nation-building. I also hope that your other colleagues in mass communication will see the launching of the Nairobi Times as a healthy development in a field that has for a long time been dominated by alien investors (12, p. 1).

The second decade of independence was a time of increasing African involvement in the press. The period was marked by conflicts among parliament, the Nation Group, and the Standard Group.

Disagreement between the press and parliament was often the result of members of parliament accusing the press of misinterpreting what had happened in parliament. By law the press was free to report parliamentary proceedings. The reporters were accused of making biased reports by publishing unimportant debates, belittling certain politicians and sensationalizing (10, p. 6). At times the Speaker of the National Assembly urged the press to be more accurate in its reports but some members demanded that the press be banned from parliamentary proceedings.

The press members defended themselves by arguing that the press is the watchdog of the nation and is necessary for the welfare of a democratic society. In a Nation editorial, Wamatu Njoroge wrote that the Kenya Constitution "does not say that members of parliament are above criticism" and questioned if Kenya "has become so intolerant of comment and criticism that some would seek to bring about a situation in which the voice of the mass media is curbed" (11, p. 6).

Some disagreements between the press and government dealt with foreign ownership of the newspapers. In November, 1976, at UNESCO's three-week seminar on African news media, Darius Mbela, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Information, said no press in the country "can claim to have Kenya's interest at heart" because editorials in the Kenyan papers were not written in the country "or in Africa

for that matter" (14, p. 3). Mbele said Kenya needed "totally committed African mass media based on Africa's socio-economic-cum-political policies and not a replica of either the east or west" (14, p. 4). He voiced the suspicions of Kenyans who wondered why these foreign groups remained, saying, "We should all wonder as to why I would want to start a newspaper in London, Paris or Moscow, unless I had some interests other than informing the people" (14, p. 4).

At the same time there were conflicts within each newspaper group between the foreign owners and African staffs. In April, 1977, George Githii, editor-in-chief of the Nation Group newspapers, resigned, claiming interference by the chief shareholder as the main reason. In his letter of resignation Githii said:

You will recollect that I maintained, as a matter of principle, that the encroachment by the chief shareholder upon sacred editorial space in order to express sectional and communal interests amounts to direct interference with editorial integrity and press freedom (15, p. 7).

Githii was referring to an editorial he had written about the Bohra community of Muslims; the editorial was not acceptable. He wrote his own and requested its publications. Githii refused and was backed by the board which said that "the Nation, owned in the majority by a religious leader, was a secular paper." Without waiting to see what the Aga Khan would do, Githii resigned (15, p. 3). After his

resignation, Githii said in an interview with The Weekly Review that press freedom does not only involve government pressure; "owners can be just as bad" (15, p. 4).

There were owner conflicts with the Standard, too. Lonrho, the company that owned the Standard, had been having internal problems abroad that prompted in its president, Tiny Roland, to reshuffle the company's key personnel. Apparently there was some evidence, according to the British press, that the company was not honest in its dealings in Africa; hence Prime Minister Edward Heath referred to company activities as the "unacceptable face of capitalism." The company's local chairman Udi Gechaga, the president's son-in-law, called the Standard's editor, warning him not to use the information. The editor considered it too important to be omitted and he ran a story about it, but not before he had had some nasty exchanges with Gechaga (2, p. 88).

One of the longest newspaper feuds between the newspapers began in 1976. On October 9, the Standard's London correspondent filed a story stating, "London is watching with approval what is fast becoming known in informal circles as 'The Great Kenya Debate'" (7, p. 39). He was referring to the "Change-the-Constitution Movement" by politicians who wanted the removal of the provision that gave the vice president ninety days of presidential power in the event of the president's death or resignation. The apparent reason was that Kenyatta was aging and Vice President Daniel Arap

Moi was not considered the proper successor by his opponents. Among those favoring the movement was Gechaga.

The Standard story seemed to say that, if London approved it, it was a good movement. Since the Standard was owned by the London-based Lonrho company, the reporter in London was giving the opinion of that business group, lending it weight by attributing the interest to London (7, p. 9). The London interest was supposedly there to back Udi Gechaga, who represented the company in Kenya. If Gechaga was supported in the Change-in-Constitution Movement, it could help the company get a man of their liking made president (7, p. 9).

Throughout 1976 the movement gained public attention and the group, with Gechaga's help, used the Standard as a mouthpiece for its views. George Githii was at this time editor-in-chief in the Nation Group. In 1974 he had supported, through the Nation, an opponent of the Kenyatta family candidate, Dr. Mjoroge Mungai. Mungai was now a key figure in the movement whose actions Githii disliked. Through the Nation he was trying to prove that the movement was unconstitutional. The Nation's editorial stated, "It is bad politics to interfere with the constitution just because some people do not like an individual" (7, p. 43).

Amidst all the arguments on changing the constitution, Attorney General Charles Njonjo issued a statement in which he said that anyone caught so much as imagining the "death or deposition of the president" could face the death sentence

(7, p. 47). The Nation carried this statement, to which the Standard referred in an editorial headline as "The Big Bluff." The editorial charged that Njonjo's statement was clearly a personal opinion and there had been no word from the president that said the movement was wrong (7, p. 4).

During these arguments the cabinet was called to a meeting by Kenyatta, who told them not to continue with the demand for the change. The Standard changed its stand suddenly and accused publishers abroad of trying to distort the matter (7, p. 50).

Two years after the movement, in 1978, the president died. At that time the constitution remained unchanged and it was clearly inevitable that Moi was to become the president because he was receiving public support. Njonjo made a speech in which he attacked what the Standard had done in 1976 when it supported the movement. To his surprise, the Standard praised him for his defense of the constitution. The Nation, which published Njonjo's attack on the Standard, was accused of ignoring important national news to attack its competition. In the weeks after Moi's succession to the presidency, the Standard featured him in a series of twenty biographical sketches to prove its loyalty to him (7, p. 50).

As Kenya moved into the 1980s, the number of daily newspapers fell to three. All of them are published in Nairobi and are foreign-owned. The Daily Nation with its

Sunday edition is the most widely read newspaper having a circulation of 81,123. It is published in English and has a Swahili sister, Taifa Leo, with a circulation of 32,334. The East African Standard is the third daily with a circulation of 42,253; it no longer carries a Sunday edition (4, p. 61). The Nation newspapers have their home office in Paris while the Standard newspapers home office is in London.

Only four weeklies remain, two in English and two in Swahili. There are three English monthlies and no Swahili ones. Although weeklies and monthlies continue to come and go, as they have done in the past, there are fewer of them.

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CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The British introduced the press in Kenya along with the ideas of free enterprise and free press. So long as they ruled and managed the newspapers, they encouraged a free press. The required posting of a 500 pounds sterling bond before one could be allowed to publish a newspaper served to limit newspaper ownership to the very wealthy, and that excluded Africans. Indians who fell in this category were able to publish, but they were hampered in what they could print because their stay in Kenya was determined by the ruling Europeans, whom they did not wish to antagonize. Although the British press laws applied to Kenya in theory, in practice they were manipulated by the local officials. Except for the period of 1940-1950, when the vernacular press played a significant role for independence the Kenyan press was owned and controlled by the colonialists. Its role was to inform settlers of events in the mother country and to entertain them.

During the decade when the African press emerged, the role of both the British and vernacular press changed. The African newspapers became instruments of political activists

while the European newspapers became vehicles for the reactionary voice. Only by passage of the revised Penal Code in 1950 was the governor able to silence the vernacular press. In so doing, the colonial government acted contrary to the free enterprise and free press ideals they had introduced.

The silence of the vernacular press continued into independence when the poor economic position of the Africans prevented the emergence of any independent African newspaper for over a decade. The British continued to own the press and their newspapers continued in their traditional style except for the change in content to appease the African leadership. More and more educated Africans took to reading and buying these English newspapers, especially the Standard and Nation, which became accepted as the leading newspapers in Kenya. Africans who worked as reporters on them adopted the style which was indicative of what Dr. Peter Mwaura, Director of the School of Journalism at Nairobi University, termed "colonization by the English language" (3, p. 22).

Control of the press after independence was shared by the government, the Standard group and the Nation group. Government power was based on its ability to control the inflow of news through the press agencies and to threaten deportation to foreign owners who criticized it. The newspaper groups, on the other hand, provided employment to many Africans and supported the government by publishing its

statements and generally bending over backwards to be flattering. For these things the foreign owners received recognition from the government, which accounts for the reason why, seventeen years after independence, Kenya's daily newspapers remain in foreign hands.

As Kenya moved into the 1980s, it had a press theory that combined both the authoritarian and libertarian press qualities. The authoritarian stand came from the African government that was anxious that the news media should support its objectives of national development. The libertarian elements were reflected in the freedom of expression that was allowed in Kenyan newspapers so long as it was not against the government or president. Vice president Mwai Kibaki put it well when he said, "You agree (that Kenya has a free press) only because you are committed to democracy. If one is committed to democracy, then one cannot but be committed to a free press"; meanwhile one knows that the press is "subject to influences which make it hardly independent (free) in a meaningful sense" (1, p. 279).

Conclusions

All indications are that the press in Kenya will continue under foreign domination and foreign influence. Two publishing groups have established such domination of the market that new competition is stifled almost before it begins. Only the government has the reserves and endurance to

establish a competing daily newspaper, and it has shown no intention of taking on the task.

Neither has the government indicated any desire to help Africanize ownership of the news media, seeming to prefer to remain committed to the free enterprise system that has thus far prevailed. The government finds it easier to get along with foreign owners who do not want their businesses nationalized than to deport them and face the responsibility and cost of operating a daily newspaper.

This is not to say that the Kenyan press is committed to serving the government and foreign owners. The majority of journalists who work on these newspapers are Africans and they do criticize the government from time to time. However, there is a limit as to how far they can express their true views without antagonizing the owners and government.

Although African journalists complain about foreign ownership, they have denied that foreign owners control them. Hilary Ng'weno said that foreign ownership is not necessarily the same thing as control. George Githii said that as editor-in-chief of the Nation group he had complete editorial freedom, but when he resigned he cited intervention from Paris as the chief reason. This paradox is expressed every time African journalists defend their newspapers' freedom when they are accused of foreign domination. They are right in a sense, because in comparison to other developing nations Kenya's journalists are free, but

compared to the West they can almost be classified as being under an authoritarian system.

Some of the problems Kenyan journalists face stem from the country's poor economic situation. More effort is needed to train quality journalists and offer them the necessary pay to attract them to and to retain them in the profession. With this the profession could be better recognized and be able to shake off its dependence on the shims of government officials and foreign owners. But great financial resources are necessary to give these incentives, and Kenya does not have that kind of money. Advertising does not generate enough revenue to provide more than minimum pay and in cases where these revenues are high, they are mostly helpful to the foreign investors who dominate the advertising business and the newspaper owners themselves.

Kenya continues to support a few daily newspapers largely because the nation is poor and there is a high rate of illiteracy. According to a United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization report by Peter Mwaura, "sixty percent of Kenya's population is illiterate and the rate of illiteracy increases at a greater rate than the rate of literacy due to the high rate of population growth" (2, p. 23). This will tend to keep the press in the urban areas among the educated until the spread of education makes it feasible to publish rural newspapers.

Some Kenyans have expressed the need for the country to have a press whose concept is Kenyan. The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Information said that Kenya needed a press "based on African socio-economic-cum-political policies" (3, p. 4). No one knows what form of press that would be, although the concept was supported by the government. However, when it came to providing the necessary energy and capital to make the concept a reality, no steps have been taken.

It is not likely that Kenya is going to have an indigenous press in the near future, nor is a truly free press likely to appear under a one-party government. This is not necessarily a negative observation because public use of the press is not yet nationwide and it would not help to produce many Kenyan newspapers that are not read. As for freedom of the press, there is a more pressing need to which the newspapers can contribute, and that is advocating unity in this critical stage of development of a young nation. True freedom of the press may come later when the political and economic foundations are strongly established.

Suggestions for Further Study

There is a need for research on the role of the press in Kenya, especially on the influence it has had in westernizing the educated elite. Such research should include not only newspapers but also other media, including entertainment magazines.

Study is needed on how the newspaper should adapt itself to traditional conditions and customs of rural people and how it can help bring about social and political changes needed in rural areas. This kind of research would help remove the belief in Kenya that the newspaper is an elite news media.

Studies are needed to evaluate the performance of Kenya's press as perceived by its people. These studies could be of assistance to those who want to use the newspaper as an instrument in promoting the modernization of Kenya by providing education and disseminating information.

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